

NEWSLETTER



El Alisal

The Historical Society of Southern California

Anna Marie Hager Editors Robert G. Cowan

VOLUME III

MID-YEAR 1970

NUMBER 1

Letter from the Society's President, John Haskell Kemble, to the Membership:

Fellow Members, many pleasant things have happened since I assumed office. This is another opportunity granted to me, as President, to greet all the members of the Historical Society of Southern California.

Your Board of Directors feel that the membership should be fully informed of the Society's actions and activities. To that end, you will find in this Newsletter, and in subsequent issues, a summary of our proceedings.

We can all best serve the cause of good government and personal citizenship as interpreters of our Society. We ask your co-operation and support to insure the progress and development of the Society.

The *Newsletter* will appear on an intermittent basis and we welcome any suggestions, news items or announcements from our readers.

Anna Marie Hager and Robert G. Cowan will serve as co-editors.

Please address your communications to: *Newsletter*, Historical Society

of Southern California, *El Alisal*, 200 E. Avenue 43, Los Angeles, California 90032.

Remember this is your publication, any comments, ideas and contributions will be warmly welcomed, please help us to make this a spritely and informative organ as an addition to your Society's splendid *Quarterly*.

John Haskell Kemble,
President

SOCIETY MEETINGS — January through June, 1970:

The Society's past monthly meetings have been varied and of continuing interest. Dr. John Walton Caughey opened the 1970 Season with an in-depth discussion on the "Negro: California's Minority." Through the generosity of the County Museum of Natural History and through the efforts of Russell E. Belous, Curator of History and a Board Member, the special exhibit hall on "America's Black Heritage," was opened for all attending Dr. Caughey's lecture.

Dr. Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., Editor of the *Quarterly*, spoke on the books the earliest settlers and travelers brought to the West Coast before the 1860's. To add to Dr. Nunis's excellent paper, Mr. Belous opened the colorful California Rooms to the membership following the lecture.

Don Meadows, Orange County historian and noted author, spoke on the "Genesis of Orange County," at our March meeting.

A salute to the University of Southern California and to the co-authors of the first full-length history of that institution, Dr. Iris Higbie Wilson and Dr. Manuel P. Servín marked the April meeting. We were honored to have Dr. John Hubbard, academic Vice President of the University as our speaker at the dinner meeting. Mrs. Duncan Gleason served as the Society's hostess with Mrs. Roberta Johnson's artistic table decorations gracing the tables, the evening proved a highly satisfying event.

A "mini-trek" to the State and County Arboretum in Arcadia proved an especial treat in May. Mrs. Patricia Warren, Historical Curator of the Hugo Reid Adobe, as official hostess and guide made the event a very exciting one.

Under the capable guidance of experience, tour guides, Wade Kittell and Joe Northrop, the Annual Summer Trek promises to be another memorable occasion for the membership to remember with delight and pleasure.

Of unusual merit and interest was the meeting of April, 1969, held in conjunction with members of the Manuscript Society in the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA. Two papers were given by our members. Miss Doris Harris, as a member of the Manuscript Society, addressed her remarks to "Sources of Manuscript Materials."

Robert G. Cowan, Board member and noted bibliographer and author, gave a resumé of his personal recollections of William Andrews Clark, Jr., founder of the Library.

The Society is deeply indebted to Mr. Cowan for his generosity and willingness to permit the use of this excellent paper. It is a valuable and rare privilege to have the following reminiscences presented to you through the pages of the *Newsletter*.

"The name of William Andrews Clark, Jr., was and is known to many, but the man himself, was known to only a few, and the ranks of that company are now rapidly thinning. It would appear that he was a lonely man, not because he was inclined that way, but because the loss of his family and his lack of interest in the general activities of the wealthy set seemed to keep him as one apart.

"He lost his first wife, the mother of his only son, and a second wife whom he deeply admired, even to the point of not allowing anyone to occupy her room for many years after her death. Only her sister and family were permitted to use the room when they came to visit. Then he lost his son in a plane crash and felt the loss very keenly. Finally, to complete his loneliness, his dog Snooky, died. Clark was quite fond of the dog and it is buried under a fitting stone near the Adams Street wall.

"His wealth drew many towards him but he found very early that these people were just using his friendship to further their own ends by trying to enlist some of his money. Even though the scheme promoted might have been a sound investment, he had no desire to increase his wealth, expand his business activities, or get involved in that in which he had little or no interest

"A case in fact that came under my notice, was of a Frenchman and his wife, who played tennis with Clark several times a week. Clark enjoyed the game and found this couple's playing on a par with his own. This went on for some time until one day it ended abruptly. The man made the mistake of approaching Clark with a plan for a perfume factory — Clark was to build it and the man to operate it. The Frenchman and his wife were no longer seen about the place thereafter. When questioned, Clark replied that he felt that Los Angeles had sufficient odors about it and he preferred not to add any more.

"It might be implied from this that Clark was not generous. He was generous to those he liked but not with money although all in his employ were paid well beyond the necessary stipend. For Miss Sanders, who was first his secretary, then his second librarian, he bought a home. For his third librarian he built a home. For his first librarian, Robert Ernest Cowan, my father, he moved a large home from Twenty-fifth Street when he was clearing that part of this property. Although this house was moved only three blocks or so, it had to be cut into three sections, to clear the trees, tele-

phone poles, etc., which, after purchasing the lot and putting the house into a livable condition, was not an inexpensive operation. Had Mr. Clark any premonition that he was going to leave the warm sunshine of this earth before father, I am quite certain that the home would have been willed to my father.

"There was an exuberant, voluble and likeable little Italian priest, a Father Tonnello, who was a frequent visitor and the recipient of much generosity from Clark. This was, of course, entirely impersonal. What was given went into various churches — an addition, a new front, repairs and all the other things that churches are inclined to need. All this was given without notice, fan-fare or publicity, which Clark abhorred. The Philharmonic Orchestra of Los Angeles, which William A. Clark, Jr., founded and carried its financial burdens for the first ten years, and later, this library, gave him more publicity than he desired or wanted.

"Many musical celebrities stayed at his home whenever they were in Los Angeles. Some he liked — particularly Madam Schumann-Heink (the great German singer). Their's was more a mother-son mutual love and respectful friendship and she never failed to stay with him when in Los Angeles.

"For the sake of their music and artistry, Clark entertained many musicians and artists in his home, but quite a few were very temperamental, self-centered or obnoxious. One little Russian boy showed possibilities of becoming a great violinist so Clark gave him one of the two Stradivarius violins he occasionally played upon, and I understand, quite well.

"In 1919 William Andrews Clark, Jr., began his bibliographical work alone. One day, while playing golf, he broke his right arm. Not wanting the work to stop he enquired about for someone to carry on the work until his arm healed.

"The name of Robert Ernest Cowan, my father, was suggested. A trial period of a month was elected. That month lasted for sixteen years!

"For the first seven years father was a guest at the house for about six or seven months out of each year. In 1926 Clark had one of the old homes on what is now the grounds of the Clark Library rejuvenated. The entire second floor was rebuilt with shelving and cabinets to accommodate the twenty tons of books and papers that comprised father's library. Later Clark added a full-sized billiard table of no mean quality, and until Clark's death his librarian occupied one of his houses without charge.

"During the time that father was staying at the Clark home, 1922 to be exact, my wife and I elected to visit Los Angeles. As I was working for the Southern Pacific Railway Company, we came by train, stopped at a downtown hotel and expected to rest our baggage there for the stay.

"The next day we visited father and were introduced to Mr. Clark. After a short talk, he asked about our plans and said, "You are staying here, you know!" It so happened that there was no spare room available. The weather was warm so a bed was set up on the porch for a few days. Do you think that we slept on the porch? Oh no, Clark slept on the porch and we were installed in his room and occupied it throughout our two weeks visit, except when we took off for various excursions. Clark assigned a maid to Mrs. Cowan and divided his butler's time with me. When at Catalina Island he tried to have us stay at the Tuna Club as his guests but at the time women guests were not allowed.

"There was one dinner that we did not have with him while at his home. That was the evening he gave the Stradivarius to the Russian boy who had come to dinner with a bevy of Russians. I do not know whether he thought that we were unsuited to the Russians or that they were unsuited to us. Anyhow, he had his secretary take father, my wife and me out to dinner, then to a theatre to see "Abie's Irish Rose."

"Along with his regular chauffeur, who was well beyond the age limit and did much better with horses than he did with the automobile, Clark had a night man whom he was putting through the USC Dental School. Clark seldom used the automobile at night so we made considerable use of it at his request. That night chauffeur is now my dentist and has taken care of four generation of Cowans!

"After this royal treatment I did not see Clark again until we moved to Los Angeles some four years later. In the meanwhile a couple of sons were born to us but instead of having a secretary phone some shop to send diapers or some such thing, Clark took the time and effort to write a congratulatory letter. At the time I was more disposed towards the diapers but have long since changed my mind. One of my sons is here today and I think that his and my feeling in this matter is mutual, both then and now.

"After moving to Los Angeles we built our home. During the process, Clark gave us two large hand-carved oak book cases for the new home. We could accommodate them nicely as the entire second floor was one large room, for a library, music, dancing or anything that came along. The book cases were hoisted up to the second floor before the stairs were installed. When we came to move it was necessary to knock out three windows to release them.

"In many ways Mr. Clark was most thoughtful. Knowing that I enjoyed symphonic music, I was given an annual pass to orchestral rehearsals until he disassociated himself from the Philharmonic Orchestra.

"His assistant librarian, Miss Sanders, and her niece, took book-binding lessons along with me from Mr. Bogardus, who was then at the Huntington Library. Clark had a bench set up for us here in the basement, with a little

equipment. Not that he ever considered using our talents in his library — as there was nothing there that he would dare expose to our “botch” work — but just as a gesture of generosity to promote our interests.

“Knowing father’s interest in *Western Americana*, Clark bought the Kessler Collection of *Montaniana* for father to play with. He excused himself by saying that he thought he should have something here of his native state. He purchased and gave his butler a six-unit court upon which to retire, after several business ventures that failed.

“There was a shadow that would appear periodically. Clark would drink heavily for four or five days. During these periods there was no change in the household. Things would proceed normally except that Clark would not be obvious. He would shut himself in his room and see no one but his butler. After the spell he would emerge serenely and take up where he had left off.

“Not much has been said about the man. Little is known of his generosity. What has been said has not always been complimentary, some of it distinctly venomous, stemming, I suppose, from envy of his wealth, jealousy of his attainments, or disgruntlement from not being able to wheedle money out of him.

“Los Angeles has been blessed with but a very few philanthropists in the past. We were fortunate in this one.

“I am not a hero worshipper but it must be readily admitted that the world could do well with men of the caliber of William Andrews Clark, Jr., with or without his wealth. His efforts in the world are lasting.”

Thank you.

Notices

Various conferences commanded the time and energies of your Executive Secretary, Miss Margaret Cassidy, and of several of the members these past months. Some of the highly interesting historical seminars included those held at colorful Mission Inn in Riverside, the Congress of History at Grossmont College in El Cajon, the VII Symposium at Ensenada, Baja California and the annual Conference of California Historical Societies to be held at Monterey.

Especial note should be made of the contributions to our historic past made by Anthony L. Lehman, Dr. Carl S. Dentzel, Ward Ritchie and Mrs. Patricia Adler to the “Yesterdays” lecture series presented by the Junior League of Los Angels.

Among our versatile and talented members who contribute their talents to the daily scene of community living and also to the benefit of the Society and its membership is Burnett C. Turner. Board member Turner has been

recognized by the American Institute of Architects and with an election to that Institute's College of Fellows. This highly unique honor was accorded in recognition of Mr. Turner's outstanding contributions related to the architectural profession. His many public services include involvement with work at Camp Pendleton, the Pasadena Jet Propulsion Laboratory, UCLA Psychology Clinic, and his support and efforts in behalf of El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historical Park. Congratulations to hard-working member of our Board of Directors!

Dudley Gordon, another member of our Board of Directors has received a resolution from the Los Angeles City Council in recognition of "his rich contributions to the education and cultural image of our great City and State." The contributions are too many to list here, but we do wish to congratulate him, and are proud to have him in our Society.

With pride we note that several of the finely printed books selected for the Western Books Exhibition 1970 included works by some of our Society's members. Included in the selection were: *The Life of George Henry Goddard*, by Dr. Albert Shumate, *Bombs and Bribery*, by W. W. Robinson and *Poems and Songs*, by Patricia Adler.

Also included in this distinguished selection were *A Distinguished Collection of Arms and Armor*, by Russell E. Belous and *Southern California and Its University, History of USC*, by M. P. Servín and I. H. Wilson.

Headlines of "The Wrong Padre!! (Who Goofed?) Father Serra Omitted," startled the somewhat sedate world of stamp collectors recently. Due to the sharp eyes of Society member-archivist Rev. Francis J. Weber a *faux pas* committed by Mexican postal designers was detected. The error was on the special 80 centavo airmail stamp issued in honor of California's Bicentennial Year and the portrait was of Fray Francisco Palóu not of Serra. Rev. Weber has caught in an imaginative mabber the story of this unusual philatelic blunder in a wee book, *What Happened to Junípero Serra*, which measures only 2x1 1/4 inches. Tipped into each one of these miniature books, bound in leather, is one of the *Aéreo 80 centavo Mexican stamp "oddities."*

Christmas Greetings in July?

Not so strange after all. Now our membership may acquire a stunning reproduction of a Duncan Gleason painting of Cabrillo's ships that carried the first Christmas Service to Upper California. These cards may be ordered with or without the Holiday greeting at \$6.25 for 25 with envelope (plus sales tax). Board member Ronald O. Swayze, in addition to his other duties, has volunteered to handle the orders in behalf of the Society. Please place your orders directly with Mr. Swayze, 1868 St. Albans Road, San Marino, California 91108. Proceeds, will of course, accrue to the Society.

The Historical Society of Southern California

200 East Avenue 43

Los Angeles, California 90031



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Historical Society of Southern California
200 East Avenue 43, Los Angeles, Calif. 90031

Date_____

To the Board of Directors:

Please accept my membership as a_____Member in the
Historical Society of Southern California. I enclose my remittance in the
amount of \$_____for dues for the fiscal year of_____.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

Proponent (if any)_____

MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATIONS

Active Member	\$15.00	Patron Member	\$100.00
Sustaining Member	\$25.00	Life Member	\$300.00
Contributing Member	\$50.00	Student Member	\$ 7.50

Dues include subscription to the Society's *Quarterly* and *Newsletter*. All
dues, contributions, bequests are deductible under State and Federal tax
provisions since the Society is a non-profit organization supported solely mem-
bership dues and contributions.
