



# The Grapevine

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WINTER 2015

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

February 2015

The San Marino Historical Society celebrates the beginning of its 2015 program year with a presentation by Nat Read on February 23. Read, who will present his popular program "America's Greatest Speech," is the author of four books and is a speaker in great demand. Several years ago we were pleased to open our archives to him when he was researching his book *Don Benito Wilson: Mountain Man to Mayor*. This program will appeal to a wide audience so plan to bring a guest.

We welcome Bob Houston to the Historical Society Board this month. Bob will join treasurer Wayne Carter on the Finance Committee as our accountant. He is generous with his time and skills in several community organizations and we are fortunate to have him join us.

In this issue look for the article on Joseph Chapman by Linda Mollno, PhD. Linda is a board member and is on the faculty of Cal Poly Pomona and Cal State Los Angeles. In this article she sheds light on Chapman and his involvement in La Presa Dam and the San Gabriel Mission.

Oral History Project Chairpersons Ave Bortz and Carolyn Chapman were pleased to receive a grant from the Rotary Club of San Marino which will fund the transfer of oral histories from reel to reel tape to CDs. The generosity of Rotary makes this process a reality.

The Historical Society is pleased to be involved in three preservation related projects in the city. The first is a city staff and citizen committee formed to draft a proposal for an historical preservation ordinance. The second is the restoration of the Stoneman monument on Montroble Avenue. The adobe structure and its brass plaque has suffered weather damage over the years and estimates for its restoration have been received. The third project is to evaluate bids on an historical structures report on Stoneman School.

We encourage long time members who have yet to renew their membership or potential new members to use the blue envelope enclosed with this newsletter. You can also take advantage joining on-line at our website [www.sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org). Your support makes the publication of this newsletter possible, funds the archives and other activities that promote the understanding of the history of San Marino.

Judith Carter

## SAN MARINO HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROUDLY PRESENTS

### America's Greatest Speech

By  
Nat Read  
Author and Public Speaker



Nat Read is a professional public speaker, speech writer, speech coach and a student of great speeches. For America's Greatest Speech, he has drawn from speeches that served as markers in American history to cut-and-paste a presentation that spans the history of the United States.

Read is the author of four books and a speaker who delights audiences on an average of once a week. This is one of his most popular speeches.

**Monday, February 23, 2015, 7:00pm**  
Crowell Public Library  
Barth Community Room  
1890 Huntington Drive, San Marino  
Public is Welcome, Admission is Free

**San Marino Historical Society  
Executive Officers and Members of the Board  
2015**

**Officers**

President .....	Judith Carter
Secretary .....	Pat Salvaty
Treasurer .....	Wayne Carter
Parliamentarian .....	Lee Mothershead
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Historian.....	Linda Molino
Membership.....	Bill Ferry
Newsletter.....	Chris Datwyler
Oral Histories.....	Ave Bortz
	Carolyn Chapman
Programs .....	Ken Veronda
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Thurnher House Docents .....	John Ryan
Legal Consultant.....	Shahen Hairapetian
Community Liaison .....	Jennifer Goldman
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**Emeritus Board Members**

Robert and Graziella Almanza  
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**Society Presidents (1974-2013)**

Midge Sherwood.....	1974
Mary Smith .....	1976
Jack Sherwood .....	1978
Ed Ford .....	1980
Graziella Almanza .....	1982
Laverne Smith .....	1985
Jeanne Imler.....	1989
Gary Fleming .....	1991
Lillian Campbell .....	1993
Marilyn Peck .....	1995
Paul Crowley .....	1999
Gene Dryden .....	2004
Benjamin Salvaty.....	2008
Ave Maria Bortz .....	2008
John Morris.....	2010

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SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA 91118-8222  
(626) 304-9375  
info@sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org**

**Thurnher House Hours**

The Thurnher House is open on the first and third Sunday afternoon of each month from noon to 3:00pm. It is also open for tours by appointment. If you would like to visit the house on Tuesdays, please call 626-304-9375 or info@sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org for an appointment.

**Membership Year 2014-2015**

The Historical Society began its fiscal year on October 1, 2014. Membership Chairman Bill Ferry reports that 194 members have renewed and that fourteen new members have joined. That is a strong start to our membership drive. We depend on the support of our members to continue to print and distribute the Grapevine, to present programs of interest to the community, to provide scholarships each year to San Marino High School and Southwestern Academy and to maintain the Historical Society Archives.

Ferry reported that one hundred fourteen people on our membership list have not yet renewed. If you are in that group, you will receive with this copy of the Grapevine a letter that encourages you to renew so that you can enjoy the benefits of membership. The enclosed blue envelope makes it easy for you to continue to belong to this important civic organization. It is also possible for you to join on-line through PayPal at our website sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org.

If you choose not to rejoin, this will be your last regular mailing. We hope you will not make that decision. As we look ahead to the year 2015, we must be mindful of our expenses. Printing and mailing costs have risen. Many members have chosen an e-mail option to receive the Grapevine and information on programs and tours.

We thank each of the 194 individuals and families who have renewed membership for the current year. A special thanks go to the following people who have chosen to become Patrons and Benefactors:

**Benefactors**

Wayne and Judith Carter	Michael Moran
Stephen and Susan Chandler	Robert and Judy Newell
Suzanne Crowell	Marilyn Peck
Ben and Mary Lou Hammon	Oskar Thurnher
Arlyne Husted	Richard and Ann Ward
	Phelps and Beverly Wood

**Patrons**

Jeff Arnett	Annamarie Mitchell
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Don and Julie Fedde	Rosemary Simmons
Bill Ferry	Sue Spence
Martin and Roberta Gundersen	Richard and Ann Ward
Hillenburg Family	Phelps and Beverly Wood

**WEBSITE**

Visit our website to learn more about your Society's programs and activities as well as viewing current and past issues of our newsletter – the "Grapevine":  
<http://sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org>

# **“Jose el Ingles: The Romantic Story of Joseph Chapman, The First American Settler in the Pueblo of Los Angeles.”**

By  
Linda Mollino, Ph.D..

Joseph Chapman’s arrival in Alta California is shrouded in myth and romance. Was he a pirate by choice or shanghaied from the docks of Boston, or Honolulu, or Buenos Aires? How did he end up in San Marino? In 1818, Captain Hippolyte de Bouchard, Argentine privateer, approached Refugio Bay. News of his plundering had reached the notorious smuggler José María Ortega, who moved large amounts of money and valuables, and the women, from his rancho to nearby Mission Santa Inés. Vacqueros drove the cattle inland and every able-bodied man waited, and watched the sea. Even from a distance one man aboard ship stood out – tall, blonde, his muscular tanned body glistened as the sun’s rays reflected off the water. His small boat capsized, catapulting him into a life or death struggle with the powerful waves, until a vaquero’s reata encircled his body. He fought vigorously but eventually lay on the sand, bound securely.

As he was bound to a horse destined to be dragged to his death, Ortega’s beautiful young daughter Guadalupe intervened. Denouncing the soldiers despicable plans as beneath the dignity of Spanish gentlemen; and on the California frontier, Spanish soldiers considered themselves gentlemen, even if not always acting thus. Guadalupe’s action saved the life of “José el Ingles” – Joseph Chapman. Sergeant Antonio Lugo, admiring the pirate’s strength and fortitude, offered to take responsibility for the prisoner and transported him to Los Angeles.

Although a prisoner, Chapman’s intention to remain enabled him to travel freely. His carpentry, shipbuilding and blacksmith skills, even his knowledge of medicine, earned him great respect from the padres, rancheros and Indians. Spanish pioneers learned weaponry and soldiering first, becoming farmers only in retirement. Americans learned from an early age to farm and use tools. Chapman’s early activities in the pueblo included building a new mill in 1823 for San Gabriel Mission, to replace the Old Mill built by Father Zalvidea. Chapman’s new design eliminated the problematic damp grist chamber and guaranteed a flour supply for mission and pueblo residents. The mill operated so well that Mission Santa Inés requested his help. Additionally, he built a ship for the padres and worked on a small dam to irrigate mission fields. Remains of that dam and a commemorative plaque can still be viewed along west side of La Presa Drive north of Huntington Drive.

He played an important role acquiring timbers for the roof of the pueblo’s first church, Iglesia de Nuestra Señora La Reina de Los Angeles. Along with Indian workers from the mission, he climbed the San Gabriel Mountains near present-day Millard Canyon to find tim-

bers for the church roof. Knowledge from his days as a shipbuilder in Boston astonished the Indians when he predicted the direction trees he cut would fall. One night a band of “wild” Indians attacked and Chapman, violently waving a club, like a Biblical Samson single-handedly routed the attackers.

Don Antonio Lugo (the retired Sergeant), owner of Rancho San Antonio and leading citizen, helped Chapman gain a pardon from the King of Spain. He converted to Roman Catholicism, pledged loyalty to the king and became a naturalized citizen. Now it was time to take a wife, and as customary in those times, Lugo took on the responsibilities of matchmaker. In a grand wedding at Mission Santa Inés Chapman married Guadalupe Ortega, the señorita who saved his life at Refugio. In 1824 they purchased a tract of land in Los Angeles and planted grapevines. As late as 1860 those vines remained in the hands of his son Charles. He moved to Santa Barbara in 1836 as grantee of Rancho San Pedro. Chapman’s large family settled in Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles counties. Four generations of descendants farmed “Chapman Woods” until World War II when the fifth generation subdivided and built ranch-style homes among the native oaks and sycamores.

The controversial legend of Joseph Chapman’s arrival – the danger, romance, and happily-ever-after ending, part history part fiction, is typical of the romantic Spanish past that emerged in late nineteenth century Southern California. Chapman’s arrival ironically mirrors a typical scene from a Hollywood movie. A pirate battling the surf at Refugio, was it Chapman or Errol Flynn? Both used good looks and masculine skills to capture hearts. Chapman, like Paul Bunyon felled trees in the mountains and like Samson routed wild Indians with only a club. His endless displays of ingenuity and resourcefulness earned him a MacGyver-like reputation.

Separating fact from fiction challenges even the best historical researchers. In the 1880s, Hubert Howe Bancroft claimed stories of pirate attacks and Chapman’s arrival, were only partially validated by historical data. In a 1929 edition of *Touring Topics*, John Gorby merged myth and fact in a romantic story, “Jose el Ingles: The Romantic Story of Joseph Chapman, The First American Settler in the Pueblo of Los Angeles.” A decade later, Los Angeles Times reporter Harry Carr, in his history of Los Angeles, claimed Chapman’s daughter as his source. Chapman left no written record but his family’s account mirrors Bancroft’s. Once in Los Angeles the controversy ends. Chapman’s inventiveness and skill, his popularity with padres and Californios, and his role as the first American in California viticulture is undeniable.

## Thurnher House Tours

Activity at the Thurnher House at Lacy Park has increased over the past few Sundays. John Morris and John Ryan provide tours of the house on the first and third Sunday of each month. A typical tour includes the early history of the area, moving to incorporation in 1913 and the development of the park in the 1920s. Aided by maps, photos, models and objects from the archives, the docents provide a lively overview of what makes San Marino unique.

Ryan and Morris find that many visitors do not know that the park was once a lake, that many of the streets in San Marino were streams, and that what is now San Marino was originally San Gabriel Mission land.

Both docents are well versed in the history of the city and provide visitors with stories about some of the founding families. Patton, Wilson, Huntington, Shorb, Lacy, Kewen and Carver are not familiar to some visitors. After a tour, all visitors know how these people fit into the fabric of the history of the city.

If you haven't visited the Thurnher House for a tour, take advantage of this opportunity on the first and third Sunday of each month from noon to 3 p.m. Non-residents can tour the house without paying the fee for entering the park. The Thurnher House is located at the Virginia Road entrance to the park before the toll kiosk.



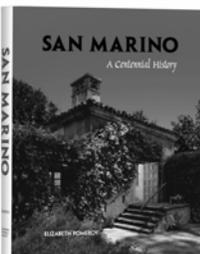
Visitor John Davis learns about the history of San Marino and Lacy Park from docent John Morris at the Thurnher House on a recent Sunday.

### Order San Marino Centennial Book Now

\$55 per copy + 4.95 tax = \$59.95. Add \$7.50 if you wish the book to be mailed to you for a total of \$67.45.

Order on-line via paypal at [www.sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org) or by stopping by the Thurnher House on the first and third Sunday from 12-3 or on Tuesdays from 9:30-3.

Books are also available for sale at the Crowell Library, San Marino Toy and Books, Julienne, A Stitch in Time, Julienne, Diana Dee's, The Old Mill, Huntington Library Bookstore, Sweet and Savory, Margie's, Fedde Furniture and Pasadena Museum of History.



## From the Archives

February 2015

Judith Carter

The Crowell Library generously donated materials from its collection to the Historical Society. Volunteers are processing pamphlets, photographs and articles to find which of these items that will enhance our collection. In the past few months, the Friends of the Library Book Shop received a large collection of books on the history of California. Historians and board members Ave Bortz, Linda Molino and Jennifer Goldman combed through the boxes of material to decide what to keep.

We recently welcomed a new Tuesday volunteer to our group. Dan Clarke joined us two months ago and has made a contribution in two areas. First, he painted an image of the Thurnher House in acrylics and presented the framed painting to us. John Morris installed it in the Historical Society office. Clarke is a former computer trouble shooter for the City of Los Angeles. He has been valuable in updating some of our files, making sure our information is backed up properly and advising us on all things concerning our new computer.

The archives have been useful to the committee composed of San Marino City staff, residents and consultants who are drafting a historic preservation ordinance at the request of the city council. Our files contain an earlier attempt in the 1990s to establish a preservation ordinance have been key to this recent effort.

The Stoneman monument on Montroble is in need of restoration and the Historical Society is providing the information the city needs to sensitively bring it back to its original condition. This California Historical Landmark #669 is on the site of 'Los Robles,' the 400-acre estate of Governor George Stoneman. President Rutherford B. Hayes was entertained here in 1880. The was the site of the first schoolhouse in the San Gabriel Valley, California's first tennis club, and the first municipal Christmas tree of San Marino.

## 2015 Calendar of Events

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| January 29  | 5:30 p.m., Chinese History of Los Angeles, Arcadia Historical Society              |
| February 1  | 12-3 p.m., Thurnher House open for docent led tours.                               |
| February 7  | 9 am Thurnher House, AHSLAC Mini Conference  |
| February 15 | 12-3 p.m. Thurnher House open for docent led tours.                                |
| February 23 | 7 p.m., Crowell Library, San Marino Historical Society Program, featuring Nat Read |
| March 1     | 12-3 p.m. Thurnher House open for docent led tours.                                |
| April 25    | City of San Marino's 102nd birthday.   |
| May 18      | 7 pm Crowell Library, San Marino Historical Society Program Meeting, TBA           |
| October 27  | 7 pm Crowell Library, San Marino Historical Society Program., TBA                  |