PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members:

Judy Carter and her associates have set up an efficient approach to receiving and cataloging historically significant documents at the Thurnher House. Using Library cataloging techniques, they are happy to receive documents or historic items which are, or depict significant past events in the history of San Marino, its residents or its organizations. If you have, or believe that you have, such items, please contact Judy, send email, or leave a message on the Thurnher House answering machine.

In the same vein, we would like to talk with those of you who would like to help in the sorting, cataloging and documenting such item.

We are also looking for members of the Historical Society who would be willing to act as docents at the Thurnher House and at the Adobe. While the opening of the Adobe is still in the future, to an extent depending on the restoration approach, the opening of the Thurnher House on a two day per week basis is currently feasible, and depends solely on the availability of staffers.

We continue to plan for a meeting of the Historical Society at the Old Mill for our May meeting. The meeting will be held outside in the Pomegranate Patio, and will be a talk on Early Airports in Southern California.

We are meeting, with a structural engineer to again assess the cost and success probability of moving the Adobe to Lacy Park and comparing with the cost and benefit of restoration of the Adobe in its current location. We plan to continue these meetings and assessments to obtain definitive costs and feasibility. The Schools and City are involved in these discussions, as well.

Design and costing of San Marino's War Memorial in Lacy Park continues. Iterative designs are resulting in a meaningful, but cost effective design which, the Committee believes, will provide an appropriate memorial to

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From the Archives

Visitors: Kathy Brown, assistant to Jack McQueen, Executive Director of the Old Mill visited recently.

Modifications: The metal shelving in the Archives Workroom is now strapped to the wall for safety reasons. Track lighting has been installed in the workroom and the storage room. The closet floors in the storage room have been modified to make them more usable for storage.

Volunteers: Three volunteers, Julie Fedde, Judy Newell and Bonnie Tamkin, have begun important projects. They meet with the archivist on Tuesday mornings to sort through file folders, assorted printed material, photos, maps and other records.

Recent Donations:
The San Marino Library donated six large transparent Duratrans prints of San Marino at the turn of the century, a blueprint of Rancho Los Robles subdivision, maps of San Marino property lines 1941 and 1987, and blueprints and plans of the Old Mill property.

A large lateral filing cabinet was donated by the Tournament of Roses Association and delivered by Don Fedde.

A History of San Marino California: A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Department of History, University of Southern California, February 1947 by Allan Dorland was donated by San Marino Police Chief Gary Isaacs.

A Brief History of the Land Grants Which Comprise San Marino by Deborah L. Bertch, a paper presented to the History Department of California Polytechnic College, San Luis Obispo, CA, May 1970, was donated by the San Luis Obispo Historical Association.

Three sets of plans for the 1991 refurbishment of the pre-1933 classrooms at Huntington School and a copy of the project manual were donated by David Narver.

A Canon PC6RE photocopy machine donated by Bill and Emily Ferry.

President's Message

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those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. Research has recently determined additional names of casualties in the Korean War, not currently represented on the monument due to the absence of the Korean War plaque.

Our email address is smhistorical@earthlink.net. An answering machine is also connected to the telephone number, 626-304-9375; please feel free to leave messages at that number. Also, we will be posting information bulletins, as appropriate, on our web site.

We hope to see you at our March 27th meeting.

Gene Dryden, President
The Christian Faith has reached across boundaries of time and space, of nations, class and kin to establish itself in the hearts of men. The Church of Our Saviour in San Gabriel, California, grew from such an outreach. It was built by this faith which knows no bounds. More specifically, it was built by one woman’s faith in the middle of the nineteenth century, extending across the United States to tie together the Spanish mission town of San Gabriel, California, the New England city of Providence Rhode Island, and the mid-western settlement at Clermont, Iowa.

The summer of 1867 found the Rev. Dr. Henry Messenger, a missionary recently returned from work in Liberia, searching Southern California for a suitable location to establish an Episcopal parish. His mission was occasioned by the dream of Mrs. Amos Maine Vinton of Providence, Rhode Island. The westward movement of settlers was on the rise again, after an ebb during the Civil War. Mrs. Vinton saw this movement with the eyes of faith. It was her dream to be a part of the movement so that “the Glory of God might be told from sea to sea” in the United States.

To commence making her dream a reality, Mrs. Vinton acquired a building in Providence which, at times, had been used by parishes under different names. After a period of uncertainty about the future of the old church building, it was obtained by Mrs. Vinton along with a charter from the state of Rhode Island for a new parish to be known as The Church of The Saviour. She planned to have three churches bearing that name: one on the Atlantic coast, one midway in the United States, and one on the Pacific coast. For some unknown reason the one on the Pacific coast has been known as The Church of Our Saviour, although Mrs. Vinton always referred to it as “The Church of The Saviour.”

Mrs. Vinton’s dream next touched California. According to the History of the Diocese of California, written by the Rev. Mr. D. O. Kelley, the first Episcopal services in San Gabriel were held by the Rev. Elias Birdsell, rector of St. Athanasius Church in 1864. However, the gatherings of a Protestant congregation go back at least a decade before. A Sunday school had been organized in the San Gabriel area by Christians concerned about the religious training of children. The school was known as the Los Angeles Sabbath School and drew attention to itself by a magnificent banner carried in a Fourth of July parade in 1853 in Los Angeles. The banner was made from the wedding dress of Mrs. Benjamin D. Wilson, second wife of the prominent rancher, Don Benito Wilson, whose Lake Vineyard property comprised much of what is today San Marino and the southern part of the city of Pasadena.

The meetings of the Sunday school were haphazard at best and not until 1864 did it gain renewed strength with the interest taken by the Rev. Mr. Birdsell, and more especially, by the Rev. Mr. C. F. Loop, an Episcopal priest who settled in the area of San Gabriel. In addition to teaching the Sunday school, Mr. Loop began to hold Sunday services in a little school house on Del Mar Avenue, a little south of Huntington Drive, on the bank of an arroyo. Annie and Ruth Wilson, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. B. D. Wilson, were among the first children attending the school and Church services with their parents each Sunday.

The Rev. Mr. Rambo, aware of Mrs. Vinton’s interest in establishing a church in California, suggested the idea to the Rev. Dr. Messenger, who came to California in 1866, after serving as a missionary in Africa. Dr. Messenger was for a time the Rector of St. Athanasius in Los Angeles. With the encouragement and blessing of Bishop Kip (first Bishop of California), Dr. Messenger began to search for a suitable location to fulfill Mrs. Vinton’s dreams. His canvass of the area took him to Anaheim and El Monte, but with the enthusiastic encouragement of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and two other Episcopal families, the Chapmans and the Howards, Dr. Messenger decided upon San Gabriel. He became the guest of the Wilsons and began holding regular services at the school.

A letter from Mrs. Wilson to her step-daughter, Maria Jesus Shorb, written in September, 1867, mentions having gone the previous Sunday “to hear the new minister” and pinpoints the time when The Church of Our Saviour had its formal beginning. Mrs. Vinton sent $2,500 in greenbacks to Dr. Messenger via Wells Fargo to build the church that would complete her dream, which now envisioned a memorial to her deceased children, Elisha Dyer Vinton and Caroline Dyer Vinton. She took comfort not only in the thought that “the Glory of God would be told from sea to sea”, but also that the sun would never shine in the United States.
Church of Our Saviour
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States without shedding its light on a church given in memory of her children.

The dream, however, suffered an initial setback in California. Greenbacks were not good money in the West at the time, hard gold being the only acceptable coin of exchange. The conversion of her greenbacks to gold cost $750.00, which left insufficient funds to realize all that Mrs. Vinton had planned. She expressly wished to have two 2-acre parcels of land provided, one with a church building erected upon it and the other designated for a rectory to be built at a later date.

To help regain a part of this sum, the $1750 remaining from Mrs. Vinton's gift was loaned to Bishop Kip's son at 2% interest per month for a little more than half a year until it reached the value of $2,000. Dr. Messenger, meanwhile, acquired personal title to a section of land to the north of Roses Road, bounded on the east by what is Dobbins Road today, on the west by the present San Gabriel Cemetery, and on the north by Coolidge Road. A small house on the land became Dr. Messenger's home, and he began to farm the property. The Sunday Services and the Sunday School now met in his home.

In 1868 he subdivided the land to meet the requirements of Mrs. Vinton for two 2-acre parcels and the church building itself was started. It was all but completed in 1869, except for glass in the windows. The building was made of adobe brick! Mr. Wilson gave permission to take adobe soil from the top of a knoll on his property, which later became the location of the home of his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. George S. Patton. An expert Mexican brick maker from Los Angeles was employed to fire the bricks on the Wilson ranch. At the same time nails were hand-forged for the building.

In 1869, with the walls up, the roof covered and cloth over the window openings, the first Protestant Church in the San Gabriel Valley was holding regular services in its own church building. When it was cold or rainy, the congregation adjourned to the nearby house of Dr. Messenger.

In 1871 Dr. Messenger officially transferred title to the two 2-acre parcels and the church building to Mrs. Vinton. These two portions of land comprised the area from directly behind the Atwill Memorial building south to Roses Road. Dr. Messenger maintained personal title to the remaining part of his property which formed a "U" around the church.

The original $2,500 sent by Mrs. Vinton had been found to be insufficient and over the years she contributed a little over $5,000 to complete her dream. She also arranged to have the church bell shipped around the Horn for the little brick church in the San Gabriel Valley. The church was formally dedicated in 1872, with a plaque erected by Mrs. Vinton. The plaque bears the original name she intended: The Church of The Saviour.

As the only Protestant Church in the valley, non-Romans turned to The Church of Our Saviour and its Rector for help in time of need. Dr. Messenger began using a portion of his lot to the west of the church for burials. This later became the nucleus of the San Gabriel Cemetery when he sold the land to the newly-formed San Gabriel Cemetery Association in 1875.

In 1875 Mrs. Vinton transferred title to the 2-acre parcels she owned to the Rector, Wardens and Vestrymen of The Church of Our Saviour.

This article is the third in a series relating the history of religious institutions in the San Marino area. Prior articles have related historical summaries of the San Marino Community Church (Spring 2003) and the San Marino Congregational Church (Winter 2005). More to come.

Please Sign Up!!!
If you want to receive these quarterly “Grapevines”, see the old photos, learn of our programs and help to perpetuate the history of our wonderful town, then return the blue envelope quickly. A membership card will follow. Chances are your name will appear somewhere in our 2013 Centennial book!

Thank you.

WEBSITE
Visit our web page to learn more about your Society’s programs and activities:
www.smnet.org
(Click on “Community Resources” and then on “San Marino Historical Society”)
or go directly to: www.smnet.org/comm_group/historical/