



The Grapevine

Published by the San Marino Historical Society

The San Marino Historical Society
Thurnher House at Lacy Park
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WINTER, 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members:

This is my first column as president. I want to thank Gene Dryden for all his hard work and great ideas as my predecessor. Fortunately Gene has agreed to serve Program Chair and to research and author the articles on the various San Marino organizations which we feature in the Grapevine.

Our first program this year will be on Don Benito Wilson, a very important figure in the development of San Marino in particular and the western San Gabriel Valley in general. The program will be held on February 25, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. at Southwestern Academy. (See the accompanying article for further details.)

The dates for our future programs are May 12, 2008, and October 27, 2008. Please calendar these dates. The program titles will be announced.

The Thurnher House, located at the Virginia Road entrance to Lacy Park, is the Historical Society's headquarters. It contains a number of historical photos of Lacy Park and San Marino. If you are interested in viewing these or merely visiting the Thurnher House, please call (626) 304-9375 and our archivist/librarian Judy Carter will be glad to arrange an appointment.

The Historical Society is undertaking a review of the process in San Marino to designate or preserve buildings or neighborhoods of local historical significance. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please call the Thurnher House and leave your name and phone number.

On Sunday, March 2, 2008, the Heritage Square Museum, located adjacent to the Pasadena Freeway on the left as you are heading to Los Angeles, is hosting Los Angeles Heritage Day. The San Marino Historical Society will have a table with membership materials available as well as a number of other museums and historical societies. If you have an interest in local history, I encourage you to attend. For further details please call (323) 225-2700.

If you have any suggestions for future programs or would like to be active in the Historical Society, please e-mail us at smhistorical@earthlink.net or call [(626) 304-9375]. Also be sure to check our website at www.smnet.org – click on "Community Resources" and then on "San Marino Historical Society."

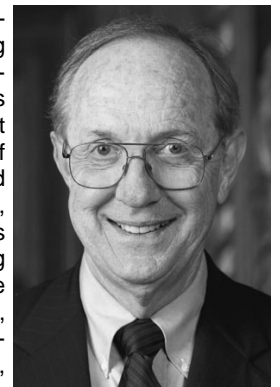
See you at our program on February 25th.

Ben Salvaty
President

SAN MARINO HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROUDLY PRESENTS

Don Benito Wilson: From Mountain Man to Mayor
by Nat Read

Don Benito Wilson: From Mountain Man to Mayor fills a long-missing gap in the record of Southern California history. This biography documents the life of one of the most significant pioneers of San Marino and all of Southern California. Wilson presided over his vast real estate, agricultural, political and industrial realm from his Lake Vineyard Ranch, overlooking Wilson's Lake (now Lacy Park). The grandfather of Gen. George Patton, Wilson is almost unknown today outside San Marino, because, until now, no one has published his story. This book corrects that oversight of history.



Read earned a history degree from Austin College and has written historical and other magazine and newspaper articles all of his adult life. Read spent three years researching Wilson's life, reading every scrap in the collected papers of the subject and virtually every newspaper that Wilson would have read during his life in Southern California. This book is significant for its account of the early history of Los Angeles, and more generally California and the West. While Don Benito Wilson: From Mountain Man to Mayor certainly fills an academic gap, it was written primarily as a page-turner for the general reader, a book that fills a gap in the wider public's curiosity about the early days of what is today the second largest city in the U.S.

This book tells the story of the West and Los Angeles through a single notable figure, who was born during the lifetimes of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and who died in a Los Angeles that present-day citizens would begin to recognize

**The Meeting will be held at
Southwestern Academy
2800 Monterey Road, San Marino
Monday, February 25, 2007 at 7:30 PM.
Public Invited -- Admission is Free**

**San Marino Historical Society
Officers 2008**

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*Vice President, Programs	Gene Dryden
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Historical Collections and Architectural Survey

Sander Peck, Marilyn Peck

Docent Chairmen

Mary Payne, Peggy Winkler

Docents

Graziella Almanza, Mary Payne, Dorothy Ohlson, Marilyn Peck, Peggy Winkler, Ave Maria Bortz, Jim Elliott, Carolyn Holmstrom

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Gene Platz, Sander Peck, Marlene Elliott, James Elliott, Alan Weirick

Adobe Restoration and Preservation

Dennis Kneier, James Elliott, Paul Crowley

Website

Chris Datwyler, Gene Dryden

*Board Officers

Society Presidents (1974-2004)

Midge Sherwood	1974
Mary Smith	1976
Jack Sherwood.....	1978
Ed Ford	1980
Graziella Almanza1	1982
La Verne Smith	1985
Jeanne Imler	1989
Gary Fleming.....	1991
Lillian Campbell.....	1993
Marilyn Peck.....	1995
Paul Crowley	1999
Gene Dryden.....	2004
Benjamin Salvaty	2008

**San Marino Historical Society Archivist Report
by Judith Carter**

Volunteers Julie Fedde and Judy Newell are nearing the completion of a project to process several boxes of photographs from the San Marino Tribune. These photos now fill four vertical file drawers. The photos are arranged by the dates they appeared in the Tribune. By cross checking the issue of the Tribune on microfilm, subjects and people in the photos can be identified.

During the San Marino Library's construction period, we have been fielding reference questions from them. While their materials were in storage, we have acted as backup for library staff. Recent requests for information include: 1) UCLA student researching the changing demographic in San Marino, 2) author researching Benjamin Wilson for a biography coming out in early 2008, and 3) an author preparing a book on the architect Gerard Colcord, who designed the home at 2170 Chaucer Road. Now that the Crowell Library is open, I expect these requests will decline.

Ruth Werner Falck, who once dated Willi Thurnher, eldest son of Armin and Erna Thurnher, donated copies of some of his letters written to her during World War II. She also donated three photographs. We will interview her as part of the Oral History Project.

Last month the Historical Society's bank safe deposit was emptied. Its contents are now housed at the Thurnher House. The typewriter on which the extortion note for the 1935 San Marino kidnapping attempt was typed, extensive file with photos of the Kathy Fiscus tragedy, and two San Marino police register books from 1927-1949 and 1949-1954 are among the contents. Two copies of Michael White's book and a framed copy of a map of the area are additional items from the box now at the Thurnher House. A photocopy of an article on the above mentioned extortion plot from the July 1936 issue of Official Detective Stories explains the significance of the typewriter mentioned above.



Installation of the War Memorial 9-27-07

History of The San Marino War Memorial

By Gene Dryden

Shortly after the end of World War II, a committee of San Marino residents constructed a memorial to those residents of San Marino who, since the incorporation of San Marino in 1913, had made the ultimate sacrifice for our country by giving their lives for our freedom. This memorial was placed in the middle of Lacy Park and included a flagpole and multiple bronze plaques. One of the plaques commemorated those killed in World War II, one for the Viet Nam war, one commemorated the life of General George Patton, and one commemorated those killed in Korea. The plaques were mounted on poured concrete walls.

The memorial originally contained names only of those killed in World War II, including Gen George Patton, Jr. Plaques were subsequently added which contained 12 names of those killed in the Korean and in the Viet Nam conflicts. An additional plaque was added in 1963 specifically honoring General Patton, who was also the son of the first Mayor of San Marino. As of 2005, a bronze plaque listing those killed in the Korean war was missing from the monument. Additionally, the names of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice in the Gulf and Iraq wars had not been included on the monument.



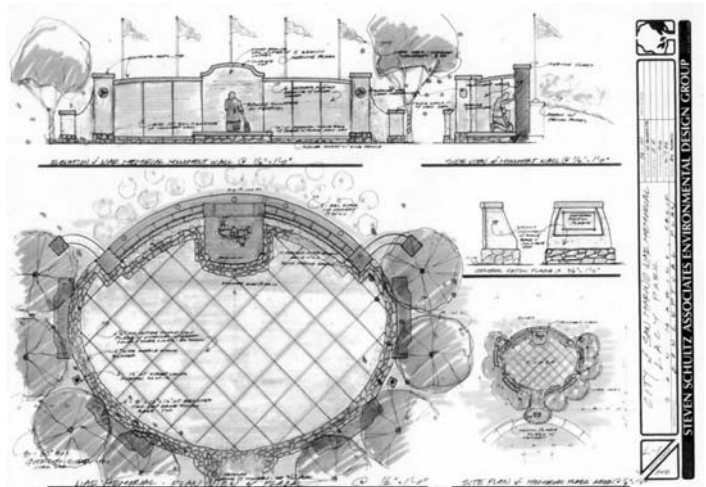
The Original Memorial

Due to the missing plaque and due to the additional death of J.P. Blecksmith, killed in the Iraq war, it was decided that the memorial should be redesigned and rebuilt to include those persons who had not been included in the prior design. In the process, a search was again conducted using newspapers, Department of Defense records and other historical archives to assure that all names of those killed in the wars since San Marino's incorporation had been included on the monument. No additional names were found. The new design included 39 killed in World War II, 7 killed in the VietNam conflict, 5

killed in the Korean War, and one killed in the Iraq War. A separate plaque was provided to honor General Patton.

In the new design, provision needed to be made for expansion, as necessary, to include those who might sacrifice their lives for freedom in future wars. Accordingly, a rendering was generated to reflect a new memorial concept. This concept, generated by Steve Schultz, served as a baseline for the new memorial design and was used, with some variations, in the final design configuration.

It was decided that provision should be made for a number of verses of Biblical text appropriate to the monument, with two quotes from prominent military figures. Cognizance of religious vs secular issues was taken in the selection of the text. A number of discussions with secular as well as religious authorities were held to determine authenticity of text and source.



Initial Design Layout

Also of concern was the selection of the material for the monument, as well as its finish. Flame cut black granite was selected as the material of choice. A number of sources were considered, however Bourget Brothers of Santa Monica was found to have the selection and sources desired. The "flame cut" granite material provided a rough appearing finish, unlike the shiny look of headstones in a cemetery. The downside of this finish is the difficulty of cleaning in the eventuality of graffiti application.

Design provisions were also made for the recognition of those resident veterans who wish to provide financial support to the Memorial. The recognition was provided by the engraving of the name and branch of service of the individuals being recognized by their families and/or friends. The engraving was performed on the concrete walkway ("The Veterans Walk") behind the granite monument structure. Names were etched into the concrete by

(Continued on page 4)

History of The San Marino War Memorial

(Continued from page 3)

means of sandblasting, with the letters filled with sealer then black paint. Provision was made for the addition of further names, as needed and desired. Care was taken in the pouring of the concrete walkway to achieve a "troweled" finish, suitable for the etching methods used. Consideration was given to engraving three names of the veterans into individual bricks, or stone or concrete blocks. It was concluded, however, that the etched names in concrete provided a much more suitable and better appearing method of creating the names.

The prior monument configuration had the problem that there was no provision for electrical power or for lighting for meetings or ceremonies requiring lighting or sound amplification. Accordingly, electrical power was provided at the base of the memorial, behind the granite wall. Lighting must be provided separately, using the power outlets indicated.

The dedication ceremony featured sets of dog tags, one for each individual on the granite wall. During the ceremony, preschool children each placed one set of dog tags in an ammunition canister at the base of the statue. This canister was subsequently placed in a small concrete caisson, placed at the foot of the North flag pole.

Order of position of the flags on the poles is of significance. It was determined that the flag positioning, from South to North, should be as follows: US Flag; Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and State of California, with the US and California flags on the taller flag poles.

The Monument is designed as a living memorial to those who gave their lives in defense of our freedom. In recognition that there will be others, beyond those recognized in this structure, provision has been made to expand the list of names beyond that on the current structure. Not only is it possible to engrave additional names on the granite facing, but also it is possible to replace the granite slabs with clean slabs, should it be necessary, or desirable. The process requires access to the mounting bolts from the back of the memorial, followed by replacement of the old slab by a new one, having epoxy mounted bolts fixed to its back surface. These bolts are to be long enough to protrude through the concrete structure to its back surface. Engraving of new text is then performed with the granite slabs in place on the memorial structure.

The Memorial is intended to provide a living tribute to those who have so greatly sacrificed for our freedom.

This tribute was the result of a significant effort by a large group of San Marino residents, City employees and other interested parties. Funding for construction of the Memorial was provided by contributions from San Marino residents and businesses. Expertise was contributed by residents, by City employees and by interested individuals. A plaque at the back of the Memorial notes these people, without whom the success of the structure would have not been possible. Special note needs to be taken of the efforts of Chuck Richey and of Cindy Collins in the management and coordination of design. and implementation of the site and construction



The Finished Monument



Sandblasting names in concrete from the Veterans Walk

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
then click on San Marino Historical Society