



NEWSLETTER  
of the  
Carpinteria Valley  
Historical Society

[www.carpinteriahistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.carpinteriahistoricalmuseum.org)

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March/April 2013

## CALENDAR

March 27—Wednesday  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Meeting—6 P.M.



March 30—Saturday  
**MUSEUM MARKETPLACE**  
8 a.m. - 3 P.M.



April 8—Monday  
**Volunteer Opportunities**  
**MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE**  
10 a.m.- Noon



April 24—Wednesday  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Meeting—6 P.M.



April 27—Saturday  
**MUSEUM MARKETPLACE**  
8 a.m. - 3 P.M.



May 9—Thursday  
**DESCANSO GARDENS**  
**EXCURSION**  
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 P.M.



## VALLEY HISTORY

### Back When They Were Service Stations: Carpinteria Gas Stations, 1920s-1970s

by Jon Washington

edited by Roxie Grant Lapidus

“Fill ‘er up! And check the oil and tires, please.” How many of us long for those days, when you could pull into your friendly local gas station, and the owner or his teenaged employee would be “at your service.” Windshields washed, tires and oil checked, maybe some local news exchanged. You’d pay in cash, not that much, and be on your way. From the 1920s through the 1960s, service stations were an important part of life in Carpinteria. People sold their cars at the stations, kids filled their bike tires there, or obtained cast-off inner tubes for frolicking in the surf. Women liked those valuable Blue Chip or S&H Green Stamps, redeemable for household goods at the special store in Santa Barbara. The stations were where the Greyhound bus stopped and where you bought tickets (Pine Haven Texaco, later at Risdon’s Mobil), and where the *LA Times* was deposited for rural delivery (Groves & Hofmann Seaside). Customers liked the free maps, and directions to various places. Barbara Lynn, CUHS Class of ’59 recalls, “*A friend of mine stopped in town once and did not know where I lived. At Moyer’s Chevron she asked Ken Stanley if he knew me. He said ‘Sure, I live next door to her!’ (Ken’s dad and mine were both park rangers.) It was just like living in Mayberry (fictional community on ‘The Andy Griffith Show’). Everyone knew you.*”

Not only was the local service station a social hub, it was an invaluable place for generations of high school boys to get their first job, learn responsibility, and earn money for their first car. Bill Sylvester, CUHS ’61, describes the lessons he learned working at John Moyer’s Chevron:

*In the summer of my Junior year at CUHS I went to work for Johnny Moyer at his Chevron station on the corner of Linden and Carpinteria Ave. I had had numerous short term jobs before, but this was the first with real responsibility. This station provided full service when you bought your 27¢ gas. Windows, oil, tires, belts, and fluids. Johnny taught me how to wash windows. “Just do a good job around the edges, the middle will take care of itself.” That advice really sped up my service time, and I think of Johnny every time I wash a car’s window.*

*Johnny liked the islands clean at all times. When I would close, which was often, my final job was to clean the islands with ash and solvent. Sweeping this*

mixture on the cement gave it a nice smooth white glaze. Johnny hardly ever got the chance to see my good work as my "friends" would come to "peel out" on my fresh work and leave it a real mess.

Changing oil was also one of my jobs. Some customers would come in monthly like clockwork. Usually these cars were the Caddies, Lincolns etc. and the oil was as clean as new. We saved the good used oil and I used it in my car for as long as I worked there.

On my first night to close on my own, I really wanted to show Johnny I could do a good job. The last task was to lock the nozzles to the pumps so they were secure for the night. I cleaned my islands, bathrooms, bay. Put the money in the safe, locked up, and left. About midnight or so, I woke with a start, realizing I had not locked the nozzles to the pumps. I jumped in my '50 Ford and hurried to the station to complete my job. When I got there, the nozzles were safely locked to the pumps. Johnny never said a word about it--great lesson for me. Johnny Moyer has become one of my heroes. Taught me lessons that served me well through my life. Do a good job, better than expected, have pride in your work, and be patient with those who are learning."

This is echoed by Frank Fortunato, Jr., who worked at his dad's Chevron stations in Santa Barbara and Carpinteria before becoming a Chevron dealer himself in 1987: "We all have our stories to tell about famous people that came to our stations. Most of our stories are about the funny things. The sad story is that there are no places like these for a young person go to work at their first job, shy and inexperienced, and learn how to deal with life."

### From Filling Stations to Service Stations, 1920s-1940s

Originally they were called "filling stations," and the first one opened in 1905 in St. Louis. Before that, owners of the new-fangled "horseless carriages" bought gas at hardware stores or livery stables. No pumps, just a metal drum with a faucet and hose, or even simply a bucket and a funnel to transfer the gas. John D. Rockefeller had founded Standard Oil in 1870, but the company mainly produced kerosene for lighting, while gas was a waste by-product. With increasing numbers of cars, the demand for gasoline suddenly outstripped the need for kerosene. In 1911 the Supreme Court broke up Standard Oil's gasoline monopoly into 34 smaller companies. Among these were the companies that eventually became Chevron, Mobil, Exxon, and Atlantic-Richfield (ARCO).

Locally, Seaside Oil was founded in Summerland in 1898 as a production and pumping company. They eventually got into the business of refining and selling gasoline. The gasoline pump was invented in 1905, and not long afterward a Seaside "filling station" opened in Summerland. It was one of the new "drive-through" stations. Elsewhere in Carpinteria, a few enterprising store owners had installed a pump in front of

their business, and the customer would simply pull up next to it.

Roxie Grant Lapidus CUHS '62 writes, "I know that the Summerland Seaside station was well established back in the teens, for my family has stories about it from that era. In 1919 my grandparents, Lilia and Wolcott Tuckerman, were building their 'dream home' at the end of Cravens Lane, while living in a rented house in Montecito. They would stop regularly in Summerland for gas. In those days Gilmore Gas had a lion logo, and their motto was 'Roar with Gilmore!' My grandfather would quip to his daughters, 'Sigh with Seaside.' One day he was going to check on the progress of the new house when youngest daughters Vi and Lou suddenly begged to come along. They hopped in the front seat beside him. When they pulled into the Seaside station, suddenly a burlap sack jumped out of the back! The attendant's jaw dropped, and Vi wailed, 'Daddy, do you have one of my cats in there?'

She had accumulated 17 strays during their 4 years in Montecito, and her father was determined not to welcome them to the new house. On his solo trips south, he had been depositing them in promising, mice-rich open country fields. Vi was eventually resigned, when told that she could have a dog, or maybe even some day a horse, in Carpinteria. But the drama at the Summerland Seaside remains a part of the family lore!"

At about that same time, Walt Dowling installed a gas pump outside his Rincon Garage on Linden Ave. Son Lescher, CUHS '43, describes the scene in the late 1920s: "Ed Braley, the

bookkeeper, was also in charge of the hand-operated gas pump out at the curb. It was tall because it used gravity flow to fill the customer's tank. It had a glass cylinder at the top. The hand lever was used to pump ten gallons of gasoline into the glass cylinder, from underground storage. We kids enjoyed watching the whole process, from the gushing of the gas into the glass holding tank to counting off the gallons as the car's tank was filled. Numbers on the side of the glass indicated gallons, and were used to figure the amount of fuel delivered, and to calculate its cost. In 1929, gas was 17 cents a gallon! If a car needed more than ten gallons, Ed had to hand pump the gas up again to fill the glass holding tank. Service back then did not include the niceties of cleaning the windshield or checking the oil. That came years later. An old photo of the garage shows a Goodyear tire in the window with a sign, 'A Big Value at \$5.69.' Of course you still had to buy the tube."

Another early one-pump operation was at the intersection of 7<sup>th</sup> St. and the highway, near present-day Aliso School. Francisco Gonzales ran the "Violet Ray" gas station and market on the triangle-shaped property from 1929-1931. According to Sal Campos, the station was later operated by Mr. Owens, before becoming Searcy's Service Station, while the store and cabins behind it were Searcy's Grocery and Searcy's Auto Court. In the 1940s the property was acquired by Ray Baker, and became known as "Baker's Triangle." Jim Campos '66 describes Baker's Triangle as it was in the 1950s and early '60s:



Walt Dowling operated one of the first local businesses to add a gasoline pump, visible just above the car, to his downtown Linden Ave. Rincon Garage. Museum archive photo courtesy of Lescher Dowling.

*"The base of the triangle was Reynolds Avenue, and the diagonals of 7th Street and Carpinteria Ave. met at the point at the service station, in front of the store. The triangle was lined by thick fir-like trees that kept people out and gave no line of sight into the inside area, site of the old 'auto court.' We kids stayed out of there. We did know that there were cabins or shacks where people lived, but no kids lived there that we remember. We referred to the store as "the gas station," and it was our favorite place to buy baseball cards, kites, candy, ice cream and soda."*

Aliso students brave enough to sneak over to Baker's Triangle at recess recall the novelties to be found behind that dilapidated screen door: chewable wax false teeth, mustaches and red lips, candy cigarettes, and other delights. Ward Small '59 recalls *"the little paraffin shapes filled with a Kool-Aid like solution. You bit the top off, slowly sucked the juice out, and then chewed the paraffin."*

The Coast Highway (now Carpinteria Ave.) ran right through Carpinteria until the early 1950s, so it was a natural spot for storefront pumps and more elaborate filling stations to spring up. Ober's store opposite the old high school had a pump, as well as candy to tempt students—one of the first "convenience stores"! In the 1920s, a "modern" Seaside station was built at the south-east corner of Linden Ave. and the Coast Highway. This later became a Shell station, while Standard located directly opposite on Linden, next to Rexall Drug. Eventually Richfield, Texaco, Mobil, Union '76 and other stations lined the highway as it passed through downtown Carpinteria. In "Old Town," Delgado's grocery had a pump outside, as did the grocery at the foot of Cramer Road. Barry McCurry '58 recalls pumping gas for customers there. According to Sal Campos, in the 1940s his brother Louie and a Mr. Ellis ran a Golden Eagle station on the western end of town, near the Barbecue House (today's Clementine's). The station was later run by Albert Sanchez. Cliff Benedict had 2 pumps outside his fumigating business, Jones and Benedict, also on the west end of town in the late 1940s and 1950s. Son David '55 writes from Australia: *"Our station was small, with only two pumps. It was the last station on 101 headed north and of course the first headed south. It was a good opportunity for (brother) Don ('57) and me to earn some extra money and learn a bit about dealing with the public. Those were the days when you would pull up to a gas station with a carload of kids, everyone would take all the change out of their pockets and maybe get*

*\$2.50 worth of gas. They were great days. So lucky to grow up in Carpinteria."*

Phyllis Armstrong '48 recalls: *"The Shell station was owned by Harold Helzman, our neighbor on Vallecito Place. He stored some Shell product in his garage, and when he left the door open we kids would get a big giggle out of seeing the partial word 'HELL' on the boxes! We were pretty innocent."*

**World War II & Gas Rationing**

Ernie Johnson was only 12 when he started his first job on Dec. 7, 1941 at Carpinteria's Texaco station, next to Safeway. The news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor spread like wildfire. *"I was scared to death,"* Ernie says. The station owner was Bill Lelo, and Ernie recalls that Lelo had a brother who was a midget, who appeared in some Hollywood movies.

In December 1942 FDR imposed gas rationing on the country. The problem was not really a shortage of gas, but of rubber, desperately needed for the war effort. The way to conserve rubber, the government concluded, was to limit civilian driving. Ration cards were issued, containing stamps for allotments of gas. Most drivers were Class A, allowed 3 gallons a week. Class B (factory workers and traveling salesmen) got 8 gallons a week. If you were an "essential war worker," policeman, doctor, mailman, truck driver or politician you had no restrictions. Ernie recalls, *"Customers right away started trying to get extra gas stamps, offering money, gifts, food, whatever."*

People had to make do. Roxie Lapidus reports, *"My eccentric uncle Bobby in Santa Barbara started diluting his gas with cleaning fluid. It worked pretty well, he said, and he claimed that he almost had his car 'weaned' onto pure cleaning fluid when either the war ended or the car died—I forget which! Gas rationing was no problem for my mother, Lou Grant, when she wanted to attend the wedding of her best friend Arleen Thurmond and Mike Sturmer. She got a ride with a friend from Hollywood to Carpinteria for the ceremony on July 27, 1943. After the reception at the Thurmond home on Cravens Lane, Arlie and Mike left in a shower of rice, off on their honeymoon to L.A. As soon as they were down the lane out of sight of the guests, they stopped, as prearranged, and my mother emerged from the bushes and climbed in the car with them. Mom and Arlie and Mike always joked that she had come along on their honeymoon!"*



**Frank Gonzalez operated the Violet Ray filling station and store at the edge of Old Town in the late 1920s and early 30s.** Museum Archive photo.



**Its location across the Coast Highway from the high school at Casitas Pass Road made Ober's Café and gas station popular with Carpinteria's youth.** Museum archive photo from Cate School's El Batidor, 1939.

### "Pop" Haggin's Station & Store at Toro Canyon

Rationing finally ended in 1946, and Americans took to the road again. Paul Main '61, a lifelong resident of Serena, recalls the coast highway in the vicinity of Toro Canyon Road in the late 1940s:

*"The highway was three lanes—north, south, and a middle passing lane. The Toro Canyon grade and 101 area was one of the worst stretches in the county for accidents. The gas station there was a Richfield, and included a market. It also had a small living quarters that was a rental. One of the early owners was Charles Burris, who lived in Carpinteria from about 1935 to the late 1940s.*

*The station was then operated by Melvin L. "Pop" Haggin and his wife Ruth. The Haggins lived in a house behind the station, at 114 Toro Canyon Road, where it intersected Oak Road (now Via Real). In the early 1950's when the freeway was being built, the gas station/store and rental were removed. The Haggins then owned a bakery in Carpinteria. They were very active in the community and in the Catholic Church. Pop Haggin was named Carpinteria's Man of the Year in 1959. Two years later, he was tragically killed by a freight train when crossing the railroad tracks at Padaro Lane and 101 at the Toro Canyon grade."*

Ward Small '59 also remembers Haggin's Richfield. It was right next to the school bus stop, and, like Baker's Triangle store, a source of tempting candy for the neighborhood kids. Ward writes:

*"It was a place I'm sure remains infused among the memories of Serena Park residents Paul Main, Richard Baldwin, Bobby Brisbin, Neil Ablitt, Jeff Thuner, Barbara Horton, and Ruby Anne Talmadge, to mention a few. On the rare occasion that one of my siblings made a candy purchase, I was always suspect. It seemed there was a correlation between the level of Mother's see-through coin bank and any acquisition. To avoid disclosure, purchases were often shared, and no questions asked. My sister Sari remembers the friendly Haggins and says they continued to live in their white house behind the station site even after the station was gone."*

Ward is right that Haggins' store has a fond place in many people's memories. Jeff Thuner '59 and Ruby Ann Talmadge '59 recalled the candy and the kindness of the Haggins. Ruby Ann wrote: *"When I was living in Serena Park at age eight or nine, there was a gas*

*station store on the old 101 run by the Haggins. Richard Baldwin, Neil Ablitt and I were frequent candy-buyers there. The Haggins were wonderful people and always had a kind word for us kids."* Neil Ablitt adds: *"When I was very young I would sit on Mr. Haggin's lap when my folks were buying things at his store, and he would tell me that chocolate milk came from brown cows! A very gentle man, in my memory."*

### Summerland: Zisman's Seaside and McCurry's Shell & Mobil

Further up the highway in Summerland, Ernie McCurry, who later ran the Shell station in Carpinteria, started in business in the 1940s. Daughter Diane '57 recalls:

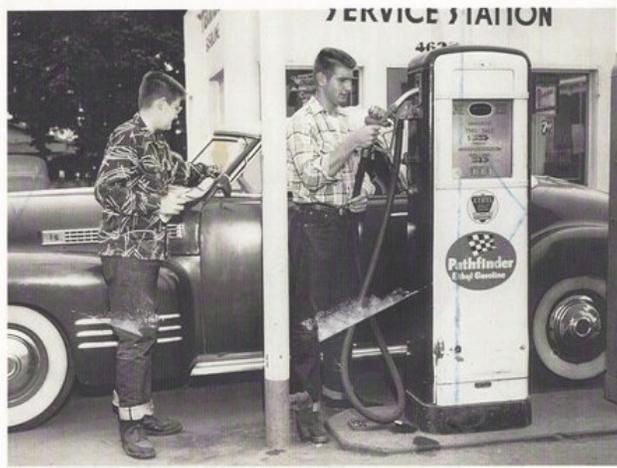
*"Summerland was an unusual setup. Our home was attached to the grocery store part of the station. There was only one bathroom and we had to share it with the customers. (I can't even imagine doing that now!) My father developed the property so that he had a hoist in the garage and a bigger area to work on cars. He was a master mechanic and worked on lots of cars. I also remember the pumps being upgraded while we were there, and Dad changing gas companies. I believe Mobil was the last company he worked with. Our grocery store was small and my grandmother ran it, and Dad handled the station. It wasn't*

*unusual for someone to come in with a car that had broken down, they were far from home, and my parents would invite them to stay at our house while Dad fixed their car. I remember one family was from China. I think we left Summerland because they were getting ready to build the freeway and our station was in the way of the Evans Lane exit. We moved back to Carpinteria in 1951."*

The Summerland Seaside station was run by Walt Zisman in the 1940's and 1950's. Ward Small remembers Walt as "tall, lanky, and soft-spoken":

*"Walt was friendly and patient with us shy youngsters as we watched in captivation while he pumped gasoline, raised the hood, withdrew the oil dipstick and brought it around to show Mother, and finally washed not just the windshield, but all the windows. From inside our vehicle, we climbed over the*

*seats following him from window to window as he sprayed each one, and then wiped it dry with a rotating sweeping action of a towel, occasionally stopping to exchange a quick 'peekaboo.'*



**Working at gasoline service stations were wonderful opportunities for young men to learn responsibility, business, and customer interaction exemplified here by Don (left) and David Benedict at their father's small two pump operation on the far western end of town.** Photo courtesy of David Benedict.



**The Seaside Station in Summerland had updated its pumps in the 1940s by the time this photo was snapped, but the building dates from a much earlier time period.** Museum archives photo.

*On occasion we prevailed upon him to patch a bicycle tube, for which he always refused payment. The "Camel" patches came in a small metal can the size of a cigarette package. The most exciting part of the patching process was at the end: the patch was ignited, accompanied by a hail of fiery sparks and puffing smoke, resulting in 'vulcanization'! Mr. Zisman also supplied us and other kids with discarded inner tubes for fun in the surf or in our neighborhood 'swamp' off Torito Road, in an abandoned quarry."*

**Seaside & Risdon's Mobil, 1940s & '50s**

Meanwhile, in 1940, Walt Dowling sold his Rincon Garage to W. W. Humphrey, who transformed it into a Chevrolet dealership. One year later, Humphrey's nephew Don Groves left the Midwest to take a job at his uncle's car dealership. Don arrived in Carpinteria with his wife Justine and 3-year-old son Jimmy. Later sons Tom and Bob joined the family. Tom Groves, CUHS '60 relates, "In 1944, Don acquired the lease to the Seaside Oil Company's local service station and took on the challenge of going into business for himself. The station was located on the corner of Maple Avenue and the Coast Highway, and became known as 'Groves Seaside Service.' In another building on the property was a café—The Irish Hut, operated by Mr. & Mrs. Donovan. After a couple of years Seaside Oil Co. asked them to vacate, probably due to alcohol-related late night shenanigans. The Irish Hut relocated to lower Linden around 1947, and Don took on a Schwinn Bicycle franchise and installed it in that building. He also sold Whizzer bike motors. His bike shop was the source of many Christmas and birthday presents for local children through the years."



**Don Grove's classic full-service Seaside station at the corner of Maple Avenue and the Coast Highway in the 1950s.**

Photo courtesy of Tom Groves.

George Coshow '56 remembers it fondly: "As a pre-teen my favorite station was Don Groves' Seaside, because it had the bike shop and I could gaze longingly at the new Schwinn models. It was also my regular stop for more air in my bike tires. There was also the fact that Jimmy Groves was one of my best friends and they lived very near by. Jimmy was always a better trumpet player than I and a better math student as well." Gerri Tripp '59 recalls, "Don Groves Seaside was my regular stop starting at age 10, with my new bike, to get air in the tires. Don taught me to use the air pump."

John Hofmann '62, son of Don Groves' eventual business partner, takes up the story: "Karl 'Bob' Hofmann and Martha with their two sons, Bob and John, moved from the L.A. area to Carpinteria in 1947. They rented a house on the beach at Ash Ave., later known as 'the boat launch.' Bob went to work for his friend Harold Heltman who owned the Shell gas station on the corner of Linden and old Hwy 1. This was

*before Ernie McCurry bought the franchise. Around 1950 Bob went to work for Don Groves at the Seaside station and garage. Don needed a top-notch mechanic to expand his business and brought Bob on board. After a couple of years, Don offered Bob a partnership. They partnered for more than 20 years and were friends for life."*

Around this same time, in the late 1940s, Fred Risdon sold his gas station in Pasadena and moved to Carpinteria when the local Mobil station came up for sale. The Risdons had spent many summers at the beach park here, with Fred coming up on weekends to join Lillie and the kids, Jack and Joanne. Joanne recalls the early years of Risdon's Mobil station on the northwest corner of the Coast Highway at Elm St.:

*"For at least the first year, the family lived in a 24-foot trailer behind the station. Though a shower was installed in the adjacent tent room, the family shared the station restrooms. They were unconditionally the CLEANEST gas station restrooms in the entire state! When the trailer park on the other side of the tracks from the depot came up for sale, Mom got the job of running the park, and we moved to the house adjacent to it on Dorrance Way. This was quite a change from her librarian job at the main branch in Los Angeles! Though of course she eventually became Carpinteria's librarian, for many years.*

*For Dad, the station was a joy. He loved to visit with people, and the station gave him that opportunity ALL DAY! I remember him arriving home from work, his right arm still circling at his side, while he claimed "I can't stop window washing!" Dad was best friends with Don Groves and Ernie McCurry. They eventually raised the funds to buy a street sweeper for Carpinteria. The three of them took turns running the sweeper once a week for several years, and also recruited volunteer drivers like M. L. (Bud) Kelsey (father of Chuck '60 and Ron '62). This gave Slim Talmadge a well-deserved rest after his years of hand-sweeping. Slim did continue his round of visiting, just minus pushing the broom."*

George Coshow adds, "My dad, Horace Coshow, spread his business to all the stations, so I had many visits at the McCurry Shell station as well as Risdon's Mobil. Everyone was friendly and chatty. No one seemed jealous of the other's business, each just tried to earn a living for their family."

We will continue our drive down nostalgia's highway in our next issue, where you will be able to "fill up" on more stories about Carpinteria's service stations and their importance in the lives of this community's citizens.



## MUSEUM NEWS

### SPRING MUSEUM MARKETPLACE

The **Museum Marketplace** will be held on **Saturday, March 30 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 P.M.** Bargains and treasures abound from our 70 vendors of vintage goods, antiques, collectibles, plants, books, clothing, jewelry, furniture, and much, much more!. As always, we appreciate your tax-deductible donations of items to the museum's used treasures booth. Donations may be dropped off at the museum's back patio at any time. Future Marketplace dates are **April 27** and **May 25**. 🐰

### MUSEUM SHOP OFFERS EASTER GIFTS

Our gift shop offers whimsical Easter cards and booklets with beautiful Victorian graphics and verse; as well as old-fashioned papier-mâché egg candy containers; cute, furry rabbits, and a variety of basket-stuffers such as old-fashioned jump-ropes and wooden tops; and wind-up lithographed tin toys, including little pecking chicks, rabbits pulling carts, vintage cars & trucks, and robots! (Wind-ups not recommended for children under 6.) **Easter is early this year, falling on March 31**, but you still have time to come in and pick-up something for those special young ones in your life (or for the young-at-heart!) 🐰



### MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE- VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES SHARED

**We invite all interested persons** to explore the many volunteer opportunities available at our charming historical museum during an **open house on Monday, April 8 from 10:00 a.m. to noon** at the Carpinteria Valley Museum of History, 956 Maple Ave. A special tour of the museum will be given by the curator and coffee and light refreshments will be served.

It would be impossible to maintain the museum and its programs without the skill and talents of its large family of volunteers. The historical society is especially seeking volunteers to serve as museum docents. This dedicated group opens the museum to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M.; answering visitors' questions, giving tours, and making gift shop sales.

Volunteers may choose to work a minimum of once a month or as often as once a week or more, your time commitment remains totally flexible. The museum will provide individual training, as well as a docent handbook for personal study of local history.

Come explore our beautiful museum while discovering the personal rewards that come with contributing to your community's well-being as you learn to share our unique cultural heritage with others. To learn more about volunteer opportunities at your local museum please plan to attend this free open house; no commitment is necessary.

**Current museum volunteers: We invite you to please join us and bring a friend to introduce to your museum!!** You may call the museum at 684-3112 for more information. 🐰

### FIELD TRIP TO DESCANSO GARDENS

The Historical Society has planned an exciting excursion to the beautiful **Descanso Gardens** on **Thursday, May 9, leaving at 8:00 a.m. and returning at 5:00 P.M.** Our visit will include a docent narrated tram tour of the gardens upon arrival, and a special visit to the restored Boddy House mansion and art gallery.

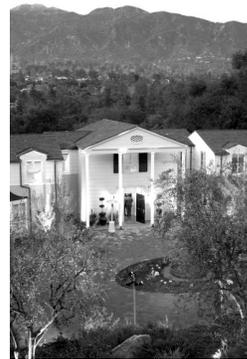
Located in the midst of California chaparral, Descanso Gardens in La Cañada-Flintridge is hailed as one of the most spectacular locations in Southern California. This 160-acre oasis contains forests, streams, a lake, a bird sanctuary, hiking trails, a 22-room mansion, a gift shop, café court gardens, and a Japanese teahouse and koi pond. Blessed with a warm climate and its mountain proximity, Descanso is able to plant a tremendous variety of floricultural delights.

#### History

In 1769 the King of Spain laid claim to the current area known as Descanso Gardens. Corporal José María Verdugo (1751–1831), a Spanish soldier who had served with the 1769 Portola-Serra Expedition, received a provisional eight square league (36,000-acre) grant of the Rancho San Rafael in 1784, from his army commander Governor Pedro Fages. Verdugo died in 1831 and his land was divided between his son and daughter, who retained ownership until 1869. Then came a period of years where the land was continually bought, sold, and subdivided.

In 1937, E. Manchester Boddy, publisher of the *Los Angeles Daily News*, purchased the 160 acres now known as Descanso Gardens. One of the first things Mr. Boddy constructed on the site of this former Spanish rancho was a two-story, 12,000 square foot 22-room mansion in the Hollywood Regency style which he called Rancho del Descanso (Place of Rest).

Designed by renowned "architect to the stars" James E. Dolena, the home is nestled into the hillside with a spectacular view of the San Gabriel mountains. In 2007,



*Historic Boddy House*

Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts chose the Boddy House to be transformed into its 43rd annual Pasadena Showcase House of Design. Working with Showcase volunteers, interior and exterior design firms completely rehabilitated and restored the Boddy House, bringing it back to life in a contemporary re-interpretation of its original Hollywood Regency style. In 2008 Descanso Gardens received a major grant from The Ahmanson Foundation of Los Angeles to return the house to the visiting public as a house museum and interpretive center showcasing highlights from the history of the property. The newly expanded Sturt Haaga Gallery adjacent to the Boddy House will have just opened a new exhibit: *Dangerous Beauties*, which will show that all is not what it seems in the plant world and their environment.

Seduced by the beauty of the camellia, Mr. Boddy soon employed an expert to cultivate different varieties of the plant. Before long, he had assembled a world-renowned collection. The newspaperman had a love for a myriad of different flower species and soon divided his interests between roses, irises, lilacs, and native California plants.

In 1953, Boddy sold his magnificent home and property to the County of Los Angeles and Descanso Gardens opened to the public. By 1957, the Gardens were in danger of being closed, until 25 area residents stepped forward to save the historic property and formed a non-profit organization to protect and promote the interests of the Gardens.

### *Garden Areas*

**The Rosarium**, situated on 5 acres, is set out in a circular pattern with the roses being laid out in a historical lineage of the blooms ranging from the Middle Ages to the American colonies and finishing with Victorian England—a world class collection!

Descanso Gardens contains the **largest outdoor planting of camellias in the world**. More than **100,000 plants** grace the winding paths of the California live oak forest that has become a laboratory for the research and development of new species of camellias. More than **400 varieties** of camellias thrive amid the filtered shade, with its natural leaf mold on the forest floor. In this setting there are camellia specimens from China, Japan, England, and the southern region of the United States. Under such ideal conditions, some camellias exceed 20 feet in height. The colors and aromas are incredible.



*The garden's signature camellias.*

Situated within the Oak Forest and surrounded by the tranquil effects of water and dozens of colorful koi fish is the **Japanese teahouse**. Giant pink azalea plants delicately surround the koi pond. The design of the teahouse is authentic, including the imported blue tile roof. The red Shinto Bridge used to cross the stream in front of the teahouse is called "The Smiling Bridge." Black, orange, and white koi fish, known as living jewels, leisurely circle in the small pools that surround the teahouse.

Celebrate Southern California's natural heritage in the **California Garden**. Follow meandering paths through sage scrub and riparian habitats, set amidst the sun-bathed chaparral hillsides. Relax at Redwood Rest and catch the springtime color of California poppies, other wildflowers, and native flowering shrubs.

Witness an incredible bed of over 150 varieties of bearded **irises** that winds along a lower path of the garden--a surprising visual treat which includes a number of gold or silver medal winners at iris society shows.

**The Lilac Garden** is a showplace with 100 varieties of lilacs. During the 1960's a program was instituted that resulted in the Descanso series of lilacs, among them California Rose, White Spring, and the Descanso Giant. These varieties were specifically cultivated for the dry, hot temperatures of the southern California climate. Peak blooming occurs in March and April, but we hope for some blooms to still be showing during our visit.

Our comfortable, full-sized motorcoach with restroom will depart Carpinteria from the museum at 8:00 a.m. (check-in by 7:45) and return by 5:00 P.M. **The cost of the trip for Historical Society members is just \$49; and \$59 for non-members.** This special price includes: bus transportation; admission to the gardens; a short film presentation about the history and development of the gardens; a docent-narrated tram tour; special viewing of the Boddy House and art collection; and refreshments aboard the bus. A no-host lunch is available at the Descanso Café (nice menu & very reasonably priced), and you will also have several hours to explore the gardens on your own.

Don't miss this exciting trip to one of Southern California's horticultural treasures. With Mother Nature's blessing, the roses, azaleas, camellias, irises, wildflowers, and California natives will all be in bloom. This is the only notice you will receive regarding this upcoming trip, so call or reserve today! For reservations or more information call David at 684-3112, or simply fill out the coupon on the back of this newsletter and return with your check. 🍷

## MEMORIALS

**TERRY G. BLISS:** Mimi & Greg Putnam; Tim, Ginny, Teddy, and Tory Bliss.

**FRANK COLSON, SR.:** Bonnie Milne; Roberta Germanetti; Patricia Lemere; Doug & Donna Treloar.

**PRISCILLA "PAT" DEHNKE:** Dianne Dehnke Tobey, Michael Dehnke, & Robert Dehnke; Betty Popnoe; Phyllis Hansen; Clarence Peterson; Angelo & Marie Granaroli; Mary Ota; Charles Treloar; Cynthia A. Beattie; Grace Young; Doug & Donna Treloar; Walter & Janet Johnson; Jeanette Miller; Todd & Jeanne Russell.

**ROBERT S. DE LAND, SR.:** Lana De Land Heaney & Robert S."Sud" De Land, Jr.

**MARILYN FENDRICK:** Vera Benson.

**PATSY GRAZIANI:** Doug & Donna Treloar; Pat Lemere; Charles Treloar; Brenda & Tom Sullivan; Vera Benson.

**SUE CAROL MOYER:** Phyllis Hansen.

**TOM OTA:** Pat Dehnke; Nick & Dianne Dehnke Tobey.

**DAVID PETTIT:** Clarence Peterson.

**BOB RAGSDALE:** Claire Roberts.

**JESSICA SHEPARD:** Nick & Dianne Dehnke Tobey.

**ARLEEN THURMOND STURMER:** Claire Thurmond Roberts; Roxie Grant Lapidus & the Grant Family.

**ROSEMARY TOPHAM:** Lucy & Bill Thomas; Frank & Jane Weidling; Ed & Melinda Wittwer.

**BETTY ZITTEL:** Hilda Seibert; Katy Meigs; Carla & Brad Stein.

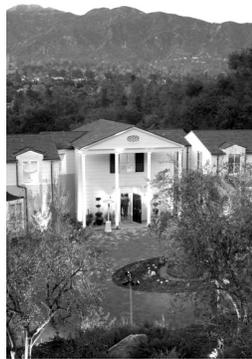


# CARPINTERIA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

956 Maple Avenue • Carpinteria, California 93013 • (805) 684-3112

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## *Descanso Gardens & the Historic Boddy House & Sturt Haaga Gallery*

**Trip Date: Thursday May 9, 2013**  
**Depart Carpinteria Museum 8:00 a.m. Return 5:00 P.M.**

### FIELD TRIP RESERVATION FORM

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of reservations:**

Members @ \$49 \_\_\_\_\_ Non-members @ \$59 \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this form with check payable to: Carpinteria Valley Historical Society or (C.V.H.S.)**  
**956 Maple Avenue, Carpinteria, CA 93013**