



NEWSLETTER of the Carpinteria Valley Historical Society

Editor/Publisher: David W. Griggs

January/February 2008

CALENDAR

Happy New Year!

January 26—Saturday
FLEA MARKET
8 a.m. - 3 P.M.



January 30—Wednesday
**Board of Trustees
Meeting**
6 P.M.



February 23—Saturday
FLEA MARKET
8 a.m. - 3 P.M.



February 27—Wednesday
**Board of Trustees
Meeting**
6 P.M.



March 19 —Wednesday
Field Trip
**Griffith Observatory &
Planetarium Show**
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 P.M.



VALLEY HISTORY

Ada Lescher's Diary 1893-1896

edited by her granddaughter, Betty Shannon
excerpted and annotated for *The Grapevine*
by Roxie Grant Lapidus

We welcome back past contributor Roxie Grant Lapidus. Readers will remember Roxie's wonderful excerpts and annotations in the "Roscoe Remembers" series we published here July 2005 - May 2006. Roxie will once again transport us back in time through a series of articles, but instead of a rambunctious boy in the 1920s, we will see the world as experienced by a young girl coming of age in Carpinteria in the late 19th century. Roxie has the wonderful ability, through her research, insight, and skilled editing, to fully develop the short entries of a diary into a charming story by weaving in relevant threads of the history of the Valley and the lives of its families. The reader will settle comfortably into the rhythm and concerns of 1890s ranch life as experienced by young Ada Lescher—Editor.

Ada Lescher's schoolgirl diary was recently discovered by her granddaughter, Betty Shannon, when cleaning out an old trunk in her mother's garage. The diary is written in a small (2-1/2" x 4") notebook, with limited space for each day, which explains the brevity of Ada's entries. Betty, who has fond memories of her grandmother as "a middle-aged lady, tall and elegant," was delighted with this glimpse of a fun-loving, athletic young girl. She painstakingly transcribed the diary in 2006, and gave a copy to the Carpinteria Valley Historical Society. We thank her for sharing it with us! Betty also donated Ada's autograph album of the same period, with entries from most of her schoolmates and friends, along with many other mementos and keepsakes.

In her diary, Ada often uses initials to designate people, which is a problem for the reader. But occasionally she uses full names, and so I was able to compile a list of the people who appear regularly in the diary, and I have inserted these names wherever possible. Also, in

transcribing the diary, granddaughter Betty Shannon kept all of Ada's entertaining misspellings, but I have corrected many of these, for clarity's sake. Ada often complained about grammar lessons in school, and we can detect that difficulty in some of her entries, but we also sense that we are hearing English as it was spoken in Carpinteria in 1892. Some of Ada's turns of phrase are clearly the usage of the day, like "Papa bought some sea trout of Charlie Ogan," or "Royal set out some cabbage plants that he got over to Wrides," or "Royal got a bundle of fire-crackers and shot them off over to Wrides."

I have consulted Sadie Hales Johnson's interviews with descendants of local pioneer families, Georgia Stockton's *La Carpinteria* (both reprinted in past issues of *The Grapevine*), and Jayne Caldwell's *More About Carpinteria As it Was*, in order to track down people and places referred to in Ada's diary. I also thank Laurie Bailard and Bonnie Milne for clarifying the locations of some of the family ranches on Casitas Pass Road. The following is a composite picture of life in the Carpinteria Valley in the early 1890s.



When 12-year-old Ada began her diary on Jan. 1, 1893, the Leschers had been in Carpinteria for 5 years. Compared to some of their neighbors, who had come in the 1860s and 1870s, the Leschers were relative newcomers. Many of the pioneering Carpinteria families had come West by wagon train, or even by ship around the Horn (Col. Russell Heath), but the Leschers had come by train, from Galesburg, Illinois. Like so many early settlers, they came because of relatives who were already here. Rose and Zach Lescher had been persuaded by Rose's father, Royal Wiswell, who had come out a few years before to visit his kinfolk, James and Cornelia Blood, on their prosperous apricot ranch in the western

Carpinteria Valley (east of Arroyo del Paredon Creek, west of the La Mirada neighborhood, both above and below Foothill Road). Mrs. Blood's brother, Harlowe Woods, also lived on the property with his family. Royal Wiswell had returned to Galesburg, and persuaded his wife and daughter and son-in-law to move to Carpinteria.

The Southern Pacific railroad had only recently completed its service from Los Angeles to Carpinteria (1887) when the Leschers arrived. With the construction of the new depot at the foot of Linden Avenue, the center of the small town had suddenly shifted from what was subsequently known as "Old Town" at the foot of Santa

Monica Road, to the vicinity of the depot. As we will see in Ada's diary, the depot and adjacent post office were the hub of Carpinteria society. Everyone went daily to the post office to collect mail and papers, and to socialize. Later, when Ada was a teenager, every young girl wanted a "fella" to escort her to the depot.

The train from the south arrived at 1 p.m. One could catch it to Santa Barbara, and return at 5 p.m. This was a great advantage over making the two-hour trip with a horse and wagon. Ortega Hill still presented a problem. Back in the early 1870s, Carpinterians had complained when the road was changed, "taking it from level ways along the seaside and running it back over hill and rocky ground." Even in the 1890s, heavily loaded wagons had to unload and reload part

of their cargo to make it up the winding backside of Ortega Hill. Passengers had to descend to "save the horses." The dusty, yellow dirt road was only 10 feet wide, and when wagons met, someone would have to pull off into the tall mustard along the side.

But at least by the '90s the danger of marauding bandits had subsided. Members of the Olmstead family recalled the early 1860s, when their mother worried every time her husband traveled to Santa Barbara. The heavily wooded area of Toro Canyon was a hiding place for outlaws, who would lasso a man and drag him from his horse or wagon, rob him and kill him. Stephen Olmstead always carried a large knife in his boot, to cut any rope thrown around him by surprise. The place acquired the name "Deadman's Gulch," and Carpinterians usually only ventured through it in groups.

When the Leschers arrived in 1887, Grandpa Royal Wiswell and his wife were settled on a ranch on the southwest corner of Foothill Road and Cravens Lane, less than a mile from their kinfolk,

the Bloods and Woods. The southern edge of his property was contiguous with the Carpinteria Cemetery, to which he had donated a portion of his land. He reportedly also bought the 17-acre property for his daughter and son-in-law, Rose and Zacharias Lescher, just north of Foothill where Casitas Pass Road intersects it and turns east. The Leschers settled into a two-story wooden house with their two children, Ada and Royal. [This property was later bought by Joe Hendy, who built his 2-storey stucco house at 5550 Casitas Pass Road in the 1930s-40s, just to the east of the Lescher house, which remained for many years as a rental. To old timers, this spot is still known as "Lescher Corner."]



Ada Elizabeth Lescher, 1893. This "glamour" shot of Ada at age 13 was taken at the Loomis Studio in Galesburg, Illinois on the family's trip "home," which also included a two-week stay visiting the Chicago World's Fair.

Photo courtesy of Betty Shannon.

Back in Galesburg, Illinois, Zach Lescher had been the proprietor of a book and stationery store. Here in Carpinteria, he became a farmer. When Ada's diary opens, some five years after the family's arrival, Zach Lescher was 40 years old. He was raising beans, walnuts, apricots, apples, and hay. He worked hard. As Ada notes on Feb. 17, 1893, "Papa worked in the field all day. He soaked his feet in hot water." But even with the endless round of farm chores, he took an interest in outside affairs. Ada reports "Papa went uptown to a trial," and a few months later we hear that he "has been chosen for the grand jury."

Unlike some of their neighbors, the Leschers do not seem to have had regular hired help, either outdoors or in. Ada reports that "Mama churned," and that she "sent 3 rolls of butter uptown," presumably to sell. ("Uptown" refers to Santa Barbara, usually by train.) But Rose Lescher was a refined woman, interested in literature and civic matters, as we will see when Ada reports her circulating "partitions" for signatures. She sewed some of her family's clothes, but also relied on two seamstresses for more advanced dressmaking: Mrs. Chambers, in Carpinteria, and Emma Smith, in Santa Barbara, who was also a personal friend. Rose later had help with the laundry ("the washing") from Mrs. Sam Treloar, who moved to Lillingston Canyon with her large family in November of 1893.

The Leschers' closest friends were Henry & Delia Ellery, whose ranch was directly across the road from them, and whose daughter Frances ("Frankie") and son Ed were quite a bit older than Ada. The closest neighbors were the Waller Richardson family, described as living "on the NE corner of Casitas Pass Road where it turns east along the foothills." Other close neighbors were the Wrides, with sons Charlie and Frank, who played with Royal Lescher, and the Grubbs, whose 3 daughters were Ada's friends. Ada also writes of getting rides from Mr. Dimmick, who lived in Rincon Canyon, in the same house now owned by the Duncan Abbott family. The Leschers' friends in Santa Barbara were Mr. & Mrs. Thacher and their daughter Annie, Ella & Will Smith, and Miss Maud Gould, who may have been a relative.

Ada and Royal attended the Rincon School, nearly a mile east of their home, on the site of the present Lion's Club Park. The school yard backed up on Carpinteria Creek, and the young scholars often ate their "dinner" along its banks, or went wading. The school served the eastern part of

the valley, and the pupils represented the families of the district. Traveling more or less eastward, they were: Ogans, Cadwells, Cardens, Grubbs, Richardsons, Leschers, Wrides, Franklins, Moores, Bailards, Treloars, Websters, Giles (Gobernador Canyon, known then as Giles Canyon), Shepards, and Walkers (descended from Capt. John Walker who led a historic wagon train to Calif. in 1862; they lived near Shepard Mesa Road at Casitas Pass Road, on property now owned by the Brown family, their descendants). Further east were the Pysters, who owned part of the old Rincon Ranch. Ed Bailard, 5 years older than Ada Lescher, later recalled that at one time at Rincon School "there were 60 kids, 9 grades, and one teacher." Families to the west attended Carpinteria School on Santa Monica Road, or Ocean School, on Toro Canyon Road. Families at the townsite attended Aliso School, where the Veterans' Memorial Building now stands.



Ada's Rincon School class of 1891. Ada is seated in the second row, third from the right. Carpinteria Valley Museum of History photo.

Favorite games at Rincon School included endless ball games, including Skyball, plus Prisoner's Base, Run-Sheep-Run, Pussy Wants a Corner, and games called "Black-Man" and "Sides, A Good Many Cried." For the school year 1892-93, the teacher was Mr. John Gammill.

Ada and Royal Lescher usually walked to school, and often got rides home in the wagons of passing neighbors. Ada herself was a competent rider, and also could drive the family's various horse-drawn equipages. She reports: "Emma Grubb and Edna Derieux came over here this afternoon. I took them home in the surrey." The local farm children seem to have used horses much as today's kids used bikes; we read that "The Franklin boys came down here on horseback to play hide-&-go seek. I rode on their horse over to Grubbs."

Ada was two years older than Royal, but they spent a lot of time playing together. They collected stamps, which they traded with friends. They played card games, like "Authors," blew soap bubbles, popped corn, and pulled taffy. They each had a garden plot to cultivate, and Royal once sold a section of his to Ada for two cents. Royal liked licorice, but Ada hated it, and "got rid of mine at school."

The charm of Ada's diary is in its straightforward recording of events. In an era when people usually adopted a "literary" style when they put pen to paper, Ada gives us the unvarnished facts, often in startling juxtapositions. "Royal brought his Arith. home & done his examples. Papa has just now went out to the barn. Mr. A. shot his wife last night with a pistol. He is in jail now. Mama churned today. Papa cultivated the apple orchard. The roses are blooming on

every side" (Jan. 13, 1892). Or, "It was very warm today and I sweated." "Went to Farmer's Institute tonight, but it was rather dry. I was about asleep but the fleas bit."

In true farmer-fashion, she starts each entry with the weather, and we smile to recognize foggy Mays and Junes, hot Novembers, and hot Santa Ana winds. She never fails to report her weekly bath, invariably followed by whether or not she went to Sunday School—the two events were clearly linked. The Leschers do not appear to have been regular church-goers, but Ada usually went to Sunday School, presided over by Mrs. Carden, mother of Ada's school mates Grace and Harry.

In excerpting Ada's diary here, I have skipped most of the weather reports, and have otherwise shortened some of the entries. Ada wrote every single day from Jan. 1 to Aug. 9, 1893, when there was an interruption while she, Royal and her mother took a trip back to Illinois for the Chicago World's Fair. As we will see, the diary then resumes in 1895, when Ada is 15.

Ada's Diary, 1893

Jan 1 Sun. Was quite warm for winter. Today was New Year's Day and I had lots of fun. Papa and Mama went over to Mr. Ellery's for dinner. Brother and I went up to Mr. Franklin's to spend the afternoon & we had lots of fun. We saw their magic lantern go, & then we went over to old Dutch Henry's & saw a skunk's den & the creek. When I came home I fed the calf and read some stories.

Jan. 2 Mon. Today I helped Mama in the garden digging up the earth. Papa harrowed up the ground in the field. Brother helped him. Brother rode on Dexter & he reared up on him. Charlie Wride was over here & helped us. Mama made some candy tonight to give to him for working. I licked one of the candy bowls. Jimmy & Austin Franklin had company today and they had a good time.

Jan. 5 Thur. Was not very warm. Went up town & eat dinner at Mr. Thacher's. Came to Carpinteria on the train, was not room in the buggy. [Annie Thacher & I] walked from the station & Papa tried to pass us in coming home. Annie just got in bed. She has on my night cap. She looks so queer. It is a beautiful night. At Mr. Thacher's for dinner, we had some lovely pudding with eggs. Miss Gould came down with us.

Jan. 6 Fri. Foggy & disagreeable. We went upstairs & dressed up in Ma's clothes & played games. We all walked down to the post office & got some papers. Annie kept stepping on my toes. We popped some corn. We are playing house now & a visitor just came in. We played in the hay this morning. We roasted some peanuts & played on the bean sacks.

Jan. 8 Sun. Annie went up to Grubbs' & got some cider & a bird's nest. We rolled hoops and Papa went down to the beach & got a load of sand. I mended my stockings.

Winter School Days

Jan. 9 Mon. School has commenced once more, but I was not yet ready to start. Annie is going home today & she don't want to. She walked a ways with me to school this morning. Mrs. Thacher came down tonight.

Jan. 10 Tues. Warm & clear. Papa, Mama, Miss Gould & Mrs. Thacher drove all over in the Casitas and they had a fine time. I slept with Miss Gould last night & am going to tonight. Mrs. Thacher did not sleep well last night. She burnt my lamp all night.

Jan. 11 Wed. Rather chilly but bright. Mrs. Thacher went home today. Mama, Papa & Miss Gould went over to Mr. G & up to Mr. B. [Blood?]. I had to make up my bed tonight & didn't like it. Read in brother's book. He had the headache.

Jan. 12 Thur. Papa & Mama went up town & took Miss Gould home. I gave her some chilecotes. She gave Mama a hat. Harry Carden came to school today I had all my lessons. Emma Grubb missed 1 word in spelling. R.C. wades in the creek with his shoes on. We had a clod fight on the way home.

Jan. 14 Sat. Papa plowed where he raised the corn. Royal burnt some corn stalks. Mama went down to the one o'clock train & sent 2 rolls of butter up town by J.D. I saw Grace Carden go by here this morning, she went over to Mrs. Whitehead's to take her painting lesson.

Jan. 15 Sun. I took my bath & went to Sunday school. I drove Dandy, he didn't much lame. Emma Smith brought down Mama's dress & she has it on now. We have all been over to Mr. Ellery's tonight & saw their visitor. Mr. Ellery went down to the beach this afternoon & thought it was fine. Frankie Ellery had the headache.

Jan. 16 Mon. I went to school, Papa went down to the post office & said there was some more horse traders down there. I took my ball & played with it. W.W. kissed Emma Grubb. Royal & I have just been playing Authors & I beat the first time but both were even the second. Royal got a stamp and 1 cent in English money.

Jan. 17 Tues. I went to school & sat with Grace Carden in the afternoon. We read magazines. I missed two words in spelling. L.C. gave me two Japanese stamps today. I gave Alice Walker some U.S. stamps, but she forgot to bring mine. Papa got some sand. Mama is mending Royal's pants.

[Zach Lescher is frequently hauling sand from the beach, presumably for mixing cement. This common practice was regretted by later generations, when foundations began to crumble.]

Jan. 18 Wed. I took my ball to school & Austen Franklin lost it in a tree but found it again. I got 5 new stamps & Royal 2. Ros C. waded in the creek with his shoes on. Mama & Papa saw Mrs. B. Franklin's baby & it is a cute one. Alice Walker, Emma Grubb & Dora Grubb stood all of us girls in playing ball & they beat.

Jan. 19 Thur. Papa & Mama went down to Thurmond's store & got some cheese. A cow came pretty close to the schoolhouse today. Frank & Delos Giles did not come to school today.

Jan. 21 Sat. Royal expected Frank Giles and Delos Giles down this afternoon but they did not come because they were sick. Royal went up to the Franklin's and had a good time. A man came along on a safety [a bike] & asked them lots of questions. Royal blew soap bubbles tonight with his new blower.

Jan. 22 Sun. Awful hot. Royal & I blew soap bubbles this morning. We went up to Knapps' to get some China stamps but did not get any. We drove over to Grandpa's & Mrs. Wiswell's, but they wasn't at home, then we went on the beach. We look for Mr. Ellerys over tonight. Royal has 98 stamps & I have 40. I pasted mine in my book today. I saw lots of people & read some stories. We had pudding for dessert. Had a good time.

["Grandpa & Mrs. Wiswell" refers to the fact that she was his second wife; they had married only 4 years previously, after his settling in Carpinteria.]

[The Eugene Knapp place was on the north side of Casitas Pass Rd. near what was later called "Yule Lake." It was later owned by Stewart Walcott, then by William Yule, then by the Barnard family. Eugene Knapp started farming in 1880, and reported his first year's crops as follows: 49 acres beans which produced 83,000 lb., worth \$2,400; turkeys valued at \$110; hogs, \$400; butter from 4 cows, \$150; bees, honey & increase, \$495, with no allowance for home consumption." By 1893 his orchard included apples, walnuts, almonds, apricots, plums, pears, peaches.]

Jan. 24 Tues. I went to school. My ball is cracked. Emma Grubb & I rode home with Mr. Dimmick in the cart. Mr. L. [Lillingston?] was leading a horse & it got away and run a long way. The boys broke a rubber ball & split a baseball.

Jan. 25 Wed. Papa went to Los Angeles this morning. Mr. Richardson came over and done the chores tonight. Him & John is breaking Mr. Ellery's colt. Alice Walker, Grace Carden & E.D. [Edna Derieux?] did not come to school today. Emma Grubb sat with Edith Shepard all day. W.W.

put a lot of ink on Royal in school. W.W. kissed Edith Shepard. Had lots of fun at recess.

Jan. 26 Thurs. It rained & the sun did not shine at all. I did not go to school in the morning it rained too much. Mr. Richardson milked the cows for us this morning & tonight. He staid to supper & him & Mama had a long talk after & before supper. We expect Papa home tonight. Royal & I walked to school in the afternoon. Royal & I done most of the chores. Mama painted a picture.

Jan. 27 Fri. It rained this morning. Papa came home last night & brought home a rubber ball, 2 darkies for Royal's engine to run. He brought me a vase & Mama some bananas. He took us to school. Emma Grubb and her sisters rode too. I walked home. It was muddy. Charlie Wride was in here this morning & tonight. Royal got some stamps.



The Lescher home as it appeared in 1912, when it was known as "El Rosa Matorral," or the rose bush. Rose Lescher kept a garden full of roses, including a famed climbing rose which covered a water tank tower. Carpinteria Valley Museum of History photo.

Jan. 28 Sat. Austen & Jimmy Franklin were here and we played ball mostly. Frankie Ellery was over here this afternoon. Papa & Mama went down to the post office. Mama gave a picture that she painted to Mrs. Tobey.

[Charles & Mary Tobey ran the post office, and lived with their family in rooms at the rear. They appear to have been open for business 7 days a week. Mrs. Tobey apparently also sold candy & ice cream, perhaps in a separate shop next door. Ada writes, "I got some ice cream down to Mrs. Tobey's." Eventually Mrs. Tobey became the much beloved postmistress, a position she held for 20 years. Their son, Warren, later ran Tobey's Grocery on Linden Ave.]

Jan. 29 Sun. It rained this morning. We got some more Xmas presents yesterday from Grandma Lescher. She sent us her picture and 7 handkerchiefs. I darned my stockings & read a good deal. Royal & I got in a fuss. He chased me way up the road. He's just going to take his bath. They are warming the water.

Jan. 30 Mon. It rained like 60 today. Sun did not shine (of course). Papa took us to school. Royal & I was the only ones there and Mr. Gammill. Royal read a poem of Longfellow & I read about Holland. Papa came after us at half past one o'clock. I went out & saw the ditch it is awful full & it run over. Papa & Mr. Wride was working right close together & did not speak to each other.

[Even today the properties east of Linden Ave. and north of Foothill & Casitas Pass Road are accessed by small bridges that cross the drainage ditch that runs along the north side of the road. Elsewhere, Ada speaks of "our bridge."]



To be continued in the next issue of "The Grapevine."

MUSEUM NEWS

HOLIDAY FAIRE REPORT

The 27th Annual Holiday Faire was very successful with **nearly \$8,200 raised** for museum operations! The creative artisans, wonderful weather, talented musicians, good food, and a super abundance of homemade baked goods all contributed to a very successful Faire.

This important fund-raiser succeeds largely due to the support of our membership, and we especially wish to **thank all of you who contributed so generously of your time, baked goods, produce, and cash donations.** It's a busy holiday weekend for everyone, and we truly appreciate those who still find the time to support our work here.

Thanks, also, to the **Wullbrandt Family** for the use of their property adjacent to the museum, providing extra vendor space. The Carpinteria *Coastal View News* provides deeply discounted advertising space for the two weeks prior to the Faire; and the *Santa Barbara News-Press* matched our advertising dollars, doubling our exposure in that newspaper. The results were apparent with the large, steady crowd of shoppers throughout the day.

Extra thanks go to **Danel Trevor** for organizing all of the "too numerous to name" booth volunteers and faire workers. All of you workers know who you are, and we are deeply grateful for your energy and enthusiasm. We would like to once again recognize the happy cheer brought to the event by Santa & Mrs. Claus: **Dick La Rue and Dorothy Kuhn.** Their spirited joy charmed and entertained the children, making for a memorable event for all. ☺

MUSEUM RECEIVES GRANTS

The Museum has been awarded a **\$5,000 grant from the Wood-Claeysens Foundation** of Santa Barbara. Unlike most grants for capital improvements or specific projects, this grant may be used for general operating expenses to supplement our membership dues, endowment fund earnings, and our fund-raising events.

A grant of **\$500 has also been received from the Agnes B. Kline Memorial Foundation** in support of our free educational programs for children. The Kline Foundation contributes annually to the museum.

Additionally, a first-time grant of **\$5,000 has been received from the Smith-Walker Foundation**, also to be used for general museum operations. We truly appreciate the sustained support shown the Society by the above noted foundations.

We also wish to recognize the generous contribution of **Trader Joe's**, which donates a wonderful variety of cheeses, crackers, nuts, and other goodies to our annual Holiday Open House; and an extra special thanks to **Westland Floral** for donating the beautiful poinsettias to dress up the museum for this community event

While recognizing this generous Foundation and Corporate support, we would be remiss in not also acknowledging a few of the smaller yet equally important contributions made by some of our members, such as the front desk orchids donated monthly by **Evelyn Lessler** or the five dozen doughnuts supplied to each flea market by **Emily Miles.** Most recently the museum bathrooms

received new sink and toilet plumbing courtesy of **Esther Mansfield's** financial support and the donated time and talent of master plumber, **Steve Garcia.** We are so very thankful for these generous acts of museum support! ☺

FLEA MARKET TREASURES

The museum's popular benefit flea markets will resume their last Saturday of the month schedule **January 26 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 P.M.** The market features over 70 vendors of antiques, collectibles, handcrafted gifts and jewelry, and a wide variety of used goods.

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 flea market dates are **February 23** and **March 29.** ☺

FIELD TRIP TO GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY & PLANETARIUM



Griffith Observatory.

Join us on an exciting journey of discovery as we explore the recently renovated and re-opened Griffith Observatory on **Wednesday, March 19.** After nearly 67 years of heavy public use, Griffith Observatory closed its doors in 2002 for its first

comprehensive renovation and expansion. This ambitious \$93-million project renewed the Art Deco masterpiece Observatory's world-class standing and restored and enhanced the Observatory's ability to pursue its public astronomy mission

The land on which Griffith Observatory sits was once a part of a Spanish settlement known as Rancho Los Felis. The Spanish Governor of California bequeathed it to Corporal Vincente Felis in the 1770s. The land stayed in the Felis family for over a century, being subdivided through generations, until Griffith, a wealthy mining speculator, purchased what remained of the rancho in 1882.

Griffith J. Griffith was born in Wales in 1850 and came to America as a teenager, later making his fortune in Mexican silver mines and, subsequently, southern California real estate. He moved to Los Angeles after purchasing the rancho and spent the rest of his life there.

During a tour abroad, Griffith had discovered the great public parks of Europe and decided that Los Angeles would need a "Great Park" for the public in order to become a great city. On December 16, 1896, he donated 3,015 acres of Rancho Los Felis to the City of Los Angeles in order to create a public park in his name. "It must be made a place of rest and relaxation for the masses, a resort for the rank and file, for the plain people,"



*Griffith J. Griffith
1859-1919*

Griffith said on that occasion. Griffith Park became the largest urban park in the U.S. with wilderness areas.

Griffith had been impressed by his visits to the new research observatory established at Mount Wilson in 1904. He believed that an individual gained an enlightened perspective when looking at the skies. On December 12, 1912, he offered the City of Los Angeles \$100,000 for an observatory to be built on the top of Mount Hollywood to be fully owned and operated by the City of Los Angeles.

The City Council accepted Griffith's gift and appointed him head of a committee to supervise the construction of the observatory and a Greek theatre performing arts facility, which Griffith promised to the city the following year. Bogged down by further political debate, the project continued to be delayed. In 1916, with his health failing, Griffith realized that his vision of a public observatory would not be realized in his lifetime. He drafted a will containing bequests for the observatory and Greek theatre, along with detailed specifications regarding the nature of the observatory, its location, and programmatic offerings. Griffith died on July 6, 1919.

Griffith's dream finally began to become reality in the spring of 1930, as the Griffith Trust enlisted some of the leading astronomers and scientists of the day. Caltech and Mount Wilson engineers drew up plans for the Observatory's fundamental exhibits: a Foucault Pendulum, a 38-foot-diameter model of a section of the Moon sculpted by artist Roger Hayward, and a "three-in-one" coelostat (three tracking mirrors on one mount to feed three separate solar telescopes) so that the public could study the Sun in the Hall of Science. The Trust judged the 12-inch Zeiss refracting telescope as the best commercially available instrument of its kind and selected it to be used as the public telescope. A 75-foot-wide theater --one of the largest in the world -- was designed to hold a Zeiss planetarium projector. The planetarium had been invented in 1923, four years after Griffith's death, and his family agreed with the Trustees that it more fully honored his intent than the originally planned cinematic theater. The Observatory's planetarium was the third to be completed in the United States.

Groundbreaking for Griffith Observatory occurred on June 20, 1933. Griffith Observatory was shaped not only by the minds of scientists but also by the times in which it was built. A major earthquake in Long Beach in March 1933 -- just as construction plans were being finalized -- led the architects to abandon the planned terra cotta exterior in favor of strengthening and thickening the building's concrete walls. Lower-than-usual prices caused by the Great Depression enabled the selection of the finest materials of the day. A depression-era Federal public works program created public sculpture at Griffith Observatory. The resulting Astronomers Monument, dedicated in November 1934, was hailed as the one of the most important pieces of art to be completed by the program.



Detail of the Griffith Observatory in 1937.

The dedication and formal opening of Griffith Observatory took place amid much fanfare on May 14, 1935. On that day, the Griffith Trust transferred ownership of the building to the City of Los Angeles. From the moment the Observatory was opened to the public, those who served as full-time and part-time staff worked daily to fulfill the original vision of the Griffith Observatory as an educational and inspirational resource for all of society.

The recent renovation of the observatory also included the Samuel Oschin planetarium. With a new dome, star projector, laser digital projection system, seats, sound system, and theatrical lighting, the 300-seat planetarium theater is the finest in the world. The opening show - Centered in the Universe - takes visitors on a cosmic journey of exploration and discovery. *The preceding text was excerpted from www.GriffithObservatory.org*

Please join us on our visit to the beautifully restored Griffith Observatory and discover many secrets of the

Universe! Our restroom equipped deluxe motorcoach will depart the Carpinteria Museum at **10:00 am on Wednesday, March 19, and return by 6:00 PM.** Tickets to the planetarium show must be purchased at the Observatory on the day of the visit, there are no advanced or reserved sales allowed. The shows run hourly beginning at 12:45 PM and cost \$7.00 for adults and children over 13; Seniors age 60 or older pay just \$5.00 (not included in trip price). A no-host lunch is available from the Observatory's "End of the Universe Café," operated by Wolfgang Puck! **Trip cost for historical society members is just \$35; and \$45 for non-member guests.** Trip price includes bus transportation, snacks and refreshments aboard the bus; and the free Observatory admission. You will have 4 hours to explore the observatory and exhibits, and take in a planetarium show. Don't miss this opportunity to visit this world-class institution in our own backyard!

Call David (684-3112) for reservations or more information, or simply fill out the form on the back of this newsletter and return with your check! ☺



The Astronomer's Monument.

MEMORIALS

JIM BLACKBURN: Tom & Anita Lewis.

LARRY HOUDEK: Phyllis Hansen.

ED MACIAS: Betty & Herman Zittel; Brand Flowers; Nan Deal; Bambi Bashore.

JUANITA SCHILLING: Esther Mansfield; Herman & Betty Zittel; Mary Alice Coffman; Tom & Anita Lewis; Claire T. Roberts.

EVANGELINE VAN DER KAR: Herman & Betty Zittel.



CARPINTERIA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

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Griffith Observatory and Planetarium

Trip Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2007

Depart Carpinteria Museum 10:00 a.m. Return 6:00 P.M.

FIELD TRIP RESERVATION FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

Number of reservations:

Members @ \$35 _____ Non-members @ \$45 _____ TOTAL: _____

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