



NEWSLETTER of the Carpinteria Valley Historical Society

Editor/Publisher: David W. Griggs

January/February 2009

CALENDAR

Happy New Year!

**January 28—Wednesday
Board of Trustees
Meeting
6 P.M.**



**January 31—Saturday
FLEA MARKET
8 a.m. - 3 P.M.**



**February 25—Wednesday
Board of Trustees
Meeting
6 P.M.**



**February 28—Saturday
FLEA MARKET
8 a.m. - 3 P.M.**



**March 28—Saturday
FLEA MARKET
8 a.m. - 3 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

Part VII. We continue with the seventh installment of Ada Lescher's schoolgirl diary, discovered in an old trunk by her granddaughter, Betty Shannon. Betty then painstakingly transcribed and edited this lost treasure. Roxie Lapidus has further edited, excerpted and annotated this wonderful view of life as seen through the eyes of a young girl coming of age on a Carpinteria ranch in the late 19th century.

Ada's Diary 1896

But first, a flashback:

When 12-year-old Ada began her diary in 1893, she wrote on March 23, "I went to school & played ball. The other girls rode horseback. We all went up to see old man Lea's [sic] house. It is pretty small." Recently a letter and photograph was donated to the historical society by Jean Fox, granddaughter of Ada's school chum, Carrie Phelps (Sawyer), and great-great granddaughter of Charles Lee. The letter, written by "old man Lea" himself, describes the rapid construction of this very house, "built in 9 days, moved in on the 10 day." Charles Lee and his wife and orphaned granddaughter Carrie Phelps apparently stayed with their friends the Pyes not far from Rincon School during the construction of the house in Lillingston Canyon, and took some of their meals at a hotel, either the White Sulphur Well Hotel on Linden, or perhaps the Rincon Hotel near Rincon Point. On May 5, 1893, Charles Lee wrote to his son Charles back in Wisconsin:

"We are in our new house 16x26. One story. 2 bedrooms 8x10 each. Partition 2 feet for closet & cupboards leaving the main room 16x16. Ceiling 9 feet high. All redwood. Sides too—oiled. Roof painted. Chimney two tiles made on purpose. Stove pipes run into them. Stove up

one corner—one foot wood. Have fire only for cooking. Live cheap as we can in Wis. Go to hotel any where & get every thing you want for 25 cents & all the oranges you want in the bargain. [...] My house cost \$350. Not one knot or crack to be seen. Built in 9 days moved in on the 10 day. Tomy Pye & wife made us as comfortable as they could. They send their kind regards.”

Like so many new arrivals, Charles Lee described the Carpinteria Valley to the “home folks”:

“It is fine weather but cool nights. Very dusty. Planting beans everywhere. Lima Beans main crop next to fruit. The next thing getting ready the dryers for fruit. Oranges and

l e m o n s i n abundance. I bought a washtub full of large oranges for a dollar. Allow Carrie 4 per day besides what the neighbors give her. They are much better than Florida oranges. [...] All ride (horseback). Boys & girls to school, to post office, fishing, to work. Too lazy to walk. Girls astride like men. [...] I bought 100 acres for Lizzie (his daughter, Mrs. Treloar, who would arrive in Dec. with her family.)

Paid \$2250. They pay me 5 percent for \$2000 & they pay Mr. Pye \$250. They will come as soon as they can. Rough looking land. 3 benches. Upper bench the wettest. Quite a large part let out this year for clearing it. Land is high. One man wanted to sell to me bad. He only wanted \$500 per acre and no house. All fruit trees every where. Roses and flowers everywhere. (Perhaps an allusion to the Lescher place, named “La Rosa Matorral” for its abundant rose bushes, probably a tribute to Rose Lescher herself.) My place joins an ostrich farm. Tourists passing all the time. They keep the country rich.”

In what follows, we catch a glimpse of Charles Lee’s strong views on religion and his evangelical fervor:

“It is 3 miles to the station and P.O. on the sea shore. We can go by foot in less than 2 miles to the ocean. A grand scene. Mother, Carrie and myself went picnicing 1 May on the beech. Rode with the neighbors. They are kind and social but religion is at a low ebb. I pity them. I have great work to do but I feel unable for the task before me. I pity your neighbor who knows the truth & yet denies it by his life. One of the last signs is now shaking of the heavens & earth by Cyclones & Earthquakes as shure as we are alive. We did not feel any shaking here but should not wonder at anything. [...] \$2000 is coming to me from the parties that bought my farm at 6 percent. All is secured to us.

The rest goes to Carrie. Love to Aunt Jane & Ady and family. Be sure to read this letter to them. Look out for coming events. Be faithful.

Your Father & Mother C.J. & S. Lee

P.S. That old book I sent you is very valuable as a relic. Be shure & take care of it. If you dont I wont forgive you.”

One can’t help speculating about the identity of the “kind and sociable” neighbors who took

the Lees in their buggy for a picnic to the beach, but whose religion was judged to be “at a low ebb.” The Leschers seem at first a possibility, since Ada was the only family member who was a regular church-goer. But Ada’s diary entry for May 1, 1893 lets the family off the hook: “May 1 Mon. I stopped in at Mrs. Franklin’s when I went to school & spoke her my piece. Some people had a May Day picnic on the beach. Papa got Mrs. Grubb’s bean planter. He worked in the field all day.”

We now pick up Ada’s story where we left off. We last saw 15-year-old Ada bidding farewell to the old year, 1895, and welcoming the new one. She did not take up her diary again until September of 1896, when she was 16. Bert Treloar (grandson of Old Man



The Lee home 11 years later in 1904. Note small addition on left with chimney. Seated on the porch from left are Sara Lee, Charles Lee, Clarence Sawyer, and the Lee’s granddaughter, Carrie Phelps Sawyer. Photo courtesy of Jean Fox.

Lee) was now forgotten, and Ada was turning her attention to Ed Ellery, 9 years her senior. He lived and worked on the family ranch, across the road from the Leschers on Casitas Pass. He was her main focus, but Ada was not averse to going out buggy riding with other "fellas"—"playing the field" seems to have been the custom of the day.]

Sept. 21 Mon. Today is vacation & first day of institute & we all went to the circus. Eddie promised to take me if he went, but I didn't see him there. It was fine, especially the trained animals & the menagerie. There was good music. I had a fine time. Ate with Aunt & Uncle T. N. & they live on the old Sexton place.

Sept. 25 Fri. The Fortnightly Club met here tonight & I played & made 40-11 mistakes (perfectly awful). Didn't have a bit good time.

Sept. 27 Sun. Was dreadfully lazy all day except this p.m. when I got up spirit to go see Eddie. Was there for 2 hours & of course we had quite a talk. He treated me to oranges & then to get rid of me walked part way home. Mom said it looked as though I was running after him.

Sept. 28 Mon. School once more. Eddie wasn't near the road, so I couldn't talk to the poor fellow. Edy gave me a "trade" that was this: Fred B. said I was pretty & he was going to make a mash on me. I went down for some walnut sacks & had a nice ride. Saw one of my old fellows (B.T.).

Oct. 2 Fri. Fires raging on the mountains tonight.

Oct. 4 Sun. Royal went to the P.O. & heard that Mr. Phillips & wife were run into last night by some drunkards & thrown out & general smash up.

Oct. 5 Mon. No school today as it was Labor Day. I earned a dime by cleaning up the yard & washing windows. Mama & I went to the store & P.O. tonight & I saw Eddie to speak to him, pitching bean straw. We had lots of fun with Julia, she making faces & clapping her hands & us laughing at her.

Oct. 6 Tues. Edith brought Grace Porter to visit. She winked at Royal & is a great cut-up. Mr. Tobey got very badly hurt & is not expected to live.

Oct. 7 Wed. Mr. Tobey died at 1 a.m. Susie [Tobey] came home [from school] at noon. I went over to Ellery's after school to get flowers. We are going to make cider.

Oct. 8 Thurs. Mr. Tobey was buried today & we had a half holiday. I went to the church but didn't look at him. Susie fainted. Sloats & Ellerys were there but I didn't see Ed. It was a big funeral. Mrs. Tobey didn't shed a tear & Warren [Tobey] was all broke up. The church was very pretty. They had white flowers.

[After the death of Charles Tobey, his wife Mary took over the position as postmistress, which she held for 20 years. "Mother Tobey" was a beloved figure in Carpinteria. Ben Fish recalled:

"The only regular daily assembly was the gathering at the Post Office following the arrival of the Southern Pacific train. Mrs. Mary Tobey, the postmistress, was much honored and beloved by everyone. Seldom was an article of mail received by her which failed to reach the party intended. A postcard mailed in Los Angeles, addressed only to Carpinteria, and which read on the back, 'Dear Henry,' was promptly placed in the Henry Fish mailbox. Being signed 'Juliette' would not have been necessary, for Mrs. Tobey knew the handwriting. Each



Mary "Mother" Tobey, Carpinteria's long-serving postmistress, stands on the west side of Linden Avenue with the post office behind her. The Tobey family lived in several rooms at the rear of the building. Museum archives photo, Elizabeth Cravens Birss collection.

day the little group, including a representative of nearly every family, would wait until Mrs. Tobey came to the window, smiled, and said, 'That's all.' "

Years later, in a paper prepared for some historical occasion, Mrs. Tobey recalled some of her experiences. Georgia Stockton recounts Mrs. Tobey's search for a missing mail pouch containing surplus money order funds, sent registered to Santa Barbara:

"At that time the evening mail trains passed at Serena, where mail sacks were transferred from cranes hung over the tracks. The southbound train brought the message, 'No pouch received from the train bound north.' It was a dark, stormy night; searchers were sent out with lanterns, but found no mailbag. At the first sign of daylight, Mrs.

Tobey went out alone to resume the search. Passing a tramp cooking his breakfast at the lonely bridge over Franklin Creek, she searched the roadbed with no success. Finally she saw an object among the weeds below the

embankment, and sliding down the muddy slope, she found the missing pouch. There was no way to return except to climb the slippery bank and pass the tramp again. He said a pleasant 'good morning' as she hurried by. Mrs. Tobey recalled, 'This was the morning of Thanksgiving Day. If ever I ate a turkey dinner with thanks, it was that day.' "]

Oct. 9 Fri. Everything went well at school. Voted for McKinley & Bryan & hurrah for Bryan. Went to the Fortnightly Club with Ed but couldn't come home with him cause Miss Woods was bound I should go with them. Ed gave me some candy & I had a fine time at club. The men made cider which was mighty fine.

Oct. 10 Sat. Mama & I went to the P.O. Mrs. Tobey looks bad but Susie is cheerful. When we got home I went over to Ellery's to get the apple parer.

Oct. 11 Sun. We made apple butter this a.m. & I had to poke & stir it most of the time. We went over to Grandpa's this afternoon & took them some cider. On the way we met Elma & George, Laura & Howe [Deadrick] & Sandy [Nicholson] & Lizzie [Ogan] in a

livery rig, while poor me was left out. I didn't see a thing of Ed but heard him talking.

Oct. 12 Mon. The boys are crazy on making horse-hair chains. I saw Ed & he said he'd take me riding if I'd wait. I did & he went the other way. He's a lola. The Cadwell boys sing tough songs while picking up walnuts. Pat Hern gets one dollar a day & doesn't earn his salt.

Oct. 13 Tues. The engine & thrasher moved today & us girls threw a lot of beans in Arch Cravens' face. I saw Ed on a load of bean straw this a.m.

Oct. 14 Wed. Killed rats & laid around as usual. Miss Woods came & took me over to Lady Barnard's with some cider & water.

Oct. 15 Thurs. Killed another rat & us girls hunted horned toads but no catchy him. Talked to Ed going & coming

from school & he took me to an ice cream supper. They had baby photos of people & the one who guessed the most right got a prize. Charlie Wride took the Westberry girls to supper & how they did stare at Ed & me. Clarence Cadwell is making me a horse hair chain.

Oct. 16 Fri. Mr. Coriss & Fairfield painted the schoolhouse prime coat, yellow. They are great fellows. It was rather hot & the paint smelt rather strong. I saw Ed coming home from school & had a little chat. I haven't missed Olliver any.

Oct. 17 Sat. Mama went up town & I had to get dinner. Papa & Mads [Christensen] whipped the trees from wagon. I went down to get Mom & got some sacks & brought Albert Franklin home. Carp. is booming, another new house going up & two grocery stores.

Oct. 18 Sun. When we were coming home from Grandpa's I saw Pat Hern & he threw a kiss at me & I won't speak to him next time. We went to the cemetery & Papa & Mama went up to the school house.

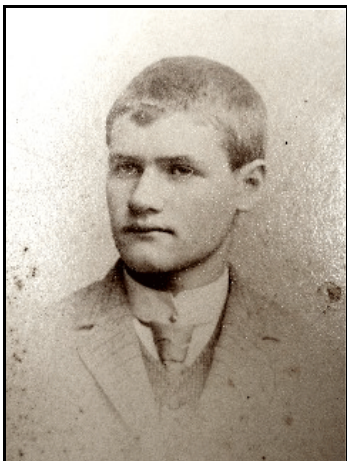
"Everything went wrong, got dirt in my dinner, the peaches spoiled when they might have been eaten, & I didn't see Ed when I wanted to so bad."

Oct. 19 Mon. We had more fun than ever with the painters. Us girls painted our shoes, talked & studied outdoors.

Oct. 20 Tues. Everything went wrong, got dirt in my dinner, the peaches spoiled when they might have been eaten, & I didn't see Ed when I wanted to so bad. Royal & I went to the P.O. & I saw Charlie Wride & he asked me to go to the beach with him to see very high breakers, & then we went riding. I wonder what poor Ed will say.

Oct. 23 Fri. The flag floated over our schoolhouse for the first time for over a year. Mr. Fairchild is dying, Oglesby's are having a reception & the Fortnightly Club was put off tonight.

Oct. 24 Sat. Mama & I went to C.L.C. at Ferris's. I spoke, and forgot of course. I hear that Ed is riding with someone else considerably.



Edmond "Eddie" Ellery. Undated photo courtesy of Betty Shannon.

Oct. 25 Sun. Ed went by & told me to come over in the afternoon, which I did. Frances, Carrie, Ed & I went on the beach & saw the train come in & had a lola-put time. I was so happy I could have jumped to the moon. [Carrie Sloat is Ed & Frances ("Frankie") Ellery's cousin.]

Oct. 26 Mon. Mr. Fairchild was buried today. Papa sold his walnuts at 3 different prices. Miss Woods & Bob B. had a scuffle at recess. The other boys apologized for tearing down our wigwam Saturday.

Oct. 27 Tues. Bob is not coming to school any more. Miss Woods is going to stay here tonight. It's raining.

Oct. 29 Thur. Papa got over 4 T. of walnuts & made over \$500.

Oct. 30. Rode to school with teacher & came home with Grubbs. But best of all is going to the Fortnightly Club with Eddie. It was bloomin' cold & he wished a doz. times he had his overcoat but then we soon got

warm. A big attendance & big program & refreshments.

Oct. 31 Sat. Mama & I went to Edith [Pyster's?] funeral & took Mrs. Barnard & Grace Carden. A large funeral. Edith Shepard came this afternoon & treated us to candy that Dr. Cota had treated her to. Saw Ed at the funeral & had a little chat. Also saw George C. & he didn't look at me.

["Doc" Cota was Jose Romualdo Cota, who gained his nickname from the fact that he clerked at Dr. Marquis's drug store.]

Nov. 2 Mon. Ed took me to a social & had a wano de wano time. He had his arm around me all the way home, but wouldn't take the hint to k__s. Ed said he would rather put his arm around me than Miss Woods.

Nov. 3 Tues. Election day is here at last, but we had school. Papa has gone down to hear who is elected. We all expect Bryan.

Nov. 5 Thur. Hunter [Thurmond] sent a song to me to practice for the Fortnightly Club. Ed brought it over. McKinley is elected. I pity poor Bryan.

Nov. 6 Fri. I went to the Fortnightly & had to come home alone with Ed, & I gave him a piece of my mind, too. He isn't my style for he isn't good looking nor jolly enough. I had a good time at the Fortnightly talking to Charlie Ogan & H.O.

Nov. 9 Mon. Us girls formed a society called the L.C. & we have a concert every session. Helen Franklin said that Ed blushed like 60 when she plagued him about me yesterday. I didn't see him today but I feel a little softer towards him. Teacher had a great time with horse.

Nov. 10 Tues. Our society didn't do much today. We went to the woodshed at noon & the boys locked us in & threw dirt on us & we told.



Frances "Frankie" Ellery. Undated photo courtesy of Betty Shannon.

Nov. 12 Thur. Mads Christensen & Papa are working at a sweet job today, hauling manure. I was outdoors all afternoon laying on the grass, had fun. We had lots of fun with Julia.

Nov. 14 Sat. Papa & Mads dug out the ditch. Edna came & I took my last lesson for a month. Jesse Franklin was here but I didn't see him, but he heard my fine singing.

Nov. 16 Mon. Edith Shepard did my hair up in a pug. Royal & I played casina tonight & I beat. Papa painted the kitchen floor. Alice Walker wanted to know if I went alone to the Fortnightly.

Nov. 18 Wed. Us girls had quite a talk & feast. Edith Shepard treated us with peppermints. Sandy [Nicholson] about waved his arm off at me. Mama had a wooden-leg tramp today. I worked algebra & Royal played solitaire.

Nov. 19 Thur. Us girls sat around a camp fire this afternoon & had a jolly time, I tell you. It rained, too. I got 5 tips. Nellie Woods stayed here tonight & we played casina.

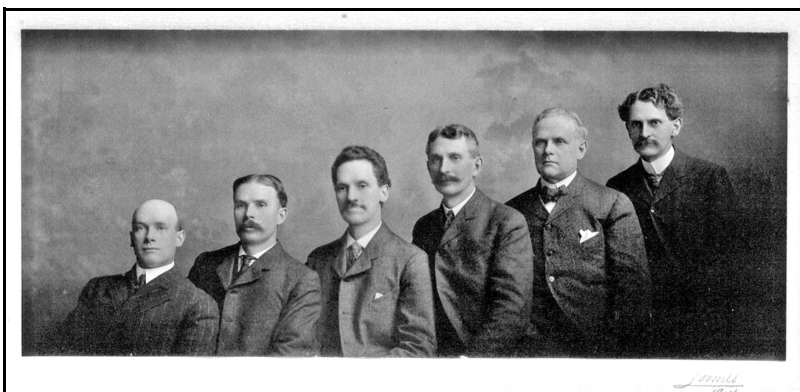
["Tips" are tips of the hat, from a gentleman to a lady. From this date, Ada begins to keep a tally—trophies along her road to womanhood.]

Nov. 20 Fri. We had another fire & the boys put it out but they will have to pay pretty dear for it. But the best of all was the Fortnightly. Ed was quite pleasant & not so soft. It met at Nellie Woods'. A mighty slim meeting as it looked like rain. I spoke & so did Mr. Oglesby.

Nov. 21 Sat. Mama & I scoured the silver this a.m. I went to C.L.C. [Carpinteria Literary Club]. I rode home with Mrs. Belle Franklin & [her son] Jesse & he tipped his hat about 6 times. The horses got out this afternoon.

[This silver-polishing and other preparations were for the upcoming visit of Grandma Lescher from Galesburg, Illinois, along with her daughter Clara and daughter-in-law Nita, wife of Zach's youngest brother Nevil, and their one-year old son, Cecil. "The folks" would stay for Thanksgiving, and Grandma Lescher would stay on through Christmas and beyond, even though her five sons back in Illinois sent her "60 presents... & they want her to come home."

Nov. 24 Tues. It is still raining & blowing. Teacher staid here again. There wasn't many at school, & the news teller we missed. Papa & Royal went up to Ab. Franklin's for a turkey.



The six Lescher Brothers, from left, Nevil Cecil, Edmond Foltz, John William, Zacharias Ursinus (Ada's father), George, and Theodore.
Photo courtesy of Lescher Dowling.

Nov. 25. It blew & was cold. Papa took us to school & we rode home with Bert Treloar & found the folks here. We have a houseful, nine in all. I got 2 bottles of perfumery & we had music & talked. I am to get some more presents tomorrow. A ring. Hoopla for company!

[Of the 4 Galesburg "folks," Grandma Hanna Lescher was 72, and had been widowed for 21 years. She had borne 10 children over a span of 24 years, and all but one son had lived to adulthood. Zach Lescher was her fourth child and the third of her six surviving sons. The "Uncle Theodore and Aunt Josie" whose visit Ada had described 2 years earlier were Zach's older brother and wife, who had come out to Los Angeles in 1890 and lived there 11 years before returning to Galesburg. There had been two intermarriages between Leschers and Wiswells in this generation—not only had Zach Lescher married Rose Wiswell, but his older brother George had married Rose's first cousin Lauretta Wiswell, daughter of the brother of Grandpa Royal Wiswell. As for the relationship of all these people to the Bloods and the Woods of Carpinteria, it is too convoluted to explain, involving both the first and second wives of Royal Wiswell, which is what brought him to Carpinteria, where he eventually married his third wife, the "Grandma Wiswell" of Ada's diary.]



The final installment of Ada Lecher's diary will conclude this series in the next issue of "The Grapevine."

MUSEUM NEWS

HOLIDAY FAIRE REPORT

The 28th Annual Holiday Faire was very successful with **over \$8,000 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 THREE 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 second-year grant of **\$5,000 has been received from the Smith-Walker Foundation**, also to be used for general museum operations. We wish to thank historical society member and Smith-Walker Foundation trustee, Jean Goodrich, for her confidence in and generous support of our work.

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.

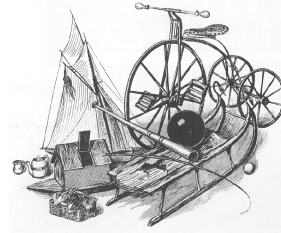
We truly appreciate the sustained support shown the Society by the above noted foundations.

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 **Case Van Wingerden and Westland Floral** for donating the beautiful poinsettias to dress up the museum for this community event. 🍪

FLEA MARKET TREASURES

The museum's popular benefit flea markets will resume their *last-Saturday-of-the-month* schedule **January 31 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 28** and **March 28**.

MEMORIALS

GEORGE BLISS: Claire Roberts; Tom & Anita Lewis; Phyllis Hansen; Chuck & Connie Thompson; Wilja Happé; Elizabeth Woodworth; Bill & Pat Dehnke.

FLORENCE BARBER FINE: Tom & Anita Lewis; Phyllis Hansen; David Griggs.

GLEN M. HICKEY: Thelma A. Todd.

MARTHA JOOS: Wilja Happé; Herman & Betty Zittel.

PAUL LEDIG: Herman & Betty Zittel; Bill & Pat Dehnke.

IRMA MAVLEOS: Phyllis Fenger; Tom & Anita Lewis.

RUTH K. MCINTYRE: Claire Roberts; Tom & Anita Lewis; J.B. & Betty Popnoe; Marny & George Middleton; Betty & Herman Zittel; Mary Alice Coffman; Chuck & Connie Thompson; Pat Latham; Tom & Mary Ota; Jayne Callaway & Family; Phyllis Hansen; Angelo & Marie Granaroli; Bambi R. Bashore; Caroline Kuizenga; Jane Prickett Luthard; Pat Lemere; Hanaye Honda; Bill & Pat Dehnke.

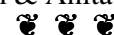
PATRICIA CURTIS ROWE: Mary Alice Coffman.

BROOKE RYE: Phyllis Hansen.

ESPERANZA SHAW: Tom & Anita Lewis.

BETTY (BECKY) WHEELER: Angelo & Marie Granaroli.

NORM WHITE: Tom & Anita Lewis.



CARPINTERIA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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