



**La Verne Historical Society**  
**S.O.L.V.E.**  
**Save Old La Verne's Environment**

PO Box 7761. La Verne. California 91750

909-593-5014

[lvhs@LaVerneHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:lvhs@LaVerneHistoricalSociety.org)

January 2016

## **First 2016 Meeting on Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> -- A New President, New Plans**

Our first 2016 meeting, on January 11, Monday, will feature elections, installation of Officers, and a vote on the updated and revised by-laws of the Historical Society.

Much attention will be spent on planning for the events to take place this spring and summer.

We will meet at 7:00 pm in the meeting room of the Pinecrest Building at Hillcrest Homes.

Nominees are: President, Sherry Best; Vice-President, Galen Beery, Secretary: Donna Dye and Treasurer: Clark Palmer. Following elections, we will have a short installation ceremony and review of programs which the Historical Society has been involved in for over 40 years.

Here are a few of the events we'll be planning.

On Jan. 23, a Saturday, members will carpool to Lizzie's Trail Inn and Richardson House Museum in Sierra Madre. Members must RSVP for reservations as the tour and parking are limited. Please indicate if you can carpool. More about this on the attached flyer.

A Spring Tour of the Brydon House in north La Verne will take place on Saturday, April 9.

Arrangements are being made to utilize a bus furnished by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich to go as a group from La Verne to tour the Sam Maloof house on May 20.

For the January 11 meeting, drive north from Bonita on A Street to Hillcrest Homes, and turn left. A curves to the west and north. Park along A Street and enter the Pinecrest building from the north. The meeting room will be either just left of the elevator or upstairs to the left.

Questions? Give us a call. We look forward to seeing you on Monday, Jan. 11! If you have a friend interested in helping us preserve Lordsburg-La Verne history, bring him or her along.

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*Dues for 2016 are \$15: membership may be renewed this month. Membership includes the opportunity to participate and to attend Historical Society events such as those described above. Newsletters and correspondence will be sent by email.*

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Bits'n'Pieces of History

### **GRANITE STUMP MARKS GRAVE OF A WOODMAN**

One of the more intriguing sights in the La Verne Cemetery on B Street is in the northeast area near the wall. Between two old evergreen trees is a solid granite tombstone carved in the shape of a tree stump about four feet high.

Above the legend on the west side is a logo of a stump, encircled by the words "Dum Tacet Clamat" – Latin for "Though silent, he speaks." Carved below are the words

OLIVER GRANT BUMGARNER

DIED NOV 2, 1911

AGED 46 YRS 2 MS 8 D.

ASLEEP IN JESUS BLESSED

SLEEP FROM WHICH NONE

EVER WAKE TO WEEP

46 Y'RS, 2 M'S, 8 D'S.

We don't know much about Bumgarner now. He died a century ago. But sleuthing into online census records shows that he was born in Kentucky, and by 1910 lived in Palo Pinto County, Texas, working as a bartender.

At the time of his death he was probably living in San Dimas at the southwest corner of Depot St. and worked as a teamster hauling hay. The house, built in 1908, still stands at 123 North Monte Vista Avenue.

The tombstone and logo shows that he was a member of a fraternal beneficiary institution – think of a life insurance company – which became popular in the 1880's

There was already a bonding in groups which ensured one's burial. When my great-grandfather went west to Colorado, in "a company" seeking gold, he wrote of happenings in a small journal. One day he noted that there was a death in the diggings. The deceased was a Mason, and his fellow members held a funeral in a small cabin and a graveside service.

In the 1860's Iowa businessman Joseph Cullen Root became wealthy operating flour mills. He became a lawyer and a U.S. revenue collector. A good Union man, he made sure that the grave of every soldier buried in his county was marked by a tombstone secured from the War Department.

Root became a member of the Free Masons, Odd Fellows, Pythians, and other secret societies. Always community minded, he chose not to run for public office, but closed his law office and sold his businesses to create a "fraternal beneficiary institution for the benefit of home, widows and orphans."

The death of a family man who was a breadwinner could be agony for his family. His income ended and there were expenses for his burial.

To alleviate this situation, Root organized the "Modern Woodmen of America" in Lyons, Iowa. It was similar to other fraternal insurance groups, but Root had a knack for selling and became quite successful.

The first certificate of membership was issued to a man in Independence, Kansas, on Dec. 29, 1890. The society also issued a publication, *The Sovereign Visitor*. Six months later, the first death claim was paid out for the death of a man who drowned in June, 1891, in Niles, Michigan.

The first financial statement at the end of 1891 showed about \$59,800 had been received and disbursements were about \$58,900 – but the organization grew rapidly and by 1900 had \$219 million worth of membership policies.

Because of disagreements, Root left the original group and established the "Woodmen of the World."

We're not sure when our Bumgarner became a member, but the organization seems to have had a chapter in Lordsburg, meeting in second-story rooms of buildings still standing on D Street.

Old photos of Woodmen funerals show that members would have dressed up – possibly in uniform - to give Bumgarner a proper funeral in Lordsburg's new Evergreen cemetery.

Founder Root became wealthy and well known. In his last years, as the 'Sovereign Commander,' he made a long trip by train to visit organizations in the southeastern United States. When he passed away in North Carolina, his coffin was sent back to his home town. Crowds of members lined the railroad tracks at each station to give him a final farewell. His remains were placed in an elaborate granite mausoleum by the side of his wife.

The Woodmen of the World continued to grow beyond Root's wildest dreams, even expanding during the Depression. On its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1941 the organization had \$364 million worth of life insurance in force. By 1966, this had grown to \$1.2 billion.

The organization today is one of the largest fraternal benefit societies. 1998 figures showed more than 845,000 members who held nearly one million life insurance, hospital supplement and annuity certificates.

Members and their families belong to 2,600 lodges throughout the United States, conduct fraternal projects of benefit to people and their communities. Projects include presenting American flags to civic and community organizations; donating equipment to police, fire and rescue units; providing assistance to senior citizens, the physically impaired and orphans; and a disaster relief partnership with the American Red Cross.

The organization is probably best known for its gravestones. For ten years the policies provided free grave markers for members. The tree trunk monument pattern was sent to a stone carver in the deceased woodman's hometown, so that all would be similar in appearance. The grave marker benefit was discontinued by the mid-1920's due to the cost.

We know of no descendants of Bumgarner, but recently we found that someone had placed a flower on his gravestone.

– Galen Beery, with Bumgarner research by Bill Lemon.

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*Your Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history of Lordsburg/La Verne. An annual "Old Timer's Picnic" is held each summer.*

*We are interested in writings, photos and memorabilia of days gone by. To provide tidbits from La Verne history or just ask questions, contact us. And of course, we have opportunities for volunteers.*

