



La Verne Historical Society

Preserving Old La Verne's Environment: Making History for the Future



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Every Picture Tells a Story

By Sherry Best & Bill Lemon

Many people who live in La Verne and San Dimas have heard of *David and Margaret Youth and Family Services (DMYFS)*, originally known as *David and Margaret Home for Children* and sometimes simply called *David and Margaret Home* or *David and Margaret*. Its history is full of enlivening stories that reveal its commitment to serving children and youth in La Verne and surrounding communities.

Bill Lemon and Sherry Best have been exploring a wonderful collection of memorabilia at DMYFS, including photos, newspaper articles, and artifacts from its past. While we cannot possibly share everything we reviewed, we decided to dedicate a majority of this edition of the *LVHS Newsletter* to material about DMYFS. Starting with a short biography of Henry L. Kuns and his family, we will describe its location and relocation, reveal some “facts” about what it takes to operate a residential facility that once housed as many as 125 children and young adults, tell a story of how DMYFS was rescued after a financial crisis, and describe evolving services for children and youth offered by DMYFS. Many images were added to this newsletter that reflect a small number of the archival treasures housed at DMYFS. We hope that sharing this information will add enlightenment, entertainment, and appreciation for this emblem of La Verne’s spirit of community service.

Henry L. Kuns – Philanthropist

The names David and Henry occur down generations of the Kuns family and across family lines, adding to confusion since they were prominent in Lordsburg/La

Verne events. David Kuns (1820-1906) was born to John and Hannah Kuns. David had a brother named Henry (1823-1893). David married Margaret (née Lamb) and they had a son they named Henry Lebosquette Kuns (1847-1930), who married Mary (née Pearce) in 1870. They had a son named David (1885-1905). They also had a son named Henry Arthur (1871-1937) and a daughter named Margaret (1874-1952). After the death of Mary, Henry L. Kuns married Lillie (Pearce) Bartlett (1869-1945).

David and Henry Kuns (the elders) were instrumental in founding Lordsburg Academy, which became Lordsburg College and later the University of La Verne. Henry L. Kuns founded David and Margaret Home for Children. He named the home after his parents (David and Margaret) and also his son David.

Henry L. Kuns
and his first
wife, Mary
(Pearce) Kuns



Hotel Becomes a Home

The 60-room La Verne Hotel was completed in 1888 on the northeast corner of what is now Damien (then Grand) and Juanita Avenues. Like many hotels of this era, it was designed to accommodate visitors interested in purchasing land for agricultural and other development. However, as happened with many such hotels during this time, the building fell victim to a “land bust”, never had a paying guest, and stood empty for 22 years. Henry L. Kuns purchased the hotel and 17.5 acres, valued at \$25,000, and in 1910 he and his wife Mary gifted it to the Women’s Home Missionary Society of the Southern California Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The original plan for the hotel was to convert it to a sanitarium. However, Kuns argued that the Missionary Society had already launched a hospital in Los Angeles and suggested instead that the hotel and land should serve as a home for orphans and half-orphans. Their gift was given in memory of Mr. Kuns’ parents (David and Margaret) and also in memory of Henry Kuns’ son, also named David. Before it could be occupied, the hotel was outfitted with hardwood flooring, gas, electricity, water, window screens, a fire escape, and a laundry. The application to license David and Margaret Home for Children was approved by the State Board of Charities and Corrections on August 4, 1914.



The La Verne Hotel, site of the first David and Margaret Home for Children

The David and Margaret Home was dedicated on June 28, 1910, and opened with six children, four of whom were from one family in Los Angeles. Within their first year the organization had housed 93 children between the ages of two and twelve years. A barn was added to the property to keep the livestock that helped supply meat, milk, and eggs. Henry Kuns donated 700 orange trees to be planted in a grove. When possible, parents were expected to pay \$10 a month toward the care of their children. Individual and merchant donations, clubs, auxiliaries, State and County aid, and other contributions provided considerable support. Medical services were provided by Dr. J. E. Hubble, a prominent local doctor.



Children at David and Margaret Home, 1915

Upsizing to a New Location

By the early 1920s it was apparent that the original David and Margaret Home was insufficient to meet the needs of an ever-expanding group of children. A fund-raising drive was launched in 1924 to meet the \$150,000 cost of the new building with a capacity for 105 children. Henry L. Kuns donated 34 acres of land for the new site on Third Street. The cornerstone was laid in an on-site ceremony on March 1, 1925 and was attended by over 1,500 Inland Valley residents. Built of concrete with a Spanish-style tile roof and front façade with ornamental plasterwork, the building was two stories high with a full below-ground basement. Moving in began the following November and children were housed with community volunteers during this time. The building was dedicated on June 20, 1926. When he passed away in 1930, Henry Kuns had lived

to see that the vision he and Mary Kuns had for creating “A home, not an institution” had been realized.



Artist rendering of the currently named Henry “Bud” Whitney Building, one of the oldest all-concrete buildings in La Verne

Upgrades Abound

In 1931, the dormitories in the new David and Margaret Home were described as “having twelve beds each, dolls and pretties for the girls, little separate dressing rooms for the older ones, pictures and decorations on the walls for the boys, pretty curtains swaying in the wind, just home.” The ground floor basement was a playroom and Boy Scout room. The farm concept established at the original home continued with cows, horses, chickens, and a vegetable garden.



David and Margaret Children Take Care of Farm Animals

In 1934, members of the La Verne Volunteer Fire Department built a 12x12 foot lily pond to the east side of the main building. The pond was embellished with miniature islands and stocked with fish and

tropical plants. Scubie Mills, rural route mail carrier for Lordsburg (1910-1955), assisted in this pond project. An Olympic-size swimming pool was built in 1959. Both were later filled in and a small swimming pool was installed in front of the administration building.



Pond and Pool at David and Margaret



1926 Group Photo

Getting Around Town

Prior to having their own transportation, children were transported to Sunday School standing upright in a truck borrowed from the La Verne Feed and Fuel Store. The original David and Margaret Ford truck (named "Henry") is shown in 1926. The truck body was traded for a covered express body with board seats, but was so worn that in 1929 it was traded for a used school bus (the Reo). A new bus was donated in August of 1931.



Transportation Evolves at David and Margaret Home

Almost Lost – But Saved

In 1935, an amazing series of events resulted in the sale and near loss of David and Margaret Home. William C. Bitting, Jr. of St. Louis, a bond broker, brought a judgment against the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for interest on bonds sold to fund the Society's Methodist Hospital in Los Angeles. The hospital had continued to operate but had not paid full interest on the bonds. Although David and Margaret Home was clear of any indebtedness, Mr. Bitting filed on every piece of property known to be in the possession of the Missionary Society to repay bondholders. He was successful in forcing the sale of David and Margaret Home property. On November 6th, 1935, a public notice of a marshal's sale was published based on a writ of execution issued on November 5th by the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of California. On December 17, 1935, three parcels of land were bought at public auction by Mr. Bitting for \$123,000 (other accounts state \$123,500



and \$128,500). The David and Margaret Home was located on the largest land parcel.

An appeal was filed against the sale and foreclosure, based on state law that bound Mr. Bitting to levy against the Methodist Hospital property rather than on the David and Margaret Home. Incorporation proceedings were instituted in January 1936 by David and Margaret Home. Incorporation meant that the home became the legal owner of the property separate from the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and could receive bequests and other forms of support. The appeal was placed on the May 1936 calendar of the United States District Court of Appeals in San Francisco. It was argued that the foreclosure and auction sale was invalid at the district court level because state law would require that Mr. Bitting should file first against the Methodist Hospital. If the judgement remained unsatisfied (not all monies paid), Mr. Bitting could then receive a "deficiency judgment" against other property owned by the Woman's Home Missionary Society. Delays on hearing the appeal stayed execution of foreclosure until December 28, 1937, when these proceedings were dismissed after consultation with Mr. Bitting's legal representatives. A solution was reached when new bonds were issued for a longer term and at a lower interest rate, releasing David and Margaret Home from any indebtedness. Eighty children were living at David and Margaret Home during this grueling time.

Changing Times and New Beginnings

The depression and WWII brought changes to David and Margaret Home. In 1948, a decision was made to only house children over six years of age and the nursery group was phased out. Twenty acres remained of the property, which was utilized as farm land, producing 2000 ears of corn, 60 gallons of berries, and 12 tons of hay. Referrals from juvenile hall and social work services were added in 1958 and by 1959 the home had become a member of the Child Welfare League of America. In 1963, a bequest of \$674,000 was used to construct three cottages each with room for ten girls and living quarters for houseparents. A 1967

study found that a 10:1 ratio of boys to girls for residential beds necessitated more policy adjustment, and in 1968 David and Margaret began housing only adolescent girls. Residential cottages continued to be added. The original orphanage building was used for storage and administrative purposes.



The dining hall in the 1950s



1960s Christmas at David and Margaret

David and Margaret Today

DMYFS received its current name in 2006 in recognition of its broadening array of services and commitment to family-centered care. It offers residential treatment that serves six counties in Southern California and is the largest facility of its kind in California. It operates a foster family agency, a non-public school, a learning enhancement center, a vocational skills training program, and recently added on-site transitional housing for youth ages 18-22 who are moving out of foster care. A total of five cottages, a non-public school, recreation building, dining hall,

pool, and administrative and maintenance buildings are located on site.



Whitney Building at DMYFS, now used for administrative offices and storage

The Vision Continues to Evolve

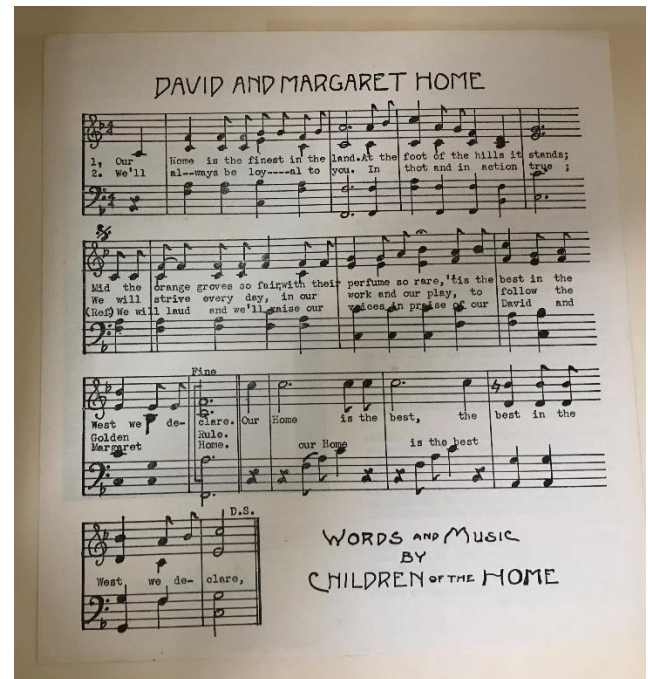
The values that gave rise to DMYFS have always revolved around home-like care of children and youth. It is important to notice, however, that social practices considered inappropriate today constrained services for some individuals. A 1931 article in the *La Verne Leader* stated that David and Margaret admitted “orphans, half orphans, and children from broken homes”, but that it “does not take mentally deficient children, or children that are in any way suffering from chronic diseases.” The home’s superintendent added that David and Margaret did not admit “foreign-born or problem cases”, who were said to be provided for elsewhere. The article concluded that “the result is that the group of children at the home are clean, white, bright children in every way normal.”

This article was written during the height of the residential institution movement when many children with physical, emotional, and intellectual disabilities lived apart from their families and communities. It is presumed that these institutions were what was meant by “elsewhere” in the article but the history of care for children of color and those who were “foreign-born or problem cases” deserve to be further researched as a point of historical interest.

Today, DMYFS embraces services that are delivered to the highest standards of professionalism in a safe and

nurturing physical and emotional environment in which to live, learn and grow. DMYFS follows a model of service in which it shares, changes and leads by the values and ideals of mutual respect, knowledge, integrity, teamwork, safety, choice and accountability, and service. It will continue to evolve but remain a legacy of the generosity of Henry and Mary Kuns.

Many documents were consulted to develop this article. The biggest challenge was restricting the length by deciding what stories to tell and what could be saved to tell later. Bill Lemon and Sherry Best wish to thank Julie Griffith, Public Relations Associate at DMYFS, for facilitating access to archival materials and conducting the recently sponsored tour of DMYFS for LVHS members.



Gallery at Hillcrest Continues Service to Third Graders

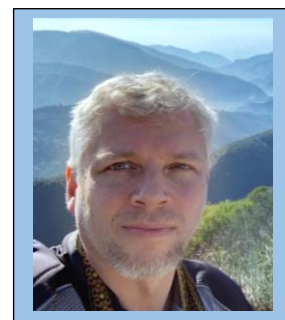
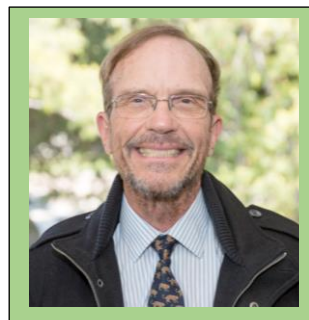
The Story of La Verne continues to be told at the Gallery at Hillcrest to all third graders in the Bonita Unified School District. Children, their teachers, and parent volunteers have visited from all district elementary schools and an extra visit was planned for the third-grade class at Holy Name of Mary School in San Dimas. Children heard from docent “culture bearers” who shared stories of their La Verne childhoods. Part of their experience includes a visit to

the Citrus Meeting Room at Hillcrest to design a personalized citrus crate label and enjoy a snack of oranges.



The Story of La Verne is an ongoing project that was created through the efforts of members of the Cultural Arts Society of La Verne, Hillcrest, The LVHS, ULV, the city of La Verne, and the Cultural and Natural History Collections at ULV.

June 10th Spring Member/Community Meeting



On Monday, June 10th, the LVHS will gather at the Hillcrest Meeting House for its summer member and community meeting. Starting at 6:30pm, we'll discuss LVHS in 2018-2019, then enjoy a presentation by Dr. Al Clark entitled "Voices from the Past: Oral History and La Verne." Dr. Clark will urge us to become local historians through his inspirational talk. Dr. Clark will be followed by a special reception to meet Kevin Bowman, creator of "Gabriel's View", a panoramic photographic image of the San Gabriel Mountains that are the backdrop of La Verne. This event is free and open to the public.

Thank you for making 2018-2019 LVHS events so successful. Save the date for the summer potluck picnic on Sunday, August 25th. We'll be back in the fall with many new adventures.

Sherry Best,
LVHS President



Welcome New LVHS Members:

Keny Chang
Judy Greeran
Julie Griffith



Gabriel's View, a photographic mural created by Kevin Bowman, will be on display at the Gallery at Hillcrest. Meet the artist at the LVHS-sponsored Member/Community meeting on Monday, June 10th, at 8:00pm. Refreshments will be served.



On Wednesday, May 22, the LVHS sponsored a photo shoot at 1848 Bonita Avenue in La Verne for the non-profit Pin-ups for Vets. This organization is dedicated to supporting injured and ill American Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Coast Guardsmen, and Sailors—and current active-duty troops deployed across the globe. The charity also supports homeless Veterans, military spouses, and Gold Star Wives. Pin-Ups for Vets has provided over \$60,000 in new therapy equipment for rehabilitation programs at military and Veterans hospitals. Photos shot in La Verne will be featured in the 2020 Pin-Ups for Vets calendar.



Patriotism on display at the Pin-Ups for Vets photo shoot