



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

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October 12, 2015

Review Proposed Slate of Officers, Change the Society Constitution, and Plan Home Tour

Oct. 12 Meeting Agenda

The next meeting of the Historical Society will be held on **Monday, Oct. 12, at 7:00 p.m.**, in a meeting room of the Pinecrest building at Hillcrest Homes.

The most important items on the agenda are that Officers, Board, and members will review a slate of officers nominated for 2016. There will definitely be some changes, and an election held in December

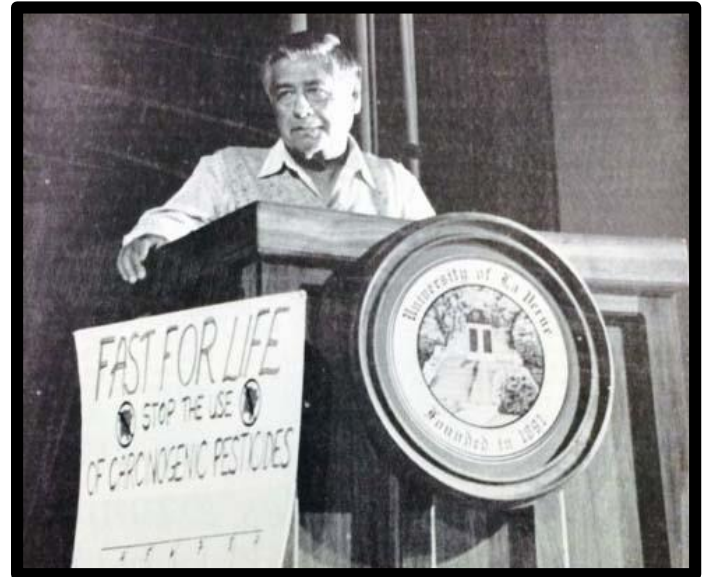
The Constitution and By-Laws have been reviewed and changes proposed. *Note:* Copies of the proposed By-Laws have been emailed to those who have provided us with their Email address. If you do not have Email and would like to look over the proposed changes, telephone Sherry at (909) 596-4679 and she'll get a copy to you.

A Historic Home Tour of the beautiful Moomaw Home, a Craftsman at 2369 3rd Street, will be held on **Saturday, Oct. 17** between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Members tour for free: for others, the docent-led tour cost is \$15, which includes free membership for 2016. Refreshments will be provided.

Building and relocating the handsome structure was a singular 'moving experience.' A vacant lot lay between the home and the one to the west. To make sure that no one could ever build between these two friends, Moomaw and his neighbor bought the lot and split it. A new cellar was dug, rails laid on the ground, and horses pulled the structure some thirty feet west. One of the Moomaw's small daughters had permission to 'ride' in the living room during the pull, and watched the ground moving away as the horses tugged west. When her father laid a sidewalk to new steps, her small footprints were preserved in the concrete and may be seen today. You can help as a docent, leading visitors through the home. Telephone (909) 596-3201 to volunteer.

A December meeting will include elections, see adoption of changes in the By-Laws, and our traditional 'Antique White Elephant Gift Exchange.' Long-time President Galen Beery will step down and will say a few words about our group, its place in La Verne, and the need to remember the past as we head into the future.

Bits 'n' Pieces of History



Labor Organizer Cesar Chavez spoke to students and townspeople at the University of La Verne in May, 1990.

Cesar Chavez Asked La Verne To Join in a Boycott of Grapes

In a way it was a bit odd for a farm labor organizer to speak in a town which no longer had agricultural workers.

By the 1950's, most of La Verne's citrus groves were gone, replaced by new tract homes. The town became a residential community known as a really nice place to live. Most of the workers who tended groves and picked the fruit, and those who sorted and packed oranges and lemons were Hispanic. They retired or found other work.

La Verne College acquired several of the packing houses and converted them into classrooms as it grew to become the University of La Verne. The number of students from Hispanic families which had an agricultural background began to increase.

Nationwide interest now turned towards the need to improve the working conditions of underpaid, overworked farm workers. They toiled under miserable picking requirements to fill American tables. A TV documentary entitled "Harvest of Shame" showed a side of agriculture that many had never considered.

The workers themselves began to take steps to improve their lot with a series of agricultural strikes.

The cause - higher salaries and better working conditions - was taken up a doughty farm worker named Cesar Chavez, born in Arizona in 1927. By 1962 he was becoming known as an organizer, and together with Dolores Huerta founded the United Farm Workers, a union which brought together chiefly Hispanic workers.

Chavez advocated peaceful protests, boycotts and marches to achieve rights for farm workers. All field crops were involved, but strikes began to emphasize grapes.

In 1968 Chavez organized a five-year boycott of grapes, known as "La Causa." All Americans were urged to stop buying California grapes until farm workers were better paid and had safer working conditions.

To draw attention to La Causa, Chavez went on a fast in 1968. This lasted for 25 days. He fasted again in 1972, holding out for 24 days in 1972.

Shoppers at La Verne's grocery stores had a moral dilemma: should they purchase grapes picked by overworked and underpaid farm workers, or go without, supporting the cause against the exploitation of growers?

Finally, after the efforts of Chavez and the United Farm Workers brought their cause to elected officials, the California Labor Relations act was enacted in 1975. This allowed farm workers the right to boycott and to back union leaders in collective bargaining. If things went well, contracts were signed to ensure better treatment - increased pay, breaks, and provision of portable toilets in the fields.

Many growers banded together and fought any change as their profits would be cut. In 1988, Chavez fasted for another 36 days to draw attention to La Causa.

Minister Leland Wilson of the La Verne Church of the Brethren noted the farm worker struggle, and members of the church came to agree that it was justified. But other Churches of the Brethren, located in the Central Valley, were in rural communities. Their members were agriculturists and growers, and of a mind to feel that growers should not lose crops because of boycotts.

The Hispanic students at ULV eventually organized a Latino Club which had a Cinco de Mayo Celebration.

In 1990 the club leaders invited Chavez, president of the United Farm Workers, to speak in La Verne as the kickoff speaker for the Cinco de Mayo Celebration. He accepted. Students soon were handing out flyers which urged everyone to "COME FIND OUT WHY YOU SHOULD BOYCOTT GRAPES!"

There was some opposition to a speech by a man some regarded as a threat to American business, but our belief in the right of free speech prevailed.

Chavez came to La Verne on Thursday, May 3, and that evening stood at the podium in Founders' Auditorium and spoke to a receptive audience. His address was preceded by a videotape "The Wrath of Grapes," which

described the efforts which Chavez and the AFL-CIO made to ban table grapes.

According to the college's *Campus Times*, Chavez stated "You see, my friends, the struggle for animals and struggles for earth and the struggles for human, it's all the same struggle. We have learned a lot in these struggles to preserve our one and only earth. Now our struggle is pesticides and toxics."

Chavez noted that the packing and handling left the workers in close contact with the chemicals, and birth defects and cancer were not uncommon in the farm worker community.

He invited his audience to join his efforts to boycott grapes until action was taken by lawmakers and growers. Farm workers' rights were also a major concern - even their basic rights to drinking water, toilet facilities and soap.

Rumor - and we err by not checking - is that his visit and words were simply ignored by the conservative *Progress Bulletin* and other newspapers.

However the ULV food service stopped serving grapes at dining tables.

The boycotts eventually achieved their purpose. Contracts were signed, and bad conditions cleaned up.

Chavez' career ended in April, 1993 when he passed away at the age of 66. He had already become an American legend, and a year after his death was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The Latino Club continued the Cinco de Mayo festivities the day after his speech, with food booths, mariachi bands, games, and a raffle. In March, 2003, ten years after his passing, the Club began holding annual celebrations of the Cesar Chavez Holiday. - GB

OLD-TIMER'S POTLUCK PICNIC, AUG. 29 HELD AT HISTORIC LARIMER HOME

Our traditional Old-Timers' Potluck Picnic was held on Aug. 29, a late summer's afternoon, in the shady back yard of Randy and Carolyn Cockrell at 2379 Third Street.

Approximately 32 persons enjoyed sharing some memories, dining delights and two freezers of ice cream.

Special tribute was paid to attendees who own historic homes bearing bronze historical markers, for their maintaining their homes and saving old La Verne's environment.

About HS/SOLVE

The Historical Society of La Verne was organized in 1969, dedicated to Lordsburg - La Verne history and saving our environment. We have several meetings, some house tours, and a summer picnic each year. If you have photos, letters, or artifacts from our history, we'd like to hear from you.