



# La Verne Historical Society

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



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## Room with a View: Every Picture Tells a Story

Story: Sherry Best & Bill Lemon

Photos: Bill Lemon & Marv Weston

On a hot and clear day on September, armed with smart phones and digital cameras (one with a wide-angle lens), intrepid members of the La Verne Historical Society approached the bell tower of the La Verne Church of the Brethren at 2425 "E" Street. Their mission was to replicate a



series of photos taken in 1930 from the top of the bell tower when it was nearing completion. Joseph Bixler, a local photographer, took photos in all directions to show off the city, surrounded by citrus and nestled at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. It is still a perfect viewing spot of the valley. The original photos showed the countryside of the rural city of La Verne dominated by acres of citrus groves.

The climbers accessed the tower inside the church and ascended a series of short stair flights until they reached a room below the final ascent to the tower. Next came a very steep wooden staircase ending at a covered portal. The final approach to the lookout was made up a rebar "ladder" embedded in the cement wall of the tower. Camera ready, the photographer adjusted to the height and began snapping in all directions. In ½ hour an updated panorama of La Verne was captured for posterity.



1930 and 2019... The photos above show the view looking west toward the corner of "D" Street and Bonita Avenue. Things have changed indeed!



The LVHS wishes to thank COB Senior Pastor Susan Boyer, Office Administrator Kelly Whittington, and Facilities Supervisor Jeff Van Voorhis for their assistance in this adventure. The picture at left is Jeff making the descent on the rebar ladder.

## October 14<sup>th</sup> Fall Member/Community Meeting When Red Cars Ruled....



Come to the Maury Smeltzer Lounge on Monday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm to hear from Michael Patris about the Pacific Electric Railway Company, affectionately known as the “Red Cars.” Connecting Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties, this mass transit system was initiated in 1901 to connect major cities to suburbs. Rail development was tied to land development and it was stated that the railway company “connected all the dots on the map and was a leading player itself in developing all the real estate that lay in between the dots”. By 1910 Pacific Electric operated nearly 900 miles of track and reached its peak by the end of WWII. However, political and governmental forces combined to replace the red cars with a web of mass transit designed for automobiles.

Michael Patris is the President and founder of the Mount Lowe Preservation Society, Inc., President of the Pacific Electric Railway Historical Society, and past Sheriff of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners (2010). He has also written numerous articles for the *Horseless Carriage Club of America Gazette* club magazine, *Collector* magazine, the *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly* magazine, *The Branding Iron* quarterly magazine for the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners, *Hemmings Motor News* and *Rod and Custom* magazine. Mr. Patris is also President and owner of Golden West Books, a publishing company focusing on the history of trains, trolleys, railroads and locomotive material.

Whether collecting antiques, working on antique cars, or restoring a 1923 California bungalow in Alhambra,

he believes that pieces of the past are too important to discard.



Don't miss this exciting and informative presentation. Seating will begin at 6:30pm and the presentation will begin at 7:00pm. **Refreshments will be served.**

Bring a friend! This presentation is free & open to the public. Sponsored by the LVHS.

### President's Message Looking Back... Moving Forward

The LVHS is gearing up for a fantastic year of events, adventures, service, and learning. After enjoying a quiet summer punctuated by our August LVHS Board retreat and the Old Timers Potluck Picnic, we are back for a great 2019-2020. Post your event calendar on the refrigerator for quick reference.

Mark your calendar for our Member/Community meetings in October, January, March, and June. All of these meetings will be at Hillcrest and feature excellent speakers on a variety of topics. Learn about Southern California's red car transit system, the 2445-acre Tres Hermanos Ranch in Chino Hills, Eulalia Perez at the San Gabriel Mission, and the evolution of the La Verne Historical Society. On November 3<sup>rd</sup> our speaker at the Veteran's Hall will be Nathan Gonzales, Archivist at the A. K. Smiley Library in Redlands, who will tell us the fascinating history of that citrus-proud city.

We'll be traveling this year and have a bike tour scheduled in November. Other local trips include historical locations in Pomona and San Dimas. We'll go slightly farther with a visit to The Old Mill in San Marino in March and listen to a performance by Joe Rinaudo on an American Fotoplayer in La Crescenta. Save May 9<sup>th</sup> for a trip to the Nethercutt Collection in Sylmar, which includes antique and vintage cars, car hood ornaments, dolls, coins, crystal figurines, automated mechanical musical instruments, and the 1912 Pullman private train car owned by the daughter of Elias Jackson “Lucky” Baldwin. We'll ride in comfort on an air-conditioned bus and eat a hearty lunch before heading home.

But wait – there's more! This is our first ever La Verne Cemetery tour on “B” Street. Visit several final resting places of several of La Verne's early residents and hear about their lives told by costumed docents. Enjoy cider



and donuts before you leave. This event is family-friendly and open from 1:00pm-3:00pm. See the feature article later in this newsletter.

And last... Did you know that the LVHS was given a 1938 International flatbed work truck by Inman Conety, Past President of the LVHS and dearly remembered local character? The "International" will be restored and you'll be able to follow its progress on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Make a donation on our GoFundMe page and help get the International ready for an inaugural appearance at the 2020 La Verne Fourth of July parade.

Join the LVHS for the history, fun, excitement, and the sense of community and pride we feel for La Verne.

*Sherry Best,*  
LVHS President



### Scouts Put Sweat Equity into LVHS Pocket Museums

When you don't have a museum for the public to visit, you bring the museum to the public. This is the idea behind restoring a dozen portable display cases and turning them into "Pocket Museums" for LVHS artifacts. The cases were donated over a year ago to the LVHS and Scout Samuel Neely accepted the challenge of restoring them as his Eagle Project. He gathered a crew who cleaned, scraped, puttied, sanded, and painted the 4' x 2' cases and their slanted glass fronts. When completed, these mini-museums will be outfitted with interior lights and deployed throughout the community. Artifacts and photos from the Galen Beery collection, plus donations and objects on loan from city residents, will be displayed to tell stories such as "The Legacy of the Palomares & Vejar

Families", "Workers in the Citrus Industry", "Vintage Postcards", and more. Cases will be distributed at key locations throughout La Verne in 2019-2020.



These Cases were in Rough Shape



The Crew Gets Busy with Base Coat Painting



Workers with Painted Display Fronts. Crew Chief Samuel Neely is Standing Second from Left

### LVHS Sponsors Tour of La Verne Cemetery

On Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, join members of the LVHS for a tour of the La Verne Cemetery. Seven families will be featured this year, including members of the Bixby, Kendrick, Hanawalt, Hubble, Miller, Price, and Neher

clans. Docents will provide narration at each site, which will be augmented with historical photos. Visit between 1:00pm-3:00pm and learn about some early La Verne ancestors.



Although buried in La Verne, George Swigert Hanawalt has a memorial stone in the Spring Run Cemetery in McVeytown, PA, where his first two wives are buried. Learn the history of his parents, George, and his three wives on the 10/20/19 tour.

“Bartie” Neher was the first person to be buried in the La Verne Cemetery. Did you know that there is a mistake on his headstone? Come find out the error on the cemetery tour.



### Get Your Green Thumb On!

October is the month for planting bulbs. If you have a green thumb, or want to celebrate some local history, plant a few Houdyshel lily bulbs. Where did that name come from? The beautiful pink Houdyshel Crinum Lily was named in honor of Cecil Ernest Houdyshel (1873-1964), a nurseryman and plant propagator who lived in La Verne and specialized in hybridizing and selling these fragrant lilies and many other bulbs and plants at his nursery at 1412 Third Street. Houdyshel lilies grow from bulbs and are related to the amaryllis. They thrive in mild climates and are described a “nearly indestructible” and “giants of the bulb world.”



C. E. Houdyshel produced a bi-annual bulb catalog that began with an introductory letter entitled “The Art and Science of Living”, a form of personal conversation with his customers. In his spring 1947 letter he wrote, “Sometimes an especially gratifying letter comes to me at a time when the uplift of such a letter is most helpful, because when you are pleased, I am pleased. When you have had a higher degree of success with your flowers, I am sharing your happiness. Flowers contribute much to our happiness. We like to believe that a love for flowers indicates high character. Perhaps it does but it is not conclusive, for many a rascal loves them so much that he will gain them by stealing or fraud... I will tell you this. In order to enjoy flowers, you must give them away.”



Cecil Houdyshel’s trademark play on words showed two hands clasping each other with a scallop shell in the background. Houdyshel bulbs can be purchased through several plant specialists, including TyTy Nursery, Edensblooms, and JenksFarmer.



Welcome New LVHS Members:

- Barbara Ames
- Linda Fuentes
- Linda Lockhart Wilkinson
- Carole Schuricht
- Kathryn Booth Butler
- Peter & Jane Austin
- Mary Kay Ogden

