

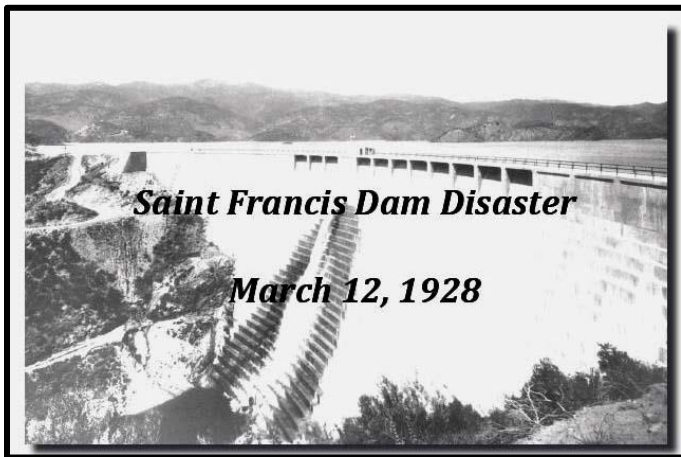


La Verne Historical Society

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



PO Box 7761, La Verne, CA 91750 909-596-4679 lvhs@LaVerneHistoricalSociety.org October 2016



Historian Paul Rippens will speak on the St. Francis Dam Disaster at our next meeting, **Oct. 10 (Monday)** at 7:00 pm. This presentation of California history will be at the Hillcrest Meeting House, 2705 Mountain View Drive, La Verne, California 91750.

OCTOBER 22 TOUR

WILL FEATURE TWO HISTORICAL HOMES

Your La Verne Historical Society takes pride in hosting a tour of two of La Verne's craftsman-style homes on Saturday, Oct. 22, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. These are the stately Hanawalt Home at 2610 Bonita Avenue, and the Seymour Home on the other side of the block at 2633 Third Street, just a three-minute walk away. There should be no problem parking on Bonita Avenue, I Street, or Third Street.

Tickets will be available at the Hanawalt Home where the tour will originate. The tour cost of \$15 qualifies one for membership in the Historical Society for 2016-2017. Call (909) 596-4679 for more information. Watch your email or mail for a tour flyer.

The Harvey Hanawalt House

2610 Bonita Avenue

This elegant bungalow was built by Harvey Hanawalt for his bride Anne in 1906. It is distinguished by elephantine pillars of river rock, and a semi-circular



driveway sheltered by a roof extending west. Hanawalt and his brothers saw the need for rock and cement and secured land north of Claremont where they operated a quarry and cement factory for many years. In addition to providing cement for sidewalks and foundations, the Hanawalts were involved in construction of the First Brethren Church in 1923, and the immense Church of the Brethren, built in 1930. In 1923 Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Shirk purchased the home and the two lots on which it is located for \$6,000. After sixteen years living there, they sold their home to their daughter Verna and her husband, Milton Brownsberger in 1939.

Two children were born in the home -- Robert Hanawalt, a longtime La Verne police officer, and Keith Brownsberger.

Jon and Joan Blickenstaff purchased the home from the Brownsbergers in 1968, making numerous modifications and maintaining the property.

The structure of the home is basically unchanged. The wide porch, originally open on the north and west sides, was enclosed on the north. Some bookcases, shelves and a desk which were built in have been removed. The built in ice box is now a pantry.

The home was built with no garage: owners parked on the driveway which runs from the corner of Bonita and I Street through the carport. Later a comfortable garage was built, so Jon Blickenstaff could restore old Ford "woodies."

A swimming pool was built in 1958 and a spa added in 1977. The kitchen and service porch were remodeled with Jon and Joan doing major cabinet work by

themselves. A low rock wall was built as a planter box along Bonita Avenue. The original side yard has been enhanced with the addition of a patio, arbor, and outside barbeque area. The home was formerly featured in the Olde Home Tour sponsored by "SOLVE: Save Old La Verne's Environment."

Jon Blickenstaff retired after 27 years serving as mayor of La Verne. He and Joan now live in north La Verne. The home was purchased by current owners Kevin and Diane Meade.



Aug 27, 2016 – Present for the siting of the historical marker were Bill Lemon, Kevin and Diane Meade, Muriel Seymour Dennis, Sherry Best, Mayor Don Kendrick, Galen Beery, Frank & Margie Martinez, and Frank Dennis.

The Frank & Rilla Seymour Home 2633 Third Street

In 1922 Contractor W. T. Tucker and a work crew laid the foundation for the California bungalow at what was 615 East Third Street. The home was owned by widow Anna Eliza Robinson until the mid-1930's, when it was purchased by the Seymours.

Francis A. Seymour, known as "Frank," born in 1869, married Laura Orilla "Rilla" Pullin, born in 1873.

Frank worked as a mason in Lordsburg. In 1915 he bid to build a city fire building on 3rd Street, but H. M. Hanawalt secured the contract with a lower bid. The family remembers that Frank had been the bricklayer, so he possibly was hired by Hanawalt.

The Seymours' daughter Mildred was blessed with an innate musical ability. She was tutored by Prof. B. S. Haugh of La Verne College. At the age of 13, she played piano classics at a recital.

In May, 1923, Mildred and Dorothea Lois Dyck were featured at a La Verne College Graduate Concert in the Gymnasium Auditorium. Both were pupils of Prof. Haugh.

The Seymours attended the First Brethren Church at the corner of Third and "E" Streets. Mildred became the church pianist, and was secretary of the King's Daughters Class.

Anna Robinson moved in the mid 1930's and the Seymours acquired the home from her.

Mildred Seymour graduated from Bonita Union High School in the Class of 1927. She married a 1926 Bonita graduate, Vernon Randall, who was in charge of the Eureka Vacuum Department at the Los Angeles Broadway Department Store. They had a daughter, Shirley B. Randall, but by 1930 were divorced Mildred then married Arthur O. Slough. Their daughter Muriel Slough was born in 1931, son David Slough in 1932.

After the couple divorced, Mildred juggled her career with raising small children. She, Shirley, Muriel and David lived with her parents on 4th Street. Eventually Mildred was employed by wealthy cellist George Allan Hancock of Santa Maria, as pianist for his orchestra named "The Hancock Ensemble." The group performed across the country until 1948.

After World War II, Mildred met three brothers who performed a comedy act as "The Weire Brothers." Their parents and grandparents were European music hall artists traveling from country to county. As a result, one was born in Germany, one in Czechoslovakia, and one in Austria. After their father died, they formed a comedy dancing act, with juggling, footwork, and violin playing. They emigrated to the U.S. in 1935.

Mildred joined the brothers in 1937 as accompanist and foil for the comedians. Her height and elegant demeanor were an asset: she wore beautiful white gowns which her daughter Muriel helped her buy.

Two overseas trips included performances in Australia, Europe, and South Africa. In October, 1951 they gave a Royal Variety Performance at Victoria Palace. A newspaper reported that the Queen was so amused that she threw her head back and laughed.

Back in the U.S., the group performed on TV variety shows. Eventually Mildred met and married Joseph P. Gilliland in 1977. She passed away in Los Angeles in 1982, and was buried at La Verne Cemetery. The home went to her daughter Muriel, now Mrs. Frank Dennis.

Kevin and Diane Meade purchased the home in 2015 and completed extensive repairs and rehabilitation.

On a nice Saturday morning in August, new owners Frank and Marge Martinez welcomed guests for a final ceremony. Kevin mixed some concrete and sited a Historical Society marker. Muriel reminisced, telling the group how much she had enjoyed living in the home as a child, and how much fun she had roller skating west to downtown La Verne for ice cream!

— Galen Beery with research by Bill Lemon and material from scrapbooks kept by Muriel Seymour Dennis.

The Historical Society of La Verne, organized in 1969, is dedicated to Lordsburg - La Verne history and saving our environment. Have photos, letters, or artifacts from our past? We'd like to hear from you

