

# Legacy Links



**PRESERVING OLD LA VERNE'S  
ENVIRONMENT:  
MAKING HISTORY FOR THE FUTURE**

**LA VERNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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## Every Picture Tells a Story

In this chapter, Ma revealed to Solomon that she had a plan for the approaching Christmas. Pa was skeptical but agreed to go along with Ma's somewhat devious scheme.



The Gates home, built in 1883-1884

## Ma's Bold Christmas Plot

Ma (Margaret Elizabeth) was not a person who would scheme and work for her own self-interest, but she would plan, work and contrive to bring happiness to her friends. Ma dearly loved people. This was especially true if they ascribed to certain fundamental religious beliefs. She was a devout Presbyterian and believed in and practiced every rule and principle that

John Calvin, one of its founders, prescribed for his followers.

Pa frequently chided her about her refusal to see good and virtue in religious denominations other than her own. But when it came to making people happy, she spared no pain or trouble. Ma, who was born in Missouri, came from a long line of Southerners. Hospitality was thoroughly ingrained in her. She strove to make people happy without any expectation of rewards to herself in her present or future life.

After Ma made her scheme known to Pa, she commenced to get ready for their first Christmas together. Several trips were made to Pomona where she purchased groceries and a few inexpensive gifts for the people whom she planned to have as their guests the coming Christmas Day.

Ma, now much improved in health, each evening went out to their turkey yard where Pa had a large flock of bronze turkeys that he was fattening and readying for the market. Ma had a large tom turkey in a separate pen that was given special care. She fed him the choicest of food – corn, barley and table scraps. She provided fresh water for him twice each day as she watched him put on weight. He was marked for the

“pièce de résistance,” as some of Ma's French ancestors who had lived in Brittany, might say when preparing a meal for a church feast day.

The tom turkey kept growing each day, unaware of the end that awaited him on Friday, December 24, 1886. It may have been an unlucky day for the 35-pound turkey who proudly strutted about his pen in majestic dignity, but not for my hospitable mother and her devious plot that was contrived to bring joy and happiness to six bachelors and six maiden women, all of whom were under twenty-five years of age.

Ma prepared mince and pumpkin pies, baked cookies and made a large coconut cake. She proudly pointed to the products of her culinary art and then gave Pa a sly wink.

Pa surveyed her array of food on the kitchen table and then remarked, “Maggie, your devious scheme may backfire on you. I hope you know what you’re doing.”

“Never mind about that, Sol. Just leave it to God, whose will must be done!”

On Saturday, December 25, 1886, at about 11:00 a.m., a caravan of one-horse rigs or buggies, separated by gaps of several hundred yards, could be seen approaching the Gates ranch. As the buggies, each with a lone occupant, drew up in front of the wooden hitching post, Pa rushed and greeted them.

Ma, dressed in her best clothes, covered by a red gingham apron, rushed into the front room, sitting room or parlor, as we called it. She threw her arms around each woman guest, some of whom she did not know too well, and kissed each woman on the cheek and bid her welcome.

Ma stepped over to the six whiskered bachelors, whom Pa introduced to her, and shook the hand of each one. Then she smiled at each of young women and proceeded to introduce them to each other.

Finally, each bachelor in turn was formally introduced to the women guests.

Ma's description to me years later about what happened that Christmas Day was so vivid that I can even now see the admiring smiles of those bachelors as they gazed upon that bewildered array of females, a few beautiful, some plain, one well-educated, but all good, moral women who would, if the right man were available, fondly welcome him as a life-mate, as one of these women later expressed it to Ma.

While the guests were getting acquainted in the parlor before the glowing fireplace, Pa excused himself and slipped out to the kitchen where Ma was putting the finishing touches on their elaborate Christmas dinner.

“Sol,” Ma asked, “What do you think about our party?”

“So far, so good. If those sly, loving smiles that those old bachelors are giving those women are any indication, your plan just might succeed.”

“What about the women?”

“I'll answer that tonight when the party is over,” Pa quipped, as he picked up a tray of food and carried it into the dining room and placed it on a corner of the already heavily laden dinner table.

The dinner now ready. Ma stepped into the parlor where their twelve guests were exchanging pleasantries and bits of gossip and announced that dinner was being served. They all walked into the dining room and Ma skillfully seated her guests in such a way that she hoped would be conducive of future friendship and, perhaps, even marriage.

Their first Christmas dinner together was a success. The thirty-five-pound gobbler, tender ham cooked Southern style, baked potatoes and fresh vegetables, along with Ma's delicious pies and cake, so her guests said, were “out of this world.”

Pa was seated at one end of the table and Ma was at the other. Ma turned to the man seated at the right of her who was an Elder in her church and asked him to give the blessing. With bowed heads, all listened as he thanked God for the hospitality of the Gates' home, the friendships that he hoped would be created this Christmas Day, and for the wonderful meal that they were about to enjoy.

After the bountiful meal was finished, some of the women helped Ma clear the table, while others helped her wash and dry the dishes and platters and place them in the paper-lined shelves of her cupboard. Ma, who had keen ears, overheard several of the bachelors asking the maiden women for dates. Furtive smiles and nods of their heads were the only indications needed for Ma to believe that her plan had succeeded. Just as the sun started to set over the hills beyond the San Dimas Wash, the guests started to leave. Each thanked my parents for the lovely Christmas Day that had meant so much to them.

That night, before going to bed, Ma asked Pa what he thought about those fine, unmarried women, who had been their guests that day.

"Do you really want to know, Maggie?"

"Yes."

"Man-hungry!"

Before another year rolled around, one of the women guests had gone back East to care for her aging mother. One of the men had died unexpectedly. What became of the remaining five bachelor guests of the Gates 1886 Christmas dinner? Five of these men married women whom they met that memorable day, and they became the parents of many fine children.

**Postscript:** Alan Jackson shared the following information about his great-grandmother.

Solomon Gates' wife, my great grandmother, was Margaret Elizabeth Carothers, daughter of William

and Jane (Bell) Carothers, born 11 August 1856 in Milan, MO. After returning from four years of service as a soldier in the Union Army, Margaret's father, William Carothers, whose wife had died, remarried. Things were not too pleasant at home for Margaret with a stepmother. Margaret and two of her sisters left home. Margaret was taken in by Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Boner. Mrs. Hyson Miller wanted her sister, Mrs. John Q. Boner, to allow Margaret, who bore the name of her de facto foster parents who never legally adopted her, to come and live with them in Los Angeles. This Margaret did. A year later she met Mr. Hyson Miller's friend, Solomon Gates. Then Solomon and Margaret were married at the Miller home by their minister, a Presbyterian clergyman. Thereafter, for many years, Margaret and Solomon frequently visited the Hyson Miller family and they in turn visited my parents at the Gates Ranch.

### President's Message

The LVHS is running strong with several in-person events. On **October 11<sup>th</sup>**, the first 2021 in-person member/community meeting was held at the La Verne Veteran's Hall and attended by 47 enthusiastic citizens who came to hear highlights of **"The Story of La Verne Video '21"**. Barbara Smythe, Hillcrest resident and Gallery Manager of the Hillcrest Cultural Arts Society, teamed with Hillcrest Director of Marketing Shirley Turner to talk about the process of creating a film that will add cultural richness to the BUSD social studies curriculum. Members of the City Council and Bonita USD School Board were also in attendance.



**Above: The Duo of Smythe & Turner describe the film-making process.**



**Attendees at the October 11<sup>th</sup> LVHS sponsored Member/Community meeting listen attentively**

The video is expected to be completed in February of 2022 and will be available for viewing by all La Verne third graders. Copies will be available to school board and city council members and posted on the LVHS website. After the presentation, President Sherry Best hosted a short business meeting and attendees voted to retain the current officers for 2022.

LVHS members gathered again to enjoy the annual Old Timers Potluck Picnic at Las Flores Park on **Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>**. Although the weather was unseasonably cool, the social atmosphere was warm. Randy Miller and Kathy Woolsey provided a set of tunes that had attendees singing along. Plans are in process to post some of their set on the LVHS website. Click on “Picnic Music” on the “Events Videos” button.



**Randy Miller and Kathy Woolsey provide mellow entertainment in the redwood grove**



**LVHS members bundled up to enjoy potluck treats and live music among the redwoods at Las Flores Park**

On **Saturday, November 20<sup>th</sup>**, attendees will meet at ULV to see items from the Citrus Roots collection, including newspaper clippings, historical artifacts, photos, and artistic works. Housed in the university’s Archives and Special Collections, the collection was previously inaccessible due to Covid-19 restrictions.



This cover in the Citrus Roots collection is from a popular periodical known as *The California Citrograph*, started in Riverside in 1915 and running until about 1969. Today’s quarterly *Citrograph*, published by the Citrus Research Board, is less concerned with straightforward news and more about

scientific research and the citrus industry. Participants were urged to attend the Crusin’ La Verne Holiday Car Show after their tour.

Mark your calendar for **Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>**. The LVHS is hosting a vintage gift sale on the corner of Third and “G” Streets from **2:00-5:00pm**. This is an opportunity for some holiday shopping (the LVHS adds no shipping charges nor carries unstocked items – what you see is what you get). Enjoy some hot spiced cider and a home-baked cookie and consider buying some sweet treats to augment your own holiday



baking. Join us for a special performance by the Bonita High School Band at 4:45pm. We need La Verne bakers to volunteer their skills for the treat table!

Plans are shaping up for sponsoring a second tour of the “B” Street Cemetery in late April or early May. I’d like to create a “Cemetery Committee” to select focus families. Please contact me if you are: 1) particularly interested in a family that could be researched and/or 2) helping on the committee. A pdf copy of families and grave locations from 1904-1989 can be reviewed in a document posted on the LVHS website. Look for La Verne Cemetery book under the Publications and Resources page. We’ll need re-enactors to play the parts of the characters depicted in the tour, help with costumes, and sit at the donation table. Don’t be shy. This is a popular community event, but it takes a lot of work; help the LVHS with your skills and some sweat equity.

**Sherry Best, LVHS President**

### **Just Ask Bill**

It occurs to us that Just Ask Bill could be shortened to JAB but Bill’s answers, while always direct, are never pointed or sharp. Bill answers a question about a sad event in La Verne’s early history.



Alan asked:

Does the LVHS have any original content for Raymond C. Thomas (1894-1910)? He was a Bonita High student who died from a pole vault accident at school. Newspaper articles are plentiful, but photos and family stories are not.



Hello Alan: Raymond’s is indeed a sad story. The photo from the 1909 Bonita Union High School Track and Field team shows Raymond Thomas

in his freshman year. Based on the photo’s caption, Raymond is the young man in the close-up shown in the previous newsletter column.



On January 28, 1910, Raymond died at home from injuries from a pole-vaulting accident sustained at Bonita High School the Tuesday prior to his death. Raymond broke both bones in one arm – a double compound fracture. Although he appeared to be making a rapid recovery, he began to complain of pain and, despite the doctors’ best efforts, died at home within several hours of this relapse. An account in the January 28<sup>th</sup> *Pomona Progress* noted a weakened heart and formation of a blood clot as a contributor to Thomas’ death. A January 29<sup>th</sup> account in the *Los Angeles Times* stated that Raymond had gone out driving on January 27<sup>th</sup> and that he “fell dead” the following evening while walking across his bedroom floor. In his honor, the flag at Bonita High School was flown at half-mast.

Raymond was described in the *Pomona Daily Review* as “...an unusually handsome, bright, ambitious, and affectionate boy, in whom the family love centered”. He left behind a younger sister, and, of course, his devastated parents.

Raymond was related to the Teague family, owners of the San Dimas Nursery and one of the leading suppliers of citrus trees in the world. The Teague family and the San Dimas Nursery will be the subject of an upcoming feature article in *Legacy Links*.

## Rolling with the International

Inman Conety's 1938 International truck is receiving enthusiastic attention from Bonita High School students under the direction of teacher Rob Zamboni.



Bonita HS students approach the 1938 International (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)

At this point work is proceeding to strip the truck down to the chassis. The frame will then be collected by Project Director Erik Chaputa for welding.



Sherry Best and Marv Weston play "peek-a-boo" through the truck window. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)

### Getting Into the Act

A "steering committee" has gathered around Zamboni and Chaputa to lend expertise and support. The LVHS was loaned a copy of an original owner's manual for Model D-30 and DS-30 Internationals, which has been scanned and will be posted on the LVHS website. In addition, Mr. Karl Hertz and Mr. Griff Roberts helped to get us closer to completion with a donation of

original International truck parts and offered their restoration experience. They have been helpful with referrals to restoration specialists. The LVHS purchased a sandblasting box for Rob Zamboni so his students can start cleaning off the rusted truck parts right in the Bonita High School shop. Erik helped with the purchase of a core engine, which will be reconditioned and installed into the International very soon.

Publicity has come from the Southern California News Group, ABC Channel 7 News, and LTVV. Many thanks go to Mr. Javier Rojas for his excellent article that appeared in the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, and *Whittier Daily News*. On Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, Zamboni's class was visited by ABC Channel 7 for filming and interviews. The students took a fender off the truck and talked about their excitement at tackling this exciting challenge. La Verne TV is in the wings ready to start filming what will become a chronicle of the truck's restoration. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sherry Best made a presentation before the Bonita Unified School District Board about the project and described more possibilities for collaborative district/LVHS projects. The LVHS will keep readers posted about the truck's transformation.



### When Santa Came to "B" Street

These photos were recently sent to the LVHS by Matthew Neely, President and CEO of Hillcrest Retirement Community, which now owns the property

at 2527 "B" Street. They show a visit by Santa. Sally Reeder shared these photos with additional narrative about her former home in La Verne to Mike Welch, an incoming Hillcrest Board member. Here's what Sally said:

I don't have to remind you of the best thing for kids growing up in La Verne was -- Santa's visit on Christmas morning!



I'll identify as many people as I can for you. My mom is to the far left waving. Sue Bringhurst is in a sweater shading her eyes from the sun. Her brother Jimmy Bringhurst (profile) is looking at the Jeep (sleigh). There are two blond girls with braids -- I'm the one still in her pajamas, barefooted with the bag of treats in my hand (looking down), the other is a neighbor's granddaughter visiting for Christmas. My brother Don is walking behind the Jeep (sleigh). I'm sure my parents knew who was in the Santa suit and who his driver was.

As far as when/how my parents bought the house, my best guess is 1956 or 1957. My Grandpa Stephens died

in 1953 and my grandmother gave my dad some of the life insurance money. Again, I was a little girl, but I think it was in the range of \$10,000. I'm pretty sure they paid \$17,000 for the house. It was a huge piece of property. In fact, your mother's apartment is probably built on what was once what we referred to as "the back 40."

We had a nice-sized yard and there was a back fence. Behind that fence was a huge field. All our property. There was a dilapidated barn on that portion of the lot when we purchased it. Dad was sure we'd play in there and hurt ourselves. So, he ran an ad in the paper for anyone who wanted distressed wood. They could have it for free as long as they did the demolition. For weeks, a man would show up back there on the weekend and take away the wood. When he had taken all he wanted, Daddy called the fire department to see if they wanted to set it on fire and practice. Sure enough! That, my friend, was pretty cool to watch the firemen in our backyard doing the real thing... only controlled."



### Look Who's Growing...

The LVHS thanks its newest members. Thank you for choosing us and please send your questions, ideas, and suggestions. Tell a friend and let's grow together.

#### NEW LVHS Members - 2021

- Jeff Allred
- Yvonne Belcher
- Judith Bruner
- Margaret Bruno
- Mike Capps
- Erik Chaputa
- Carol Dahl
- Muir Davis
- Catalina Green
- Paula Klute
- Elaine Semanik
- Spencer Shwetz
- Sherri Szabo
- Debbie Viggers