

Legacy Links



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

LA VERNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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June/July, 2024

Every Picture Tells a Story:

On Friday, May 17th, members of the LVHS visited the San Gabriel Mission for a morning of discovery. Director of Development and Communications Terri Huerta met us inside the mission and provided a synopsis and then answered questions before we explored the compound, which included the museum, indigenous courtyard, cemetery, and other features. There were so many spots for photography that the images from this visit were collected into a collage that is featured at the end of this newsletter. However, one historical item was so compelling that it earned a separate picture and narrative. This is the Trinity Vine, also called "The Mother Vine." Planted in 1771, it still thrives at the Mission.



Junipero Serra, founder of the California missions, planted the first Mission vines at San Diego de Alcalá, in 1769. The "Mother Vine" at San Gabriel Mission became the source of the first vines planted at the Pubelo de Los Angeles in 1786.

Winemaking was a crucial source of income for the California Missions and vineyards were eventually planted at each of the twenty-one missions. The vineyards at Mission San Gabriel became the largest and most prolific. In the 1790s, the Mission winery was producing over 35 million gallons (130,000 kl) of wine. By 1820 their mission wines, particularly fortified wines, were being shipped to Europe. As more varieties were introduced throughout California, the Mission grape transitioned to become a favorite table grape with a pleasant and agreeable flavor. Members of the Los Angeles Vintner's Association continue to harvest grapes to make wine, thus celebrating the city's viticultural and historical past. They are working with San Gabriel Mission staff to propagate the historic vine.

Mission San Gabriel was designated as a World Heritage Site on May 6, 1971, which means that it is a cultural site of outstanding universal value. The increased emphasis on the lives of indigenous peoples

during the “Mission Period” was explored in the museum and a special courtyard garden.

President’s Message

The LVHS conducted very successful events in May and June. Although attendance was modest for the June 9th cemetery tour, interest and participation was high and the docents did not disappoint. The local weather cooperated with breezes and high clouds. The next day we had a presentation on the life of Florence (Pancho) Lowe Barnes. The President of the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society, Leslie Ziff, gave



the presentation. Attendance was high as visitors learned about famous woman who made aviation history. At the conclusion of the presentation, the International made an appearance outside the Meeting House. Now sporting new side mirrors and



window glass, the International was ready for the July 4th parade.

On June 29th, we enjoyed a visit to the Tail’s End Ranch with docent Ed Hume. The visit was full of information and is featured in a separate article later in this newsletter. Lily Brainard took these excellent photos of the event. Soon there will be a video to view on the LVHS website. Thank you, Lily!



Docent Ed Hume provides introductory remarks as the group gathers to carpool to Trail’s End (above). The group gather on the back porch after the tour and family history (below).



Look for the LVHS throughout the summer. We’ll be at the July 27th Family Swin Night and the August 6th National Night Out. Both events are at Las Flores Park. Look for an email blast announcing our Old Timer’s Potluck picnic later in August. The LVHS is silent in September as we plan events for the coming year. If you have a special request, please send it to Sherry Best at 909/596-4679 or

sbest@lavernehistoricalsociety.org. The LVHS serves its members!



This K-9 sponsored float was the prize-winner at the 2024 Fourth of July parade. What a handsome entry!

Exploring the Lives of Early ULV Presidents



Eric Davis talks about his grandfather and 13th ULV President C. Ernest Davis

On Sunday, June 9, 2024, visitors converged on the La Verne Cemetery on "B" Street to heard docents talk about the lives of several early ULV Presidents. The event was particularly noteworthy because two of the presenters were direct descendants of those presidents and knew them as grandparents as well as university leaders. Other ULV Presidents will be highlighted in future editions of *Legacy Links*.

The following is an excerpt from the 1st person narrative of C. Ernest Davis, President of La Verne College from 1938 – 1948, as told by his grandson, Eric Davis, son of Rodney Davis, with a co-written script by Barbara Smythe. La Verne is fortunate to have numerous citizen residents whose families were early pioneers in this city.

C. Ernest Davis was born in 1893 and died in 1966. He is buried next to his wife Grace Heisel Davis, born in 1893 and died in 1985.

I was born in 1893 in rural Tennessee into what some would say was the Brethren church; my grandfather being an "unsalaried minister" for the church, my dad a farmer/preacher, and my Uncle John a Deacon in the church. By the time I was eight, I had made my own commitment to Christ and was baptized in the church. My mother had died when I was six weeks old, and my Uncle John and Aunt Martha took over parenting me. I had just completed the 8th grade when our family joined the Brethren migration to the West Cost for the promise of cheap, fertile farmland, and a church college education for their children. We settled in Butte County, a rural area in the north central part of California.

I wanted to go to college, but Lordsburg (where the Brethren academy and college were located) was 600 miles away and we didn't have any money. So, I repeated 8th grade twice more, since that was the highest grade available in Butte County. And then the community and our church family thought I should go to college because of my loud voice and serious attitude and helped support my dreams of further education.

At 17, I was the first in our family to attend college. I have heard that since then, 63 relatives of the Davis/Heisel family have either been alumni of staff of Lordsburg Academy/La Verne College/ or the University of La Verne!

After I graduated from La Verne, I earned my Masters from the College of the Pacific in Stockton, CA, and was called to the presidency of Mount Morris College, a Brethren affiliated school in Illinois. Later I served as Professor of Religious Education and Field Secretary at McPherson college, a Brethren school in Kansas. I had gained administrative experience, understood the problems of the field man, had good relations with a great number of the Brethren of the Northwest from my schooling days, and was known in the denomination.

When the Board of Trustees at La Verne College looked for a President to succeed the retiring Dr. Studebaker, they looked for a man with a combination of administrative experience and enough understanding of the church to recover the support of the Brethren in Northern California and the Northwest. I seemed to fit the bill.

And so, in 1938, fifteen years after my graduation, I was being asked by my alma mater to come back as President of the college! In my first report to the Board of Trustees, as their newly appointed President, I praised the contributions of my predecessor, Dr. Ellis M. Studebaker. And then, I pointed out the two imperatives that needed to be done: 1) balancing the budget, and 2) getting out of debt. (\$82,000! Much of this debt consisted of notes to faculty members for unpaid salaries) Our indebtedness hung around our necks like a millstone. I knew this couldn't be done at once, but I thought this goal could be reached within 10 years. These were hard times. We were recovering from the Great Depression and the possibility of a World War was looming on the horizon.

In my second year, I was able to announce that the balance of the mortgage indebtedness on the main campus and building had been paid off, largely through the sale of a farm given to the college by Adam Wenger of Pasadena.

By my third year as President, 1940-41, the enrollment had increased to 221, the best in a decade. However, I was concerned about the possibility of war and how it would affect the college. I warned in my September 1941 report, *"The Selective Service System and the war situation will cause a general reduction in attendance at colleges and universities throughout the country. Our enrollment will suffer. A general feeling of unrest and a sense of futility and frustration make student recruiting more difficult. In view of prospective lessened income from student tuitions and the positive necessity of paying in full our modest salaries to the faculty and staff, who must live on the rising market, we must ask your increased support during this period. . . . We need to not only pay our present salaries in full, but to make more substantial increases so our faculty can stay with us, and we need to add to our equipment and facilities from time to time."*

The war years created problems due not only to the decline in enrollment and the problems this precipitated, but to the issues the war itself raised. Frankly, it was not easy to be the president of a college sponsored by a peace church in wartime. However, my deep convictions on the subject held firm, though I tried to act fairly to those on both sides of the controversy. I was appointed associate advisory member of the Covina Selective Service Board. I know I was expected to help with the conscientious objectors, but I also gave careful and accurate counsel to those entering the armed forces. During this difficult time, I made every effort to remain kind and considerate of all I came in contact with, in spite of our differences.

After the record low enrollment of 1943 at the college of 75 girls and 20 men, enrollment began to slightly increase with each succeeding year. By the end of the war, enrollment stood at 117. By the second semester of the 1947-48 school year, enrollment was 246, the largest the College had had up to this time. It was a good time to terminate my service at the college. I had

served as its President for 10 years, from 1938-48. They had been challenging years, but I knew I was leaving the college in much better shape than when I came. We had wiped the slate clean of the \$82,000 deficit plus the \$10,000 interfund debt. Faculty salaries were raised, and a regular scale of payment adopted. A pension fund had been started through the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association. The Board of Trustees had been enlarged to 21. A number of promising young men had been added to the staff. About \$70,000 had been raised for building purposes; the construction of the I.J. Woody dormitory was underway, and the beginnings of a fund (\$4,000) for the Hoover Memorial Library had been made.

In my closing message to the Board of Directors, I suggested that students' tuition might need to be raised, as well as teachers' salaries. I did remind them in these words: *"... Money is still not everything with everybody. If you should ever be discouraged, remember that institutions are not built in a day, that we have survived two world wars, one major depression, and various other difficulties too numerous to mention. . . . Consider, too, that America and the world need the kind of education for which La Verne stands. God still lives. Take courage and go ahead."*

SOURCES:

The University of La Verne – A Centennial History: 1891 – 1991. Herbert W. Hogan and Gladdys E. Muir

La Verne, The Story of the People Who Made a Difference, 1839 – 1987. Evelyn Hollinger

The Brethren of La Verne – A History of the Church of the Brethren, La Verne, CA 1890 – 2008. Galen S. Beery & Evelyn S. Hollinger

Brethren Trail Blazers. Mary Garber, Vernard M. Eller, & Others (Vernard M. Eller)

Our Church. C. Ernest Davis, Director of Religious Education Northern, CA, 1923

Eric Davis, grandson (Rodney Davis's son) provided various articles, a postcard, and invaluable family history.

Trail's End Visit at the End of the Trail

On Saturday, June 29, LVHS sponsored a visit to the Trail's End Ranch, originally the hunting lodge and weekend "getaway" of John Barnes Miller, the first Chairman of the Board of Southern California Edison. Now owned by Pomona College and used as an event center, the ranch was opened for an exclusive LVHS tour with former Edison employee Ed Hume as docent.

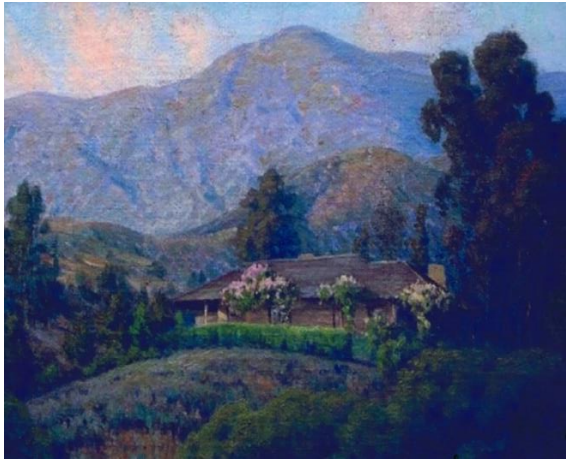
Ed provided a biography of the house and its occupants. John Barnes Miller was born in 1869 and raised in Port Huron, Michigan. He attended the university of Michigan for two years but returned to manage his father's business and study law in a local law office. After a hiatus managing a plantation in Louisiana, he returned to Port Huron, where he married Carrie Borden, granddaughter of the founder of Borden's Milk Company. The couple moved to Pasadena (then an enclave for wealthy eastern families) and bought a big house in 1897. They built another house in 1906. Both houses are still standing.

John went to work for the Westside Lighting Company, which merged with Edison Electric. John was elected President in 1901.

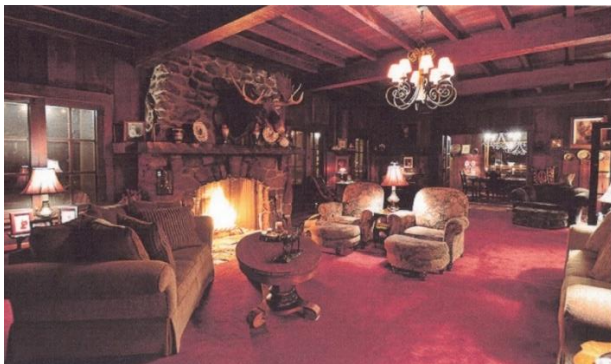
During his time at Edison Electric, John became known as the "great amalgamator" because he engineered the mergers and acquisitions of about forth power companies all over Southern California. One of these was the San Antonio Power and Light Company, which pre-dated the hydropower plant built in Niagara Falls two years but seldom gets credit for its first-place status. In 1917, Miller merged his company with Henry Huntington, creating a monopoly on electric service.

Feeling the need to build a "getaway" from Los Angeles and Pasadena, Miller awarded a contract to D. H. Williams of Venice to build a house and two bunkhouses in Live Oak Canyon north of Lordsburg. The lodge-style house was built for \$10,000 and the architect was Reginald Johnson, who is responsible for designing the All-Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena,

the City Hall and Biltmore Hotel in Santa Barbara, and the Hale Solar Laboratory at Cal Tech. The image below is a watercolor painted in 1929 by California Impressionist John Gamble.



Miller enjoyed his income. He was on the board of the Tournament of Roses committee, played polo, owned a 101' yacht, and was a Republican delegate to the RNC. After Miller's death in 1914, his widow lived on until 1947 and left her estate to her four children. The house was sold to a family named Hill, and it was lost to Mrs. Hill in a divorce settlement. The house was sold again to another family named Miller (no relation to the original Millers), who made multiple improvements and alterations. One of the most significant changes was the installation of a 20,000 gallon water storage tank on their property, which came in handy as the water was in the 2003 Padua Fire. Although a bunkhouse was lost, the main house was spared. The image of the great room as it appeared in the 2000s. Note the moose head over the fireplace mantle and the red shag carpeting.



Scouts Help the LVHS for Love of La Verne

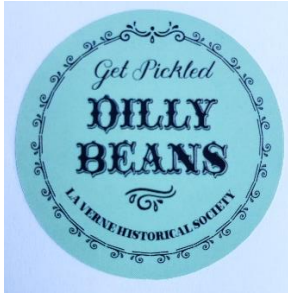
Members of Brownie and Girl Scout troops have helped the LVHS to complete display cases for the Pocket Museum Project. On May 11, 2024, members of Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles Daisy Troop 7221 helped during the first annual "Love La Verne Day" to complete the remaining five display cases. One will go to Ramona Middle School and another to Bonita High School to display artifacts of La Verne's history. The remaining cases will be distributed throughout La Verne, where their contents can be appreciated by residents and other visitors. Two cases were located at Hillcrest in the Meeting House. One case will feature artifacts that tell the story of Hillcrest's history, and the other will be a rotating display that features the lives of Hillcrest residents.



Summer Harvest Means New Jams and Pickles

If you are in the mood for some crisp pickles to go with your BBQ this summer, or want to make a delicious peach cobbler, consider the LVHS' dilly beans and mango-peach jam. The dilly beans are great by themselves, chopped up into potato salad, or used as a substitute for celery in a Bloody Mary. The peach/mango jam comes in regular and spicy versions

and will be perfect on toast, English muffins, or in a pie or cobbler. *Laissez les bon temps rouler!*



Once Again: Shout Out To Sanders Towing



The LVHS wants to give a huge shout out to Sanders Towing in San Dimas. For years, Sanders has taken the International to appointments at Bonita High School, Old Anvil Speed Shop, the homes of various La Verne residents, and carried us with pride through the Fourth of July parade. Now that the International is rolling, we want to acknowledge a debt of gratitude that can never be re-paid. Your towing service helped us stretch our dollars and gave the International much-needed publicity. Once the stake bed is up, we will proudly carry your sign. You were always there for the LVHS. Thank you!

Rolling with the International

The International participated in La Verne's Fourth of July parade and proudly roamed our streets sporting a tall Uncle Sam hat and patriotic decorations. Members of the LVHS turned out on July 3rd to decorate its chassis and cab. Our goal for 2024 is to get a new bed and sides installed so we can carry passengers. A sound system is also planned. Your membership and donations from sales of our t-shirts, jams/jellies, and books fund our projects. Former Mayor Don Kendrick related that he drove the International in La Verne's July 4th parade in 1984, and then it was retired to

Heritage Park and sat for more than 30 years before it was brought back to life by the LVHS.

The following images commemorate the International being prepared and participating in the July 4th parade, "Fifty Years of Hometown Heroes".



2024 LVHS LIFE Members

Danita Beauchamp

2024 NEW LVHS Members

Ken & Karen Beauchamp

Monique Flynn

Barbara Grant

Kito Gutierrez

Pat & Eric Leung