I f there is one thing a global pandemic provides, it’s perspective, quickly dispelling any notions of community isolation and neutrality from the global order. And so it is with our organization. The La Jolla Historical Society operates a portfolio of six missions—delivery functions: exhibitions, publications, educational programs, community events, archive and collections accessibility, and historic preservation consultation. All have been suspended, cancelled, postponed, or in some way affected by the COVID 19 pandemic.

The list is long of the activities we cancelled this year in response to the pandemic, which include restrictions that prohibit or limit social gatherings and program activities. Exhibition opening receptions, the La Jolla Concours d’Elegance & Motor Car Classic, the Secret Garden Tour, silent film nights on the lawn, Landmark Group lectures, youth summer camps, and the Scripps Luchatron are some of the casualties. Knowing that the pandemic recovery will be uneven and protracted, be assured of our future. There is much to be thankful for at the La Jolla Historical Society as we look ahead, and we are extremely grateful for your support, generosity, and encouragement.

Heath Fox
Executive Director
n the early twentieth century, newcomers to San Diego invariably commented on the wildflowers that sprung up after the winter rains, covering hillsides with patches of purple and yellow flowers, wild mustard, and flaming orange poppies. Among them was philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps who was delighted by the variety of plants that came to life out of seemingly barren ground. Intrigued, she commissioned the artist Albert R. Valentien to collect and paint the wildflowers of California. His watercolors in the collection of the San Diego Natural History Museum testify to the rich variety of plant life in early California.

Valentien was not a botanist but the chief decorator at Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati, OH. He began painting native wildflowers while taking the “rest cure” in Germany. He and his wife Anna had travelled to Europe to arrange for the Rookwood exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition and to show their own work. Exhausted, Valentien recuperated at a health spa in the Black Forest where he entertained himself by sketching wildflower “models” that his wife collected for him.

In 1903, the Valentiens travelled to San Diego, reputed to be a paradise for both health seekers and amateur botanists. Sensing that there was a market for flower paintings, Valentien painted 150 species of plants including the manzanita, the California lilac, and the matilija poppy. He brought some of his works to show members of the Scripps family at Miramar Ranch, the West Coast headquarters of publishing magnate E.W. Scripps. Ellen Scripps, visiting from La Jolla, noted in her diary, “Mr. Valentien here with collection of painted wild flowers.” Encouraged, Valentien considered leaving his job at Rookwood. He later wrote that this was “practically the ending of my pottery career.”

The Valentiens moved to San Diego in 1908. An exhibit of wildflower paintings at the Scripps Building in downtown San Diego attracted Ellen Scripps who purchased studies of goldenrod and wild aster at $100 apiece ($3000 in 2020 dollars). She met with Valentien and his wife several times over the course of that year before deciding, in 1909, to support a major project: the illustration of California’s native plants.

Over the next ten years, Valentien traveled, in his words, “over valleys, mountain tops, along the seashore and in the deserts of the entire state... painting as I go.” He filled 1,094 sheets of 13-by-20 inch paper with watercolors of nearly 1,500 specimens: wildflowers, ferns, grasses, trees, shrubs, and cactus. He also collected specimens which he sent to UC Berkeley for identification. When finished, the paintings were placed in flat metal shelving in Scripps’ library.

Scripps and Valentien had hoped to publish the watercolors, but production costs proved too expensive. As a result, the images remained in La Jolla until 1933 when after Scripps’ death they were donated to the Natural History Museum. According to Margaret Dykens, Research Library Director and curator for the 2003 exhibition, Plant Portraits: The California Legacy of A.R. Valentien, the collection bears witness to the “vibrancy, liveliness, and breathtaking abilities” of Valentien. It also “documents the spectacular richness of California’s diverse plant life in the early 1900s.”

McClain is professor of History at University of San Diego and a member of the Society’s board of directors.
Howard Steele Fitz-Randolph – signing himself as Howard S.F. – was no scribbler. He crossed his T’s and dotted his I’s. He watched his grammar and, equally, punctuation. Commas in right place. Ditto hyphens, colons and semi colons. Hyphens only where hyphens are due. In researching and writing the first book of La Jolla history Fitz-Randolph adapted a basic rule: Write letters, talk to old people and dig, dig, dig.

Randolph’s book, “La Jolla Year by Year,” was initially published in 1946 with printing undertaken by the author, a genealogist, who had a mind for what he was doing. (Before the Cold War, the Red Scare and fall-out shelters. With returning military starting families, La Jolla was about to experience a huge housing boom, but with a different kind of house that was to replace the cozy village cottages and rustic bungalows of yesteryear – houses that found iconification as Mid-Century Modern works of substance hanging over ocean-view canyons or California ranchers that landed like so many happy look-alike zombies on nearby mesas. The houses contained a new phenomena – television! – and homeowners who gathered for neighborhood cocktail hours or skipped out to dinner and dancing at that superficially respectable, but slightly iniquitous, place to swing called Del Charro. La Jolla was evolving into a different style of place when Randolph recorded right plain facts. Much of the Green Dragon Colony was gone or going. The Ellen Browning Scripps manse on Prospect Street had just become the new Art Center with visions toward becoming a contemporary museum. More and more street corners and blocks began to sport baby new gas stations and car dealerships. The electric trolley, for nearly 20 years a major link from La Jolla to San Diego and back, had ceased operating. La Jolla, like the rest of the country, was ready to cruise the highways in Oldsmobiles and Buicks.

Randolph left a history book of the La Jolla of before – before it cruised away. In preparing the manuscript he corresponded with hundreds of residents and visitors as well as their relatives to share memories of older people and places. Correspondence, frequently lengthy handwritten letters and sometimes no more than typed notes on penny postcards, went on for several years before Randolph sat down to write and assemble material at his home at 7862 Prospect St. The book became an extreme hands-on project with type set in place for each page and the pages then assembled in seven binders with accompanying photographic copies to be used in the first edition. Randolph dealt with the then and still-debated origin of La Jolla’s name – Indian or Spanish, hole/hollow or jewel. He began by saying “there is much to be said for both contentions” and quoted a children’s story on prehistoric La Jolla written in 1943 by Melicent Humason Lee supporting the notion of origin from an Indian word meaning “cave” or “hole.” The acting director of the San Diego Museum supported Joya, the Spanish word for jewel “that phonetically can be spelled Jolla.” And Randolph concluded “whether the name is Indian or Spanish, whether it means cave or jewel the facts remain that we do have caves here and that La Jolla sparkles like a jewel.”

But when the 1946 book got into readers’ hands the reference to La Jolla’s name caused major hoo-hah. Residents cringed – how could anyone suggest La Jolla was anything but a jewel? Linguistics scholars threw linguistic tantrums. And Randolph picked up his fountain pen and drew lines over everything he had written about the name La Jolla. When the 1955 book was published, his section on the La Jolla name began: “The origin of the name La Jolla has been a controversial subject for many years. . .” This time he relied on Edwin G. Gudde’s book, “1000 California Place Names” published in 1947 by the University of California Press as his source along with an 1870 map of the Pueblo Lands of San Diego. “There is much to be said for both contentions.”

In his second and final edition Randolph establishes “there can be no doubt that this hollow gave La Jolla its name.” His hand-typed note pasted into the personal copy of 1946 includes a paragraph from Gudde’s book and a conclusion that “this seems to be the final word on the subject.” Obviously, it wasn’t.

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By Carol Olten

IT WAS THE EARLY 1900S, BUT LA JOLLANS ALREADY HAD THEIR SWANS DOWN CAKE FLOUR, OREOS, JELLO, AND CAMPBELL’S PORK AND BEANS GOOD TO GO

By Ken Thiel

VOTE! VOTE! VOTE!

In the century since, women’s suffrage hasn’t propagated similarly momentous sister legislation or social change.

When my son was in elementary school I mentioned that there was once a time when women were not allowed to vote. He was skeptical. “It’s true,” I assured him. “Men made the rules and they thought women were too ignorant and emotional to vote.” He argued with me about the fallacy of that position, and I took a perverse pride in his incredulity. Nearly 100 years after women pushed for and delivered the right to vote, I helped birth a generation who found the history of women’s suffrage so absurd as to be unbelievable. Is this a sign of progress or is it a pacifier that distracts us from the unfulfilled legacy of women’s rights?

August 26 is Women’s Equality Day and marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. In our zeal to celebrate the passage of what should have been a birthright, let’s not overlook the fact that women are still struggling for equality, starting with women’s suffrage, itself. Though the 19th Amendment was written for all women, it mainly served to enfranchise white women, due to regressive state laws like Jim Crow. It wasn’t until the 1965 Voting Rights Act outlawed discriminatory voting practices that Black women and men were fully allowed to exercise the right to vote. Indigenous women were largely excluded from voting before the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, after which some municipalities passed laws effectively barring them from voting until the late 1940s. And restrictions on Asian American voting weren’t removed until the 1950s.

In the century since, women’s suffrage hasn’t propagated similarly momentous sister legislation or social change. Though women account for just over half of the population, we are underrepresented in places of power. As of 2023, only 24 percent of U.S. senators, 42 percent of U.S. representatives, and 37 percent of state legislators are women. We comprise only 24 percent of board members, and only 19 percent of executives in Fortune 500 companies.

Women are represented in about 10 percent of the monuments on the National Mall; New York’s Central Park got its first statue honoring real women – Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth – this month, thanks to the efforts of San Diegans Gary Ferdman and Dr. Myriam Miedzian; and San Diego can claim statues of just one woman who got kissed by a sailor she didn’t know. How fitting. August 26 is Women’s Equality Day and marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. In our zeal to celebrate the passage of what should have been a birthright, let’s not overlook the fact that women are still struggling for equality, starting with women’s suffrage, itself. Though the 19th Amendment was written for all women, it mainly served to enfranchise white women, due to regressive state laws like Jim Crow. It wasn’t until the 1965 Voting Rights Act outlawed discriminatory voting practices that Black women and men were fully allowed to exercise the right to vote. Indigenous women were largely excluded from voting before the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, after which some municipalities passed laws effectively barring them from voting until the late 1940s. And restrictions on Asian American voting weren’t removed until the 1950s.

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JOHNNIE OF THE BIRDS
(cand other small wonders)
by Carol Olson

by stretching your arms to the Every Child’s Society of San Diego...
Editor's Note: As this year observes the 150th anniversary of architect Irving J. Gill, his birth in 1870 in a small farm community near Syracuse, N.Y., his esteem grew within the architectural world for pioneering efforts toward 20th century modernism. Architectural scholar James Gething, founder of the Irving J. Gill Architectural Foundation, considers Gill’s early 20th century work in the San Diego area and extraordinary contributions to La Jolla in buildings such as the La Jolla Women’s Club and Wheeler Bailey House. Below, Tremkoeker also reprints an excerpt from The Craftsman magazine of 1916 in which Gill wrote a rare description of architecture and its relation to the arts under the title: The Home of the Future: The New Architecture of the West: Small Homes for a Great Country.

“Irving J. Gill, architect of good health”


No architect can read his inspired analysis of the place and the

thought has its page and its monument in that immense book.  Down

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the principal expression of man in his different stages of development,

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Everyday life underwent significant shape-shifting starting in mid-March, 2020, when quarantines and lock-downs were put in force to combat the quickly spreading coronavirus already declared a worldwide pandemic. In La Jolla, the streets – strangely carless and peopleless – became eerily silent. School and businesses closed. Many storefronts were boarded up in fear of looting and rioting. Beaches and parks were largely deserted. Sheltering in place at home, many people found time passing more slowly. In rare moments in their lives they found themselves suddenly without schedules. Others segued into making new and different kinds of schedules via Zoom school and conferencing or Facechat. And some just stayed in bed and slept late! In the interest of recording these times for posterity, the La Jolla Historical Society asked members of the community to submit reports about their lives during these unusual and turbulent times. Herewith, a selection of our...
a rain shower – began to interest the city folks whose appetites for natural subjects had already been whetted by literary pieces such as Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass.”

By the early 1870s his writing and assorted jobs of teaching and clerking had earned enough to buy nine acres of farmlands along the Hudson River for himself and his wife, Ursula. A wood and stone house was built and named Riverby. When words didn’t bring in a satisfactory monetary harvest, Burroughs planted and sold grapes. But he continued to write about his life in the country and what he found in that country, subjects ranging from Eastern Screech owls to strawberries. He found a following in magazines such as Country Life and the North American Review, besides the Atlantic. Eventually, his work was published in 25 books with notable titles such as “Wake-Robin,” “Birds and Poets” and “Locusts and Wild Honey,” the majority of it written at Slabsides, another nearby retreat the author built in the Catskills.

Burroughs notions of the simple life fit easily into the cultural groove of the American Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, a period notable for the architecture of Greene & Greene, Stickley furniture and the many earth-bound design forms in pottery, iron work and lighting that came to define the era. His La Jolla visits were invariably combined with stops in Pasadena where the movement flourished in the Arroyo Seco culture spawned and nurtured by one of the Arroyo’s principal inhabitants, Charles Lummis, whose publication “The Land of Sunshine” became the leading literary journal of the Pacific Coast. Burroughs never published in Lummis’ magazine but the two literary figures became good friends. Lummis took the last-known photograph of him as he boarded the train in Pasadena for his long journey home.

Johnnie of the Birds will always be remembered for loving small wonders. He was an avid trout fisher, but not taking more than he needed for supper. He venerated all manner of thrushes from the “wood wagtail” to the “hermit.” He spent hours watching sparrows. He missed about Darwin and he worried over Edgar Allan Poe. He viewed nature with wit – but moreover – awe, something to be considered with renewed interest today as so much of it disappears around us and our conception becomes reduced to virtual reality videos of irascible bears and curious deer running amuck around suburban backyards and super highways.

Burroughs never would have driven his Henry Ford car on a super highway or lived in suburbia. He was buried on an April day on the family farm where he grew up next to a favorite moss-covered rock where he wondered over piping frogs. His Slabsides (near Poughkeepsie, N.Y.) is operated as an environmental retreat and nature sanctuary as part of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage.

The nature sanctuary is spread over 200 acres of woods and meadows and operated under auspices of the John Burroughs Association presided over by president Joan Burroughs who also keeps a close eye on the many letters, literary contributions and memorabilia items that accumulated during his life as well as the decades succeeding.

There are three elements, she says, “that we try to keep alive about Burroughs: that he was the first real modern nature essayist, that he influenced our country’s first conservation movement on a personal rather than a larger political scale and that he brought nature study to children through schools.”

But Burroughs seldom thought about any of his life in terms of goals and accomplishments. “Happiness,” he believed, is found in the everyday task of “having something to do.”
Thousands of archival pieces have accumulated through the years in the La Jolla Historical Society archives. Many, such as the photographic portraits of the Scripps half-sisters and iconic Irving Gill buildings, have been repeatedly reproduced over the years, thus developing an easy familiarity. This last page of The Timekeeper is devoted to those archival pieces in the collection that have remained largely outside the public eye.

G
rowing up in Point Loma in the 1950s, I thought live lobsters crawling in the kitchen sink and fresh caught abalone being cleaned and pounded in the back yard was a normal occurrence. For my step-father, Ben Stone and other members of the Bottom Scratchers Diving Club, it was just another day in the ocean.

The club was founded in 1933 by Glen Orr, Jack Prodanovich, and Stone with the clear waters and abundant sea life off La Jolla as their hunting ground. It was started in part to put dinner on the table during the great depression.

Club membership was limited and reached a peak of less than 20. Initiation required prospective members to capture three abalones on a single breath, catch a 10-pound lobster, and wrestle a horn shark to the surface bare handed.

Many of the club members were also renowned in the outside world. Dr. Carl Hubbs was professor emeritus at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and founder of the Hubbs Research Institute at Sea World. Lamar Boren innovated one of the first underwater camera housings and was cinematographer for the popular Sea Hunt TV series, Flipper, and the James Bond film Thunderball. Jimmy Stewart was the chief diving officer at Scripps for many years, and taught many of its scientists to dive.

– Bill Canning

Accompanying photographs by the late underwater photographer Lamar Boren are recent additions to the La Jolla Historical Society Archives.
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