



## Curator's Corner

by Jan Scott

### A QUESTION

The historic question of the month is:  
*Who is Marjorie A. Newsom?*

We have three books that belonged to her, donor unknown. We assume she is somehow tied to the Anna Branch/David Newsom line? But we don't know. Anyone?

The books are *Camping & Tramping with Roosevelt* by John Burroughs and two Kipling books, all signed by Marjorie with dates of 1914 and 1917.

### THE MAP RESTORATION PROJECT

Most of you know that **Linda Shephard** is the stalwart leader of the Society's Book Committee. She oversees inventory and supply and works toward publication of new materials. What you may not know is that she has won my first ever, *Angel of the Month Award*. No, there isn't really an award, just a deep sigh of relief.

Linda has been doing all the research on our map restoration project, and it has involved everything from e-mailing photos of maps to calling museums and talking to anyone who might be able to guide us. It has turned into a much bigger job than we imagined, and Linda has been dauntless.

### TEXTILE PRESERVATION

As if that weren't enough, Linda mentioned that she was having lunch with a friend, **Lezlie Labhard**, who teaches at Cal Poly and works at Hearst Castle in textile preservation. I asked her to find out what kind of vacuum they use, for pulling dirt from clothing. That part of our collection that lived in the semi for over 5 years is in desperate need of cleaning.

Textile preservation is a little like being a doctor. Your motto is, "First do no harm," which is more difficult than it sounds. Instinct is almost always wrong. Brushing dirt off shoulders doesn't actually do much more than grind it into the fabric where it begins to act like microscopic sand paper on the woven threads. Dry cleaning unfortunately leaves a residue that will work the same way. For those of you trying to preserve Great Granny's wedding dress, the other cardinal rule is *DON'T STORE IT IN PLASTIC*. An old clean sheet or acid free paper will be much healthier for it. You can order such paper and acid free boxes with an internet search of "Museum Supplies" or "acid-free paper."

I knew I needed screening (the plastic kind you put in window screens), seam binding to seal off the edges so fabric can't catch, a vacuum cleaner and some kind of technique for using the tools. Linda returned from her lunch a few days later, carrying everything we need.

Her friend had graciously put together a preservation package and given Linda instructions on how we should proceed.

**Clara Madsen** has already sewn the edging to the screening squares (so we can't suck fabric into the vacuum. I know it sounds obvious, but...) So we're moving ahead. Volunteers for this time-consuming project will be needed.

### LOCAL WORLD WAR II SERVICEMEN MOVIE & TAPE TRANSFERS

It may be necessary to create an audio tape that can be mixed/added to the silent movie DVD rather than trying to overlay words onto the pictures. This is still an unknown. Research is continuing. We are gathering all of our tapes to transfer to DVD. If anyone has skills in this area, or interest, let us know.



## Kirk's Korner

**BARN  
MUSEUM IN  
AG VILLAGE**  
Kirk Scott, the force behind the

Barn project at the South County Historical Society's Heritage Square, received formal recognition from the mayor at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

"This was your baby, from beginning to end," Mayor Tony Ferrara told Scott as he presented a plaque to him. "We are so very grateful, Kirk, to you for this tremendous contribution to our community."

The barn houses a variety of antique vehicles and agricultural artifacts from the South County area. It also houses vintage printing presses and other interesting exhibits. It is located just a few steps from the Santa Manuela Schoolhouse and is immediately behind the Heritage House, both Historical Society museums.

Scott, a former actor who appeared in dozens of television shows, such as "Simon & Simon," "Dallas", "T.J. Hooker" and "Mission Impossible", has been involved in numerous community groups since he moved to the Central Coast.

He has served on the Traffic Commission and has been president of the Historical Society since 2000.

Although he had help doing some of the construction work on the Barn, Scott conceived of the idea, oversaw construction of the project and completed much of the work himself.

After he accepted his plaque, he mentioned that he tore a rotator cuff when he thought he could still carry 10 sheets of plywood at his age.

"I'm proud of what we accomplished," Scott told the maor and the large crowd of citizens present for the ceremony. "I'm grateful that I got to lead the parade."

The Barn is open from noon until 3 pm Saturdays and 1 until 4 pm Sundays free of charge.

(Karen Driesen, reporter for the Times Press Recorder, dated 2/9/05)



## From the Docents Desk

by Jane Line

### 2004 Statistics

Thanks to Ross Kongable, who compiles all our SCHS data, I can report that we had **ninety-five, 95**, yep, that's really **95 docents** sign in during 2004. These docents are the face of our Society to the greater community, allowing us to meet our mission statement of spreading information to all. These wonderful docents keep our four museums open on week-ends, festivals, and special events.

One such special event was to assist the cities of *Arroyo Grande and Grover Beach* when our members hosted a *League of California Cities* meeting in May '04. SCHS' Heritage Square museums provided a unique and charming backdrop for this important meeting. Additionally, it helps to spread the word throughout the state that *San Luis Obispo's South County* is a great place to visit. This, in turn, promotes our local business community!

Another special project is our *School Tour Program* run by **Norma Harloe**. (See related article.) This program specifically enables the county's third grade teachers to satisfy a state curriculum requirement for visiting local sites which teach the children "how their local community" came to be what it is today. The students learn through our exhibits what it was like to be a student 100 years ago in the *Santa Manuela School*, or at *Heritage House Museum* how a youngster's bedroom might have looked in 1920, what books and toys local children had in 1925, or how radio brought news and entertainment to the Arroyo Grande Valley in 1940.

By visiting *Paulding History House* they learn of the lives of Arroyo Grande's first physician and his family, seeing firsthand the beautiful carvings of **Dr. Paulding's** skilled doctor's hands. Our new museum, *The Barn*, allows the children to understand how the families before them earned their living or grew their food or printed their newspapers!

Our Society pays special tribute to the docents who make these events work - year in and year out. I would also like to highlight the Docent Coordinators who faithfully schedule the docents throughout the year: **Betty Brown** at Paulding History House, **Jeanne Frederick** at Heritage House, **Joe Swigert** at The Barn, and **Kathleen Sullivan** at Santa Manuela School. If you can help any of these Coordinators by volunteering a couple of hours of your time, or help Norma Harloe in her Student Tour Program, please call them. You can find them listed in the membership directory or you may call me at 481-6510.

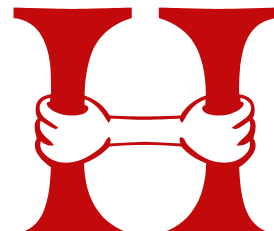
### **Field Trips!!**

Thursday, March 31, 10 AM is the date scheduled for our trip to the Atascadero straw bale barn and workshop of **Kay and Rosemary Thorne**. The Thorne sisters are master weavers and spinners who have graciously offered to share their knowledge and artifacts with us.

They have named this program "*The History of Traditional American Spinning and Weaving*." Some of you may remember Kay and Rosemary from Harvest Festival '04. They graciously supported our efforts to create living history exhibits in Heritage Square. There was so much interest in their subject specialties that we have planned this follow up to their home.

**Those who plan to attend this event should meet at the Santa Manuela School parking lot at 10 AM on March 31. We will arrange carpools at that time. Also, please RSVP to me one week prior so that I may give them a headcount. Rain cancels.**

**Our field trip to the *Dana Adobe* is re-scheduled for April 13, 10:30 am. In order that I may give a headcount to **Barbara Watson**, Docent Leader for the Adobe, please RSVP to me one week prior to this event also. This is also a wonderful treat and will expand our understanding of local history. Please plan to attend. You won't be sorry! *Rain cancels*.**



**HELP WANTED**—As you know, all the activities in our Historical Society are supported solely by donations and volunteer efforts. Our museum complex, now four buildings and soon to be five with the completed restoration of the IOOF Hall this summer, needs not only funds for support, but **manpower (and womanpower)**.

## STUDENT MUSEUM TOURS

The following dates are already booked for this year's student tours. The schedule will continue to fill up, but please check your calendar and see if you can help on one of these dates.

Call Norma Harloe, 489-5642

Norma will need docents at:

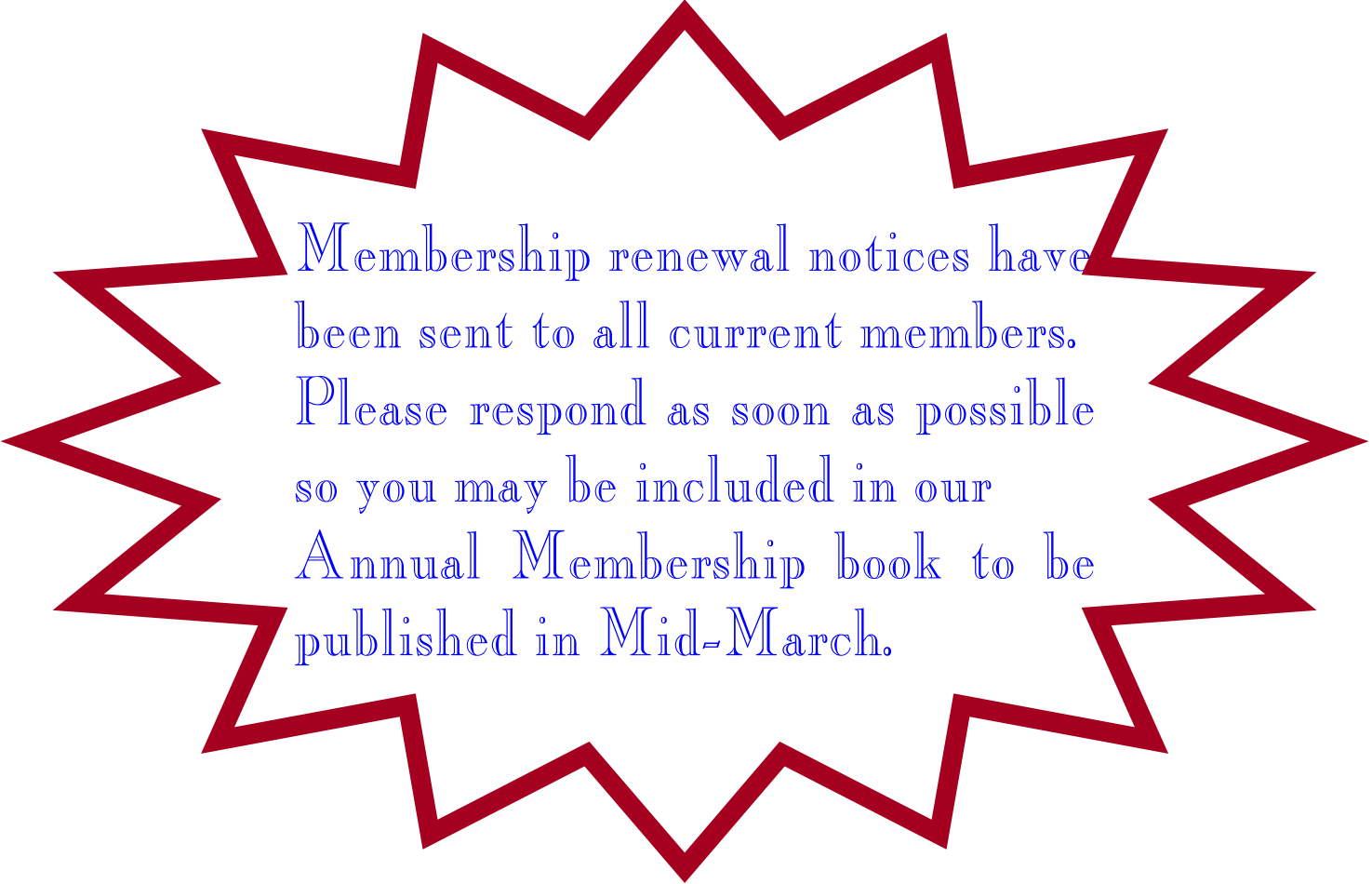
Santa Manuela Schoolhouse   The Barn   Heritage House   the Hoosgow   Paulding History Hous

<b>Feb 25</b> .....	9:45 am	Orcutt School Special Ed class .....	(15)
<b>Mar 4</b> .....	9:30 am	Grover Heights.....	(60)
<b>Mar 18</b> .....	9:00 am	Bellevue, San LuisObispo.....	tbd
<b>Apr 21</b> .....	12 Noon	Harloe Elementary .....	(40)
<b>Apr 22</b> .....	12 Noon	Harloe Elementary .....	(40)
<b>May 12</b> .....	9:30 am	Ocean View Elementary.....	(40)
<b>May 20</b> .....	9:30 am	Dana Elementary.....	(40)
<b>May 27</b> .....	9:30 am	North Oceano Elementary.....	(84)

If you need training, please call Jane Line at 481-6510.

Participation in this program always leaves you smiling and lighter of heart!

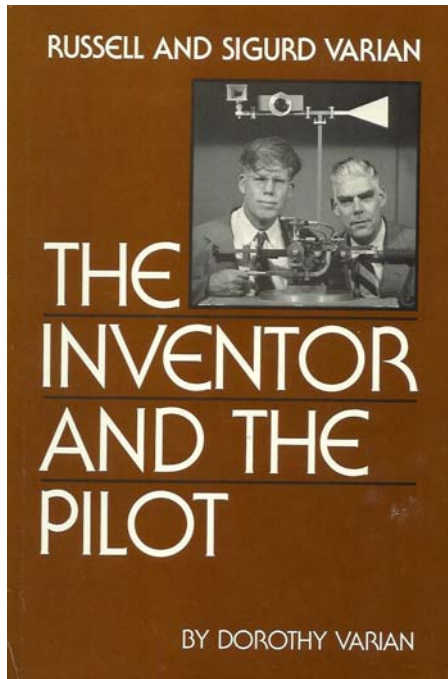
*It's a good thing!*



Membership renewal notices have been sent to all current members. Please respond as soon as possible so you may be included in our Annual Membership book to be published in Mid-March.

# FLASHBACK . . . . . TO THE HALCYON DAYS

A Book Report by Jane Line



Excerpts from the Preface, ".....the school-age sons of John (and Agnes Dickson Varian) often could be observed working away in the back garden....on some typical boy's project such as a cigar box model airplane. Sigurd, the younger boy, usually wanted to make some particular gadget but sometimes didn't know how to go about it. His older brother Russell would figure out how to do it and Sigurd then would happily put it together. Sigurd liked to make things and was good at it; Russell was more interested in the design of the device and how it worked."

Russell was the inventor and Sigurd was the barnstorming pilot who flew without instruments throughout the United States, Mexico and Central America. "If only Russell could invent some method of landing with greater certainty when visual aids were not enough," Sigurd often said. Eventually Russell did and Sigurd built it.

The innate skills of each brother became the foundation of a new technology through the invention of the power amplifying, oscillating klystron. The klystron helped make possible the early airborne radar which was instrumental in winning the Battle of Britain in WWII, and subsequently

became responsible for the growth of the field of microwave engineering. Though the klystron was the most significant of Russell's inventions, it was only one of more than a hundred patents held by him during his lifetime. The brothers formed Varian Associates in 1948 in a small San Carlos, California, factory building, later moving it to Palo Alto near the Stanford labs of Russell's early research projects. Russell had attended Stanford University, studying physics while Sigurd had attended Cal Poly. Both schools provided assistance or resource materials throughout the early years of struggle. Younger brother Eric was an electrician, raising his family in the small community of Halcyon, California, where the family retains property today.

Their story is an interesting one. Parents John and Agnes Varian emigrated to the U. S. from Ireland in 1894, settling in San Jose in 1903. John, an emotional young man with bushy red hair and beard, interested in theosophy, music, and poetry, struggled to make a living. John and Agnes, now with three young sons, came from a background of musicians, writers, artists, craftsmen and tradesmen. Their families included religious free thinkers who worked for social betterment, especially through the temperance movement. They were also the descendants of the *rapparee*, Irish guerilla fighters who were determined to make Ireland unsafe for any British subject following Cromwell's bloody sweep through their country in 1652. They crept silently through forests down to the estates of British landlords, killing cattle and burning buildings, then silently returned to their villages. Gathered around their fires, these Irish patriots told the legends of Ireland's greatness, the stories of the High Kings, Brian Boru, Red Hugh O'Donnell and other famous chieftains. Impoverished, their books destroyed, schooling forbidden, their Gaelic language banned, they told the stories of the greatness of the past.

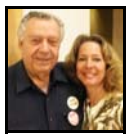
These stories became the means of educating their children, exchanging information and was a principal form of entertainment during much of the 1700s and 1800s. This family background, genetic pool and social environments would influence the lives and personalities of the three Varian boys. Some 275 years following the conquest of Ireland, Russell Varian regaled his Stanford University friends with tales of his *rap-*

*paree* ancestors whom he obviously admired. When asked by an English student how he could be so proud of common outlaws, he showed his wonderful sense of humor by replying, "Why not! Had they lived another generation, they would have become Lords." The Varian boys had been raised on the stories of Ireland's heroes becoming great storytellers themselves.

By 1910, the family had arrived in Halcyon, California, a small community of theosophists in the Arroyo Grande Valley. Money was never plentiful around the Varian household, but the family had a fond dream that is recorded in Agnes Varian's diaries. "Russell will invent something that Sigurd can make, and this will guarantee the family fortune." Halcyon was the home base, no matter where the boys were. Their mother had a rule - "write once a week even if it's what the cat had for dinner." They did and their letters were circulated through the family unit allowing all to feel a part of each other's events. Those letters provided a comprehensive primary source for Russell's wife, Dorothy, as she wrote this book.

These gifted men, whose conversations and writings inevitably were peppered with such terms as *rhumbatron*, *bunching principle*, *nuclear magnetic resonance*, *Fluxmeter*, *Boomatron*, remained loyal to their roots, humble and true to their principles throughout their lives. Sigurd died in an airplane accident in Mexico in 1961, two years after Russell's death in 1959. Russell had traveled with his family to Alaska to promote his conservation efforts. Both men established foundations. Sigurd's has helped to support a hospital in Puerta Vallarta where he and his wife kept a home. Russell's has provided funds for a physics laboratory at Stanford and, due to his commitment to the outdoors, land acquisition to create Castle Rock State Park in California.

If you would like to read this book, it is available at the William Quan Judge Library. The Temple of the People maintain this 10,000 volume library located on the first floor of the green two story building at 906 S. Halcyon. Eleanor Shumway, Guardian of the Temple and a member of our South County Historical Society, welcomes everyone to visit the library. The book is also available on Amazon.com.



### GIFT BASKET WINNERS

Jeanne Frederick—Arroyo Grande  
 Claude Hartman—Arroyo Grande  
 Howard Louis—San Luis Obispo  
 Dorothy Curry—Arroyo Grande  
 Marya Kindig—Arroyo Grande  
 Doug LeSage—Arroyo Grande  
 Betty Guthrie—Arroyo Grande  
 Mary Kyle—San Luis Obispo  
 Anne Taylor—Arroyo Grande  
 Joyce Kaplan—Pismo Beach  
 V Sluga—Arroyo Grande  
 Tracy LaGrow—Nipomo  
 Jeff Wiley—Bakersfield



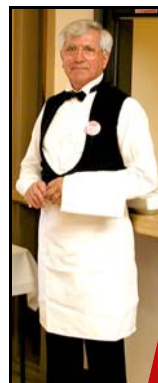
### Gift Basket Donors

**Sandra Worsham**  
**Doc Burnstein's Ice Cream**  
**Lund's**  
**Talley Farms**  
**Susan Heaton**  
**Norma Burton**  
**Mary Ann Feller**  
**Margaret Haak**  
**Barbara LeSage**  
**Barbara Vinson**  
**Ethel Gilliland**  
**Doris Wais**  
**Mark and Rosalind Britto**

**2005 ANTIQUE SHOW & SALE** - a great success due to the efforts of dedicated Coordinators Doug & Barbara LeSage,



Ross Kongable,  
 Jim Bergman,  
 Vivian Krug,  
 Sam & Norma Burton,  
 Carol Sargent,  
 Margaret Haak,  
 Judy Turner,  
 MaryAnn Feller,  
 nearly 100 staff  
 volunteers and  
 generous donors.



### TEA ROOM PROVIDERS

**Kiwanis**  
**Greater Pismo Beach**  
**Bonita Packing**  
**Beta Sigma Phi**  
**Righetti Farms**  
**&**  
**Members**  
**of the**  
**South County**  
**Historical Society**





# Publicity and Web News

Vivian Krug—

Publicity Director

**We're In the News!** Although the Society received a large amount of publicity with numerous stories and articles about our **24<sup>th</sup> Annual Antique Show** (which was a huge success!), by far, our most exciting Publicity was received earlier in the month.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> the City of Arroyo Grande honored our **President Kirk Scott** with a special *Mayor's Commendation* for his vision and completion of bringing a new Museum, "The Barn", to Arroyo Grande.

The first new Museum in the County in over a decade, the Barn has proven to be the Society's largest attraction.

Be sure to check the next issue of the Coast News, where you'll find another story about Kirk, the Society and the Barn Museum. **Thank you Kirk!**

## Harvest Festival 2005

The 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Arroyo Grande Valley Harvest Festival is just around the corner!!! Well, not really. This year's Festival is scheduled for September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, but preparations have begun and the Historical Society will once again play a large part in the festivities.

Last years push to bring the Festival back to its roots, bring back the atmosphere and traditions from past Harvest Festivals, was a huge success. Tractors and farm equipment were in full force in the parade, festival-goers dressed in vintage and western wear for the festival, citizens started dressing up the week preceding the festival, but, most importantly, the "ag" (agriculture) which defines our history here in the Arroyo Grande Valley returned.

This year will prove to be even better. If you would like be involved with this years Harvest Festival planning committee please contact me soon at: [Vivian@AGHarvestFestival.com](mailto:Vivian@AGHarvestFestival.com) or call me at 458-3321. We'll need help with Contests, Booths, Setup, Parade, Events, Food, Parking, Information, Games, etc.

## IIOF Hall Update

Fundraising, Publicity and other related projects have begun. If you would like to help plan and work on these activities, please contact me to join the IIOF Hall Committee. We'll have our first committee meeting in Mid March.

I need your help! Start looking through your photo albums. We need photographs of the IIOF Hall, inside and out. We're also looking for photographs of IIOF

members, activities and any other Arroyo Grande IIOF Lodge related stories to add to our website and to use for publicity as we draw closer to our grand opening. Please contact me if you have anything you think we can use.

## Web Stats [www.southcountyhistory.org](http://www.southcountyhistory.org)

And the numbers keep growing. Last year our web site had 5,366 visitors. This year we've already had **1,248!**

Our web site also continues to grow. Coming soon.... pages dedicated to the IIOF Hall so you can watch the progress up to the Grand Opening anticipated for sometime this summer.

Also coming soon, Antique Show 2005 photographs in our photo album section.

## Team Effort with the Village Improvement Association

We continue to work the Village Improvement Association and the City in our efforts to bring more visibility to the Historical Society, the City of Arroyo Grande and the Village as a "destination" spot for tourists and residents alike, a place to enjoy a piece of Americana not found anywhere else on the Central Coast. One of the possibilities being discussed....street signs when entering the Village, pointing out our Historic sites: the Hoosgow, Swinging Bridge and Museums. If you have any suggestions, ideas or comments, we'd love to hear them!

## Let Me Know.....

Let me know when you hear of an event, an award being given or any other item that involves the Historical Society or one of our members.

We can never get too much publicity or visibility! The more publicity and visibility the Society receives, the more potential we have for new members, for new visitors at our museums and new friends to be made.

There is always a Historical Society event around the corner or an opportunity for a member to volunteer or become involved with a community event. Get involved!! Do your share to let the community know what the Historical Society has to offer and what its members contribute, not only to the Society, but to the community.

I'm easy to reach by Phone 458-3321 or

Email: [Vivian@emotionscards.com](mailto:Vivian@emotionscards.com)

Stay connected! Viv

## **SOCIETY MEETINGS**

The board meets on the **3rd Wednesday** at 7:00 p.m. in the  
Arroyo Grande Parks & Recreation Building.  
Members are Welcome

## **GENERAL MEETING**

held on the **2nd Tuesday** at the  
**Hiawatha Lodge, 3065 Temple, Halcyon**  
**at 6:30 p.m.**

Bring your table settings and a dish to share.

**MARCH 8, 2005**

**“Oceano, the Atlantic City of the West”**

Presented by author, Norm Hammond  
Including movie clips and videos of the area 50+ years ago.

## **Patrons of the South County Historical Society**

### **DOC BURNSTEIN'S ICE CREAM LAB**

**MORLEY & PAT FARQUAR**

**CAROLE HIZEY**

**PAT LOOMIS**

**HOWARD & AILEEN MANKINS**

**BILL & CHERYL MILLER**

**SOUTH COUNTY REALTY**

102 Bridge Street, Arroyo Grande—481-4297

*Visit our Society's Website*

**[WWW.SouthCountyHistory.Org](http://WWW.SouthCountyHistory.Org)**

*Don't forget—as a member, you can view the Heritage Press  
in full living color on the website.*