



Jane Line - President

LOOKING FORWARD

This month I offer my newsletter space to **Gordon Bennett**. Gordon spoke at his cousin **John Loomis's** memorial service last month at the Loomis family's ranch just outside of Arroyo Grande. Many of our members attended as long time friends of the family.

I asked Gordon if he would share his part of the day's program with the rest of us. He graciously provided the text of his remembrances which is printed below.

"On behalf of the Loomis Family, we welcome you to the Tar Springs Ranch. WOW! We haven't seen a crowd like this since Moses came through! It is a pleasure to stand here before you today in memory of John Loomis. My name is Gordon Bennett, John's cousin.

We grew up together, were born in the same year, lived on top of the high school hill (Crown Terrace) and walked a mile across town to the old two-story elementary school (where Mullahey Ford is today).

To get to school, we had to walk through the business district of old downtown Arroyo Grande and therefore,



over the years, we got to know a lot of merchants and their businesses. The town's population was around 900 people in the 1930s, so everyone *knew* everyone in the downtown area. It was like a great big family! The depression was still on and money was tight, but at least prohibition was over! The merchants had a lot of time on their hands so they were playing tricks on each other and using John and I to carry out their schemes.

In 1936, John Monnin had a shoe repair shop a few doors down from Wilkinson's Meat Market. His door was always open and inside was his worktable. He and Jim Wilkinson were good friends and they were always playing tricks on each other. One day, John and I were walking by and Jim Wilkinson gave each of us some firecrackers and a match. He told us to go down and throw these under Mr. Monnin's work bench while he was sitting there. "Then come back and I'll give each of you a hot dog!" How could we lose? It was a wonderful deal! You get to shoot fireworks and then you get hot dogs!

So, we tippy-toed down there, crawled on our hands and knees behind the counter so he couldn't see us, lit those rascals, and threw them under the workbench. Then we took off! Monnin ran after us, right on our tail, carrying a bucketful of heels and other leather shoe and boot parts. We ran right down Branch Street and into Wilkinson's Market yelling, "He's coming!" and then dove in behind a pile of salt sacks in back of the meat counter. We were scared to death and thought Monnin was going to kill us!

Here's Jim Wilkinson working on a pile of hamburger on top of the wooden chopping block, and here comes Monnin with his bucket of shoe parts, screaming at Wilkinson because he knew who put us up to it. Monnin started throwing heels at Jim. Paul, Jim's son, was also standing behind the counter and the Wilkinsons began throwing handfuls of hamburger at John Monnin! Some of the meat hit the ceiling fans. It was a battle royal, but we got our hot dogs later! Three grown men, having fun - it was great!

When a city street light was left on during the day, guess who they called to contact the mayor? John and I! We were also the last ones in town to be locked inside

(Continued on page 7)

**2006 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
Directors and Committees**

President.....Jane Line ... 481-6510
 Programs Charles Porter
Ways & Means— First VP.....**Jim Bergman** ... 473-9757
 Books & Publishing Linda Shephard
 Tour Bus Coordinator.....Barbara Freel
 Antique Show & Sale Jim Bergman
 Annual Rummage Sale Jan Scott
 Wedding/Social Coordinator Doug LeSage
Membership—Second VP.....**Michael & Colleen Drees** ... 489-0295
 Volunteer Coordinator
Recording Secretary.....
Corresponding Secretary..... **Edie Juck** ... 773-4689
 Historian & Sunshine Ethel Gilliland
Treasurer.....**Gary Hoving** ... 929-3106
Publicity.....**Vivian Krug** ... 458-3321
 Community Relations
 Webmaster
Paulding History House Curator.....**Chuck Fellows** ... 481-3464
 Paulding Committee Jean Hubbard
Museums Curator..... **Jan Scott** ... 481-4435
 Assistant Curator Joe Swigert
 Heritage House Joe Swigert
 Santa Manuela Schoolhouse Kathleen Sullivan
 The Barn Jim Bergman
Property Management **Charles Porter** ... 929-1014
 IOOF Building Committee Howard Mankins
 Vehicles Edward Diable & Chet Thomas
 Gardening—Heritage House Barbara LeSage
 Gardening—Santa Manuela Schoolhouse Jane Line
 Gardening Paulding History House Jean Bryant
Docent Leader
 Docent Supervisor Joe Swigert
 Heritage House Coordinator Jeanne Frederick
 Paulding House Coordinator Dee Trybom
 Santa Manuela School Coordinator Kathleen Sullivan
 Barn Joe Swigert
 Student Tours Norma Harloe
Information Systems.....**Ross Kongable** ... 489-2885
 Heritage Press Newsletter
 Computer Systems and Software
Parliamentarian..... **Kathleen Sullivan** ... 489-8195
Society Information..... 473-5077
 Heritage House 481-4126
 Paulding History House 473-3231
 Santa Manuela School 489-8745
 The Barn 489-8745

Website— www.SouthCountyHistory.Org

**WELCOME NEW
MEMBERS**

Alex & Cici Wynn—481-1039
 2620 Appaloosa Way, Arroyo Grande 93420

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Kirk & Jan Scott
 202 Fortuna Ct., Arroyo Grande 93420

GET WELL WISHES WERE SENT TO
 Arnold Teague Sam Burton
 Martha Saari Kathleen Jensen
 Doris Gullickson Al Spierling

***We are sorry for the loss of
our faithful members.
Our condolences to their
families.***

Ann Banning
 Ralph Beck
 Carl Braun
 Marian Kirchner
 John Loomis
 Ed Mullahey
 Father of Tim Mullahey

The IOOF Committee will be meeting this week to begin coordinating final stages for the completion of the Hall project. If you would like to participate in planning the re-dedication of the Hall, please call 473-5077—4.

**Watch for the announcement of the grand opening of the
Pat Loomis Reference Library and Ruby's House.**

The 2006 Membership Book will be mailed this week. If you haven't received yours by June 15, please call 405-473-5077—4 or email SoCoHistory@aol.com



Director of Museums

Jan Scott

Curator's
Corner

As we head into the summer months, everything seems to be moving faster. A wonderful group, the **Questers**, who have helped at Paulding History House, have voted to give us a grant for our Historic Hall and it's been approved. This is great news. When the structural work is finished at the Hall, I will tell you more about their gift and who they are.

John Bryant remains steadily at work at the Hall, getting the interior painting finished. At the Meatlocker, we're still moving ahead, trying to finally finish the processing of the semi-trailer contents. It's been a "long haul," but I think we're finally nearing completion.

Charles Porter, our Property Manager, arranged for vents to be installed in our storage containers. That should take care of the swamp-like atmosphere that tended to build up in there.

Meanwhile Kirk and I are packing up for our move across town. Whatever possessed us to think downsizing was a good idea? We're working hard, but will take time out for the Founders' Day BBQ out at the Porter Ranch. If you've never been out there, make plans to attend. It's an amazing place to experience, and the Porters are the best of hosts. Those of you who have been out there before already know that.

Best wishes for a great summer and we'll see you in the fall.



Publicity *Vivian Krug*

Strawberry Festival

The third Annual Strawberry Festival Cookbook prepared and printed by the Arroyo Grande Village Association (VIA) and SCHS member **Teri Kelly**

Nixon for the benefit of the Historical Society is complete and on sale. The Strawberry Festival Cook-off which kicks off the Strawberry Festival on Friday afternoon prior to the weekend events has also been named once again in the Society's honor. We will be presented a check for last years Cook-Book sales and donations during this year's festival.

The 3rd Edition of the Cookbook can be found at Farm Supply, Hallmark and will be for sale at the Festival. After the festival the books will be for sale at the Historical Society Museums. Our thanks go to Teri and the VIA.

69th Annual Arroyo Grande Valley Harvest Festival

Although it's only May it's not too soon to start thinking about your September 2006 Harvest Festival attire. As in years past, everyone is encouraged to dress in western or turn-of-the century attire. Remember, all those not dressed in costume are subject to arrest, will be thrown in the Festival Hoosgow and required to pay a fine to be released! In the past, residents and merchants dressed in costume the entire week of the Festival.

Other Harvest Festival Contests that you can start preparing for now are the Chili Cook-Off

Contest, Bread Baking (Pumpkin and Zucchini) Contest, Scarecrow Contest and Salsa contests.

More information about the contests and activities will be available on the Harvest Festival web site (www.agharvestfestival.com) later in the summer and as we get closer to the Festival in September.

Web Site

This Year we've had a total of 8,071 visits on our website (7,135 being Unique which means 936 were repeat visitors). We have lots of new additions and more will be posted soon, so check back often. If you haven't browsed the entire site, take a look at our "Links" section where you'll find a variety of links to Historical Locations and Services in San Luis Obispo County. A very interesting and informative site is www.historyinslocounty.com with dozens of sites pertaining to the history of San Luis Obispo County.

View Your Newsletter On Line in full living color!

Don't forget, you can view your Historical Society Newsletter, the Heritage Press in full living color on our website located at www.SouthCountyHistory.org. It's a great way to read your newsletter and enjoy color photographs.

Contact Me if you want to participate in the Harvest Festival or any other Society events or have information I can use for publicity or on our website, I'm easy to reach by Phone 458-3321 or Email: Vivian@emotionscards.com

Stay connected! Viv

The draft was on and many of the high school students enlisted in the military. The Loomis Feed Mill lost most of its male employees to the draft, leaving the heavy work for us high school students - including driving the big trucks. For example, John and I would drive to Paso Robles to pick up a load of wheat, the sacks weighing 120 lbs. each.

Gasoline, sugar and meat were rationed. The Loomis Firm had agricultural permits allowing them to have more gasoline to deliver their products to the farmers. John had a key to the firm's gas pump and got gas for his high school buddies which made him a hero!

In 1943, John joined the Marines following some of his upper class school friends. He was sent to the South Seas and participated in the battle of Guadalcanal. He took part in several other major battles in the South Pacific.

One of his last engagements was the landing at Okinawa. He was on the *west side* of the island with the Marines.... and I was on the *east side* on a Navy oil tanker.

After getting out of the service in 1946, John went to college and after that joined the Loomis firm. During 1948 I went to work with John and the Loomis firm. We spent a lot of time in Oceano unloading boxcars of

wire bounds, shook, turkey and chicken feed, fertilizer and beet pulp. Most of the products were loaded onto a truck and delivered directly to the customers.

One case in mind, we took a large truckload of chicken feed to the Cudahy Poultry Farm at the historic Santa Maria Airbase. The chickens were located in the old, flimsy, vacated Army barracks buildings. We backed the truck up to the front door and began unloading the feed. John carried in a 100 lb. sack of granite grit and dropped it on the floor with a loud thud. Instantly, one thousand white, screaming Leghorns hit the ceiling - leaving a murky cloud of feathers. The thrashing wing-pits left off a foul fragrance. No more chicken soup for us!

The following years found John constructing his frontier town on the Tar Springs with his relatives and friends. Then it was the Marine Reunions which were conducted on the ranch. John invited half the businessmen in town which he knew to help operate the numerous activities....such as, the 24-hour bar under the spreading oak trees. Everyone had a great time congregating with the Marines!

These stories cover just a fraction about John's life-long activities and achievements. He will be hard to replace."

∨

Hats Off to the School Tour Docents

who just keep doing their thing!

Watching the children from the various schools

scamper up the steps at Paulding

or pull their classmates in a buggy at the Barn,

or practice being a student 100 years ago
in the Santa Manuela School,

or discover the lifestyle of days gone by
at Heritage House,

You make it a delightful experience.

We thank all of you
who make that happen!

Especially
Norma Harloe!



June 11, 2006

You should have received your invitation to our annual Charter Day BBQ held this year at the historic Porter Ranch.

Call Billie Swigert -489-5472 before June 5.



Stop by the 100 block of South Mason Street and see our “two ladies” in their new chapeaus.

The Victorian Ladies on South Mason Street in Arroyo Grande

Born around 1888 or 89 - *a lady never tells her age* - the Heritage House Museum and Ruby’s House are getting facelifts which will hopefully carry them through the next few decades with their usefulness and beauty ensured!

Heritage House Museum has a new roof! FOUR old roofs were removed to give this charming structure new life for a guaranteed 40 years! A new wardrobe of paint will be added to freshen up her face! And, of course, her gardens remain beautifully cared for by **Doug and Barbara LeSage** with help from **Tom Cooley** and the **Huffines**. Stop by and offer to help when you see them working!



Ruby’s House has a new dimensional fiberglass shingled roof to last her through the years. Members **Eric and Terry Moore**, owners of **Vanguard Construction**, are responsible for this beautiful roof. We are most grateful. Ruby’s new roof has changed the Mason Street neighborhood dramatically!



But there’s more to come as the project’s architect **Gary Scherquist** and builder **Tim Harris** finish up the reconstruction of Ruby’s old bones. Assuring that Ruby’s light shines through forever is **Mike Fairbrother** as he fixes her windows and hangs her doors. How grateful we are to have Mike doing what Mike does so well!

The **Nelson Street Stripping Committee** continues its work in the garage of **Sandy and Dale Arnold**. **Sandy, Jane Line, Gerry Fesler, Jim Dickens, Edie Juck, Ross Kongable, Paulette McCann** and the **Huffines** remain steadfast in their determination to waste no piece of Ruby’s elegant old redwood trims. **John Bryant** breaks from his work at **IOOF** occasionally and visits to keep us straight. We work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10 AM - 4PM. and would welcome new helpers.

What was to be a ‘renovation’ has evolved into a ‘restoration’. Finding square nails in the woodwork has inspired all to bring back the original glow of a truly precious asset to the Village.

Chameleon Fabrics will pull the Bride’s Room together at Ruby’s as soon as restoration is completed and the weddings can get back to normal. Once again, we thank **Doug LeSage** and **Ross Kongable** for keeping the brides and grooms happily engaged at Heritage House until the new room is ready!

Jane Line, Lead Stripper.....

Report from our Volunteer Fire Engine Mechanic—Chet Thomas

I have been restoring the engine on the 1923 American La France fire truck currently on display in The Barn for nearly a year. In August, I removed the water pump and discovered the shaft was badly corroded at the seal area. I took it to co-owner **Pat McGuire, Mid State Precision**, 901 Highland Way in Grover Beach. Pat created a new stainless steel shaft and donated the effort (approximately \$100) to the Society. *A big thanks to Pat and Mid State Precision!!*



After assembling and installing the water pump, the truck now has water and anti-freeze with *no leaks*. I am currently restoring the wiring (as much as possible) to the original loom and switches. Thanks to **Gordon Bennett** for the charger, I now have installed and charged up the battery and am in the process of checking all the electrical. The starter will have to be restored/rebuilt, and I'm currently in process of locating someone to do that. Hopefully, we'll have another vehicle to enter in the Harvest Festival parade in September!

I was privileged to interview **John Loomis, Gordon Bennett and Mike Bennett** at the Loomis Ranch last month. We discussed the Society's 1923 American LaFrance fire truck No. 2. It first saw service in Menlo Park, in the San Francisco bay area. John Loomis located the fire truck in Pine Crest in a museum. In 1967, John, Gordon and Mike drove to Pine Crest to bring the truck to Arroyo Grande.

"When we arrived to take delivery, we were issued goggles, for there is no windshield. Starting down the hill, the brakes caught on fire. After finally reaching the bottom of the grade, the weather was very hot, and shortly the engine caught on fire burning the wiring on the spark plugs. We over-nighted in Fresno. Realizing the heat-sensitive nature of the truck, we decided to drive only at night when it was cooler. At one point we raced a freight train shining our spotlight on the train engineer. Nearing Paso Robles, a bearing went out on the rear axle. We left the truck with a mechanic friend of John's and continued on home. It took a week to locate the necessary parts and he replaced the bearing, and we went back and brought it on in to Arroyo Grande."

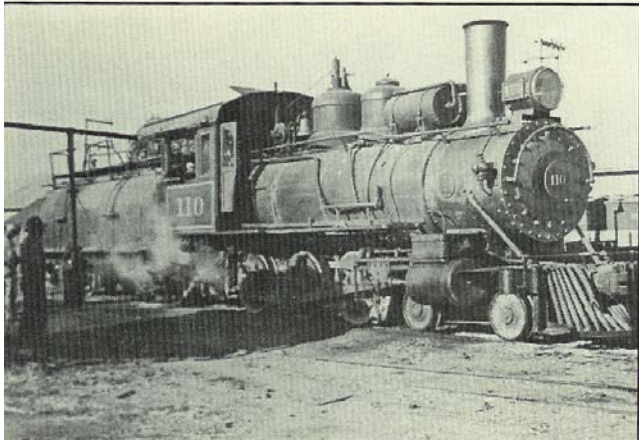
While visiting the Loomis Ranch, I noticed there was a 1934 Ford fire truck which was restored by the Arroyo Grande fire department and used for some time as their muster fire truck. There was also another fire truck which Gordon tells me was used to take the Arroyo Grande girls baseball team to the games, and had a PA system on it that was used to announce the ballgames.

The cabinet maker working at the Historical Hall, **Lynn Collett**, continues to astound us with his design and installation of the decorative molding on the front inside wall of the Hall. Following close behind is **John Bryant**, our resident paint expert, putting the finishing touches on all this beautiful woodwork. (Note: the colors (if you view this on our website) are not the final.)



the old concrete Hoosegow on Halloween night...a practical joke by the city's Constable. A historic moment!

One of the highlights of the year for John, his brother Richard and I was the annual Japanese Picnic held at Routzahn Park nine miles east of Arroyo Grande. The E. C. Loomis firm invited all 300 of their Japanese customers and their families to a big beef BBQ. John's father put John in charge of the soda pop, ice cream, cigars and cigarettes. It was a time, as kids, where we could gorge ourselves on soda pop and ice cream. We also got the job of placing the cigarettes and cigars on the long tables for the Japanese customers. We saved several cartons of cigarettes and hid them in the truck that we came out in. (Later) we took the cigarettes down to the local swimming hole and passed them out to the kids. It was a "smoker's" paradise.



The Pacific Coast Railway which ran through town influenced us greatly. There were hobos walking up the tracks looking for handouts. Some lived in cardboard shacks under the train bridge...not too far from the Loomis feed mill. John's father would let them sleep in

the hay barn if they promised not to smoke except on rainy days. The train bridge was also a great place to hide and to smoke for our friends using the Japanese Picnic cigarettes!

I can remember when at times the Filipino customers would drop off a half sack of sugar peas for John's mother. We would take them up on top of a nearby boxcar and eat a bunch of them and throw the pods down on the loading dock. From time to time, the railroad would gather all of their coach and observations cars for rail fan tours from San Luis Obispo to Santa Maria. These events would bring out the whole town of Arroyo Grande to view the train load of several hundred rail fans parked next to the Loomis Feed Mill.

The railroad influenced us so much that we built a home-made railroad push car and used it for going to Scout meetings and other things. Our push car held four kids - with two kids pushing. We even gave rides to people who lived up the tracks, until the railroad company confiscated our push car. Then we had to find another way to do our Scout good deed for the day.

Early in our high school days, John became interested in the Loomis Company's trucks sitting idle and parked behind the Feed Mill. Before long, we were learning to drive some of the trucks in the confines of the yard. Then, before too long, we were taking short rides out of town. This activity lasted for some time - until on Sunday John was out on a solo run and got stuck in a walnut orchard. He had to get towed out which resulted in being caught by his dad. It was worth the effort... just to learn how to drive!

On December 7, 1941, John, his father and friends were hunting wild pigeons on Mt. Abel when they heard on the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. It was a day in history that would change all of our lives forever.

(Continued on page 4)

Dues Schedule—2006

Individual.....\$15	Family w/children under 18.....\$40	Patron (business/individual)...\$200+
Couple.....\$30	Sustaining (individual)\$100+	Life (individual).....\$500+

MEMBERSHIP SOUTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RENEWAL NEW

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Home Tel: _____ Work Tel: _____ Email: _____

Type of Membership _____ Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ Check No. _____

Please make check or money order payable to SOUTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PO Box 633
Arroyo Grande
CA 93421

SOCIETY MEETINGS

The board meets on the **3rd Wednesday**
Members are Welcome

GENERAL MEETING

Held on the **2nd Tuesday at 6:30 pm**
at the Hiawatha Lodge, 3065 Temple, Halcyon
Bring your table settings and a dish to share

Our next General Meeting will be
SEPTEMBER 12.

Your next newsletter will be published
AUGUST 21

HAVE A HAPPY SUMMERTIME!

Patrons of the South County Historical Society

OSTY INSURANCE

PATRICIA LOOMIS

CAROL HIZEY

SUSAN BRANCH 'A TASTE OF HOME'

DOC BURNSTEIN'S ICE CREAM LAB

HOWARD & AILEEN MANKINS

BILL & CHERYL MILLER

SOUTH COUNTY REALTY