



Curator's Corner Jan Scott

Happy Spring. We're still waiting for those teasingly glorious days of warmth to return. But while we wait, there's plenty happening at the society.



Curator Program

The program for the **April 13th** General Meeting will be the SCHS Curators telling stories about their tenures, starting with **Sandra Cabassi**, the society's first curator and the one who first set her sights on getting the IOOF Hall (before it would be returned to the national association). **Pat Vandever**, who is soon moving away from this area, will be on hand to speak about her time which included the first Antique Show and to whom we owe thanks for acquiring the school desks at Santa Manuela. **Judith Turner** will talk about her 18 years (!) overseeing the collection, as well as the opening of Heritage House after its major renovation. **Jean Hubbard** will speak about Paulding, and I, the newbie on this distinguished block, will sit back with you and enjoy listening to our history as a society. I've heard some of their stories and I promise it will be an interesting and amusing night.

Schoolhouse Workday Those of you with good memories will stretch them back and remember a day, well over a year ago, when we met at Santa Manuela school and passed around a list to sign up for the Santa Manuela Schoolhouse Workday. We were going to buff up the schoolhouse, learn to use Briwax and just generally sweep away the cobwebs. It was supposed to occur last year. Quite obviously, it did not happen.

We now have a date: **Thursday, April 8th, 10AM.** (Rain cancels)

If you signed the list back then, you will get special phone call inviting you to this learning/work session. If you didn't sign up but are interested, please join us. If you come: wear *old* clothing and shoes; (we will get dirty); bring *rubber gloves* if you'd like to work with the Briwax (before it dries, Briwax has a strong petroleum odor, so we'll be working with doors and windows open); you may want a sweater if it isn't balmy outside; if you'd feel better with a paint mask, don't hesitate to bring one. Please bring some old rags and newspapers as well. We will work on the school desks, the teacher's desk, piano and anything else we find that needs some help. Those of you who are not interested in the Briwax will be able to do 'normal' cleaning chores.

Wish List This month's wish list is quite short. The Board has authorized the cleaning of several carpets at Heritage House. Do we have any members who have contact with professional rug cleaners? Anyone who might give us a break in cost? Call and let me know.

(Continued on page 3)

by Kirk Scott, President



*Kirk's
Korner*

The "Barn" will be closed to the public until mid-May. All kinds of things are going on in and around the barn. My other half, curator **Jan Scott**, has big plans for a totally new display concept to be used in the barn and needs some time to prepare for the grand opening on June 6th.

Meanwhile, **John Bryant**, with the able assistance of **Edward Diable**, has just about finished sealing the plywood walls with a moisture resistant coating that will add years to its life. Our hats are off to these capable volunteers.

Your Board has authorized a new security system for both the schoolhouse and the barn. Member **Steve Andrews**, commander in the Arroyo Grande police department, did a volunteer security evaluation of the barn and gave us some very useful tips on security. Property Manager, **Charles Porter**, along with **Mario Tognazzini**, got us several bids for a security system; the Board accepted one and the system will be completely installed by March 22nd. A word of caution to you docents; be aware of the security system in all locations! We don't want to set off false alarms that disturb the neighbors and send the police department running. I'm sure Joe Swigert and Jane Line will be a good source for instruction on the new system.

The Board has also authorized additional gravel to be added to the School/barn parking lot. **Sam Burton** has been kind enough to lend us his expertise as honcho of this job. So all in all, the barn is on the right track for a grand opening on June 6th.

Our talents never cease to amaze. The back door of Ruby's House was literally hanging on one hinge and wouldn't close because of extreme weathering and disrepair. Brand-new member **Jim Payne** picked out an old door that was stored in the barn, shaved it down to a beautiful fit and replaced the old door complete with a new deadbolt lock. *Kudos Jim!* This is a wondrous accomplishment to those of us who where standing behind a pole when they passed out that kind of talent. Reliable information tells me that two of our members, blocked by the pole, **Ross Kongable** and **Joe Swigert** excelled at running to the hardware store and handing Jim tools when he needed them. Thanks to you all.

Your Prez, *Kirk*

Visit our Society's Website -- Southcountyhistory.org

FROM THE DOCENTS' DESK

by Jane Line, Docent Leader

Help! I'm drowning!

I need to ask one of you to step forward to fill the monthly job of lining up docents to work Santa Manuela School. It's not a big job due to **Lia Kalpakoff** working two Saturdays a month and the **Bergers** working the other two Saturdays. And it's pure pleasure to stay in touch with the folks who do work the schoolhouse, but I'm not doing the job well due to time spent on my other responsibilities. I'm just coming in under the wire - often calling folks at the last minute. That's not good. If done correctly, this job should only take an hour or so a month. Please call, **481-6510**, if you can help me with this task! I thank you in advance!

Our Docents are Red Hot!

Heat in the schoolhouse is on its way! **Charles Porter** and **Mario Tognazzini** obtained a winning bid from a reputable contractor and your Board of Directors quickly approved the contract. No more red noses when you work the Schoolhouse! And our guests will be more comfortable too! Thank you Mario and Charles.

By working the "historical" Special Election in 2003 and the March Primary 2004 the following docents turned over **\$1,150** for heating improvements to the

schoolhouse:

Poll-workers: Norma Harloe, Gerry Fesler, Ginny Kraatz, Anne and Olaf Shipstead, Martin Line, Georgia Byers, Pearl Cole, Emily Shimon, Billie Boultinghouse, Margaret Haak, Marya Kindig, Beth Garner, and Jane Line.

I must say, in spite of all the time spent training, reading, even handling 11 different ballots in the March Primary, we had a great time! In fact, at one of our last minute meetings, we took time to celebrate three *Birthdays Girls* - one turning 88, one turning 87, and one turning 81 - all having their special day the week of the March election. I never ask a lady's age, but this photo tells it all! Look at those sweet faces! I love them all!



*The Third Graders are coming!
The Third Graders are coming! And how dear, curious and eager they are!
With the Barn open this year, it's*

even more fun! Please give some thought to helping with this program. You might even get to see **Gordon Bennett** (with a little help from **Manetta**) thrill the children up at the Hoosgow! Have you ever been to the Hoosgow? Now's your chance! Call **Norma Harloe at 489-5642** or **Betty Brown (Paulding) at 489-8650**.

The Barn Familiarization Meeting on March 7 went smoothly. We welcomed some of our faithful docents, but were also happy to have new faces like **Beulah and Orville Schultz** who promise they'll be back! We'll be scheduling another training on the Barn as we have much need to pull this program together. Our Society will be helping the City of Arroyo Grande host the **League of California Cities'** three-day meeting **May 21-23**. This is a wonderful opportunity to show off to three coastal counties - Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. We will have a need for costumed and un-costumed docents for that weekend. Watch for more news on this! Working this event will guarantee your picture in the papers!

If you have an idea for this column, please give me a call at **481-6510**. It is always nice to have more than one voice in this space which is dedicated to the SCHS Docents and their thoughts, needs, and accomplishments.



Qualified Barn Docents: (L to R) - Ethel Gilliland, Orville and Beulah Schultz, Gus Berger, Joe Swigert, Bob Brown, Rossi Berger Betty Brown, Margaret Haak, Jan and Kirk Scott, Jane Line, MaryAnn Feller, Donna Fisher, Barbara LeSage, Barbara Vinson

Curator's Corner (Continued from page 1)

Thank You! A huge thank you to **Jim Guthrie**, SCHS member and Arroyo Grande Planning Commissioner and manager of The Spyglass Inn. The Inn has donated 76 framed antique photos of 3 different scenes of old Pismo Beach. We are keeping some for our collection and the rest will be used for fundraising. You will see them first at the *June 6th Barn Opening and Charter Day BBQ*.

Thank you to **Jack Tiedeman**, member and owner of *House of Another Tyme Bed and Breakfast at Mason & LePoint* in AG, and member **Pat Olivera** for answering the call for a potted tree and plant. It's wonderful when wishes come true so easily.

Member and local author, **James Norris**, donated a large number of books (including some of his own) on Central Coast history last month. Several have gone right into our reference library and the rest, as he wished, will be used for fundraising. Thank you, Jim.

Pat Loomis, true to her word, sent us a reference book on barbed wire. (Yes, there is a book written purely about the history of the "wire that fenced the west.") It has already been put to good use.

And a thank you to **Ken and Carolyn Huffine** for donating an eclectic assortment of vintage tools, lanterns, trunks and general "stuff," much of which will take up residence in the Barn after processing.

As always, I'm certain I'm forgetting someone or something. If I have, please call it to my attention. Neglect is both unintentional and unforgivable. I rely on you too much to take you for granted.

See you April 8th??

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Web News — *Vivian Krug, Publicity Director*

If you haven't had a chance, take a few minutes and visit our brand new official website located at www.SouthCountyHistory.org. Although a work in progress, the site is full of information on our Museums, Events and Projects. We are still filling in some of the pages and pictures and can use your help. If you have a photo, news story or any other content that is relevant to the history of the South County, Please call me at 458.3321 or email me at Vivian@southcountyhistory.org.

The Society is now on the map and has gone worldwide! Officially launched on February 9th, our site has already received 500 visitors. We've received twenty-six visitors from France, eleven from Sweden and more from Japan, Canada, South Korea and Italy. A special feature for our members, the newsletter is now available online. Every month the newsletter will be posted online saving the society printing and postage expenses, not to mention a few trees along the way. So, if you are online, let us know if you prefer to read your news on our website.

For those of you who would prefer to continue receiving your newsletter in the mail, don't worry, they will continue to be mailed unless you tell us differently.

The next new feature to be added to our website...a book section. Already in the works you should expect to see it on the site within the next two weeks. I hope you all enjoy our website and I'd be happy to hear any of your comments and suggestions.

Stay connected

Get Well Wishes were sent to:

Jane Line

Barbara Vinson

Jean Bryan

Marge Cawelti

Jean Hubbard

Hilda Roza

Juandell Christian

Kay Losier

Kathleen Sullivan

Lyle Carver

Lisa LeSage

Congratulations were sent to

Todd and Jill Talley

on birth of

Karena Young Talley

Sympathy & Condolences to

Mary Ann Feller

On loss of her sister-in law

Marj Wolters & family

On death of husband Norman

Margaret Haak & family

On loss of her sister

Flashbacks to . . .

the Corduroy Road

The next time you're traveling north on the 101 and get off on Traffic Way in Arroyo Grande or you take Bridge St. into the Village, flash back to what it was like in the old days!

From the earliest days of California's statehood in 1850, there were roads – of sorts. But in this part of the Valley, much of the land was still covered with *monte* – that Spanish word used to describe the thick underbrush which flourished in the rich clay soils, fed by creeks overrunning their banks in the wet years. The few roads were cow trails, or foot paths made by the Mission fathers, leading north to San Luis Obispo, west to the ocean, or south to Santa Maria and Santa Barbara.

According to Madge informs us that “*there was a fairly good trail for four wheeled vehicles from the Santa Manuela Rancho of F.Z. Branch to the Nipomo rancho of Capt. W. Dana.*” However, the severe drought years of the early 1860s had been very harsh. No one was thinking of improving roads! Survival was on everybody's mind.

Then the rains came! Relief at last! But we all know what happens to these dry, hard packed clays when the rains come: they get sticky and “*cut the trail roads to gullies, and make holes of the low places....*” There were few settlers in the Valley then, and to make matters more difficult, the dry years meant there was little money available to build or repair the old roads. But times change and better times were just ahead!

“*Perhaps Daniel Rice did more than any other man who has lived in the Arroyo Grande Valley to make it more convenient for his neighbors to haul their crops to market,*” Madge Ditmas wrote in 1934. In the late 1860s, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rice settled their family in the village of Arroyo Grande on West Branch St., residing in a home identified today as 116 Hart Lane. Soon after, he was appointed by John M. Price, supervisor for the south county, as the “*road boss.*”

Settlers were beginning to come into the Valley to build homes and raise their families. They wanted roads and schools and were willing to pay for them. Mr. Rice went to work improving the old trails, changing their grades, and shortening the travel time between destination points. Heavily loaded wagons were the signs of commerce for that day—and the product had to get to market!

Daniel Rice improved the roads using simple, elegant methods born of a “can do” mindset and necessity. He sighted a road's grade by laying a *riata* down over the terrain, then let his horse “*have his head when going up a*

hill—as the horse would always pick the easiest grade to climb the hill.”

At that time, there was a wagon road going through the monte, where Bridge Street is today. This rough wagon road was shaded by huge sycamores and the Arroyo Grande creek “*flowed where it listed....*”

Then, as now, the Arroyo Grande Creek flowed toward the ocean, cutting a wide swath from the Branch Mill Road corridor southeast of town. Seasonal creeks converged with the “*Big Ditch*”, including drainage from that first tourist resort, Sulphur Springs, belonging to Anna Branch and managed by her husband, David F. Newsom, a Virginia native.

These waters also flowed through the monte of “*blackberry, willow, cottonwoods, maple, and sycamores*”, and crossed what we know as Bridge Street and Traffic Way. Many months of the year, the creek crossing in this area was “*as boggy as only a California creek can be.*” This was the main entrance into town from the south! What to do, what to do?

Using a personal account from Charles Rice, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rice, Mrs. Ditmas writes, “*Mr. Rice filled these bogs with tons of rocks, and then made a corduroy road of sycamore limbs so that there was never any danger of travelers getting stuck in the mud.*” Clever and presumably effective!

When the City of Arroyo Grande began to put in their sewer system in the 1920s, the trench excavations on Bridge Street revealed many of Mr. Rice's big rocks and old logs from the “corduroy road” of the last century. Our own Jean Hubbard has told of soil samples, taken from around the IOOF Hall - SCHS's main museum on Bridge St., that reveal still evidence of that road built to accommodate early visitors and trades people.

So, when you next drive in that area, I'm betting you will flash back to Mr. Rice, a man who did what needed to be done, and his *Corduroy Road*, which teaches us today an occasional bump in the road is nothing to fuss about!

May I suggest some reading material for more information on the Arroyo Grande Creek or the “old days”. Our member Bob Brown has written a book called *The Arroyo Grande Creek*. There is much to read about of the old days in the Madge Ditmas book, *According to Madge*. For your convenience, both books are sold at Heritage House with proceeds benefiting our Society.

Submitted by Jane Line

2004 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
Directors and Committees

- President**..... Kirk Scott.....481-4435
 Audit Committee:
 Kirk Scott, Jane Line, Carol Sargent, Sandy Arnold
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- Ways & Means— First VP**.....
 Books & Publishing.....Linda Shephard
 Antique Show & Sale Doug LeSage
 Annual Rummage Sale Jan Scott
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- Membership—Second VP**..... Sandy Arnold.....489-2845
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 Volunteer Coordinator
- Recording Secretary**..... Edie Juck.....773-4689
- Corresponding Secretary**..... Martha Saari.....474-8031
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- Treasurer**..... Carol Sargent.....489-8568
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 Gardening Cathy Hughes
- Museums Curator**..... Jan Scott.....481-4435
 Assistant Curator..... Joe Swigert
 Heritage House..... Joe Swigert
 Santa Manuela Schoolhouse..... Marj Wolters
 The Barn..... Ken Leonard
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 IOOF Building Committee..... Howard Mankins
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 Heritage House Coordinator..... Jeanne Frederick
 Paulding House Coordinator Betty Brown
 Santa Manuela School Coordinator Jane Line
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- Information Systems**..... Ross Kongable.....489-2885
 Heritage Press Newsletter
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Society Information481-4126
Website— Southcountyhistory.Org
 Heritage House481-4126
 Paulding History House473-3231
 Santa Manuela School489-8745

Welcome New Members

Jeanne Barks—489-2146
 1231 Brighton Ave, Arroyo Grande

Jim & Mary Ann Payne—473-0670
 885 Marsala, Grover Beach

★ **Life Members** ★
 Gifted by Robert & Karen Talley Miller

Karena Young Talley

And Mother
Jill Rickett Talley
 665 Mountain View, San Luis Obispo

You all received a Volunteer Survey card including a self-addressed STAMPED response card. Please complete and mail it at your earliest convenience. WE NEED YOUR RESPONSE !!

Visit our Society's Website -- Southcountyhistory.org

Dues Schedule—2004

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

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SOCIETY MEETINGS

General meetings are 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.

The board meets on the **3rd Tuesday** at 7:00 p.m. in the Arroyo Grande Woman's Club.



PO Box 633
Arroyo Grande
CA 93421

Our next

General Meeting will be held

April 13, 2004

Curators of the Society's Collection

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The next Society Board of Directors Meeting will be held

April 20, 2004

All members are invited to attend.

Don't forget to set aside the date for visiting
SANTA MARGARITA RANCHO

Saturday, May 15, 2004
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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