



# HERITAGE

Volume 32, Issue 2

[www.elcajonhistory.org](http://www.elcajonhistory.org)

April 2011

## ***Our Mission Statement:***

*To gather, preserve, and protect historical records and personal publications about those living in and around the El Cajon Valley. As part of our stewardship we will promote the gathering, display and appreciation of the region's history.*

## **President's Letter**

### **THANK YOU**

**Thanks to Lois Hall** for her donation in December and thanks to **Todd and Julie Hall** of Oxnard for their donation in January. We appreciate the support.

Thank you to **Jordan Mani**, 1<sup>st</sup> place essay winner in 2010, for renewing her membership and including her family. The family also donated to the essay contest and the quilt drawing. Jordan's sister, **Jesalyn Pennington**, was the winner of the handmade quilt.

**Thanks to everyone** who contributed to the quilt opportunity drawing; we took in over \$700. Each \$10 donation was given a numbered ticket. The drawn ticket was then matched to the numbered list of names. Many thanks to **Sharon Hall** for preparing and sending the letters for the opportunity drawing. Sharon is our behind-the-scenes worker elf. Thanks as well to Christy Klock for numbering tickets and creating the list of contributors.

**Thank you** to the **Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians** for underwriting this year's Third Grade Essay Contest with a \$600 donation – the funds help to secure the venue and pay for the trophies that winners receive. This will be the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the contest!

**Our thanks**, as always, to **Superintendent Janice Cook and Asst. Superintendent Stephen Mahoney** of Cajon Valley Union School District for the continued partnership in the Essay Contest. The district encourages 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers to participate and facilitates the dissemination of information.

Thank you to **Thelma Lugo**, a new docent. She is helping on Saturdays and learning the ropes of being a tour guide.

**February Museum Month** was a success! More visitors were able to tour the Knox House Museum on each Saturday. With thanks to Carla Nowak, Michelle Regan, Dick and Eldonna Lay, the Museum was open two additional Saturdays. With more docents, we could be open every Saturday. If you'd like to docent, we'll train you. It's fun, and you meet so many nice people!

### **FYI :**

We have applied for a Community Enhancement Grant through the Board of Supervisors – our request is to fund a new roof to protect archives from the elements over the office area; repair of windows; and removal of UV film and application of new UV film on the windows to protect the museum interior from damaging sunlight. Our application requested just over \$7,000.

**Anyone who would like to volunteer** for 1 hour every 3 months by helping to prepare newsletters for mailing, give me a call at 619.504-6301 – we would love to have help and we make it fun – beverages and snacks, and laughter – makes for a fun hour!

**Volunteers are needed to bake** coffee cake and cookies to be served with coffee and drinks at a Jamul home on the April 30 Garden Tour presented by Friends of East County Arts. This is great exposure for us and a fund raiser, too. If you would like to help with set up, serving, and/or take down, call Jonna at 619.504.6301. Tour hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### **Dates to Remember:**

- April 1 – Salon Series – Fred John
- April 28 - Quarterly Meeting Sizzler.
- April 30, Garden Tour 9am – 3pm
- May 6 First Fri. Knox House – Poetry Readings
- May 11, 2pm Book Club
- First Fridays – 6pm to 7:30pm
- June 6, 7 pm 3<sup>rd</sup> Gr. Essay Presentation
- July 16, 11 – 2pm Antique Sale

If you'd like to have your Heritage Newsletter emailed to you, please call us or email us at:

[michelle@mainstreetus.com](mailto:michelle@mainstreetus.com)

We'll be happy to send it to you electronically saving postage and paper at the same time!



## January Meeting at the Chrystal Ballroom



Author G. Carroll Rice entertains us with stories of the early theater in San Diego



Attendees enjoyed delicious Mediterranean chicken and fish entrees at the Chrystal Ballroom, Magnolia and Wells.

### What Every Woman Should Know – from *The Home* 1923 A supplement to *Woman's Weekly*

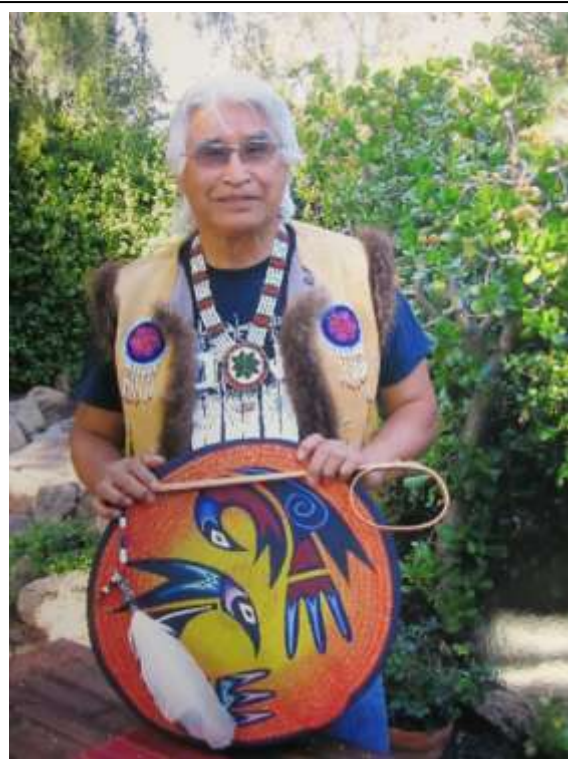
Cleaning Pearls – “Soak them in hot water in which bran has been boiled, with a little cream of tartar and alum, rubbing gently between the hands when the heat will admit of it. When the water is cold renew the application till any discoloration is removed, then rinse in lukewarm water. Lay them on a white paper in a dark place to cool.”

Good to know - bran can be used in so many other ways!

## Quilt Drawing

The Board would like to announce and congratulate Jordan Mani, winner of the “Love Knot” quilt from the drawing held at their February board meeting.

The Board wishes to thank Cheryl Minshew for making and generously donating the beautiful quilt and thank those from the society who participated in the drawing, making this fundraiser a success. Your continued support is very much appreciated.



Fred John – Speaker at the Knox House First Friday's, April 1, 2011. See Bio on Pg. 8

## *April Quarterly Meeting:*

Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am

The Sizzler Restaurant  
1030 Fletcher Parkway  
El Cajon

*Choice of Steak or lemon chicken – Orders taken at the restaurant*

Cost \$15.00

Checks payable to: ECHS

P. O. Box 1973

El Cajon, CA 92022



***Kindly RSVP by: April 22<sup>nd</sup>***

Our Guest Speakers will include:

Representatives from the San Diego and Oxnard  
Offices of National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration (NOAA), they will be speaking to us  
about weather history in Southern California, fire storms,  
Tsunamis and other related topics.

*We welcome your gently used white elephant items for the opportunity drawing.*

Kindly cut or tear-off and mail with your payment



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Please Reserve My Seat (seats) at the Quarterly Meeting Luncheon, April 28 at 11:30am.

Sizzler Steak House 1030 Fletcher Parkway, El Cajon, CA

*Gently Used or new Prizes are welcome for the opportunity drawing.*

Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_ X \$15.00                      Amt. Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to become a member. 😊      \_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to upgrade my membership. 😊

Mail Reservation checks to: ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, Ca 92022 See you there!

## We appreciate your Donations:

### Sharon Jarboe has donated her collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century women's magazines.

In the 1910 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, is a story on Mr. Guggenheim, written by Charles Edward Russell who charges, "He and his brother are commercial kings by grace of some able, some daring and some lawless achievements. But he is a senator of the United States by grace of his millions ... and for no other reason."

The 1913 copy of that magazine carries stories of marital conflicts, Broadway movie stars, etc., as written by Booth Tarkington and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson.

A 1912 issue of *Everybody's Magazine* featured "Gratitude and Graft" by Walter Lippmann, a story about the killing of the proposed Sulloway Bill in Congress that would halt a phenomenal growth in the numbers of Civil War pensioners. Fourteen years after the end of that conflict there were four times the number of veterans as there had been at war's end. Costs were estimated at the time to rise by a million dollars over the next ten years. In actuality, Congress added \$400 million during those years.

In the 1915 issue of *McClure's* was a mystery by Mary Roberts Rinehart, and the personal experiences of Alice Williamson, the first woman war correspondent entitled, "My attempt to be a War Correspondent." Other articles were written by Wallace Irwin and P.G. Wodehouse, and each magazine was the size of today's *National Geographic* magazine, and sold for 15 cents.

**Members of Eugene du Bac Vacher's family have donated** his Asher/Vacher documents, letters and photos to our Society – some dating back to each family's early life in late-1800s France and from Canada, Seattle, San Francisco and El Cajon earlier in that century. Photographs and watercolors by Robert Asher, the "hermit of Mount Palomar," are of immense interest to historians; they date to San Diego's settler days when only native plants and animals lived on the mountain. Asher donated land he owned and leased to the Observatory and the Boy Scout Camp. Already, there is interest in this sub-collection from a local university.

Our local history involves Frenchman Eugene Stanislaus Vacher and his wife, Josephine Asher Vacher. Josephine, the last white child born in Old Town, became a national prize winner at the 1893 Chicago

Exposition for her skill in raising and curing raisin grapes on land now occupied by the Westfield shopping center on Fletcher Parkway.

She also became a revered local school teacher – teaching until she was in her 80s. In El Cajon, she taught at the original El Cajon Grammar School, and later designed the landscape around the school in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, when the El Cajon Union School District built new offices and board room on that property; they followed that same planting design. The library/media center at Hillsdale Middle School in Rancho San Diego bears Josephine Asher/Vacher's name, and exhibits some of her drawings of native flowers and weeds. In the collection presented to our Society are Josephine's many Victorian valentines and several silver cups she won for raising and drawing flowers throughout her long lifetime. Some will be used in the Knox House Museum.

Society members have already spent a number of weeks processing the hundreds of pieces of El Cajon-based ephemera and photographs to determine which items are better suited to San Francisco's and other cities' collections. Although it is difficult to guess how long it will take to finish the initial steps for processing everything – then read the letters, cards, diaries, telegrams, sales slips, etc. – Society members are delighted to be able to add more source information on El Cajon's settler-and-growth years to our collection, and then digitize everything and make it available on-line to researchers and interested members of the El Cajon community. The Board knows that each of our members is also grateful for the generosity of our donors in giving to the ECH Society.



"Not until it was consumed and the black ash fell into the saucer of the candle stick, did Carlotta speak again."  
From "K" by Mary Roberts Rinehart. *McClure's Magazine* April 1915. Illustration by Charles Chambers.



## NEW MUSEUM POSTERS AROUND TOWN

Please look in store windows on major corners throughout El Cajon for lovely posters advertising the Knox House and Olaf Wieghorst Museums. Ours shows the Victrola on exhibit in the Knox parlor, and says, “*At Home on the Southern California Frontier – built during El Cajon’s Settlement Years 1869-1912.*” By promoting the museum and continuing to gather, process and digitize early records, maps, photos and letters, your board members are seeing to it that the history of our city and community is protected and increasingly made available for public use.

### Phebe Burnham

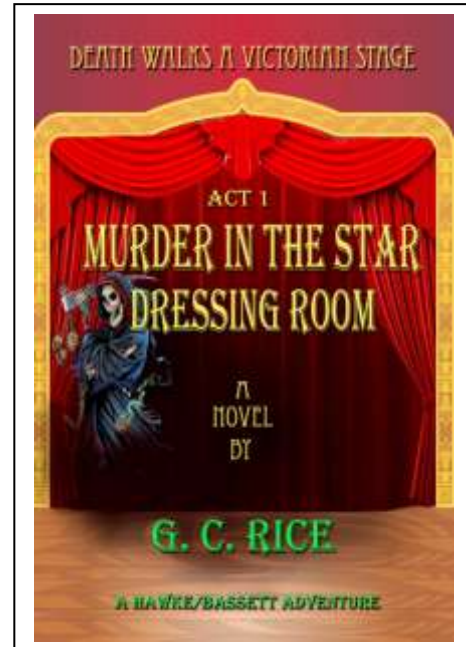
A number of Phebe Burnham’s original paintings of early El Cajon settler families have been donated by the well-known artist to the Society to sell or auction. And we will be doing both over the months and years ahead. One or more will be auctioned off in Chinese auction fashion at our upcoming Antique Sale in July on the Knox Museum grounds and in Judson Park across the street.

Phebe, an acclaimed artist, is exhibited and collected locally and nationally. Born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, her ancestors were New Bedford whalers. She, however received degrees from the Swain School of Design and the Columbia University School of Painting and Sculpture. Her entry into El Cajon came when her husband, Bob, was hired by the Grossmont High School District as an administrator. Later, he’d take the helm of the new Grossmont College as one of its early presidents. For a time, Phebe taught there. After Bob passed away, she turned to painting full time.



“Uncle Jake and Aunt Ida” by Phebe Burnham

G.C. Rice’s new book *Murder in the Star Dressing Room* has just been released on Kindle. It’s the first of a series titled Death Walks A Victorian Stage. Two more books of the series will follow in a few days. These cozy mystery tales feature Detective-Inspector Emmett Hawke and his acting-couple friends, Alex and Helena Bassett, as they foil the plots of the clever murderers, using the detection methods of the 1890’s.



Guess Who - ?? Ans. On pg. 7



## El Cajon Historical Society Board

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HERITAGE EDITOR: MICHELLE REGAN

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KARNA WEBSTER, ELLEN ANDERSON, BONNIE FREDENSBORG, DICK LAY

### COME JOIN US!

MEMBERSHIP:

\$10-	INDIVIDUAL
\$15	FAMILY
\$25	ORGANIZATION
\$35	BUSINESS
\$500	LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Your membership and donations are very much appreciated and help to preserve our Knox House and the artifacts within - pictures and documents for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

### KNOX READERS

**The Midwife's Tale**, The Life of Martha Ballard Based on Her Diary 1785-1812

by Laurel Ulrich

*Diary of midwife and herbalist reveals prevalence of violence, crime, and pre-marital sex in rural 18<sup>th</sup> century New England.* (Synopsis of the book on the Knox Readers Book List)

The "Diary" I read revealed an astonishing woman, who raised a family, mourned the deaths of her children,

### Essay Contest Just Around the Corner

Plans are already underway for the 2011 Third Grade Essay Contest. Our Award Ceremony will be held on Monday, June 6, at 7 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Community Center. All members are invited to attend and assist – in checking in students, serving refreshments, or serving as essay readers.

Packets are posted on the website for public and private schools: [www.elcajonhistory.org](http://www.elcajonhistory.org) Schools will be notified this month and we really gear up in April when we will need readers to read those very interesting and sometimes comical essays.

The essays will be distributed in May to the readers.

Members are encouraged to help read for the final awards. Essays are great fun to read and it is amazing what kinds of facts third graders discover! If you would like to be an essay reader, contact Chairperson, Alice Rodriguez at [alicerod@san.rr.com](mailto:alicerod@san.rr.com) . Or call us and leave a message at 619 444 -3800



contributed to the welfare of the community in which she lived, conducted her own business and managed her household with unflinching faith and commitment. Some of us may have had ancestors like Martha, who lived in New England during the aftermath of the Revolutionary War and the tensions leading up to the War of 1812. I have a love of genealogy. I often wonder about events my ancestors experienced as I search out facts about their lives. The picture this book paints, about the hardships and privations lived by a fledgling community along the Kennebec River in Maine, helped me flesh out images of my 18<sup>th</sup> century relatives.

## First Fridays

### Fred John

A Man of Two Cultures at the Knox House

Alaskan Native Fred John will share songs, chants, and stories, and answer questions at the fourth 'Salon Night' at the Knox House Museum on April 1, from 6:00 to 7:30, 280 N. Magnolia Avenue, El Cajon. In cooperation with El Cajon's Community Development Corp. 'First Friday' program, the El Cajon Historical Society has obtained a series of speakers and musicians with unique talents and expertise to encourage conversation and discussions with members of the community.

It was 50-below outside the tent where Fred was born in 1943 in the village of Sosluta in the Copper River country of Southeast Alaska. The nearest doctor was about 200 miles away, but the traditional ways of the 'People of the Headwaters' (Tatl'awhat'aenn Nenn') were more than adequate to meet the rigors of nature. Fred's parents, Fred John, Sr. and his Mother, Katie, were prominent members of the community; his father, the last traditional chief, and his mother a member of a clan associated with 'sleeping doctors' or practitioners of 'spiritual medicine.'

For the first seven years of his life, Fred, called 'Curly' (Tsklok) heard and spoke only his native Ahtna language and was barely aware of any people besides those in his own village. There, he listened and learned the songs, myths, and traditions of his people, which form the background of the programs he presents to educate others about the Native Alaskans. At the age of seven, Fred was sent to boarding school where he learned to speak English and how to fit into mainstream American culture.

Returning to his own people after seven years, he discovered many changes. The village where he was born had been wiped out by tuberculosis, and Native lives had been transformed by new highways and towns. Determined to keep Ahtna language and culture from being lost, he has worked with his parents and other members of the community to preserve the old traditions and has assisted in the writing of books in the Ahtna language. His wife, Linnea, the daughter of Byron and Jean Conrad of El Cajon, met Fred while teaching swimming in Alaska. She is totally supportive of his efforts to preserve the Alaskan heritage. **May 6** - Poetry writers share with readings **June 3** - Andrew Woodruff will share about his passion with American coins and currency



We've gone Viral – Not really! But you can experience a Virtual Tour of the Museum

<http://www.virtualventura.net/elcajon/theknoxhousemuseum-index.html>

#### Welcome New Members: We're growing, and we like it!

Shannon Chilver,  
Foss & Esther Corley  
Earl & Pamela Harper  
Tad & Shirlee Geiger  
Frances Parsons Hill -Enhanced Life  
Enid M. Farrell

Carol & Keith Zetsch  
Mary Kay Engh  
Mariana Adams & Mr.  
Shera Dearing  
Helen Cerda

Historical Photos are available for purchase from the museum. Any photo owned by the San Diego Historical Society or Ticolor Title must be purchased from the San Diego Historical Society. Those funds go to preserve, catalogue and protect the photos.

Photo copy	\$20.00
Scan Fee	\$25.00
Research	\$38.00 per hour

Using GoodSearch to help out the museum.

Good Search gives us a penny each time you use their site as your search engine. Simply go to [GoodSearch.com](http://www.GoodSearch.com) and put in ECHS in the space provided for your charity.

In addition, when you purchase anything when using the GoodShop button, we can receive a percentage of the purchase. The GoodShop button is on the GoodSearch website or on the tool bar which you can download.

**Many of us do quite a bit of shopping on the internet. This is a painless way to give to our museum.**

<http://www.goodsearch.com>

**Membership due dates are on your address label.**

We appreciate your membership support, helping to preserve our El Cajon History.  
Kindly mail your payment to ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022

Knox House Museum  
280 N. Magnolia  
P.O. Box 1973  
El Cajon, CA 92022

Museum Hours:  
Currently Open  
1<sup>st</sup> Sat. 12:30 – 3:15  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sat. 11am – 2 pm

Call first for specific hours  
619 444-3800

**Guess Who Ans. L – R Caruso, Melba, Schumann-Heink, McCormack, Martin on a Victor record ad. Circa 1920's**

El Cajon Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1973  
El Cajon, CA 92022

Return Service  
Requested

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 154  
EL CAJON, CA 92020

### El Cajon's Agricultural Past by G. Carroll Rice

It's difficult these days to visualize the rural roots of modern El Cajon. There are clues in the discovery of ancient grape stumps, isolated stalks of asparagus, the annual appearance of 'volunteer' oats and barley, and a few gnarled old olive and orange trees. Yet, in the days before World War II, the very existence of El Cajon was tied to its farms, groves, vineyards and fields of grain. This is the first of a series of articles exploring the grape, citrus, grain, livestock and produce gardening enterprises in the pre-industrial years of the El Cajon Valley.

The valley, with its grasses, oak trees, and wide spaces attracted the native people who for thousands of years harvested its acorns, nourishing plants and small game. There was plenty of water, and the many running streams washed the bitterness from ground acorns that were cooked into a basic staff of life.

Under Spanish and Mexican rule, the valley was seen as grazing land for sheep and cattle. However, some authorities say that the missionaries and a few scattered settlers planted small vineyards and grew some old world crops here, but real farming was yet to come.

The purchase of the El Cajon Rancho in 1868 by Isaac Lankershim, and his grant of land to his attorney, Major Levi Chase, set the agricultural tone of the valley for the next 100 years. Although Major Chase lived in San Diego, he was vitally interested in the development of orchards and row crops in El Cajon. His 105-acre 'Cajon Villa and Fruit Farm' excited comment throughout the State. *The History of San Diego County*, published in San Francisco in 1883 says that Major Chase's "orange trees set out in 1876 now have 800 to 1,000 oranges on them." The Major's farming production was not limited to citrus. His other fruit trees and crops were also thriving, and by the 1890's he was supplying fruit and vegetables to the then-new Hotel Del Coronado.

Interest in valley lands grew rapidly, and when county growers formed the San Diego County Producers Union in 1889, J. M. Asher, W. H. Swann, and other El Cajon horticulturists and farmers were at the center of the movement. From that point, the valley would establish and maintain a prominent place in California agriculture for the next century.

