



# The Hourglass

Ginny Folkers, Newsletter Editor, Curator

WINTER 2014

## Homesteaders in Cahuilla Hills Edited from the Society's Archives by Ginny Folkers, Curator

Around the mid-1930s, the Federal Government decided it had more land in its name than it really needed. There were people living in the United States who could use this vacant property. In 1938 they designed the Small Tract Act for disposing of up to five acres. At a patent office, citizens could apply for five acres for themselves and their heirs.

This new project followed in the footsteps of the Homestead Act which called for 160-acre allotments. Much of this land was confiscated from the American Indians. See Kim Stringfellow's book, "Jackrabbit Homesteads," for more on this subject.

One of the first families to obtain land in the Cahuilla Hills was Kenneth & Helen Burns. They became active in the Mutual Assistance Group, which formed among the homesteaders. Demonstrating their strong Christian faith, they organized the first

The Burns' young daughter, Barbara, talked to all the neighbors to get their latest news. The information she gathered was typed and printed on one sheet of paper which she called the "Jackrabbit News." The first weekly edition came out in March of 1953. By December of that year the name was changed to the Cahuilla Weekly. The last we heard from Barbara, she was doing missionary work in Brazil.

By the mid-1950s Arnold & Esther Schaak joined the Cahuilla Hills group. Esther added a few sheets of local news and incorporated Barbara Burns' contribution, which was the beginning of the Cahuilla News Letter. Esther was an inveterate writer and loved publishing this newspaper in her home. Subscribers were delighted with the paper, and in 1959 she expanded and named it the Palm Desert Newsletter. Retailers were using the publication as a vital part of their advertising budget. .

The adventurous people who were up-grading their five-acre pieces of land had many side issues with which to contend. They needed a Cahuilla' Hills sign, electricity, water, driveways and roads, waste disposal, etc. They also needed somebody who could organize all these projects. They didn't have to search very far to fill this position as Esther demonstrated her talent to fill-the-bill. There were road builders, well drillers, Riverside County, and many others to be contacted and contracted. Esther divided the costs and billed her neighbors for their share of the expenses. She also circulated petitions, planned a concert, and had aerial photos taken of the area. Mrs. Schaak was appreciated by neighbors and welcomed to Palm Desert activities.

*The Mission of  
the Historical  
Society of Palm  
Desert*

*To collect,  
preserve and  
record the history  
of our city and  
communities and  
to provide  
access to the  
society's  
archives and  
artifacts through  
exhibits,  
publications,  
programs and  
events.*

Easter Sunrise Service in the mountains in April of 1948. It was highly successful with attendants coming from all over the Palm Desert area -80 people in all.

## A Message from our President

Don Graybill

We hit the ground running once the weather cooled, from Opening Day at the firehouse to the five Mini-Muster school days. Then our Fall Luncheon, the Fourth-Friday gatherings at the Portola library, and most recently, the Firehouse Yard Sale! Now it's time to take a break and enjoy the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays with family and friends. All our activities have been well received, as you can see from this newsletter. Much thanks to those who work so hard and well to make them so.

Please keep your eyes open for new members. Perhaps carrying an application or two with you can be all the encouragement someone needs. Mark your calendar for up-coming activities, so each one will bring to mind personal memories for you. (Don't you just LOVE the new 2014 calendar from P.D. -- it's our city's 40th.) As always, come by the firehouse as often as you are able. We're hoping to see you soon!

## Our Members Speak Out

Colleen Tebeau to Brett Romer: I enjoyed reading the newsletter as usual. Please tell Ginny that I particularly liked her article on the trip to France and look forward to the next installment. (Note: Dear Colleen and all the other ladies I talked to during the yard sale, I will not be including the "European Trip" in future issues of the Hourglass. All the ladies loved it, but the men said it was not relevant to Palm Desert's local history. So-o-o-o, Brett Romer has agreed to include the rest of the trip on the Society's web page. Hope you enjoy it. Ginny)

Dick Oliphant to Brett Romer: I enjoyed the article about Phil Franklin. Frank Goodman and I built the first cable system in the desert at Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club.) Phil came to see us one day to talk about purchasing our cable system. He had two investors, Bing Crosby and Phil Harris, who wanted to expand cable over the desert. We wound up selling our system to them, and they franchised it Able Cable. Frank and I got a percentage of every new connection for 25 years and free TV service. It was hard to believe when one day I received a letter telling me this is the final check and my TV service was being terminated. I can tell you 25 years goes by pretty fast. (Note: Dick, thank you for clearing up

the details of the beginning of cable in the desert. Our archive confirms your explanation. You are absolutely correct. -Ginny)

Eric Vogt to Clayton Mayes: I am sure the fine folks that donate all the many items to the Annual HSPD Yard Sale often wonder what happens to those donated items. Prior to this year's yard sale, someone donated part of a wooden propeller. Kim Housken and I tried to find out the origin of this propeller part on the internet. but we were not successful to establish any sort of provenance documentation of any type. The donor didn't leave his contact information either. There were not any manufacturer's embossed markings, codes or a nomenclature plate, which are almost always on propeller blades. I further researched all wooden propeller manufacturers back to the 1800's, but was unsuccessful in finding this propeller blade. I did find a design that used manually pitched adjusting hubs and this type of wooden propeller blade, but not this specific one. So what should the Society ask for it? Its value was a mystery! What to do with it was clear to me at this point. A close friend is an accomplished, avid pilot owning several planes over many years. I even learned a lot about aviation through him, from the back seat as his instructor gave him flight training. We flew all over southern California, into Arizona and Nevada. After he finished his training and had his pilot's license, we flew many times together. We enjoyed clear, calm

## Firehouse-Museum

*72-861 El Paseo Drive  
P.O. Box 77  
Palm Desert, CA 92261  
760.346.6588  
Fax 760.346.6588*

*[www.hspd.org](http://www.hspd.org)  
[info.hspd@verizon.net](mailto:info.hspd@verizon.net)*

*Open Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
and Saturday  
10:00 am to 3:00 pm*

days all over the desert and over the mountains to valley and coastal airports. Who better to receive this mystery wooden propeller blade as a final destination? I paid the marked price and presented the propeller blade as a gift at a recent luncheon to Clayton Mayes, retired L.A.P.D. Captain, retired Downey City Chief of Police, and professor for the College of the Desert Administration of Justice/Peace Officer Standards Training Program. John Marman and I appreciated the surprised look on Clayton's beaming face when he realized the propeller blade was going to be his! He is going to mount it on the wall in his man-cave at his home in Rancho Mirage and enjoy it for many years

### **New Members**

We would like to welcome the following new members to the society:

Kathleen Kelly  
Gary Whiteley  
Jim & Susan Brock  
Marvin Spreyne  
Jeanne Lee

### **Life Members**

We would like to recognize our life members. They are:

Ault, Frank  
Eastes, Mr. & Mrs. Warren  
Folkers, Mr. & Mrs. Richard  
Gregory, Mr. & Mrs. Ron  
Harman, Mr. & Mrs. Reed  
Hollenbeck, Jean  
Keedy, Mr. & Mrs. Doug  
Lyon, Whitney  
Moller, Mr. & Mrs. Poul  
North, Ceil Erickson  
Romer, Mr. & Mrs. Brett  
Rover, Mr. & Mrs. Hal  
Stewart, Mr. & Mrs. Kevin  
Yoxsimer, Jeannette

### **Recent Donations to the Archive**

#### Betty Crockett: Collection 139

2005 = 52 items on her work, Shadow Mt. Club, 37 issues of Sun Spots. 2013 = 23 items on

Environment, Coachella Valley Preserve, Fauna-Birds, Pioneers, etc.

#### Duchess Emerson: Collection 171

2013 = 5 items on Environment- Canyons, History - General - 1940-50s, Pioneers -Tommy Tomson, Performing Arts- Movies.

#### Sarah McCormick Seekatz: Collection 172

2013 = 3 items on Agriculture- Dates, Celebrities- George W. & Laura Bush, Sports & Recreation - Date Festival.

#### Mrs. George "Duke" Fisher: Not cataloged

Permission to copy photographs and newspaper articles in an album made for her husband covering his years in the Optimist Club of Palm Desert.

#### Eugene Conrotto: Not cataloged

Approximately 95 issues of the Palm Desert Post covering the years between 1963 and 1967.

### **In Remembrance of Betty Jane Crockett**

One of our most popular pioneers passed away on Nov. 3. She moved to the desert in 1956 at the age of 19. Coming from the Los Angeles area, she was invited to take a job at the Shadow Mountain Club



teaching the children swimming safety and every manner of important information that the various ages needed to know. They loved her like a mother and appreciated her for the fun and education she provided for them. The youngsters kept in

touch even into their adult years.

When she retired in 1964, she kept a menagerie at her home. Betty lived in La Quinta until she moved to Palm Desert in 2000. The Historical Society gave her the 2008 Founder's Day Award.

Anne Tuttle says she has known Betty for ten years, and she remembers their discussions about birds. Betty had an albino humming bird she fed with an eye dropper to keep it alive. She will be long remembered and greatly missed.

The Society is accepting funds donated as a memorial to Betty Crockett and the role she played in the history of Palm Desert. If you wish to

contribute, please make your check out to: Historical Society of Palm Desert.

At a birthday party for Betty on March 11, 2006 a poem was presented to her on the program. It gives a good idea of what the youngsters remember about her leadership for them during the 1950s and 1960s at the Shadow Mountain Club.

A Poem by "Her Kids"

### Thank You

Thank you....Betty Crockett,  
For your genuine love and care,  
More super charged than a rocket  
With your long golden hair.

With your bathing suit & ponytail  
We were your little kittens,  
You led us up the Tahquitz Trail  
For you we all were smitten.

Your green MG you drove  
To be with us every day,  
With smile and heart you strove  
To teach us the right way.

You are more beautiful each day  
Our memories of you are dear,  
What you mean to us, we can't say  
You grow more precious every day.

Memories of egg hunts and plays,  
Of dances, hikes and dives.  
How we wish our children  
Could have a Betty in their lives.

Love, Your Kids

### Historical Society Yard Sale November 9 & 10, 2013

Our annual fund-raiser was a busy, happy, successful event because we netted \$6,200 after expenses. Adele Sandman, our able chairperson, can now sit back in an easy chair, put her feet up and take a well-deserved rest. She and her helpers spent all summer picking up our discards, sorting and pricing in preparation for this week-end event.

During the week before the sale, the huge trailer in

the Society's backyard was emptied out. Tables were set up, merchandise was sorted, some prices had to be applied, and tarps were at the ready in case it rained. Each day, Adele saw-to-it that her helpers were well-fed, either with home-made dishes or treats purchased in Palm Desert. This year there was a good supply of furniture, Christmas decorations, boutique items, linens, glassware, clothing, technical items, books, flowers bulbs, and baby sago palms. Next year we could use more sporting goods, tools, plants, toys and antiques.

Many thanks to everyone who picked up large items, joined the summer workshops , came early, worked hard, and set the stage for the success of this event. It is the Society's most important fund-raiser, and

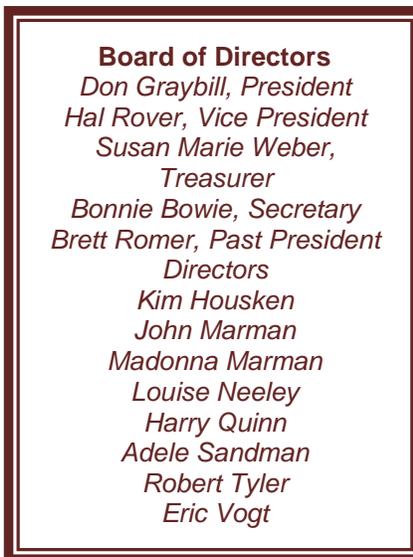
you are some of our most valued members.

### Mini-Muster 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary October is "FIRE SAFETY MONTH"

For the past 20 years the Historical Society has been coordinating with the Desert Sands School District and the Riverside County Fire Department to teach "fire safety" to third graders from five local schools. Along with personnel from these organizations, the Rotary clubs and members of the Society give their assistance. John and Madonna Marman have chaired

this out-reach for the past few years. Before that, Dan & BJ Callahan organized it and did the paperwork. The program was introduced to the Society by Jan Holmlund.

Children learn what to do if they happen to be in a fire, and they also teach all their friends and family. They participate in a bucket brigade, follow a water hose blindfolded, learn to stop-drop-and-roll, and they dress in a fireman's turnout clothes. After the field activities, they assemble in a darkened room and hear what sounds a fireman makes when he is wearing a smoke mask and safety equipment.



## **A Biography of Clifford Henderson**

By Ginny Folkers

For the past five years I have been compiling a biography of the life and times to Cliff Henderson. Following Marian's death, the Society received all the archival documents and photographs that were part of the Henderson estate. The book will be published by Jean Denning (a member of the Society) of Thunderbird Press. It will cover Cliff's birth, childhood escapades, high school & USC education, 12 years of work organizing the National Air Races, and the founding and development of Palm Desert.

### **Envisioning Palm Desert**

Information provided by David Hermann, Public Information Officer, City of Palm Desert Edited by Dick & Ginny Folkers

Since last May, a committee composed of local residents has been meeting to work on a new strategic plan titled: Envision Palm Desert--- Forward Together. Discussion about the future of Palm Desert for the next 20 years on topics such as Economic Development; Land Use; Education; Tourism & Marketing; Energy & Sustainability; Parks & Recreation; Arts & Culture; and Public Safety takes place at these sessions.

This new plan will be the City of Palm Desert's fourth since its incorporation in 1973. The first was the 2000 Plan which finished in 1986. The second was the 2010 Plan which finished in 1997. The third was the 2008 Council Strategic Plan which had 3-year goals. Envision Palm Desert fills a 20-year window and the study is scheduled to go to the Council in January 2014.

Some of the goals which have been accomplished by these past committees have enhanced the City's appeal as one of the leaders in the Coachella Valley. The Civic Center and the Park behind it is an inviting complex for local residents as well as visitors. Another fulfilled goal was the establishment of Palm Desert as a Charter City. The most recent completed goal is the new Aquatic Center. Since 2008 the city has lost its redevelopment funding which presents challenges and an opportunity to reevaluate where Palm Desert is headed. A strategic plan will help do this by identifying specific goals and objectives and

outlining ways to get there.

Some of the people on this committee are members of the Historical Society. They are: Dr. William Kroonen, Kim Housken, Brett Romer and Dick Folkers. We congratulate them for their willingness to expend their time and energy in good citizenship.

### **Friday Night Lecture: Native Desert Plants**

Speaker: Jennifer Hudson from the Living Desert By Dick Folkers

On November 22 the fourth-Friday lecture started at 7:00 p.m. at the Portola Community Center. Jennifer showed pictures of the various desert plants with the common names and also the scientific names. She explained about the grasses that the Cahuilla Indians used to make their baskets. She had one basket that was water-proof and worth thousands of dollars. It had the design of a snake woven into it, which was a figure that was sacred to the Cahuillas.

As she explained the plants, she passed around a basket of cookies made from plant flour which she mixed with wheat flour and other ingredients. She also explained about the tea made from the creosote bush. It had medicinal properties as well as nutritional value. Part of the show was about desert insects. It was very interesting to see a caterpillar go through its various stages to end up as a beautiful butterfly.

### **Mini-Muster Art Contest Winners**

The winners of the mini-muster art contest this year were: Jazmin Olivas-Pacheo from Lincoln Elementary School, Sebastien Nail from Carter Elementary School, Jianna Martinez from Ford Elementary School, Carolina Flores from Reagan Elementary School and Tayla Berg from Washington Charter Elementary School. Each school selects one student from all of the third grader entries. The winning entry is framed and hung for the year at the fire station associated with the particular school. The winners ride on our fire engine in the annual golf cart parade. (You might note that we are the only motorized vehicle in the parade.)

## Schedule of up-coming events

January 24, 2014 (Friday)

Friday Night Lecture Series

### **Louise Neeley & Harry Quinn "Coachella Valley History"**

Coffee, cookies and conversation begins at 6:30 pm. Lecture from 7 to 8 pm.

This is held at the 'Old Library' - 45480 Portola Ave, NE corner of Portola and Shadow Mtn.

A \$5.00 donation is suggested.

January 24,25,27,29,31

### **DesertArc Art Show & Sale**

**Reception will be on Jan 24 from 11am to 1pm.**

This is held at the firehouse, 72861 El Paseo Drive.

This is during the regular firehouse hours from 10am to 3pm.

February 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17

### **C. V. Watercolor Society Art Show and Sale**

**Reception will be February 8 starting at noon**

This is held at the firehouse, 72861 El Paseo Drive.

This is during the regular firehouse hours from 10am to 3pm

February 22, 2014

### **Field Trip to 3 Museums**

Field trip to the Malki Museum, the Fire Memories Museum and the Gilman Ranch Museum. Assemble in parking lot at Painters Path and Fred Waring. Cost is \$40 for members or \$45 for non-members. You **MUST** make reservations by 2/8/2014! Call 760.346.6588 or get registration materials at our web page <http://www.hspd.org> . **Must signup by February 8, 2014.**

**February 8, 2014.**

February 28, 2014

(Friday)

Friday Night Lecture Series

### **Bill Waring on "Fred Waring: His Connection to the Desert"**

Coffee, cookies and conversation begins at 6:30 pm. Lecture from 7 to 8 pm.

This is held at the 'Old Library' - 45480 Portola Ave, NE corner of Portola and Shadow Mtn.

A \$5.00 donation is suggested

March 23, 2014 (Sunday)

### **Picnic in the Park including Spring Meeting of the Membership**

Social begins at 11:30am with lunch starting about noon.

This is at the Civic Center Park, 73510 Fred Waring Dr, NE corner of Fred Waring Dr. and San Pablo Ave.

A \$10.00 donation is suggested.

March 28, 2014 (Friday)

Friday Night Lecture Series

### **Lucinda Crosby on "Water in the West"**

Coffee, cookies and conversation begins at 6:30 pm. Lecture from 7 to 8 pm.

This is held at the 'Old Library' - 45480 Portola Ave, NE corner of Portola and Shadow Mtn.

A \$5.00 donation is suggested

April 12, 2014 (Saturday) **TENTATIVE**

### **Art Appraisal Day**

This will be at the firehouse and run from 10am to 12:30pm.

More information will be shared when it is available. Check our web site at <http://www.hspd.org>

April 25, 2014 (Friday)

Friday Night Lecture Series

### **To Be Announced, see our web page at http://www.hspd.org**

Coffee, cookies and conversation begins at 6:30 pm. Lecture from 7 to 8 pm.

This is held at the 'Old Library' - 45480 Portola Ave, NE corner of Portola and Shadow Mtn.

A \$5.00 donation is suggested

**Museum Closes June 2, 2014.**

**Museum will reopen September 29, 2014.**

## BUSINESS MEMBERS

The following local businesses have supported the Society by taking out a membership. We encourage you to patronize them throughout the year. Be sure to mention that you know they are Historical Society members.

**BACKSTREET BISTRO**

72820 El Paseo Dr., 760.346.6393

**CASUELAS CAFE'**

73703 Hwy 111, 760.568.0011

**COLLEGE OF THE DESERT ALUMNI STREET FAIR**

43500 Monterey Ave., 760.636.7957

**EXPRESS FRAME**

44489 Town Center Way, Ste A, 760.773.9228

**DESERT MAP & AERIAL PHOTO**

73612 Hwy 111, 760.346.1101

**HIDDEN HARVEST**

87711 Peter Rabbit Lane, Coachella, 760.398.8183

**SHADOW MOUNTAIN RESORT & CLUB**

45750 San Luis Rey, 760.346.6123, 800.472.3713

**JILLIAN'S RESTAURANT**

74155 El Paseo Dr., 760.776.8242

**WAYNE CONNOR & ASSOCIATES**

44267 Monterey Ave., 760.340.9277

**JEFF FRISCO FOR HAIR**

45275 Prickley Pear Lane, 760.340.1622

**RGA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**

73061 El Paseo Dr., 760.568.3624

**ROBERT D. REED, D.D.S.**

73071 Fred Waring Dr., 760.346.8901

**THE INN AT DEEP CANYON**

74470 Abronia Tr., 760.346.8061

**FRESH AGAVE MEXICAN BAR & GRILL**

73325 Hwy 111, 760.836.9028

**These businesses support us so let's support them.**



## **Palm Desert Calendar for 2014**

This calendar was produced under the direction of Jan Harnik, Mayor 2013. David Hermann, working closely with the Historical Society in the selection of the 'old' pictures, created an outstanding calendar.

Stop by the FireHouse and pick up your copy of this great calendar.

Historical Society of Palm Desert  
P.O. Box 77  
Palm Desert, CA 92261