



CALABASAS-LAS VIRGENES HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2019

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Judy Jordan



Our beloved region has experienced an incredible loss; The Sepulveda Adobe, which had finally been renovated, was destroyed, as was most of Peter Strauss Ranch. In Agoura both the

Lapworth Castle and the old Morrison Ranch house were completely destroyed. Our precious collection of photos have been digitized so they will never be lost.

We are looking forward to many interesting events as we begin celebrating our 40th anniversary. I would like to introduce two new Board Members: Norma Citron, who is going to assist Julie with the membership and Stella Collins is going to work on special projects. Pia, our treasurer extraordinaire, is going to be our official photographer as well.

Our major activity is presenting history lectures jointly with library on the fourth Thursday of each month. Starting times vary between noon and 6:00 pm to serve different segments of our audience. We are reaching out to all community groups to help us celebrate our 40th Anniversary. We are asking all members to enthusiastically join the party.

The Lapworth's and Early Agoura

By Bob Harrison



Charles and Else Lapworth and Queen Elizabeth, the leader of their herd of goats.

In 1929 Charles and Norman Lapworth started building a concrete block house on the top of their eight-acre hill in the back country, two miles north of Ventura Boulevard. The back country of rolling hills spotted with oak trees was fenced off from the Village by a barbed wire fence with cattle guards on the two dirt roads into the area. There were only three or four houses in the back country in the 1930's. The house the Lapworths were building became known as "The Castle" by people in the village.

Charles Lapworth was an Englishman who had been the night editor of a London Labor newspaper. During the First World War he was a publicist for Charlie Chaplin's national war bond drive. Included in

his gallery of friends, in addition to Chaplin was Alfred Hitchcock, Maxwell Anderson and Norman Bel Geddes.

The 1930's were lean years for the Lapworths. The Edison Company had extended electricity to their house, but for much of this period, they were without electricity because they didn't have enough money to pay the bill. Their water well was at the bottom of the hill and they had a 50 gallon water tank on top of the house. Ingenious Norman rigged up a Model T Ford motor to operate the pump for the well and measured just enough gasoline so that the motor would stop when the water tank was full.

In 1935, when I was in the first grade, we rented one of *the* three back country" houses for \$5.00 per month. The house, near the end of Chesebro Road, was about a mile from the Lapworths. It was on 2 ½ acres, and was for sale for \$500.

There was an outside privy, a wood stove for cooking and no running water. Mom and I walked about a quarter of a mile to our landlord's house for water from his well. There were several large oak trees and my dad

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PRESERVING THE PAST. PROTECTING THE FUTURE.

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built a tree house in one of them. Dad was an extra in the '30s and stayed in Hollywood during the week. On weekends he would come out with friends or in borrowed cars.

Liberty was a one room school. There were two of us in the first grade and I was given the assignment of helping the other first grader with her arithmetic.

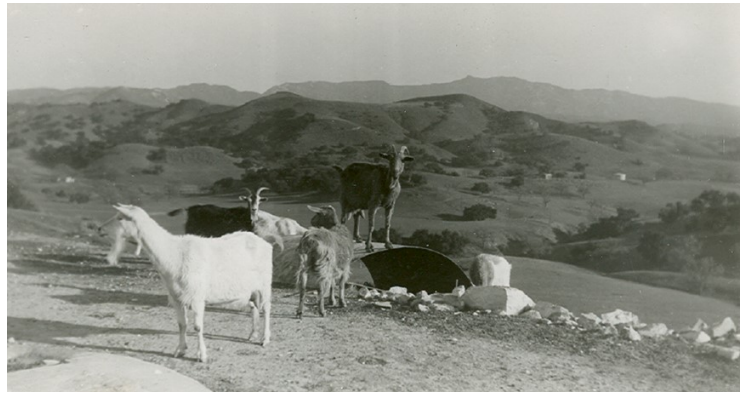
One day I was taken out of class so that I could go to the beach at Malibu with my mother and the Lapworths. Now and for the past 50 or 60 years, there is a small park and playground on Chesebro Road where the school had been.

We visited the Lapworths during different stages of the construction of their house. For many years the concrete roof above the living quarters served as an upstairs deck. I have fond memories of sitting up there under the stars on summer evenings listening to the grown ups talk with classical music in the background. When it was decided that we were going to visit the Lapworths I got excited and became very impatient during preparations for the trip. I also have fond memories of staying on "the hill" for short periods during summer vacations.

CONT. NEXT COLUMN



The concrete block house known as "The Castle" in early Agoura.



The goats in 1938 with the view south towards Agoura

They had half a dozen goats that were lead by Queen Elizabeth. She looked forward to my visits when I was small so that she could chase me. Other memories include: going out with Norman and other people with apples looking for Flash, their retired polo pony, when he was running with other horses; Else's story about a friend coming in the house for a visit of an hour or two and then looking out to see something in his convertible, and Else asking him why he hadn't brought his friend in, only to discover that his friend was a goat that had fallen through the cloth roof.

When my wife and I drove from Paso Robles to Orange County for Christmas, we stopped by to look at the Lapworth house that was at the top of Lapworth Drive. Sadly, the house was one of the many casualties of the Woolsey Fire and is lost forever.



Do you know a local historian, author, researcher or other person who can share historical information with the CLVHS? If so please contact Martha Duley at 818-451-3104



The City of Calabasas presents: "New Year - New Beginnings" In attendance: (L-R) Arlene Bernholtz, Martha Duley, Judy Jordan and Pia Coleman. Despite the heavy rainfall during the evening and a flat tire as we left the party, it was a grand affair and wonderful way to start the New Year.

1. This bolt is identical to the ones used to secure the steel beams for the structures within the Calabasas Civic Center. It was an "extra" that was never actually used.
2. This nail is identical to the ones once embedded into the asphalt in front of the Civic Center to delineate parking spaces before they were painted. It, too, was an "extra" that was never actually used.
3. This item has no historical significance. It is an odd-looking shot glass that came with a vodka bottle.

Historic Preservation Anniversary

This is the 10th anniversary of the Calabasas Historic Preservation Commission.

I plan to feature each Landmark in numerical order in subsequent issues of the newsletter.

The history of the Calabasas area is long, varied and colorful. It includes Native American inhabitants, Spanish and Mexican Colonials, and the transformation of California into an America state. Many early 20th century settlers were subsistence farmers and homesteaders. With the establishment of the Las Virgenes Water District in 1958 and the Las Virgenes School District in 1963, the area experienced significant growth. The city of Calabasas, established in 1991 is 12.9 square miles with a population of 23,227. With the purpose of protecting cultural resources, the city council adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance on January 2, 2008.

The purpose of the Historic Preservation Program is to safeguard the heritage of Calabasas by protecting our unique historic places for the education and enjoyment of the people. Thus far, seven properties have been placed on the Register of Historic Places:

1. William C. Masson Residence, 23075 Mulholland Highway
2. Benson Residence, 23685 Clover Trail
3. Rouse Residence, 23959 Park Belmonte
4. Old Topanga Canyon Road, south of Mulholland Highway
5. Park Moderne Fountain, at the Bird Path
6. Bird Path, between Blackbird Way and Bluebird Way
7. Calabasas School House Bell located at 4029 Las Virgenes Rd.



CITY of CALABASAS

The commission consists of five Calabasas residents with an interest in the history of the area. Each council person makes an appointment subject to the approval of the entire Council. One nonvoting member is appointed by the Calabasas Historic Society, established in 1979 to promote and preserve the historical interests of Calabasas and surrounding environs. The current members of the commission are: Chair: Alan Ross Vice chairs: Judy Jordan, Negin Ghaffari, Jacques Soriano and Lynne Tracy with the Calabasas-Las Virgenes Historical Society rep: Martha Sweeny-Duley -Judy Jordan

20 Years and Counting!



On July 14, 2018, the Calabasas Municipal Library celebrated its 20th anniversary. In 1998, the City of Calabasas seceded from the Los Angeles County library system, establishing its own independent library. This was done in order to ensure that all tax monies collected from Calabasas residents for library services stay within our community. An extensive study revealed that prior to secession, approximately one-half of all such funds were used by the County outside of Calabasas for general overhead, maintenance, and infrastructure. In 1999, the City purchased land in the Calabasas Park Centre for the creation of a future Civic Center. In 2003, Calabasas sought and received an \$8.2 million grant from the State of California to build a new library building within the Civic Center. And in 2008, the City celebrated the grand opening of the Calabasas Civic Center, which included a 25,000 square foot Municipal Library.

-James Bozajian

City of Calabasas Artifact Quiz



For many years, I admired three ever-present objects sitting atop former City Manager Tony Coroalles' desk at Calabasas City Hall — in addition, of course, to admiring the City Manager himself. Knowing of my interest in local history, Coroalles graciously gifted the items to me when he retired last year. At the time, I believed them all to be of historical significance; but, as things turned out, only two of the three were actually local relics. I soon devised an idea to create a historical quiz using these three curiosities. Depicted above are the three objects in question. Can you deduce what each of them is, and which two among them have historical relevance? **The answers to this first-ever Calabasas-Las Virgenes Historical Society Quiz are on page 2 of this newsletter** -James Bozajian

Mysterious Local History

Was found and acquired by James Bozajian for the City Archives last year. This large silver platter, approximately 14 inches in diameter, is a 1962 award from the Calabasas Annual Horse Show at Brierwood Arabian Farms - no records for which can be found online. It's a mystery to solve someday!



Join the CLVHS!

The Calabasas-Las Virgenes Historical Society is making an incredible offer. With a \$25.00 membership, you will receive 2 books by Catherine Mulholland: **Calabasas Girls An Intimate History 1885-1912** and **Calabasas Lives Pioneers of Western Outpost**. Read of the hardscrabble and often dangerous life the original settlers of this area.

Join today at CalabasasHistoricalSociety.org

Ralphs Rewards Program

Support the CLVHS when you shop!

Just follow these simple instructions: **1.** Log in to www.ralphs.com **2.** Click on 'No Account' Register **3.** Follow the easy steps to create an online account **4.** You will be instructed to go to your email inbox to confirm your account **5.** After you confirm your online account by clicking on the link in your email, return to Ralphs.com and click on 'Sign In', enter your email address and password. **6.** View all your information and edit as necessary **7.** Link your card to your organization by clicking on: **a.** Community Rewards - Enroll **b.** Type your NPO number or Name of your Organization **c.** Remember to click on the circle to the left of your organizations' name **d.** Click on Enroll to finish your enrollment process.



The Calabasas-Las Virgenes Historical Society is:

Elected Positions:

President Judy Jordan
 First VP & Program Chair Martha Duley
 Second VP & Membership Chair Julie Shy-Sobol
 Third VP, Ways & Means..... James Bozajian
 Treasurer Pia Coleman
 Historian Bradley Bobbs, Ph.D.

Appointed Positions:

Parliamentarian Arlene Bernholtz
 Hospitality Taryn Wayne
 Librarian Open, Cim Castellon until filled
 Member at Large Cim Castellon
 Website & Newsletter Brian Rooney