LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL

The Branding Iron

J. GOODMAN

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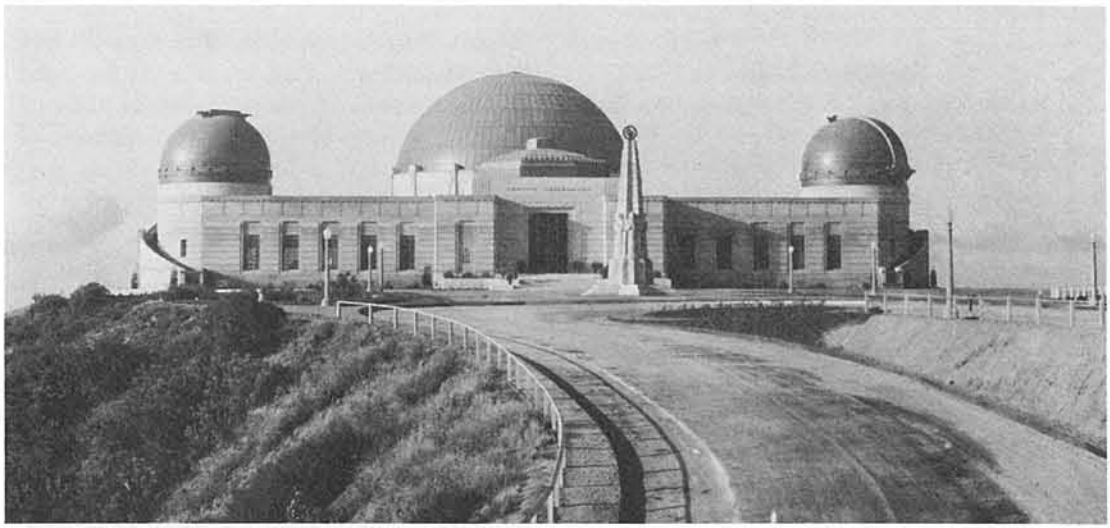

Griffith Park Planetarium—Memorial to Griffith J. Griffith—Donald Duke Collection

Griffith J. Griffith and his Park

by Charles G. Clarke

Millions of Southern Californians know Griffith Park, the largest city park in ground area in the United States. Here mothers bring their toddlers to visit the children's zoo, ride the ponies or the miniature train. Boys and girls camp out in facilities located in the wilderness area. There are two 18 hole golf courses and many tennis courts for the athletic minded. Picnic tables, miles of scenic roads, and trails provide a healthy outing in the sun for families of all nationalities. The popular Greek Theatre and the famous Observatory attract people of all ages. Griffith Park has something for everyone.

Griffith Park did not begin as a complete park, it took years, and a lot of money, devotion, and time on the part of many persons to get it to the condition you see the park today. I shall discuss some of these later, but at first it may be of interest to briefly review the history of Rancho Los Felis from which this wonderful park sprang.

When Spain decided to colonize Upper California, scores of prospective settlers were assembled at Tubac, Mexico, for the long journey overland to California. Under the leader-

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The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL

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THE BRANDING IRON solicits articles of 1500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

March

Larry Burgess, presently Sheriff of the San Bernardino Corral of the Westerners, presented a thought-provoking talk on Southern California based on his own opinions, as well as those of eminent historical writers. He stressed the need for more research dealing with the industries of Southern California, especially the citrus industry which, according to Larry, deserves more recognition. A lively session of questions and answers followed.

Scene at the March meeting (Left-Right) with Deputy Sheriff Tony Lehman, speaker Larry Burgess of the San Bernardino Corral and our own Sheriff Holland.—Iron Eyes Cody Photo

April

Bunker Hill was brought vividly to life by Ben Abril, one of the outstanding artists of our time. Ben, a native son of Los Angeles, describes himself as "a chronicler of the past in the medium of paint." He displayed six original paintings and showed slides of scenes he had painted on Bunker Hill from 1959 to 1969. His extraordinary ability to express feeling in his

paintings became obvious as each picture appeared on the screen. His descriptions successfully transmitted a real sense of the era and made one feel the emptiness resulting from the needless loss of the magnificent buildings that once stood on Bunker Hill.

May

William O. Hendricks' talk revealed a fascinating and complicated series of events involving the landholdings, business ventures, and private life of Thomas Blythe. Blythe died in 1883, leaving an estate worth some 2 to 3 million dollars and, to complicate matters, no will! Nearly 200 aspiring heirs filed claims to his estate, thus touching off court battles that lasted 30 years. Bill's talk was well received, and members present seemed to enjoy the sordid and humorous details of Blythe's involvements with women he promised to marry and never did.

Corral Chips

A series of lectures at the Sherman Foundation features two Westerner speakers: *Ray Billington* describes "The 'Wild' American Southwest—As Viewed by European Novelists," and *William O. Hendricks* takes a look at "Corona del Mar: A History of a Southern California Coastal Community."

C.M. *Alec Guthrie* is awarded the Washington School of Art Award at the 111th Annual Exhibition of the American Watercolor Society. The prize-winning painting, entitled "Sea Dirge," is a transparent watercolor interpreting the wreck of the *Dominator*, a tanker which ran aground during a storm off the Palos Verdes coast. The artist is an ardent student of western maritime history and is presently making a study of shipwrecks, historical and contemporary, off the Pacific Coast.

On hand for the annual banquet of the Chinese Historical Soceity of Southern California are *Dutch Holland, Henry Welcome,* and *Walt Wheelock*.

The "Eager Beaver" award of the Jedediah Smith Society is presented to *Ray Wood* for his outstanding work on behalf of the Society. Ray also spends most of the month of April travelling in Europe and the Near East.

The July issue of the *Black Powder Times* describes the custom of "firing the anvil" and pays tribute to octagenarian *Sid Platford* for his skill in this frontier tradition.

"The Sea Otter Trade in Baja California" is the subject of *John Kemble's* talk for Symposium XVI of the *Asociacion Cultural de Las Californias* meeting in La Paz and San Jose del Cabo.

The Winter, 1978 issue of the *San Bernardino County Museum Association Quartlerly* is devoted to Associate Member *John Robinson's* article on "San Gorgonio Mountain: Preserving a Wilderness."

C.M. *Marie Harrington* is in charge of the dedication and marking of historic Lopez Station site at the Los Angeles Reservoir and dam. Officials of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Native Daughters of the Golden West, and Cal State University at Northridge all participate in the event. *Ray Wood* represented the Westerners and gave a few reminiscences of the vanished landmark in Mission Hills.

The Longpre Gallery stages an exhibit of C.M. *Ben Abril's* oil paintings.

The Sierra Madre Historical Society hears an address by *Tony Kroll* on the life and works of Bernhardt Wall, one of the nation's all-time prominent etchers. In an interview with Jackie Knowles of the Pasadena *Star-News*, Tony notes that "speed and quantity are sounding the prelude to the demise of the printed word in the 21st century." He goes on to say that "already the pace of quick, easy communication has come close to obliterating the art of fine etching, engraving, and printing."

Ray Billington is made an honorary member of the San Diego Corral.

Co-starring in the film "Grayeagle" is *Iron Eyes Cody*, who plays the role of Standing

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GRIFFITH . . .

ship of Juan Bautista de Anza, a large party of colonists set out in the year 1775. One of the soldiers comprising this group of men, women and children who would make the long march over deserts and mountains, was Corporal Vicente Felis. His wife died of childbirth early on the trek, but he was able to bring the balance of his family of four boys and three girls safely through.

In old Spanish records we find the name Felis spelled in various ways. Sometimes the name terminates in s, x or z, but each variant seems to relate to the same man and his family. This Felis settled in Los Angeles and later Governor Pedro Fages appointed him his direct representative to act as general manager for the colony and arbitrator of all disputes.

After residing for some years in the new Pueblo de Los Angeles, Felis petitioned the Governor for a grant of public land. On account of his fine record, the Governor granted Vicente Felis in 1802 some 6,647 acres, or about one and one-half leagues of very desirable land located just north of the Pueblo de Los Angeles. The grant became known as the Rancho Los Felis. Rancho Los Felis may be translated as "The Happy Farm," but the name is certainly an extension of his own name. It should be noted here that the original Felis grant was almost twice as large as the present day Griffith Park.

Unfortunately the surviving records from the early Spanish period are vague and incomplete. Vicente Felis remarried and his second wife's name was Maria Ygnacia Verdugo. That name is also spelled *B*erdugo in the old records. Here they raised a large family on the Rancho. Felis died about 1816 before the title to the land was confirmed. In 1843, the Rancho was legalized in the name of Maria Ygnacia Verdugo by Governor Micheltorena. It is also possible that Felis deeded the Rancho to the Maria who was the wife of Julio Verdugo of the adjoining San Rafael Rancho.

In any event, the southern boundary of the grant abutted the northwest boundary of the land granted to the Pueblo de Los Angeles. It was bordered on the north and east by the curving Los Angeles River. The grant extended west through the Santa Monica Mountains to about where present Gower Street terminates.

Page Four . . .

In the year 1853, Dona Verdugo, wishing to provide for "the welfare and progress of my daughters," granted each of them parts of the Rancho. Thus began the subdivision of the original grant. The daughters did not value the land, so they sold their respective shares for a dollar an acre.

Don Antonio F. Coronel, a noted citizen of early Los Angeles, purchased the Rancho. In 1865, he sold part of it to a James Lick of San Francisco. Lick began to subdivide and to sell off the southeast portion, which became known as the Lick Subdivision. This area was known as the Ivanhoe and Edendale Tracts. The western area, containing Bronson Canyon, became a part of today's Hollywood.

In 1863, Antonio F. Coronel and Jose Antonio Felis—who had each married Verdugo sisters—deeded their part of the rancho to a C. V. Howard. Three years later, Howard sold his interest to John M. Baldwin, not to be confused with "Lucky" Baldwin. He built a two-story adobe hacienda near the old Felis home. Later, Baldwin's son, Leon, was to sell the property to Thomas Bell of San Francisco.

In 1882, Griffith Jenkins Griffith purchased the property from Bell. This time a careful search of the title and boundaries was made by experts. Griffith acquired some 4,071 acres of the former grant, mainly consisting of mountains and foothill land. Approximately 250 acres of the purchase included the bottom land bordering the Los Angeles River. This purchase also included the water rights to nearly half of the flow of the Los Angeles River.

Who was this Griffith Jenkins Griffith, owner of all this land? He was born January 4, 1852, on a farm near Bridgend, about 30 miles from Cardiff, South Wales. His grandfather and father were also born in the same stone house on the 80 acre farm called Penn Bryn. Young Griffith was the oldest of nine children. He helped with the farm chores, attending school and assisting his father who owned a draying business serving the local mines.

When he was 14 years of age, a relative from the United States arrived and offered to take young Griffith to America with him. In the winter of 1866, he arrived in New York and a few days later was brought to Ashland, Pennsylvania. Here was a fine school, superior to what he had known in Wales. Griffith spent two years there and then moved to nearby Dan-

ville. At Ashland he met a Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Mowry who had recently lost a son. The Mowrys were so impressed with young Griffith that they offered to board him and enter him in school for five years in exchange for the household chores.

The Mowrys were a deeply religious family. The affections between them and their ward grew into parental love. Mrs. Jane Mowry had formerly been a school teacher before her marriage and she was of great help to Griffith in furthering his studies and moral precepts. The Mowrys were of the religious faith that lived by the rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

During his stay, Griffith read the Bible through twice from cover to cover. He was encouraged to read only the better books and to spurn the probably more exciting dime-novels of the day. The training he received in these formative years guided him throughout his life.

At the end of his five year term with the Mowrys, Griffith, now 21 years old, went to New York City where he attended the Fowler Institute. Besides going to school full time, he carried on outside employment, which paid his way through school during his two years attendance.

In 1875, Griffith went to San Francisco where he was advised that Los Angeles might be a better place for a young man to begin a lifetime career.

Los Angeles in those years was a sleepy Mexican village of about 6,500 population. Griffith was deeply impressed with the possibilities of the town, but could not find an opening where his talents and energies could be used to advantage. He then returned to San Francisco by boat, as the Southern Pacific had not completed its line to the pueblo at that time.

Soon after his return to San Francisco, he secured a position as the business manager for the Herald Publishing Company. These were the years of the great mining boom in the West. Griffith employed every spare moment by studying everything he could find relating to mineralogy and geology. Perhaps that stolid Welsh mining background was an influence in this decision.

The owners of the *Daily Alta Californian* offered him a position as a corresponding journalist for that newspaper. He accepted and in time was regarded as an expert mining authority. He advised all the mining and railroad magnates of those years including Stanford, Crocker, Huntington, Hopkins, Senator Jones, W. G. Ralston and the Messers Fair and MacKay. He was also paid well for his valuable advice.

During the years 1876-1878, Griffith dealt extensively in mining properties around Virginia City, White Pine, Pioche, Eureka and Prospect Mountain in Nevada. In the summer of 1880, he became interested in mining claims located near Chihuahua, Mexico, and joined a syndicate formed to develop the silver mines located there. Sensing a decline in the price of silver, he sold part of his holdings in 1882 for $50,000. He then placed this amount in a Pennsylvania bank as a nest-egg against any further risks against his mining claims. By this time he had made, and lost, part of a million dollars in his Comstock Lode and Chihuahua mining ventures.

In the spring of 1882, Griffith visited his old benefactors, the Mowrys in Pennsylvania. He found them in near poverty, and their homestead was being sold for taxes. Griffith was shocked and quickly cleared up all their indebtedness. He left them well provided for during their remaining years. The Mowrys died in comfort in 1888, and Griffith later returned to have a large monument erected over their graves. This was a fitting remembrance for the loving deeds they had given him when he was a homeless and penniless immigrant lad.

Griffith returned to Los Angeles during the summer of 1882. After purchasing various properties, he purchased the remaining section of the Rancho Los Felis. This property now contained a little over 4,000 acres. He negotiated this purchase through an attorney named J. A. Graves, in order to make sure that the legality of the title and water rights were in good order. Griffith was assured that the title was as good as the United States Government could provide.

Soon after consummating this purchase, Griffith made an extensive tour of Europe. He accompanied four other gentlemen and the group visited many of the great cities of the old world. Of particular interest to Griffith were the fine parks in many of the major cities. The Bois de Boulogne in Paris, Hyde Park in London, the Tiergarten in Berlin, as well as Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and Central Park in New York, suggested the idea that Los Angeles should also have a fine park. Griffith resolved

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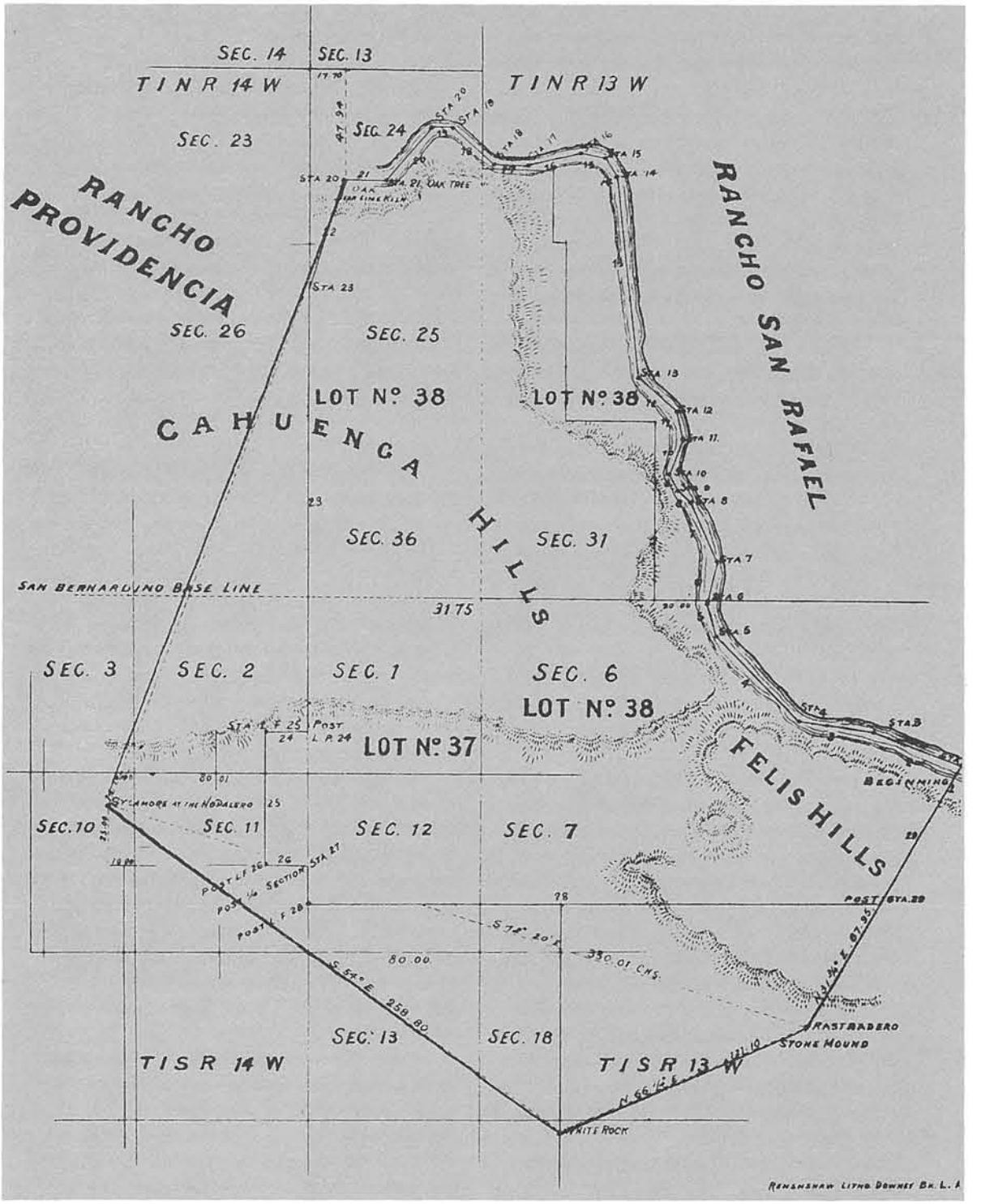

When Griffith purchased the property of Thomas Bell, in 1882, he made a careful search of the titles to his land, and boundaries were carefully made by experts. Griffith now had 4,071 acres of a former grant, mainly mountains and foothills, and 250 acres of bottom land bordering the Los Angeles River. —Charles G. Clarke Collection

to follow this concept and use his means to bring about a park for the city he loved.

En route home by way of Wales, Griffith found that misfortune had overtaken his father, eight brothers and sisters. Realizing from his own experience that their opportunities might be improved in America, he invited his family to come and share his home on Rancho Los Felis. The following year, the Griffith family had closed their affairs in Wales and had settled in California. The three youngest Griffith children were placed in the local schools of Los Angeles.

Griffith resided on the Rancho for several years and he had stocked it with the finest grade of livestock. A visitor to Rancho Los Felis was amazed at the prize cattle, horses, hogs and sheep that grazed the meadows.

Early in 1884, the growing city of Los Angeles desired to purchase all of the water rights of the Los Angeles River, including the half owned by Rancho Los Felis. Griffith sold these water rights to the city for $50,000, although he had been offered many times that amount by private speculators. He felt that the water rights should belong to all the citizens of Los Angeles. He also purchased back some of the land that had formerly been a part of the original grant. Griffith secured that section lying between Franklin, Vermont, Los Felis, and Edgemont Avenues from Daniel Penman who had been using this tract as a vegetable farm.

About 1888, Griffith sold to Dr. Sketchley of South Africa, some acreage along the Los Angeles River in order that he may establish an ostrich farm. To provide access to this attraction, a horsecar line was proposed from a downtown location on Spring Street, out along Sunset Blvd. to Beaudry Avenue. From that terminal, a steam-dummy railroad was built out to the Ostrich Farm, Rancho Los Felis and on to Burbank. While the Ostrich Farm had a limited life span, the Los Angeles County Railroad remained an important fixture for years.

Griffith now began to spend more time in the city. He was a dignified man, usually wearing a frock-coat and carrying a gold-headed cane. Some thought him inclined to be pompous. By 1885, he had opened an office on Main Street to conduct his real estate business. One of his frequent customers was a Louis Mesmer, owner of the United States Hotel and other properties. Mesmer and his family resided on Fort (Broadway) Street between First and Second Streets. One afternoon Mesmer urgently invited Griffith to dine with him that evening to meet his wife and two daughters.

An acquaintance began that evening that grew, over a period of months, from friendship to deep affection for Mesmer's older daughter named Tena. Things happened quickly as they became engaged in September 1886. During these frequent family meetings, more than once the subject of religion was discussed plus other topics concerning their future. Business deals were also spoken of with the elder Mesmer as to certain real estate investments, such as his deep involvement in Ballona Harbor. Griffith suggested that it would take the backing of the government or some railroad or steamship company to finance such a costly project. As a result, Mesmer withdrew from sinking further funds into this idea. Seventy five years later, this was finally developed into the Marina del Rey at great outlay of government and state funds.

During the courtship, the subject of the Andre Bristwalter will and Tena's interest in it were discussed. It appears that young Miss Mesmer had been the protege of Bristwalter, and he being childless, had left his estate to her, ignoring other friends and relatives. This state of affairs caused considerable disagreement among the families involved. During the engagement, Mesmer secretly influenced his daughter to deed her estate to him. There was some $60,000 indebtedness for legal fees and taxes due on this inheritence. It was exposed that Griffith should pay this amount to clear the estate. Though he was a very wealthy man and did not covet his prospective bride's property, he did strongly feel that such undercover maneuvers did not bode well for an open and harmonious marriage. He broke off the engagement.

The problem was later straightened out to mutual satisfaction through the efforts of the mother of Tena. Miss Mary Agnes Christina "Tena" Mesmer and Griffith were married on January 27, 1887, at the home of her parents, rather than at the church. This was done on account of the difference in their religions. She, naturally, had been raised in the Jewish faith. There were some resentments by outside parties to the marriage. A few writers, including Boyle Workman in his *The City That Grew,* cast spurious references on Griffith. Major Horace

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Bell in his *On the Old West Coast* created a lively myth which he labeled "The Feliz Curse." He dubbed Griffith as "The Prince of Wales" as an uncomplimentary term.

The Griffith-Mesmer wedding tour was an extensive trip through much of the United States and Europe. Tena had never before been outside of California, so this tour was an educational triumph for a most happy couple.

Upon their return to Los Angeles, the happy couple lived in a fine home on Hill Street between 7th and 8th Streets.

A son, Vandell "Van" Mowry Griffith was born on August 29, 1888. It is interesting to note that his middle name, Mowry, was in honor of his father's benefactors who had just died in Pennsylvania.

Griffith resumed his real estate activities while his wife became active in women's clubs and the social life of the city. Griffith at this time wore a well waxed moustache, dressed nattily and became a man about town. He moved his office to No. 27 in the Bryson Block.

During the boom years of 1886-1887, Griffith sold nearly a million dollars worth of real estate holdings at profitable prices. His prime interest remained in the development of the city's resources. Young Griffith was an active member of the Farmers and Merchants Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the California National Guard (from which he derived his title of Colonel), the Masonic fraternity and the Loyal Order of Moose. It was his aim to assume a full share of the responsibilities in all civic organizations to which he belonged.

Always civic minded, Griffith felt that Los Angeles deserved a great park. As a Christmas present to the city, on December 16, 1896, he donated 3,015 acres of the Rancho Los Felis to be used as a public park to bear his name. He reserved that eastern portion where the golf courses are now, as his country home and farm. His detractors, quite naturally, claimed that he made this gift to avoid paying taxes on wild, unusable land. The city gladly accepted the gift.

During the mid-1900's the Felis hacienda was used as the headquarters of the Aero Club of California. The grown up Van Griffith was the secretary of this fledgling organization. Landing strips were scraped out of a part of the 200 acres known as the Griffith Reserve. Such early flying pioneers as Glenn Martin and Glenn Curtis had hangers here to house their primitive aeroplanes. This site provided an important seed for the future development of the aviation industry of Southern California.

Portrait of Griffith J. Griffith in 1896, the time he donated the land for Griffith Park.—Charles G. Clarke Collection

While the city had eagerly accepted the gift of the land for a park, years were to pass with nothing done to develop it. There wasn't a road built, and many of the large and ancient oak trees were cut down and sold as firewood. Sand and gravel from the Los Angeles River bed was sold for 10 cents a load, and there was little the public could enjoy of the lovely tract. Other parks within the city were developed first. Griffith became irritated, and in 1912, wrote and published a small book entitled *Parks, Boulevards and Playgrounds*. This was an effort to call attention to the lack of effort towards development of Griffith Park. The newspapers responded with stories and pictures extolling the merits of the park as a playground for the public.

Tragedy soon struck Griffith. Seven years after he had donated the park acreage, he was in San Quentin prison for the shooting of his wife. This misunderstood act had occurred on September 3, 1905, while they were staying at the Arcadia Hotel in Santa Monica. Mrs. Griffith recovered from a slight wound to an eye and then divorced him. He never remarried.

Griffith was a model prisoner while incarcerated, doing the menial prison work with

good spirit. His son, Van, was 17 years of age in 1905 when he received a letter from his father which I quote in part:

> I have not allowed my misfortune in any way to sour nor embitter me against society nor my fellow man. But how about your dear self? Are you making the best of your opportunities? Bear well in mind that the wisdom of ages as handed down to us in books and traditions, teaches us that a father is his son's best advisor. Between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five are the best years for study, the mind being most retentive during that period.
>
> Remember it is not what we read, but what we remember that benefits the mind . . . .When the city of Los Angeles reaches a million or more inhabitants, what will it matter who donated Griffith Park? The scenery along the drives and walks will be just as delightful, the shrubs in the frostless belt of the foothills will be fully as fragrant, the views from the lofty peaks will be just as interesting. But it does matter to me whether I shall be allowed to spend my few remaining years peacefully in the city I love as that I may enjoy with my neighbors and friends some of the beauties and pleasures of my own donation.
>
> Before closing, may I ask you to sympathize with your mother in her affliction and be kind to her. In her declining years she will learn to lean and depend upon you for her greatest earthly comfort.
>
> Affectionately,
> Dad

After his release from prison, Griffith returned to Los Angeles and resumed the management of his properties. Again he became active in civic affairs and made many contributions to churches of various denominations, plus other worthy causes. He wrote and published another booklet, this one relating to prison reform. Yet in the back of his mind, he was still concerned with the lack of development of Griffith Park.

At long last the city began to act. On February 10, 1910, the park area was annexed to the city, making it the largest park within a city in the world. A few roads were constructed to provide a better access to and within the park.

On December 22, 1912, Griffith appeared before City Hall to announce that he wanted to present to the citizens of Los Angeles a second Christmas gift. "I consider it my obligation to make Los Angeles a happier, cleaner and finer city. I wish to pay my debt of duty to the community in which I have prospered." Thereupon he presented $100,000 with which to build an observatory atop Mount Hollywood within the park. The offer was immediately accepted by the Council, but objections were made by certain vocal citizens and some park officials. Members of the Park Commission turned down the $100,000 and later started a court action to restrain Griffith from fulfilling his offer. One of his critics asked in a letter published in a paper, "Are you prepared to say that if a man is a millionaire he can commit a crime and then with his wealth bribe the community to receive him back into fellowship, merely because of the bribe?" But these few obstructionists did not prevail.

Griffith, along with Ivar Weid, H. J. Whitney and others, succeeded in the construction of the Hollywood extension of the Los Angeles Pacific electric railway line from downtown Los Angeles. This line went out Sunset and Prospect (now Hollywood) Boulevard and was the means of opening up the Silver Lake and Hollywood areas for settlement.

Griffith J. Griffith died July 6, 1919, at the age of 69. He is buried in a mausoleum in the Hollywood Cemetery.

The funds that Griffith put in trust to build the observatory had still not been accepted. Undaunted by the city's refusal to accept the gift, Griffith left $750,000 in his will for the construction of a Greek Theatre in the park. The funds continued to draw interest at the Security-First National Bank and they grew into a considerable sum to be used at a more propitious time.

Van M. Griffith carried out the details of his father's wishes. For years he was active on the Park and Recreation Commission, the Grand Jury, and as a Trustee for the building of the Observatory and Greek Theatre. In a quiet manner he pursued land development and farming for the rest of his life. He had extensive holdings in the Chatsworth area. He died July 14, 1974.

In later years, astronomical experts decided that a celestial telescope on Mount Hollywood would be of limited value. Its nearness to the city lights which then illuminated the night sky would make a telescope useless. So the decision was made by the Trustees to build a Science Building on a lower and more accessi-

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ble location to contain a solar telescope and Planetarium. The final cost of the Observatory and Hall of Science was $225,780. This elaborate facility was completed and opened on May 14, 1935, with the funds that Griffith had provided.

In its early years one of the interesting exhibits at the Hall of Science was a primitive model of a television receiver. Many people saw here for the first time a television image on a small 12-inch tube, signal being broadcast from downtown Los Angeles. Today television is commonplace, but its humble beginnings were witnessed in Griffith Park back in the mid-1930's.

The Greek Theatre was opened on September 25, 1930, and has been presenting a series of summer attractions ever since. The facility is leased by the city to producing organizations who book and stage unusual productions for the public.

Griffith Park has grown to its present size of 4,067 acres. Additional land was acquired when the city purchased the Griffith Reserve. The old hacienda was razed and 204 acres was taken over to build the Golden State Freeway.

Many forms of wild life abide in Griffith Park. There are deer, quail, fox, and many other species roaming the rugged hillsides and canyons. A fine zoo has been built, financed by a group of civic-minded persons. The handsome Astronomers Monument featuring statues of six of the world's greatest astronomers was erected fittingly. This monument graces the approach to the science building and Observatory.

The many other facilities of the park, like Travel Town, are too numerous to detail here. These are all memorials to the man who donated the land and funds to make this great park possible for the people of the city he loved.

Corral Chips (Continued)

Bear.

Associate Member *Abraham Hoffman* pens an article for the Winter issue of *Arizona and the West* on "Origins of a Controversy: The U.S. Reclamation Service and the Owens Valley—Los Angeles Water Dispute."

"Maynard Dixon and Publications" was the topic of *Tom McNeill's* talk at Los Compadres held at the Sherman Foundation on Saturday May 13. On view was an exhibit of original magazine and book illustrations prepared by Dixon.

The Pasadena *Star-News* has an illustrated feature article on the unique shadow-box woodcarvings of C.M. *Bryce Hawkins*.

C.M. *Jon Lauritzen* addresses the San Fernando Valley Historical Society on the topic "Northern Arizona, Land of Pioneers and Mormon Plural Marriages." *Dwight Cushman*, incidentally, is reelected President of this active historical group.

The 2nd Annual American Indian and Cowboy Artists Western Exhibition and Sale features paintings by *Andy Dagosta* and Corresponding Members *Bill Bender, Y.E. Cheyno,* and *Ken Mansker*.

The Desert Peaks section of the Sierra Club hear *Walt Wheelock* on the topic "Missions of Sonora."

C.M. *George Houle* presents a talk to a UCLA Extension class on "Book Auctions: Bidding, Buying, and Selling."

Finishing out his year as president of the American Urological Association is Associate Member *Earl Nation*. During his tenure, Earl has attended meetings in such places as Paris, Monaco, Toronto, Quebec City, and throughout the United States.

The first issue of *Far West,* a monthly magazine devoted to western fiction, slides off the presses under the capable hand of its Editor, C.M. *Scott McMillan*.

The Platrix Chapter of E Clampus Vitus elevates *Henry Clifford* to the lofty and awesome position of Noble Grand Humbug.

Finally, the Charles M. Russell Library of C.M. *Robert D. Warden* of Great Falls, Montana has been acquired by the University of Nebraska's Library for their Center of Great Plains Studies. Collected over 25 years, Warden's Russell library numbers over 7,000 items and includes first editions of the hundreds of books that are enriched by his work. In addition, there are over 1,000 periodical appearances of Russell art, 1,500 ephemeral items, over 1,000 color prints and slides, pictures of Russell, and a motion picture on the artist and his work.

MARCH 10, 1933

by Maurice I. Hattem

SCENE ON E. ANAHEIM ST. LONG BEACH-CAL.

—Ernest Marquez Collection

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." With these words spoken by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at his first inauguration on March 4, 1933, Los Angeles, along with the rest of the nation began the long ascent from the depths of the Great Depression. Those were the days when you could buy a new Dodge for $595. A new Philco radio was selling for $32 and coffee was $.27 a pound. Beef roasts were $.16 a pound while New York steak was going for $.43 a pound. Oh yes, grocery clerks were earning from 15 to 18 dollars a week for a 72 hour week. Of course you could go to Clifton's Cafeteria and get breakfast for $.15, lunch and dinner for $.25 and if a family of six arrived they could get a complete dinner for $2.94!

It was barely a week later on the following Friday March 10, at approximately 5:54 PM when it happened. We lived in the southwest part of Los Angeles in the Baldwin Hills area. Our home was located on West Vernon Avenue which was a rather steep hill at number 3652. I was sitting on the sofa in the living room listening to my favorite afternoon radio program, *The X Bar X Ranger* program sponsored by Wheatena Cereal. All of a sudden the house began to shake with a slow roll which developed into a rumble and a roar. I remembered that the safest place to be was by the doorway as this was a reinforced area. A few seconds later (which seemed like an eternity) I managed to get out of the house as I thought for sure it was going to roll down the hill.

Although the epicenter of the quake was in Long Beach and the surrounding area, it felt as if I was right in the center of it at the time. The force of this quake was 6.3 on the Richter scale, which was much less than the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 which had a magnitude of 8.3. Fortunately, the quake didn't occur until after school hours as many of the buildings which were destroyed were school buildings and thousands of school children could have been killed or injured.

There were 123 persons who died and close to 1500 who were injured in the quake, yet by Caltech standards this wasn't considered a "great" quake. It did prove, however, the

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inadequacy of the local building codes at the time. The Long Beach Earthquake, as it was called, led to more strict building codes, although some seismologists at Caltech still believe that they should be more strict. The Long Beach earthquake dramatically demonstrated how not to build in earthquake country. As a result of this earthquake, the California Legislature in 1935 adopted the Field Act, which specified the standards of construction for school and other public buildings. William Putnam, a noted geologist, maintained that the school buildings were exceptionally vulnerable due to their faulty construction. According to Putnam, "wide spans were used for classroom floors in multi-story buildings and at the same time outer walls were weakened through the extensive use of large windows."

Earthquakes have been a way of life (or death) for Californians as long as there has been recorded history and perhaps even beyond. Los Angeles is part of the great Circum-Pacific Earthquake Belt, which encircles the Pacific Ocean from the southern tip of South America along the western coasts of South America, Central America, and North America, through the Aleutian Islands, down through Japan and the Philippine Islands, and on into New Zealand. Approximately 80 percent of the world's earthquakes occur in this area.

Father Crespi, the first California historian, wrote in his diary the evening before the Portola expedition reached the Los Angeles River on Friday, July 28th:

"We pitched camp on the left bank of this river (Santa Aana). On its right bank there is a populous village of Indians who received us with friendliness . . . I called this name the sweet name of *Jesus de los Temblores,* Jesus of the Earthquakes, because we experienced here a horrifying earthquake which was repeated four times during the day."

Crespi continued, "the first, which was the most violent, happened at one in the afternoon, and the last one about four. One of the heathen who were in camp, who doubtless exercised among them the office of priest, alarmed at the occurence no less than we, began with frightful cries and great demonstrations of fear to entreat heaven, turning to all the winds. . . ." On Tuesday, August 1st, he wrote in his diary: "This day was one of rest, for the purpose of exploring, and especially to celebrate the jubilee of Our Lady of Los Angeles de Porciuncula. At ten in the morning the earth trembled. The shock was repeated with violence at one in the afternoon, and one hour afterwards we experienced another. Today I observed the latitude and it came out for us thirty-four degrees and ten minutes north latitude."

The next recorded earthquake in Southern California occurred at the area surrounding the Mission San Juan Capistrano on December 8, 1812. From Thomspon & West's *History of Los Angeles County,* Oakland, 1880: ". . . But hark! What sound is that—loud as the sound of doom, now blending with his dream? What mean those hurrying feet, those cries of pain? Stricken by hands unseen—he starts and wakes; he shrieks and dies! The dreaded 'Temblor' had come; and beneath the ruins of that costly pile, thirty-six victims lay writhing in their death agony; priests and neophyte, old and young; all in a common tomb." Following this, the next earthquake occurred on January 11, 1855, followed by a big one on January 9, 1857. This one lasted for about two minutes, the motion being of a north-south movement. Earthquakes are unpredictable although some modern geologists claim that some day they will be able to predict when an earthquake will occur. Since 1933 there have been two major earthquakes: 1952 centering in the Tehachapi mountains and in 1971 centering in the Sylmar area.

It's a wonder that with all of the earthquakes the Los Angeles area experiences that we haven't had one such as the San Francisco earthquake or the Alaskan Earthquake of 1964.

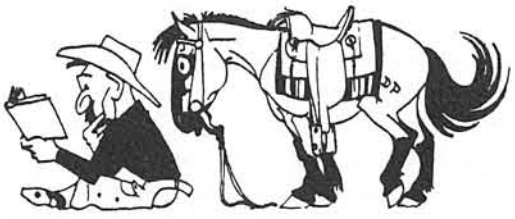
With this in mind, the City of Los Angeles became concerned about the increasing number of high-rise buildings being built in this area. One of the measures taken was the "accelerograph Ordinance," which requires the installation of earthquake recorders in all new high rise buildings.

These recorders will obtain data on earthquake ground motions and the effect of earthquakes upon buildings. This ordinance was instituted in 1965 and has resulted in the obtaining of data from a number of smaller earthquakes in addition to the very important San Fernando Earthquake in February, 1971.

Of all of the earthquakes I have experienced during the past 50 years, the 1933 earthquake will always be thought of as the "big one." It's the one I can relate to the most,

maybe because it happened at a time in my life when I was a young lad and I suppose that any event, whether it be large or small, catastrophic or not, remains the most vivid in the mind's eye of a youngster.

The next time that Los Angeles rocked again in 1933 was in December. Liquor had returned!



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

City Makers; the Story of Southern California's First Boom, by Remi Nadeau. Trans-Anglo Books, P.O. Box 38, Corona del Mar, Ca. 92625, 168 pp., 1977, $12.50.

Remi Nadeau is a name well-known in the blue book of Southern California historians. His four other volumes featuring the local scene have been digested by historians up and down the coast for years. Nadeau is a fifth generation Californian and his family has been involved in the freighting business here, especially between Cerro Gordo and Los Angeles when the mines were booming.

City Makers is not a new book.

This is a reprint of the classic first published by another publisher. This edition is larger in format and with additional illustrations. For those who missed this history of early day Los Angeles the first time around, now is your opportunity to get a fresh copy.

—Art Brush

Death Valley's Victims: A Descriptive Chronology 1849-1977, by Daniel Cronkhite. Sagebrush Press, P.O. Box 87, Morongo Valley, Ca. 92216, 54 pp., 1977, $4.50.

The thought of reading about all those who have perished in Death Valley's Victims: A Descriptive Chronology 1849-1977, by Daniel Cronkhite. Sagebrush Press, P.O. Box 87, Morongo Valley, Ca. 92216, 54 pp., 1977, $4.50.

The thought of reading about all those who have perished in Death Valley, the world's most hostile place, hardly seems like bedtime reading. Surprisingly, the contents will be quite rewarding. In the earliest of times one can understand the innumerable hardships of men who tried to blaze a trail West and were stuck in this hell hole. Even in our modern times with roads, aid stations, etc., it is interesting to note that this "land of little rain" continues to claim those who wish to challenge death head on. This volume reads well and is an important part of our Western history.

—Eddie Torr

Los Angeles: Biography of a City, by John and LaRee Caughey. University of California Press, 2223 Fulton St., Berkeley, Ca. 94720, 510 pp., 1977, $6.95.

Los Angeles seems to be a remarkable place. It's setting is rather distinctive when you consider we have the beach on one side and the mountains on the other separating us from the hot desert.

Within a matter of 200 years we have grown from a sleepy Spanish town to one of the most famous metropolitan regions in the world. Yes, we really do live in a sort of "Garden of Eden." If you don't believe it, just visit New York known as "fun city."

This volume is perhaps one of the best anthologies of writing about the Southern California region you will find, with basic emphasis on Los Angeles naturally. The contents range from the time of the Indians to our jet age and contributors include such well known names as Matt Weinstock, Jack Smith, to W. W. Robinson and Robert Glass Cleland to name but a few. This is a must book for all local historians Here you will find some good reading and source material.

—Art Brush

Illustrated Sketches of Death Valley and the Borax Deserts of the Pacific Coast, by John R. Spears. Sagebrush Press, P.O. Box 87, Morongo Valley, Ca. 92256, 226pp., 1978, $4.50.

John Randolph Spears was the first professional writer to visit the Death Valley region and to become aware it needed some sort of guide for the traveler. Not only was he a journalist, but Spears took many of his own illustrations which grace the pages of this volume. In 1892 he published this guide to describe the

. . . *Page Thirteen*

remote parts of the desert area including the discovery and exploitation of borax.

This reprint of Spear's classic is still considered an important book of source material. Westerner E. I. Edwards writing in his *The Enduring Desert* states, "Certainly no desert collection even merits the name without a copy of Spears." Need one say more?

—Art Brush

The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith: His Personal Account of the Journey to California, 1826-1827, edited with an Introduction by George R. Brooks. Western Frontiersman Series 18, 259 pp., 3 maps. Arthur H. Clark Co., Glendale, 1977. $24.50.

Jedediah Smith's journal of his first entry into California—the first entry by any American overland from the east—has been missing for well over a century, in fact ever since about 1840. For a while it was believed that it had been surrendered to Governor Echeandia at San Diego in 1825, and by him sent to Mexico City, and that it might by chance turn up some day in the Mexican archives. Well, it did turn up at last, but not in Mexico City. It was brought to light in the summer of 1967, in the city of St. Louis.

This long-lost journal, covering the whole period from August 1826 to July 1827, has now been published by the Clark Company, whose interest in Jedediah Smith and his travels dates back at least to 1918, when they published Harrison C. Dale's monumental coverage of all the Ashley-Smith explorations in the West. But even then Dale was deploring the loss of Smith's journal—only a fragment of it had survived, only the last twelve days out of the total of eleven months. All the rest of Smith's adventuring during 1826-27 was conjecture, based on later journals, letters, summaries, and the like. But now scholars have at their disposal the full journal, and may read for themselves about his opinions and his hopes, rediscover his campsites, revel in his fortunes and misfortunes, and sympathize with him in his dealings with merchant, padre, and governor alike.

And it is a fascinating account. Smith's style of writing is well known to historians, because fortunately other writings of his, both journals and letters, have largely survived. This newly discovered journal of his first expedition to California is as well written as the others. It tells us many things not previously known—his precise route in the crossing of the Mojave Desert (though this had been surmised); the exact location of his campsites in the May 1827 crossing of the Sierra Nevada (though these locations had also been fairly well pinpointed); and also the fact that he visited the missions of San Juan Capistrano and San Luis Rey on his voyage down to San Diego, and that he spent two days and nights at Catalina Island on the way back (these details being quite unknown previously).

Geographically the journal covers the expedition of Smith and his trappers from their 1826 start in southern Idaho, "at the bend of the Bear River," through Utah, southern Nevada, extreme western Arizona, southern and central California, the Sierra Nevada, the central Nevada basin, and back across north Utah to the site of the 1827 rendezvous, Bear Lake, on the Idaho-Utah border. These eleven months included the first entry by Americans into California from the east, the first penetration by Americans into the San Joaquin Valley (though the Spanish Franciscan Garces had preceded them there by over fifty years), and the first eastward crossing of the high Sierra Nevada by anyone other than an aborigine.

Editor George R. Brooks has done a very fine job of preparing the text for publication, with 277 scholarly footnotes, three maps depicting Smith's travels in detail, a bibliography, and an index. The publisher has included it, in a limited edition of only 750 copies, in the Western Frontiersman Series. It is, however, more than merely one additional book in that already distinguished series. The 1977 publication of Smith's lost journal of 1826-27, after a hiatus of one hundred and fifty years, is a major event in the historiography of the West; and these pages of Smith's actual journal will prove to be a gold mine of historical treasure. Moreover, his very readable and very human style will prove fascinating to scholars and to general readers alike.

—Raymund F. Wood

San Marino: From Ranch to City, by Midge Sherwood. San Marino Historical Society, P.O. Box 8241, San Marino, Ca. 91108, 22 pp., 1978, $2.50.

The story of San Marino is rich in California legend and lore. The site of the city originally consisted of large fruit ranches and vineyards, owned by early day pioneers whose names are still familiar to Westerners—like

Benjamin D. Wilson, George S. Patton, and James DeBarth Shorb.

In an earlier era, San Marino was part of the vast California mission system, providing rich yields of food, tallow and hides. As the missions grew, a need arose for a grist mill to process the abundant grains. Such a mill was constructed about 1816 and is today El Molino Viejo—the Old Mill, the oldest building in town and the site of the local headquarters of the California Historical Society.

San Marino's most famous resident, other than Henry E. Huntington, was Benjamin D. Wilson, who in 1854, established his Lake Vineyard Ranch home on what is today part of the Huntington Library grounds. When his daughter Maria married James DeBarth Shorb, he gave them the top knoll of his estate as a wedding gift. The Shorbs built a home where the Huntington mansion now stands and named their 600 acre ranch San Marino. Shorb named his ranch after his grandfather's plantation in Maryland, which in turn had been named for the tiny Republic of San Marino.

Henry E. Huntington visited the Shorb estate often and loved the location. He purchased the Shorb property in 1903, and in time the old ranch house gave way to the mansion.

Today the City of San Marino is well known throughout the world for the extensive and priceless collections of art and books in the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, but the story of this town from ranch to city is also a narrative of growth and pride in community development.

One of our new Corresponding Members is author of this most interesting booklet, a thumbnail sketch of a complete history of the city already in process. Collectors of Southern Californiana will enjoy the story and the select gathering of illustrations nicely printed. This volume was sponsored by the newly established San Marino Historical Society.

—Donald Duke

The Man Who Captured Sunshine, by Katherine Ainsworth, ETC Publications, Palm Springs, California, xiv-274 pp. $12.95.

Those of us who have been so fortunate as to know the subject of this book in the Westerners, E Clampus Vitus and the 49ers, can well understand CM Katie's subtitle, "Episodes in the Life of John W. Hilton, Botanist, Gemologist, Zoologist, and Gifted Painter of the Desert Scene, as garnered during long years of friendship by Katherine Ainswroth," may have felt that they had known John in many or all of these facets of his extraordinary life. We may also have known of his expeditions into Sonora and Baja California Norte as told in his works, *Sonora Sketchbook* and *Hardly Any Fences*. We may also have read of his work in the discovery and mining of *Iceland Spar*, the essential element in the construction of the optical-ring-gunsight, which was an important factor in the winning of WWII. Or at the other extreme, we may have sat around campfires and listened to John strum his *geetar* and sing ballads of wine, women and the West.

Still none of us could have possibly known of all of the activities that have filled his unbelievable life, to which he is probably still adding new chapters.

Such things, as his early life as a missionary's son in China, where he took his first lessons in painting from an old Chinese master artist—of his career as a miner of gem stones, which led to years as a dealer in gems and as a designer of fantastic jewelry for the stars of Hollywood—of his search for an old Indian mummy with Ed Ainsworth on the unexplored caves along the rugged banks of the Colorado River—or of Felice, a little poltergeist who haunted his pad in Los Alamos, then years later, when he was in a touch-and-go situation with a heart attack, materialized in a hospital in La Jolla, California, to shock him back into the land of the living—.

For many years, perhaps in his most productive years, John, Katie and Ed were the closest of friends. During much of this time, Ed introduced John Hilton to the readers of his column, "Along the Camino Real," in the *Los Angeles Times*, and much of John's fame was boosted by these articles.

It was through this close relationship that our author has been able to spin together the impossible lore of the man who could "capture sunshine," both in his painting, and through all the media he employed. She writes with warmth and with accuracy, producing a volume that excells, both as a history of a widely expanded *West*, and of a man's life, such as we are unlikely to ever see again in our lifetime.

Frankly, there is no way that I can even scan the contents of this volume—read it yourself.

Walt Wheelock

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