



Poway Echoes

A NEWSLETTER OF THE POWAY HISTORICAL AND MEMORIAL SOCIETY

Preserving Poway's Past for the Future

Jeff Frye, President

FALL 2011

Joye Davisson, Editor

AT THE MUSEUM

The displays at the museum this fall are in honor of those who serve. There are pictures and displays featuring our local heroes. There are also pictures and some memorabilia from



the devastation that happened ten years ago on 9/11/2001.

We each need to take time to recognize the sacrifices made by "those who serve" and to show our appreciation.



EARLY DAYS OF POWAY RECALLED BY BILL OTIS

This article written by Hal Davee first appeared in the Poway News Chieftain on February 10, 1973 and is reprinted here by permission. You may recall that Mr. Otis had been authorized to take over the Poway post office. We continue his story . . .

According to Bill, he wired Washington immediately, advising what had happened, and within an hour he had another wire, an exact duplicate of the first one he had received authorizing him to take over.

"I really wasn't sure what was going on," said Bill, "but I had that official telegram and they wanted that post office in Poway, so I went back to Big Stone to try to talk to the man."

That proved to be Bill's second mistake of the day. "He told me he didn't care what kind of telegram I had, or where it was from, to get out and not come back. "And," said Bill, smiling again, "the way he said it, well, it wasn't very encouraging."

However, Bill's second mistake proved to be the store operator's undoing. Angered by the man's attitude, Bill was determined he was going to be Poway's postmaster, so he sent another telegram to Washington, describing the situation. Within a few hours he received a third identical wire authorizing him to assume operation of the post office. "They all read the same," said Bill, "that I was authorized to take over."

Not knowing what might happen, but prepared to do battle, Bill took the third telegram and headed again for Big Stone.

"I really didn't know what that guy would do," Bill explained, "and I wasn't prepared for what happened. When I walked in the store the fellow smiled, handed me a box of stuff and invited me to take it and go run my post office."

So the front porch of the little house became the Poway Post Office, although it was subsequently moved to a larger building which Otis later built.

Bill served as postmaster for over a year before his appointment was confirmed by the US Senate, July 3, 1931.

In 1946 Bill relinquished his position as postmaster to Mrs. Marvel Taunt, but the post office remained on his property in a new building which he leased to the government.

For operating the post office Bill was paid 160% of each canceled stamp, and because of his ingenuity, resulting in a substantial increase in daily cancellations, he came under the scrutiny of postal inspectors.

In an attempt to enlarge grape sales, Bill made an agreement with Milton Heller, owner of Heller Stores, San Diego's largest chain at the time, to sell by the box grapes from his vineyards and ship them by mail to any place in the United States. Each box, according to Bill, weighed approximately 24 pounds. He received \$3.50 per box and Heller stores 50 for taking the orders. Business flourished and several boxes a day were being shipped by mail. The resultant increase of canceled stamps, from about 75 per day to over \$15, 60% of which came back to Otis, caught the eagle-eye of the postal inspector.

"I was a little apprehensive when the inspector came out," Bill confessed, "but after we discussed the situation he told me I had as much right to send the grapes by mail as anybody in Poway." Bill stopped momentarily, a wide grin on his face. "Mailing those grapes sure did raise my post office income," he added.

His small home crowded with the post office and telephone exchange, in 1928 Bill constructed a more commodious building closer to Poway Road, and at his urging the telephone company installed a new and larger exchange to handle the community's growing phone connections, which now numbered 16. The enterprising Bill then demanded a monthly fee of \$60 from the phone company, which was reluctantly paid.

The post office also was moved to the new building, a portion of which Bill used to branch into a general

store - "because the people had no place to buy bread and milk, among other items" - and a feed and grain business.

In operation until 1958, the store, and in particular the feed and grain business, was one of Bill's better money making ventures.

"I delivered to customers from Poway to Pine Valley and the coast," Bill said, "and I did over \$30,000 in business the last year."

Among Bill's early customers were such prominent San Diego families as the Beichers, the Scripps and Garretts.

In between answering phones, picking and boxing grapes, and waiting on customers, Bill also found time in the new store to act as Registrar of Voters for the 1,000 people then residing in Poway.

As Bill recalls it, electricity first came to Poway in 1928, and he had the first connection.

"About two weeks before we got our connection I went down and bought a small General Electric refrigerator," Bill said as he invited me into the kitchen. He was almost in a reverent mood as he pointed to the small refrigerator bearing the GE insignia. "There she is," he said. "That's the refrigerator I bought in 1928. It's still running and it has never been repaired or out of the house."

I was almost tempted to say, "They don't build them like that anymore," but didn't. The thought did occur, however, that the GE might be worth a great deal to the company, providing they could get Bill to part with it.

(The conclusion of Mr. Otis's story will be in the winter issue of Poway Echoes.)

I believe in America because we have great dreams—and because we have the opportunity to make those dreams come true.

. . . Wendell L. Wilkie

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Sun, moon, stars, and shadows. This is the time of year that the shadows grow longer. The days are getting shorter and the nights have a crispness in them. Back to school, Halloween, Thanksgiving stir the memories of years gone by.

Here at the museum we've had a summer to be thankful for. Our volunteers have collaborated and we have accomplished a lot.

Jan Rubacky and Jennifer Rough have been tenaciously sorting our "object numbering system(s)". Until this project of theirs, our society has been struggling between at least two numbering systems.

Cecilia Burr and Blanche Gunther, (and her amazing volunteers), did an incredible job with the "tour season". Each year in the late spring our society hosts elementary school third graders, and an assortment of community groups with tours of the "Nelson House" and the museum. Cecilia handles tours at the museum. while Blanche and her stalwarts host groups at "Nelson House". This tour program is fantastic and is coordinated with and by the City.

Blanche Gunther, Nancy Higbie and their volunteers have made our "Nelson House" experience an exciting success. The public has responded to their enthusiasm, and the group's contributions to our society are fantastic.

Fourth of July was huge this summer. The city estimates that we had 5,000 plus visitors through the park that day. Visitors strolled the Craft Faire,

Nelson House, the Museum, and the Gazebo were musical groups entertained. Of course the north end of "Old Poway Park" is ideal for picnicking and bar-b-que. Many thanks to Tom and Lucille Dalbey who helped and hosted the museum on the fourth. T.A. did double-duty as he also has a chair with "The Pomerado Community Band" which closed the day beautifully.

Our annual "volunteer luncheon" has been rescheduled for Sunday, October 16. The city however will host the annual "volunteer dinner" here at the park Thursday, August 25, from 5:00 pm. till 7:00 pm.

September brings "Poway Days" which will start with the parade on Saturday the 10th. Our generous member Greg Payne will enter his vintage Fords to represent our "Poway Historical and Memorial Society". The annual "Rendezvous" will be held here at the park Thursday, September 15 through Sunday, September 18.

"Once Upon a Halloween" is coming Sunday, October 30. A real thrill for all the children. We need volunteers to operate games and the "haunted house". Give a call to the museum if you choose to join in the fun.

Have a great fall season everyone. Thanks for any and all of your support. Please come on out to the museum with your questions and ideas.

~Jeff Frye.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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The Board meets the first Monday of the month at 8:30 AM in the Museum. Members are welcome to attend.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Poway Historical Society and Museum has many opportunities for you!

Call Cecelia Burr at 858--486-0106 to see how you can help "Preserve Poway's Past for the Future."

Schedules are flexible and help is needed at the Museum and in the Nelson House.

Poway Historical and Memorial Society
P. O. Box 19
Poway, CA 92074-0019

POWAY HISTORICAL AND MEMORIAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NEW

RENEWAL

Complete form and send with your
check to PH&MS
P. O. Box 19
Poway, CA 92074-0019

\$500 LIFE

\$75 BUSINESS

\$20 ORGANIZATION

\$17 FAMILY

\$15 INDIVIDUAL

\$10 STUDENT

Optional: I would like to help with:

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|---|---|---|
| Artifacts <input type="checkbox"/> | Docent in Nelson House <input type="checkbox"/> | Library <input type="checkbox"/> |
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