

TATTERED TIDBITS

ALPINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 6, Issue 1

Carol Walker, Editor

January 2012

Upcoming events:

- February 19th—Quarterly Meeting
- February 25th & 26th—Museum Open House
- March 24th & 25th—Museum Open House
- April 15th—Quarterly Meeting

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ALPINE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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QUARTERLY MEETING—FEBRUARY 19

The quarterly potluck meeting of the Alpine Historical Society will be held on Sunday, February 19th, at 1:00 p.m. at the Alpine Woman's Club, 2156 Alpine Boulevard.

The event will feature Diana Lindsay, the acclaimed biographer and historian who has been writing about the Anza-Borrego region of Southern California since the 1960s. Her latest book, *Ricardo Breceda: Accidental Artist*, tells the story of how Mr. Breceda's marvelous life sized metal sculptures came to be.

Diana is an award-winning photographer and the new book contains over 250 full-color photographs of the sculptures under many lighting conditions. In addition to telling Mr. Breceda's fascinating history, she will also cover interesting facts about the Anza-Borrego Desert.

Please RSVP to Carol Morrison at 619-445-2544 or e-mail info@alpinehistory.org if you will be attending this worthwhile event. Plan to enjoy the potluck or come just for the speaker at 2 p.m. Hope to see you! ■



Diana Lindsay

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

2011 was a very busy year for the Society. Throughout the year preparations were being made for the dedication of the Dr. Sophronia Nichols' commemorative marker and the ceremony, held in October, was the culmination of all these efforts.

Numerous projects were com-

pleted during the year to preserve and enhance our two pioneer houses. These included waterproofing Dr. Nichols' carriage house barn area, patching the floor, replacing the doors, rewiring the building and creating new display areas. A grant from the county helped fund the

restoration projects.

One of the Society's main goals is to continue expanding the knowledge of Alpine's history through support of the third grade social studies unit that covers local history. In order to accomplish this goal, tours (*continued on page 2*)



Two of the wire sculptures by Ricardo Breceda that are scattered over three non-contiguous miles of Borrego Valley, adjacent to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

A Message from the President *(continued from page 1)*

of the museums are offered to all third grade students. In addition, in 2011 students from all of Alpine's elementary schools took part in our annual essay contest. The contest winners were announced at the annual History Day celebration in June and several of the students rode on the Historical Society float during the Viejas Day Parade. The school tours are one of the favorite activities of

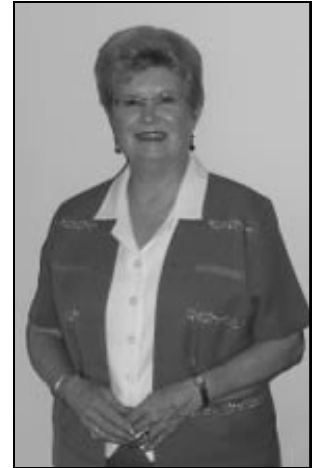
our volunteers!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Historical Society members for their support of our efforts. Without the monetary contributions, donations of artifacts, and those willing to freely give of their time and effort, the work to preserve our rich history would not be possible. In addition, community support and the efforts of groups such as the Al-

pine Kiwanis help us enormously.

We are always in need of folks willing to help—there are a myriad of tasks that need doing. If you have some extra time, please consider giving me a call at 445-2544 to see what might interest you. Our group is made up of interesting, dedicated individuals and you would be most welcome to join us!

Carol Morrison, President



Carol Morrison

Viejas Day Parade

The winners of the Third Grade Essay Contest rode on the Alpine Historical Society Float in the annual Viejas Day Parade.

The photo on the right shows Sam Walker driving his tractor which is pulling Sam's cousin Don Walker's 1927 flatbed, wire-wheeled wagon.

Riding the float, in addition to the honored third graders, is the President of the Alpine Historical Society, Carol Morrison, dressed in period costume and holding an American flag.

Thanks to Sam, Don, Carol and the students for helping to make this a very special event and to represent the Historical Society in this community event! ■



Ceremony Held to Dedicate Dr. Nichols' Marker

The Commemorative Marker Dedication honoring Alpine's Dr. Sophronia Athearn Nichols was held on Saturday, October 8, 2011, at the John DeWitt Museum and Library, 2116 Tavern Road in Alpine.

The ceremony was sponsored by the DeAnza Chapter of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) and the Alpine Historical Society.

The culmination of a year of work performed by the Marker Committee, the ceremony was very well attended. One attendee was overheard saying the ceremony was "superbly done." Many thanks go to

Nancy Eggert, the Historic Preservation Chairman of the NSDAR and a member of the Alpine Historical Society and Carol Morrison who coordinated the event. Barbara Cater and Carol Walker, Historical Society members, also worked on this project. Barbara spent many, many hours researching and documenting the genealogy of Dr. Nichols' family and was instrumental in obtaining the required approval for the commemorative marker. Carol compiled all the documents needed to file the application with the NSDAR.

Financial support was provided by Nancy Eggert, the

DeAnza Chapter NSDAR, Albertson's, Kiwanis of Alpine and the Alpine Historical Society. A generous donation was also received from the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians. Thanks to all for their support!

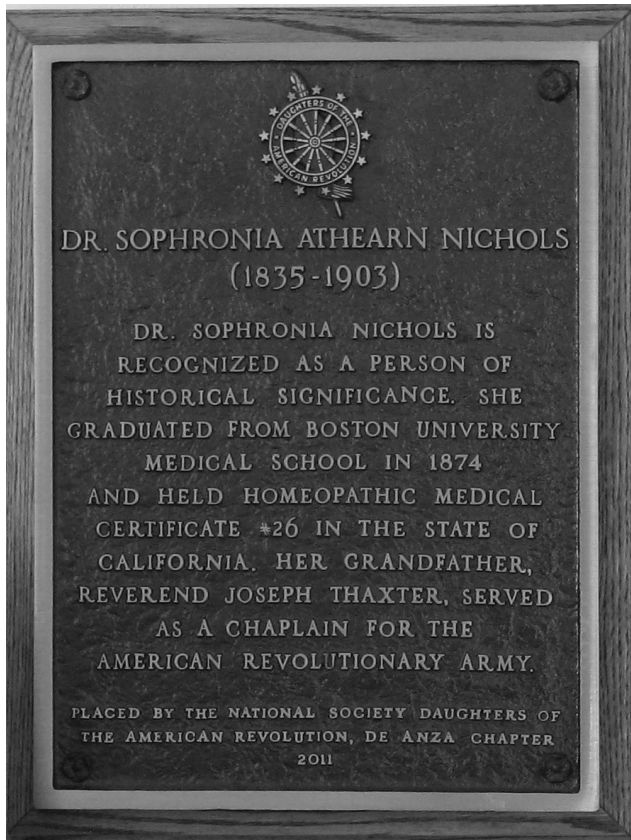
Carol and Ed Morrison hosted a dinner the night before the event at their home to welcome the descendants of Dr. Nichols who traveled to Alpine to attend the ceremony. Carol reports that for her this was the highlight of the entire event.

Dr. Nichols' great-great granddaughter, Donna Sisson, performed an historical reenactment depicting her great-great grand-

mother that was compiled from historical reports and family recollections. Her resemblance to her ancestor made many folks feel they were seeing the famous doctor in person. The presentation was informative and entertaining.

Representing the NSDAR were Bettybob Williams, DeAnza Chapter Regent, Marykay Burch, JoAnn LaGasse, Joanne Murphy, Martha Gresham and Laurel Lemarie. Several local dignitaries were also present.

The National Society Sons of the American Revolution, dressed in period costumes, presented the col-
ors. ■



Left: The plaque honoring Dr. Nichols which now hangs in the main room of Dr. Nichols' home, one of our museum houses. **Right, top:** Descendents of Dr. Nichols join NSSAR Color Guard at ceremony. **Right, bottom:** Members of the NSDAR gather to honor Dr. Nichols at the Dedication Ceremony. Photographs on right courtesy of Linda Meckler.

It's Time for the Annual Membership Drive Once Again



Membership renewal reminder letters were mailed to all members in January. So far, response has been wonderful, but many of you have not yet renewed your membership.

During this time of year, many life members also make monetary contributions to the Historical Society.

Membership dues and contributions enable the Society to continue its efforts to preserve and maintain Alpine's rich history. They are vital to our continued success.

If you haven't mailed your dues or contribution, please consider doing so today. It will be greatly appreciated and will be put to good use.

When you're preparing to send in your renewal or contribution, take a moment to let us know if you would like to help support Alpine's history by a donation of time. Our volunteers make great things happen.

There are many plans for 2012—please step forward and lend a hand. ■

Baltazar Marquez—Honored at ALPS Award Ceremony

Those of us involved with The Alpine Historical Society often hear compliments about the way our pioneer houses are maintained. A great deal of credit goes to our caretaker, Baltazar Marquez, and his family. The Marquez family make their home in the living portion of Dr. Nichols' Carriage House and do a great deal to watch over, protect and preserve the society's museums.

Because of his dedication, the Historical Society Board voted to honor Baltazar as our Volunteer of the Year at the 2011 Alpine Leadership and Awards (ALPS) event. The event recognizes those organizations and individuals that have demonstrated community leadership and public service for the benefit of the Alpine Community.

Baltazar and his wife Laura attended the ceremony, along with President Carol Morrison and Board members Bill Waterworth and Anne Tarr,

on November 14, 2011, at the DreamCatcher Lounge at Viejas.

The Marquez family can always be counted on to help with whatever is needed—and always that help is offered with a smile! Getting ready for the annual Alpine History Day, one can find Baltazar out and about sprucing up the landscaping and Laura is busy washing and ironing the table covers. The children are always willing to pitch in as well and seem to enjoy the ice cream sundaes on that special history day each year!

With the many artifacts stored in the museums, vandalism is a concern. The Marquez family's close watch over our old buildings eases that concern for all involved.

The Alpine Historical Society is fortunate to have dedicated, willing supporters. Thanks to the entire Marquez family for all they do—and, Baltazar, we don't know what we'd do without you! ■



Above: President Carol Morrison presents certificate of appreciation to Baltazar Marquez. Below: The Marquez family in front of Dr. Nichols' Carriage House.

From Left: Diana, Laura, Baltazar Jr., Baltazar, Valeria



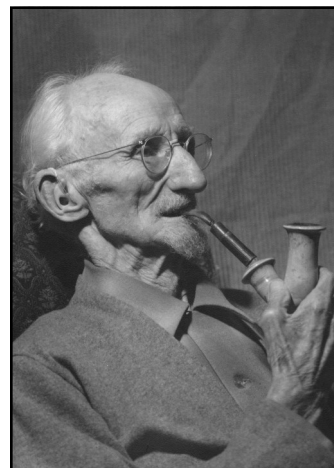
A Year for Celebration—50th Anniversary of Society

April 8, 2012, marks the fiftieth anniversary of The Alpine Historical Society. Beatrice LaForce wrote, in the book *Alpine: History of a Mountain Settlement*: "It was agreed that this area could support a society dedicated to preserving its history and a date was set for a meeting to form the organization. On April 8, 1962, 22 people met at Sky Mesa Ranch, the La-Force home on South Grade Road, where officers of the Alpine Historical Society were elected.

Ralph Walker, President; Lenore Oakliegh Lusk, Vice-President; Bea La-Force, Secretary and Treasurer. Mr. Walker appointed E. L. Freeland and Hazel Hohanshelt as a committee to draw up By-laws for the new society to be presented for vote at the next meeting, May 6, 1962, at Sky Mesa Ranch. An invitation to all interested people was published in the Alpine Echo and the Alpine Sun.....Under the enthusiastic guidance of Presi-

dent Ralph Walker, real old time Alpiners, the Historical Society flourished, holding regular monthly meetings, soon moving to the Woman's Club auditorium since private homes could no longer accommodate the crowd."

From these humble beginnings, the Alpine Historical Society has evolved and now owns land, two pioneer houses and a carriage house. We look forward to the next fifty years with anticipation. ■



Ralph Walker
AHS's first President

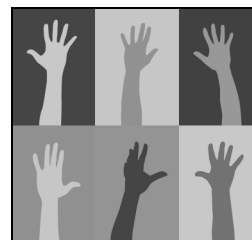
Bible Records Project

When in Alpine for the dedication of the marker honoring Dr. Nichols, Tom Curtin the great-grandson of Mr. Nichols and his third wife, brought two family bibles from 1850 and 1872. He was kind enough to let the Society borrow them in order for the genealogical data to be recorded for our records.

A representative of the NSDAR asked if this information could also be added to their State Genealogical Bible Project. Alpine Historical Society member Barbara Cater took on the project, photographing the bibles, front covers, inside page with copyright information and each handwritten page from the bibles. In addition, she transcribed all of the written data from the bibles. Carol Morrison and Barbara then made three copies of each bible. This was a very extensive project made possible by Barbara and Carol's dedication to preserving Alpine's history and by Mr. Curtin's generous loan of these precious artifacts.

The bibles were returned to Mr. Curtin and the Bible Project information was sent to the NSDAR for submission to the State Society. ■

Volunteers Needed!!



Volunteers to serve in many capacities are urgently needed. You can help preserve the rich history of Alpine by helping in many different ways.

**Interested? Please call
Carol Morrison at
619-445-2544 today!!**

2012 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 18th—Albertson's Community Fair

February 19th—Potluck Luncheon Meeting

April 15th—Potluck Luncheon Meeting

June 2nd—Alpine History Day

August 19th—Potluck Luncheon Meeting

September or October—Viejias Day Parade

October 21st—Italian Dinner Meeting

First Car

The story on pages 6 and 7 of this newsletter was written by Frank Ball and tells of a youngster's fascination with automobiles in a time much different from today. Frank weaves a wonderful tale and has provided the Society with several of his short stories. Look for them on the Historical Research/People of Alpine page of our website, www.alpinehistory.org.

Frank's family purchased their ranch on Tavern Road, El Rancho Metate, in the early 1930's. We hope you will find the story as delightful as we do!

First Car *by Frank Ball*

Alpine, a small rural community in eastern San Diego County, was a place where young people were raised, free of many civilized constraints placed on the youth of more urban settings. Perhaps my impression is too generalized because of the style my family used in raising children. We were free to do almost anything and we often did. My father was a doctor, a pathologist. He kept very busy with his clinical laboratory in downtown San Diego, spending about two hours a day just driving to and from work. My mother was inclined to have faith in the innate ability of human children to choose the activities that were good for them. Perhaps this remarkable attitude resulted to some extent from her lack of confidence in her own ability to make better choices than her children.

As a pre teen I thought there was nothing more interesting than automobiles. My father bought a new '41 Mercury station wagon. A "woody" is what they are called now days. When my friends came over to visit, we could spend hours in the car, in the garage. We would take turns in the driver's seat shifting, steering, clutching and breaking, providing ample vocalizations for proper sound effects. In our minds, it was so realistic we began to think we really were able to drive the car.

I think I was ten years old when the subject of this story started to develop. My brother, a year and half my senior and I were just walking around ex-

ploring our neighborhood. The property adjoining ours was that of Ye Alpine Tavern, a commercial enterprise in the business of providing domestic accommodation for rent by the day, week or month. It was a hotel in function but looked like a large house with outlying cabins. It had considerable historic significance, being in business since the days of the stagecoach. In fact it had



Frank and his older brother Newt and the 1929 Chevy

been a stagecoach stop, one day's drive out of San Diego.

We approached Ye Alpine Tavern from their back yard so it might have been any rural back yard. We walked up to an unpainted barn. It was built on sloping ground. Posts supported the floor along one side forming a ground level shelter without flooring or doors. In this shelter there was a 1929 Chevrolet roadster. This ten-year-old car was in pretty good condition. It was dusty from disuse but had all the fenders and running boards, looking like a street-worthy car. As we studied the car we did not notice a man approach. When he was

quite close, he said, "Are you interested in cars?" Not knowing this man or his intentions, we mumbled something nonspecific. In a friendly way, he said, "If you think you could make it run, I would buy any parts you need to put it in shape."

Such an offer could not have come to more receptive ears. We gave an affirmative answer to his

offer. Both the answer and the offer showed immense naiveté. Unhampered by judgments based on experience, we set about the business of making this thing run. First we purloined all of the tools we could find. A fair supply of tools was available because our ranch had a couple of wells with water pumps and a tractor that would only exchange as much time of useful work as it required in time of tool application. If the sequence of our diagnostics seems a little odd and misguided, keep in mind the limited experience with which we were working and the utter lack of re-

straint provided by the car's owner.

We did almost nothing that would have encouraged the engine to run. We just started to take things apart. It was not many days before we had removed the cylinder head and oil pan. The pistons came out and the timing chain was removed. We told our benefactor of the parts that would be needed. We asked to have new babbit poured in the bearings, new rings, a gasket set and other detail parts I don't remember. By the time we started to put things back together it had become a grimy scene. The workspace had a dirt floor and there was a goodly collection of oil sludge on the internal engine parts. We had little facility to clean parts with solvent. I remember lying on my back on the dirt floor trying to get the connecting rods bolted back on the crankshaft. Many grubby handprints were left on the bearing surfaces as it went together.

Finally the day came when we had most of the engine parts back in the approximate place they had come from. We put in some motor oil and pumped up the tires. The engine was so stiff the starter would barely turn it over. The tavern owner offered to tow us with another vehicle to try to get it started. We hooked up a rope and began to drag the roadster all around the unpaved yard. In third gear we could sometimes get the engine to turn over. In lower gears it simply slid the back wheels. *(Cont'd. on page 7)*

First Car—by Frank Ball *(Continued from page 6)*

We could not get any indication that it was even thinking about running. We stopped several times to make adjustments and check things for forgotten details. Just about the time we were about to give up for the day, the engine gave some hint of life. Persistence began to win over method. Soon, amid a good deal of smoke, the engine even kept running without the towing help. A short time later the activity stopped altogether. The smoke, nay grease vapor, continued to rise off of the engine, indicating it was overheated to the extreme. It was not boiling—we had forgotten to fill the cooling system with water.

Eventually, following the addition of water and various other needs, we learned to make the engine run for more or less indefinite intervals. The end of the day forced us to park our project. Before we left for home, the owner offered to sell us the car for \$40. Now, he had to have twice that tied up in parts he had supplied to our project. In retrospect I think he was just interested in watching us deal with this learning experience of total immersion. A tenant had left him with the vehicle in exchange for \$40 of owed rent. He had no need for the car, running or not.

We eventually amassed the fortune of \$40 and took possession. The car was unregistered at the time of purchase and it remained so. We took it home where we could work on it over a cement

floor inside a garage. It was a long time before the car ran well. I remember the first time we measured the fuel mileage, it was 7 miles per gallon.

This car had several parts that we began to regard as more decorative than useful. The hood of course was open more than it was closed. To save time and trouble we began to prefer to leave the hood at home. Soon we could no longer remember where the hood was stored. There was a small decorative sheet-metal panel filling the space between the frame rails in front of the radiator and behind the bumper. Parts like this would be removed to work on something and never put back in place, because we did not feel the usefulness. It was not long before the fenders and the bumpers went the way of these “purely decorative” parts. The doors too, became a nuisance. By the time we had taken the engine apart enough times to learn how to put it back together well enough to run properly, the whole thing was a much lighter car.

We found out soon enough, there were other parts on a car that should work properly besides the engine. Once we were taking a joy ride with few kids our age. (Kids our age were the only humans reckless enough to ever go for a ride in our car.) Once in awhile the driver would notice a catch in the steering mechanism. It did not become a serious matter until the catch turned into a jam. Once

while coming out of a turn, the steering would not straighten out. The car spun out of control on the dirt road and ran up a three-foot bank at the side of the road. The speed was not great and no one was hurt—not even the passenger who was thrown out of the missing right-hand door. At that point the steering seemed to work all right but we returned home to study the problem. On taking apart the steering gear, we found a thrust ball bearing had fallen apart and the worm and sector gear had picked up a ball, temporarily jamming the action.

Another time we were driving up the narrow dirt road into Peutz Valley. As we came to a blind right turn, we met one of the few residents of that area. In fact we met suddenly and abruptly, as this '41 Plymouth collided, left-front wheel to left-front wheel. Our right-front wheel was climbing the vertical mud bank on the right but the other driver thought it was our fault. She was so used to driving in and out of that road without seeing another car, she did not expect to see us around the turn. We ended up pulling the Plymouth fender away from the tire so she could drive on. Other than a lot of grumbling, nothing more came of the incident.

Our travels were fairly limited for a couple of reasons. We did not want to get farther from home than we would want to walk. We tried to avoid roads that were likely to have Highway Patrol on

duty. A few times we were daring enough to press the limits of this envelope. We once went as far as the high ground overlooking Tecate, Mexico and to El Cajon at night to see a movie. To avoid the main highway, we went down Dehesa Road where Singing Hills Golf Course is now. Our car used a gallon of oil to get to El Cajon and back, about fifteen or twenty miles.

Oil and gas consumption was not much of a problem to us. We got oil as needed from a gas station that drained it from cars of owners who were wise enough to get rid of it. My father bought gasoline in bulk. It was delivered by a fuel truck and put into a few fifty-gallon drums on a rack down by the barn. From there it was dispensed to various cars and a tractor. The accounting of the gasoline usage was very loose, so sometimes young neighborhood men with enough chutzpah would fuel their cars at night without ever being seen.

When I was in the sixth grade at Alpine Union School I would sometimes drive my car to school. This did not happen very often, but when it did, the scene was a big hit with the school kids. It was, by contrast, not a big hit with the teachers. They did not know how to handle the situation. The exact bound of teacher responsibility was poorly defined. Making this problem more delicate for them was the fact that my father was Chairman of the School Board. ■

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Areas of Interest for Volunteers:

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Please complete this form and include your check payable to the Alpine Historical Society, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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