

# TATTERED TIDBITS

ALPINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Volume 2, Issue 3

August 2008

## Upcoming Events:

**August 17**—Sue Wheelington's antique clothing on display at Quarterly Meeting

**October 4**—Viejas Day Parade

**October 19**—Annual Italian Dinner Fundraiser

## Inside this issue:

The Alpine Store 2

Membership Update 3

The Real McCoy 4

Historic Trails Project 5

Volunteer Recognition: Carol Morrison 5

Membership Application 6

Alpine Historical Society  
P. O. Box 382  
Alpine, CA 91903

## AUGUST MEETING WITH SUE WHEELINGTON

The quarterly potluck luncheon meeting of the Alpine Historical Society will be held on Sunday, August 17, 2008, at 1:00 p.m.

Sue Wheelington will be displaying and discussing her unique collection of antique clothing. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to see the Wheel-

ington home, which has been on the Sage and Songbirds Home Tour as well as the Woman's Club Christmas Tour, know we are in for a real treat! The meeting will be held at the Alpine Woman's Club, 2156 Alpine Boulevard. Come for the luncheon at 1:00 p.m. or just for the speaker at 2:00 p.m.—everyone is welcome.

Please R.S.V.P. to Carol Morrison at 445-2544 or send an e-mail to us at [info@alpinehistory.org](mailto:info@alpinehistory.org).

These meetings provide enjoyment for all who attend. Don't miss this event—it's a wonderful way to catch up with old friends as well as make new ones. Mark your calendar now! ■

## ALPINE HISTORY DAY CELEBRATION 2008

Homemade chili, hot bread, luscious salads, lemonade, iced tea and ice cream sundaes—who could ask for more? This was the menu for the annual Alpine History Day Celebration held on Saturday, June 7.

The highlight of the day was the presentation of the Third Grade Essay Contest Winners.

In the category "Life in Early Alpine," Melani Tompkins received the first place award and Annika Roberts and Rose Logan were the second and third place winners. Shelby Wray won first place with her essay on "My Favorite Historical Person in Alpine" and Madison Perrott and McKenna Tanner won the second and third place awards in this category.

Mackenzie Bernatz was given first place for her essay on "My Favorite Historical Place in Alpine." Honorable mention awards for art were presented to Shelby Wray, Madison Perrott, Natasha Jones, Nicole Miller, Katie Lepetri and Lauryn Blottin. An honorable mention for creative essay format was presented to Nick Pupa. (Continued on page 3)



President Carol Morrison introduces Vikki Coffey, the Chair of the Third Grade Essay Contest along with the winners!



Nick Pupa admires Pete Holtzen's Observation Hive filled with live bees. Photos courtesy of *The Alpine Sun*

## April Meeting Update—The Wilson Family Store

In 1936, Gordon and Mava Wilson, along with their four children, Jack, Jean, Stanley and Gail, took over management of the Alpine Store. Good merchants and friendly hosts as well, the Wilsons made a visit to the store seem as much a call on friends as a shopping trip. Everyone came to know the Wilsons and they to know everyone for miles around. Mava and Gordon ran the store until 1951 when they retired and turned the business over to their son, Jack, who ran it until 1964. The Alpine Store closed its doors as a grocery store and has since been Tyler's Feed & Tackle, a 99 Cent Store, Henry Wolcott's Frontier Gallery and Lori's Fibers and Frames. The building is currently for lease and is on the corner of Alpine Boulevard and W. Victoria Drive, directly across the street from the Woman's Club building.

Three of Gordon and Mava's children, Jack, Jean and Gail, spoke at the April quarterly meeting of the Historical Society. They provided wonderful stories of the times spent in the store during the years they were growing up in Alpine. Between them, the Wilson siblings have 13 children, 22 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

After the meeting, all the Wilson descendents in attendance were invited to tour their family home on Viejas View Place by new owners Ron and Lori Beyer.

Thanks, Wilsons, we loved your stories of a simpler time, a wonderful family and a true country store. The Alpine Store—the original building was built in the 1860's, Alpine's first post office in 1865—one of Alpine's treasures.■



The Alpine Store in the 1950's



Photo above left from left: Gail Wilson Guth, Jack Wilson, Jean Wilson Christianson  
Photo above right: The Wilson clan in front of the old Alpine Store. Front row from left: Lauren Crow, Gail Wilson Guth, Jack Wilson, Jean Wilson Christianson.  
Back row from left: John Guth, Vicki Crow, Jan Hooper, Grant and Kerry Christianson.  
The commemorative marker (right), placed on the building in 1978.



### PLEASE HELP KEEP OUR RECORDS UP-TO-DATE

If you have moved, changed your name or had any other changes in your membership status, please let us know so that our records can be updated.

A call to Carol Walker at 741-4629 or an e-mail sent to [info@alpinehistory.org](mailto:info@alpinehistory.org) is all it takes! Thanks for your help!





## Museums Open Last Saturday and Sunday of Month

The next time you're out and about on the last Saturday or Sunday of the month, make a point to stop at the museum for a visit. We are constantly updating displays and renovating the houses—it's worth even a special trip!

Our pioneer houses are located at 2116 Tavern Road and are open from 2:00—4:00 p.m. the last Saturday and Sunday of each month. You will be able to visit the Dr. Sophronia Nichols House and the Adam Beatty House as well as view the outside of Dr. Nichols' carriage house.

If this time is not convenient for you, a call to Carol Morrison at 445-2544 will allow you to set up a time for a private tour at your convenience.

Don't put off a visit—the history can be felt in these buildings and you may catch the history bug! ■

## Membership Update and Call for Volunteers

Welcome to the following new members: Colin and Jackie Campbell, Kay Garrard, Dr. R. Gordon and Janet Gastil, Victor Head, David Smith and Helen Starnes.

Dolores Kling, Ronald and Carol Matzenauer, Max Robinson, Jack Spaulding, Yolaine Stout, John and Joanne Talamantes and the Alpine Woman's Club.

Thanks also to renewing members Alan Dadisman, Michael Harris, Linda Heyser, Jim Hinds, Norman and

If you're just joining the group, or if you're a long time inactive member, consider volunteering. There are

many needs and volunteers are always welcome. If you have special talents you are willing and able to share, please contact Carol Morrison at 445-2544. Let us know about your specialty!

This is a terrific opportunity to get involved and make a difference. ■

## Alpine History Day Celebration 2008 *(Continued from page 1)*



Anne Tarr demonstrates on the 1919 treadle sewing machine

Sincere thanks to all the third grade students, their teachers and school administrators for their participation in our essay contest. The works presented this year were wonderful and each student who entered our contest did an incredible job. The annual essay contest is a terrific way to end the third grade social studies unit pertaining to local history—and Alpine Historical Society members look forward each year to the student tours of our

pioneer houses. Congratulations to all!

A demonstration of our newly acquired 1919 treadle sewing machine was presented by Anne Tarr and attendees enjoyed organ music by Joan Waterworth and singing by Barbara Hendrix. Everyone was fascinated by the interactive bee hive that Pete Holtzen of Honeybee Rescue shared with us once again this year. Pete may be contacted through his website [www.honeybeerescue.com](http://www.honeybeerescue.com). His method of bee control is terrific!

Special thanks also go out to our donors. Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians once again was a major sponsor of this event and Alpine's new Albertson's store was a supporting sponsor. Bill and Joan Waterworth were the donors of a silent auction item—dinner for 20 at their lovely Alpine home. Other donors included: Christian Community Theater; Phoenix Rising Studio; Alpine Inn Restaurant; Earth, Wind and Sea Florist; Reflections Day Spa and Beauty Supply; Kristen Bensen, Brettney Rodriguez,

Lesla Fedel, Pat Hyer and Barbara Crawley of Oscar and Company; Save-a-Heart; Cohn Restaurant Group; Cynthia Jackson, DDS, MS Orthodontist; The Vine Wine Bar and Bistro; Trynn Gallery; The Basket Corner; Wanna Pizza; Vinnie's Authentic Thin Crust Brooklyn Pizza; The Original San Diego Soap Cellar in Alpine, The Liars Club; Alpine Auto; Janet's Restaurant; J.C. and Carlette Anderson and Ed and Carol Morrison..

Thanks to everyone for making our major fundraising event a success! ■



Miss Alpine, Lauren Watson, and Miss Teen Alpine, Jackie Felix  
Photos by Carlette Anderson

## Recent Donations



The Alpine Historical Society depends upon grants and donations from indi-

viduals to carry on its work of preserving our pioneer houses and documenting the history of our community.

We'd like to thank the following for their recent monetary contributions that help so very much: Kay Garrard, Gail Guth, Michael Harris, Victor Head, Robert and Mary Polk and Rodney and Guille Tuttle. Your support is very much appreciated.

We were recently able to purchase several interesting artifacts from donations made to the Alpine Community Church's annual rummage sale. These include a 1940's phonograph, a doll playpen, a fold-out Kodak camera, antique pillow cases and doilies and a baby buggy. These items will be on display in the museums.

Thanks to all! ■

## The Real McCoy by Albert Simonson

Big Jim McCoy had a "sure-fire" approach when he rode the "San Diego Trail" through Viejas and Jacumba Indian country. He had more firepower than the Indians. If you can trust the word of a senator (he later became one), this fighting Irishman and fourteen men fought off 500 Indian attackers at the mail fort he built by Jacumba Springs. You had to be a gunslinger to deliver mail in 1853.

Except for Indians, this was pretty empty frontier country. East of Rancho El Cajon, the only population center was Viejas Valley, where Cockney Bill Williams and his mayordomo Julian Sandoval lived with the Indians. Their rancho was the prime grain producer of the region, because the fertile soil and wetland of the valley was not yet destroyed. That took decades.

In those days, Army express riders carried dispatches and general mail on a more or less biweekly basis to the fort from San Diego and Fort Yuma. Sometimes they disappeared. Jacumba served as a kind of pony express relay station and depot, since the distances were rough on men and horses. But, after the battle, the Army abandoned the little fort and kept well north of the springs more toward the

present interstate. Early express riders were Joe Swycaffer, Johnny Hinton and Jim McCoy.



### First Transcontinental Mail Route

The first transcontinental mail came through in 1857. This was the San Antonio and San Diego mail line, dubbed by envious San Franciscans the "Jackass Mail" (although only horses and mules were used). McCoy worked on this line, too. It followed a northerly route from Vallecito stage station with stops for feed, fresh animals and water at Lassator's (by the Cuyamaca museum), Julian's (Descanso) and Viejas (just east of the casino). Grub for passengers was also available at stops, a welcome change from dried beans and jerky. Jim's throat got mighty dry on that trail, and he looked forward to quenching thirst at the "Jolly Boy" in Old Town. It was in that saloon that Charles Rathbun gave him three near-fatal wounds.

Jim recovered in the sobering solitude of Cuyamaca, where he built up a herd of 500 sheep and 125 goats.

The former distillery worker from County Antrim could reflect that he had come a long way as he shepherded his own flock along the Jackass Mail Trail.

He was not the first to graze sheep there. The Osunas, the family of San Diego's first mayor, had grazed sheep in Cuyamaca and Descanso as early as 1843. In fact, the Jolly Boy Saloon had earlier been the home of the stiff dignified mayor. And, further down the trail, the Osunas had owned the Rancho Valle de las Viejas y Mesa del Arroz. Before that, Cuyamaca was presidio horse pasture and Descanso was mission cattle pasture.

This trail was by no means new. According to the late Hero Rensch, historian of Cuyamaca, this was the "Yuma Trail" used by Indians since time immemorial. Governor Fages pursued Presidio deserters on this "Camino de San Diego" in 1772. It was recommended for official mail to Sonora in the Mexican period. This now-forgotten trail of many names has a rich history and bleached bones, too. *(Continued on page 5)*

## Our Dedicated Volunteers: Carol Morrison

Carol joined the Alpine Historical Society in 2000 and assumed the role of treasurer. The next year she was elected president and has served in that capacity ever since. She was responsible for guiding the complete renovation of the Beauty House. Carol truly enjoys the challenges of the various projects as well as the people she has met through the Society and in the community.

Carol was born in New York. As the child of a Navy father, she attended five elementary schools and three high schools! Her interest in history grew

out of stopping at historic sites and markers along the highways as her family traveled from one home to another. When her father retired, the family settled in San Diego.

She and her husband Ed met at San Diego State and married in their junior year. Carol taught math at Chula Vista Junior High School for four years. She then "retired" to motherhood. Among the many activities the family shares are water skiing, desert camping and riding dune buggies and ATVs.

Carol began her volunteer-

ing career with the Del Cerro Junior Woman's Club. In her twelve years with the club she held many offices—including president. Ed calls her a "professional volunteer"—with service to Girl Scouts, American Cancer Society, AYSO Soccer, San Diego Junior League, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Alpine Community Center and the Alpine Chamber of Commerce.

Ed and Carol moved to Alpine in 1988. They spend their free time with family, friends, two grandsons, playing bridge, gardening, attending plays,



**Carol Morrison**

symphonies and Aztec football games.

The Alpine Historical Society has come a long way under Carol's leadership. She is a steady, calm and balanced leader who truly knows how to accomplish goals. We are indeed fortunate to have her. ■

## The Real McCoy

by Albert Simonson (Continued from Page 4)

McCoy was an Indian hater and could indulge his whims later as County Sheriff. Any Indian who was not sober and clearly employed could expect to feel McCoy's revolver pressed to his head and to be auctioned off as forced labor for about fifty dollars. McCoy was San Diego's "unemployment office."

Jim did not just bully unarmed Indians. Once, he beat up a handcuffed Cave Couts, an Army veteran and notorious Indian snatcher, to within an inch of his life. But Couts was not a lovable character and he probably had it coming.

McCoy built a wooden house in Old Town in 1869, where he annoyed people with his syphilis and rowdy parties. The house is now being built again in his honor and will be

used as a visitor center by the state park. The decision to place a building of relatively late American period over the foundations of San Diego's first adobe homes brought outrage by historians and by descendants of San Diego's venerable first families.

So...whether you think he deserves it or not, Big Jim will probably be the best remembered of our back country characters.

*Editor's Note: The McCoy house was indeed reconstructed and is open to the public with exhibits about Old Town. Another reconstruction is the home of "El Santo" Aguirre who owned the entire Alpine area in the 1850's. It is a major tourist attraction and contains a small Aguirre museum. ■*

## Historic Trails of the Back Country Project

Albert Simonson, one of our most dedicated researchers, has a dream.

He'd like to take the results of all the research performed on the historic trails of our region and document this using modern technology.

Albert's vision is to have a DVD prepared which would show the locations of important roads in our region's history—the George Washington Webb Toll Road, the San

Diego Trail through Viejas and Jacumba Indian country, the Jackass Mail Route and the Yuma Trail are among the many roads that would be documented.

Albert will happy to share his extensive knowledge of the trails and will lend support to everyone involved.

If you're interested in working with a group to accomplish this very important task, please contact Carol Walker at 741-4629. We look forward to hearing from you! ■

**Alpine Historical Society**

2116 Tavern Road  
P. O. Box 382  
Alpine, CA 91903

Phone: 619-659-8740  
E-mail:  
info@alpinehistory.org



# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/City/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Send notices via: E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Category (please check one):**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$5     | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$35         | <input type="checkbox"/> Business \$50         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$15     | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit Org. \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Life \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life \$500          |  |

**Amount Enclosed:**

Membership	\$ _____
Donation	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

**Areas of Interest for Volunteers:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Building Preservation
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical/Clerical
<input type="checkbox"/> Where Needed

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

Alpine Historical Society  
P. O. Box 382  
Alpine, CA 91903-0382

PRSRT STD U.S. POSTAGE PAID ALPINE, CA 91901 PERMIT NO. 18
---

«Organization»  
«First Name» «Last Name»  
«Address Line 1»  
«City», «State» «ZIP»