

FRESNO - PAST & PRESENT

VOLUME 17

MARCH, 1975

NO. 1

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRESNO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



News Of The Society

NATIONAL REGISTER LISTS KEARNEY MANSION

As of April 1, 1975 the Kearney Mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This makes a total of four structures in Fresno that are on the Register. The others are the Old Watertower, the Administration Building on the City College campus (see the June 1974 P&P for details), and the Meux House.

MANSION RE-OPENS

The 1975 re-opening of the museum was March 16, and the museum looked fantastic. The floors in the entry, reception room, and Kearney's office were repainted by Gary Smith, who also refinished the two desks in the new staff offices.

CLOCKS REPAIRED

All the clocks in the mansion were looked at by Steve McKenney who got them all in working order again. Our thanks to him, particularly for fixing the grandfather clock.

FLOWERS DONATED AND ARRANGED

Thanks, also to Mrs. Betty Coulter who made six beautiful fresh flower arrangements for our annual re-opening.

NEW OFFICES

The executive director and assistant are now in the new offices and work area, which are located in the basement of the Servant's Quarters. Entry to the offices is via the door on the south end of the Servant's Quarters.

CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES -- SYMPOSIUM

The executive director and volunteer Sue Matz attended a symposium held in San Luis Obispo. Much was learned during the two days that will benefit the Society.

BAY AREA TRIP

Shortly after attending the symposium, the director and Sue went to the Bay area on Historical Society business. They stopped in San Leandro to visit Mr. and Mrs. Lee Rice, members of the FCHS. Mr. Rice is a native of Fresno County (Watts Valley), and he related much valuable information about his life and living in Watts Valley. He also donated many valuable artifacts to the Society, among which are a chair purchased at Millerton in 1864, old cast iron cooking utensils, a farm account book, Indian artifacts, an 1889 Colt Navy revolver, farm tools, and many other articles.

Mabelle and Sue then went on to San Francisco, where they did research at the library of the California Historical Society, and at the History Room at Wells Fargo Bank. While in San Francisco they visited with Dagmar Haarbauer, who was the only mistress Kearney Mansion ever had. She was married to S. Parker Frisselle (from 1912-1930) the superintendent of the ranch from 1911-1949 for the University of California. Their son, Bradford Parker Frisselle, was born in the mansion on October 3, 1914. Mrs. Haarbauer donated to the Society many valuable items, including photographs, newspaper articles, and a scrapbook of her life while she lived at Kearney Mansion.

MATZ ATTENDS OAKLAND SEMINAR

Our full-time volunteer, Sue Matz, attended at her own expense, a seminar in Oakland sponsored by the American Association for State and Local History. She was one of only 30 chosen to attend.

"SAVING OUR HERITAGE" CLASS

Dr. Ephraim Smith's extension class-workshop at CSUF on "Saving Our Heritage" attracted 25 students and raised \$360 for the Preservation Committee. Various people gave guest lectures and presented slide shows on preservation, or the lack of it, in the nation, California, and Fresno.

BOOK WANTED

Fresno County: The Geographical Hub of the State of California by John McGroaty, 1915, Fresno County Expositions Committee

If you have this book and do not want it, or know someone who has it and does not want it, please consider giving it to the Historical Society. It would help very much in our goal to make our archives as complete as possible.

THANKS

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society wish to thank those members who have renewed their memberships in a higher dues category. We appreciate your generosity and thoughtfulness.

Thank you to those who have mailed their dues on time so we do not have to send a reminder. It saves staff time and postage to be used for Society work.

FREE ADMITTANCE TO KEARNEY MUSEUM

Historical Society members will now be admitted into the museum free six (6) times a year (*except* during special events such as 4th of July, Christmas, etc.) if they have their current membership card with them. Life members are not limited to the number of yearly visits, but the special events limitation applies to them also.

CAROUSEL PROJECTORS

Help! The Historical Society needs two Carousel projectors. We use them when we present slide shows on local history and preservation to community groups. If you have any you no longer need, or know of someone with one they no longer want, please call us at 264-8317.

A SHIP CALLED FRESNO

Our thanks to Mr. Eugene Machamer who recently gave to the Historical Society photos taken in Alaska of the sailing ship *Fresno*. Information accompanying the photos stated that it was built in 1874 and weighed 1244 tons. It was destroyed by fire on April 4, 1923 in Bellview, Washington. If any readers have more information on the *Fresno*, please write it down and mail to the Historical Society.

"Johnny comes marching home." May 8, 1919, some seven months after Armistice Day this was the scene at Fresno's Sante Fe railroad station as returning soldiers and sailors are served hot coffee and donuts by local Red Cross canteen workers.

THE COVER

The faded poster on the side of the cart reads "Fresno Honor Roll, Welcome Home, Canteen Service, Register Here."

Note the tin cups, bowl of California Poppies and wooden sided railroad passenger cars. The two soldiers wearing campaign hats have their traveling tickets stuck in their hat bands.

Sixty-Five Million Years Of Fresno History

By William G. Huff

Long before man appeared on earth there was a recorded "Fresno County" history, a chronicle which has existed for what seems an endless stretch of time when measured against the life span of man. The record was sealed in the rocks, and after discovery was read and interpreted by University of California scientists.

At that distant period (Upper Cretaceous, sixty-five million years ago) a large area of what we now call California, including Fresno and surrounding countries, was at the bottom of the sea. Large marine reptiles, unlike any living today, swam these waters. A number of years ago the fossil remains of two such animals of different species, Mosasaur and Plesiosaur were discovered in the Panoche Hills fifty miles west of Fresno.

On his mining claim, Frank C. Paiva discovered the fossil remains of the plesiosaur, a thirty-six foot creature with an extremely long neck, who propelled himself through the water with four powerful, paddle-like limbs. Seeking professional information, Mr. Paiva disclosed his find to Dr. W. M. Tucker, chairman of the Department of Geology, Fresno State College, now Fresno State University. Dr. Tucker in turn took some of the vertebrae to the University of California at Berkeley and showed them to Dr. Charles L. Camp, Professor of Paleontology and Director of the Museum of Paleontology.

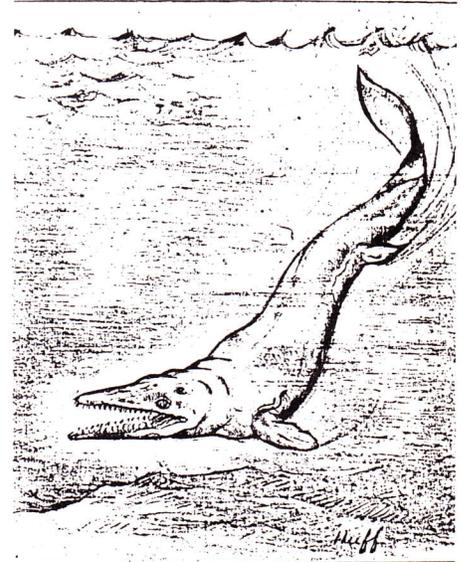
Great interest in Mr. Paiva's discovery was shown by members of the staff, which resulted in a joining of forces by the University of California and Fresno State College in an expedition to excavate the fossil bones. U.C. paleontologist Dr. Samuel P. Welles, assisted by the resourceful Mr. Paiva and a crew of students, dug out a complete skeleton which was delivered to the University in Berkeley. There, in the paleontology museum, skilled preparators extracted the fossil bones from the brownish gray blocks of shale in which they had been embedded, making them ready for study.

An interesting highlight of the discovery, exciting the laboratory technicians, was the exposure of a pocket of gizzard stones swallowed by the plesiosaur to aid his digestive process. Embedded among the gastroliths were flecks of probable fossil remains of what might have been partly digested fish, possibly the marine reptile's last meal.

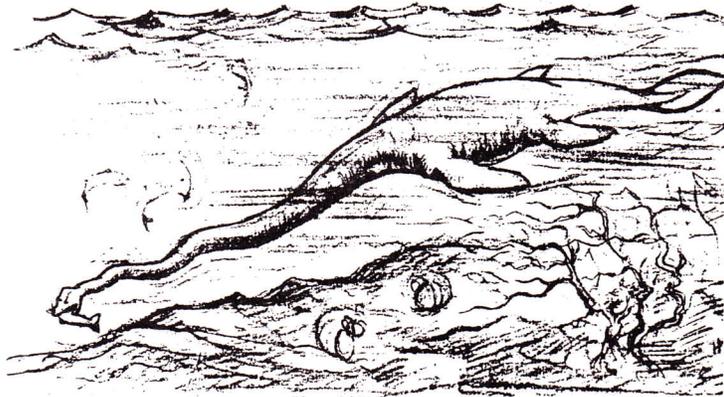
The other sixty-five million-year-old natives of the area, described by Dr. Camp, were predaceous reptiles known as mosasaurs, sea lizards also provided with paddle-like limbs of a design different from the plesiosaur's. The elongated

bodies of these creatures extended over thirty-five feet and were beautifully constructed for agility and speed. The two known mosasaur genera found in California are distinct from any elsewhere known, states Dr. Camp. The complete skull of one was found in Merced County by Allan Bennison, then a student at Gustine Union High School. Bones of the "Fresno" mosasaur were found in the Panoche Hills while the plesiosaur dig was in progress. The combined U.C. and Fresno, State parties, including Dr. Tucker and Frank Paiva, were responsible for finding and collecting the mosasaur remains. The same preparators at U.C. extracted the fossils from the hard matrix and readied them for scientific examination.

Working with paleontologists through the years, I have created numerous original graphic and three-dimensional restorations of prehistoric animals for the University of California. Of all these animals the two marine reptiles from Fresno have intrigued me most — mainly, I suppose, because the three of us are fellow natives.



PLESIOSAURUS
A restoration by W.G. Huff



Hydrobatosaurus albandeni. A restoration of the thirty-foot reptile by William Gordon Huff.

The foregoing article was sent to the Historical Society in response to last issue's article on the Drake family in Reedley. If you have any little-known information about Fresno County's history, please write it down and mail it to us. Maybe you have pictures to illustrate your story. These things are of great value to our archives. We appeal to you, our members, to write down your memories of events, history of family and their experience, information on farming, on inventions, on important artists,

musicians, sports champions, politicians, or donate ledgers of businesses and farms no longer needed. These are things so often discarded when the owner no longer has use for them but they are, when put together with others, what make it possible to write history.

Pictures, diaries, ledgers, letters, scrapbooks, pamphlets, histories or scrapbooks of organizations, newspaper clippings, etc. — all of these things will add to our archives.

Route 180 Now Easy Drive Into Sierras

By W. L. Welch
District VI Engineer
Division of Highways

Each year thousands of recreationists and sightseers flock to the Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks to enjoy camping, fishing and the incomparable primitive beauty of the rugged Sierras. Not so long ago though, only the heartiest of these people would brave the rough, winding road leading to this mountain paradise.

In those days, State Sign Route 180 was generally described as a "horse and buggy" highway. Grades were steep and the alignment in many locations was a series of sharp angular curves or switchbacks.

Traveling speeds as low as 20 miles per hour were common. According to traffic studies made by the State Division of Highways in 1946, the average speed of travel between Orange Cove Road and three miles west of Dunlap was 28 miles per hour. The volume of cars traveling this road numbered 400 per day.

To trace the development of Highway 180 leading into the parks, one must go back more than two decades to focus on two significant highway construction projects. The first was the completion in 1939 of thirty miles of new highway between Cherry Gap and Cedar Grove, thus opening to the motoring public for the first time, the rugged canyons of the Kings River.

In 1941 a second project was completed accounting for the improvement of Highway 180 within the boundaries of the parks and three miles to the west.

Traffic Increased

As a result of these projects, traffic into the parks increased. Motorists were more willing to make the trip because of the ease of travel over the new sections of highway. The contrast was now great between the improved sections of 180 and the unimproved part to the west. It was at this time that state highway engineers began planning for the removal of the last stretch of "horse and buggy" road from 180 between Orange Cove Road and three miles west of Dunlap.

The improvement of this section was delayed because of the high priority for road funds for highly populated and industrialized cities during and immediately after World War II. Finally, in late 1949, funds were made available and work began on the first of two projects for the construction of a modern highway.

The first project was 5.4 miles in length located on new alignment between Orange Cove Road and 4.7 miles to the east plus a 0.7 mile section ending at Mill Creek. It was completed in July 1951.

Friant-Kern Bridge

Also on new alignment beginning at the terminus of the first job on the west and ending six miles to the east at White Deer Road was the second project. This job was started in late 1952 and completed a year later.

Completion of these two projects shorted the route by 2.2 miles. Because of improved road alignment, motorists can

now average 43 miles per hour instead of 28. Traffic volumes have increased to 1,500 cars per day reaching a peak of 2,800 cars per day during July.

The most recent improvement on Highway 180 was completed in 1959 involving 1.5 miles in length. Curves were straightened and a bridge was constructed at the Friant-Kern Canal.



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PAXTON NAILING MACHINE FORERUNNER OF GENERAL NAILING

General Nailing Machine Corporation Has 42 Years of Steady Growth & Progress in Sanger

By Mrs. Janice Paxton
from the Sanger Herald Progress Edition -
1963, Sanger, California

The "ancestor" of the General Nailing Machine Corporation, called the Paxton Nailing Machine Company, was given birth in Sanger in 1921 by the present head of General; Gerald "Bus" Paxton and his older brother, the late Hale Paxton. The Paxton brothers came from Redlands, California. The older brother came to work for the late J. Eckle Starnes in his Chevrolet Garage, which was then located where the P G & E building now stands. The younger brother came along to work and visit during the summer. The visit turned out to be a lengthy one.

On observing the vast amount of boxes of fruit shipped from the Sanger area, and the many men required to make them, they conceived the idea of building machines to do this and to contract with the sheds to make their boxes.

Shortly after successfully completing and operating the first machines, various packers expressed the desire to own and operate their own machines. Patents were granted on their designs and the first machines for sale were built in the small building on Academy Avenue between Jensen and 7th. This property is now owned by Gerald Paxton's son, Jack, and the small building is still used for storing old machinery. Then, as now, the coming of progress and automation was greeted with mixed feelings and it was not unusual to find the machines battered up, or a little sand or saw dust in the gears.

Rapidly outgrowing the small building, the Paxtons moved their operation to 7th street where J. K. Norwood's "Elgin" auto agency had recently vacated. General expanded their line to include machinery for apples, lettuce, tomatoes, and other products for use throughout the state.

In 1926 they formally incorporated the business as Paxton Nailing Machine Corp. with Hale Paxton as President and Gerald as Vice President and General Manager.

A year later, again needing more room, they built an office building across the alley from their shop on land that belonged to the First Baptist Church, which was on the present site of the new Bank of America. The office building was where the Bank's parking lot is situated and faced on 7th street.

Hale Paxton's health was poor and in 1930 he moved his family back to Redlands. The company had been expanded greatly into the orange shipping

industry in the southern part of the state by this time. In 1933 it was decided to move the entire plant to Southern California. This decision was not a happy one for Gerald Paxton. In 1925 he had married Janice Rose, a third generation Sangerite, and by this time considered Sanger definitely as home.

A building was purchased in Santa Ana, and the machinery and personnel were moved there in August of 1933. This entire plant was sold in 1936 to FMC Corporation, which was then Food Machinery Corporation. Gerald Paxton remained as Chief Engineer for FMC until 1945 and the close of World War II. During the war FMC greatly expanded with the war effort and due to the prime necessity for the machinery manufactured by them, most key personnel were frozen in their positions for the duration. The close of the war found the engineering department housed as an entirely separate unit on Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles. This department was headed by Gerald Paxton with a crew of about 50 engineers, and were awarded government recognition for their efficiency and contribution to the war effort.

When "peace" was declared, Gerald immediately made arrangements to return "home" to Sanger and once again start into the nailing machine and packing house equipment business. His brother, Hale, had passed away in 1937.

The second start was more difficult than the original since it involved designing a whole new line of machines and power equipment, lighter in weight and more efficient so they would not infringe on any of the patents sold to FMC. A new name had to be chosen, as the name "Paxton" had been included in the sale of the original business. "General" was decided upon, and the land purchased and a small building constructed where the present plant now stands at 1324 So. Academy. Since 1945, this plant has had to be enlarged six times and now contains 36,000 square feet of floor space.

World Wide Use

Many new types of machinery have been designed and manufactured by General in these 17 years. Their equipment line, which includes packing units, conveyors, elevators, scales, stackers, de-stackers, dumpers, and sizers

along with box making and lidding machines for all fruits, vegetables, beer & beverage cases, ammunition, egg cases, cheese boxes, and most anything else that needs a box around it for shipping, is not only in use in most states, but also in the main fruit centers throughout the world, including Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Israel, Greece, Puerto Rico, Egypt, and Lebanon.

General has branched out into other products as well, including the making of a complete line of industrial sprockets that are sold to various other manufacturers throughout the states. Practically everything manufactured at General is covered by patents including their newest product, a corrugated paper and wood container for fruit and vegetables, and sold under the name of "Stak-Pak." According to the government surveys which are made periodically by the Defense Department, the machine shop at General is one of the most completely equipped between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

General is a privately owned corporation with all stock held by Gerald and Janice Paxton, their son, Jack Gerald Paxton, and their daughter, Sharon Rose (Paxton) Roberts. This group, with Earl D. Roberts, son-in-law, and Office Manager, are all actively engaged in the present management.

General also operates General Capital Corp., a finance company for machinery purchasers, and General Nailing Sales Corp. The latter has selling or service agencies in the various fruit and vegetable centers, such as Southern California, Oregon, Washington, Florida and Texas. These, plus Paxton Enterprises a family farming and investment venture, all have their headquarters at the local plant. General is also the agent for Southwest Forest Industries, who maintain an office and salesman at the plant. Southwest Forest Industries is in the lumber and paperboard products field.

The Paxtons feel they are definitely a fixture on the Sanger scene. The past well represented by Janice Paxton's maternal Grandparents, the James Carroll Goss family who came from Colorado in 1888. Their youngest daughter, Myrtle, was Mrs. Paxton's mother; and also her paternal Grandparents, the Samuel H. Roses, who accompanied their son John R. Rose, Mrs. Paxton's father, when he was transferred from Laton to be freight clerk for the railroad at the Sanger Depot in 1899. The present is being busily lived on the scene. The future should be the best of all, because it's yet to come with the Paxton's seven grandchildren as a fifth generation: to carry on it seems assured.

NEW MEMBERS

REGULAR:

Ruth H. Smead
 Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Stanton
 Mark O. Kilen
 Elizabeth A. Landrum
 June J. Benck
 Mr. and Mrs. Carsten L. Henningsen
 Dr. G. Gordon McCormick
 Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Buch
 Ruth A. Phillips
 Mr. and Mrs. Milton Torigian
 Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Zacher
 Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Rodder
 Rev. and Mrs. Krstivoj Kotur
 Mrs. Betty L. Coulter
 Mr. and Mrs. James T. Hamilton
 Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Watson
 Mr. and Mrs. Donald Neal
 Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Chapman
 Edna Mockbee
 Mr. and Mrs. Leo Scheidt
 Lt. Col. and Mrs. Geo. Hollister
 Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Garrison

SENIOR CITIZEN AND STUDENT:

Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm L. Hebert
 Mrs. William W. Myers
 Michael K. Crist

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL:

The Warner Company
 Valley Federal Savings and Loan

SUSTAINING:

Dr. and Mrs. E. R. Mosley
 Dr. and Mrs. Ephraim K. Smith
 Mrs. Elsie Flynn
 Pearl E. Smith
 Elizabeth M. Rippe
 Dr. and Mrs. Peter J. Klassen
 Donald G. Wren
 Robert M. Wash
 Progressive Home Club, Inc.
 Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Harris
 Mr. and Mrs. John Houlihan
 Dr. and Mrs. Francis A. Wiley

For God's Sake Do Something



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Fighting the Traffic In Young Girls

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NEW PRESIDENT



WILLIAM MATZ has been elected president of the Fresno County Historical Society for 1975. Matz is customer operations manager for the Pacific Telephone Company where he has worked for 20 years. He is a graduate of UCLA and is active in the Golden Valley Girl Scouts Council. Supporting officers are Phil Wilson, vice president; Mrs. JoAnne Gardner, secretary, and Earl Knobloch, treasurer.

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

I plan to continue the programs which have already been started, these include

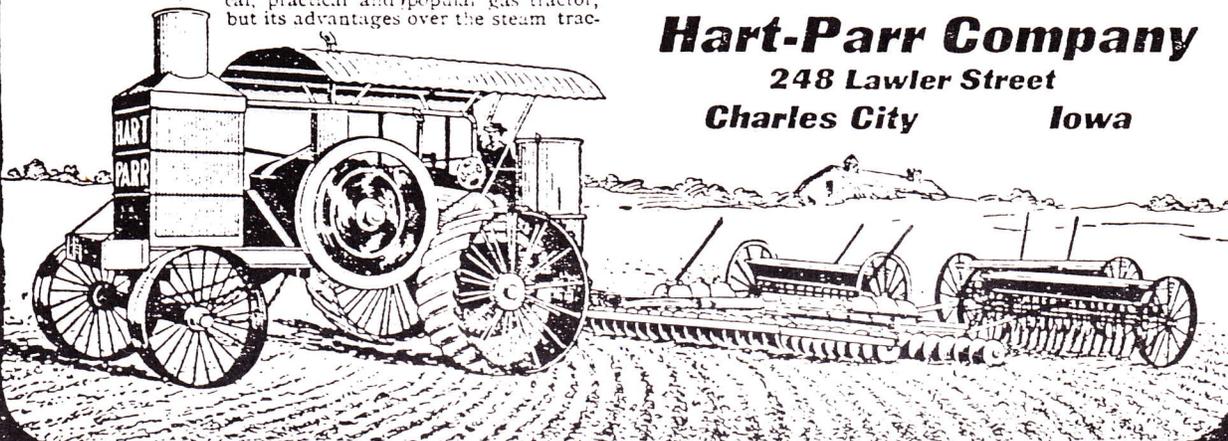
- Raising the standards of the Society to a professional level.
- Expanding the activities of the Society.
- Broadening the scope of the Society to provide more services to the community.

I am looking forward to a very productive year in which we will provide the residents of Fresno County with more programs and information about the events of our past.

W.D. Matz

The Modern Farm Horse

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DONATIONS OF OFFICE AND MUSEUM EQUIPMENT

In response to the announcement in the December issue of the *Past and Present*, the Historical Society now has a typewriter, nine metal filing cabinets, and a dictionary. Mr. R. Edwin Streit of United California Bank arranged for the donation of the cabinets and typewriter, from UCB, and he himself contributed the new dictionary. The cabinets and typewriter were located in San Francisco, so Mr. Streit also obtained transportation for them. Delta Lines generously provided shipping services to Fresno free of charge. Sincere thanks to Mr. Streit, UCB, and Delta.

Also in response to the notice, we have received an amplifier from Mr. Harold Selland. A \$50 donation from Dr. and Mrs. Henry Rosenstiel will be used to purchase glassene folders for our photograph collection. Our thanks are extended to Mr. Selland and the Rosenstiels.

MEMORIAL PLAQUES -- ONLY A FEW LEFT

There are a few memorial plaques left that can be purchased for the Blockhouse. The cost is only \$50, which will cover the cost of a new exhibit at the Blockhouse and a plaque that will carry a memorial inscription to a loved one. Send the donation to the Historical Society (address on back cover) and include the wording you wish to appear on the plaque.

HERITAGE DAYS AT FASHION FAIR

Members of the Historical Society again participated in Fashion Fair's Heritage Days by judging employees' costumes and store decorations. The Historical Society received a \$150 donation for our services, so a sincere 'thank you' is extended to all those who helped.

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE U.S.A.

La Paloma and Society members helped serve coffee and rolls at the opening of "Industrial Heritage U.S.A.," an exhibit sponsored by Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum.

Each year it is the pleasure of the executive director to present awards to those who have given outstanding volunteer service to the Fresno County Historical Society. The three recipients for 1974 were particularly outstanding:

Mr. James Nargis, our architectural advisor, has been working with the Historical Society and other civic groups for many years, giving of his professional knowledge for the good of the community. He has served on the Civic Committee and others for many years and has worked with the Historical Society for ten years. During 1974 he wrote architectural reports for three out of the four buildings in Fresno that have been placed on the National Register--the Old Administration Building at City College, the Meux Home and the Kearney Mansion Museum.

Dulce Rose, our outstanding tour guide, has been guiding tours for over ten years and comes faithfully each Thursday. Her father, Gene Tully, was volunteer curator for the Blockhouse Museum for many years and Dulce drove him to and from the Blockhouse. She now has enlisted her lovely daughter, Joy Schramm, and two of her granddaughters as guides and hostesses, making four generations of one family to work toward saving our heritage.

Sue Matz was chosen as volunteer of the year for her service of redesigning and rebuilding our Blockhouse displays. This work was started last June and still continues. We can hardly wait for the unveiling.

PRESERVATION AWARDS

Laura Zacher was presented an award by Preservations chairman Dr. Ephraim Smith for her contribution to preservation of Fresno's heritage through the purchase of three older homes, two for commercial use and one as her own home.

Miles, Sears and Eanni, a firm of attorneys, were presented with an award for restoring the Brix Mansion for office use.



BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

ARE MORE FREQUENTLY KNOWN AS SUCH BY AN ELEGANT FIGURE THAN A PRETTY FACE, AND MANY LADIES BY USING AN ILL SHAPED CORSET DESTROY THE SYMMETRY OF THEIR OTHERWISE SHAPELY FIGURE. ALL LADIES WHO HAVE ANY REGARD FOR THEIR PERSONAL APPEARANCE WILL

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FRESNO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President: William Matz
Vice President: Philip Wilson
Secretary: JoAnne Gardner
Treasurer: Earl Knobloch
Executive Director: Mrs. Mabelle Selland
Phone: 264-8317

Dues and change of address should be sent to the Fresno County Historical Society, 7160 W. Kearney Blvd., Fresno, Ca. 93706.

Membership year is from January 1 to December 31. Dues to the Fresno County Historical Society are tax deductible.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Senior Citizen & Student \$ 2
Libraries \$ 6
Regular (Family) \$ 10

Special Memberships

Sustaining . . (Individuals or Non-Profit Organization) . . \$ 25
Business and Professional \$ 50
Life \$200

Fresno Past and Present is the official publication of the Fresno County Historical Society and is published in March, June, September and December. Subscription of 50 cents per copy, \$2 per year, is included in the membership to the Fresno County Historical Society.

Editor: Don DeVere Fresno, California
215 W. Garland 229-5860

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