

MUSEUM MUSINGS



Monrovia Historical Museum

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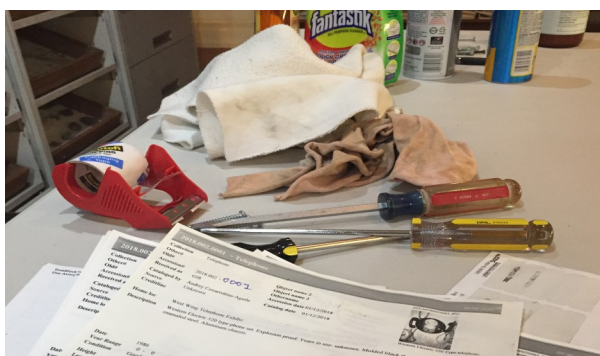
Volume 5

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How We Spent Our Summer Vacation

To paraphrase the Grateful Dead, what a long strange year it's been. When the rise of Covid-19 forced us to close in March 2020, we had no way of knowing we'd still be closed at the end of the year. Just because we're closed to the public, though, doesn't mean we haven't been working in the office and on the exhibits. So, without further ado, here's how we spent the spring.. and summer... and autumn of 2020.



Left side: Monrovia timeline exhibit and on the right, some of the tools used at the museum as we make good use of our downtime during the pandemic.

Trials, Tribulations and Lessons Learned During A Pandemic

We posted a request to the public for their pandemic stories – what changed, how we dealt with it, what we learned, and we wanted to remember from this turbulent time. We only received one submittal, and it was from our own board member Nick Baldry! Try to imagine a Scottish accent as you read his account from the early days of the pandemic.

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Notes from the Pandemic, One Man's Observation

By: Nick Baldry

Date: 07 May 2020

Initially, we were told to stay at home with limited exceptions. You could shop for food while maintaining social distancing, of course. We have been sending my wife out once a week on the basis that I am confused by the layout of supermarkets at the best of times. During the coronavirus emergency, it makes sense to send the 'professional shopper' to get a weeks' worth of food without me wandering around the aisles looking frightened and lost.

Facemasks

One thing we saw little of in the first days of 'safer at home' (AKA lockdown) was facemasks. It wasn't until well into April that those became mandatory in some settings, so they were an oddity in the early days. I hugely preferred the pre-facemask days when I was out for a walk around Monrovia. Naturally, everyone had to keep their distance, but at least you could smile and wave as you passed. There was an unspoken connection that said, "yeah, this is bizarre, but what can we do about it?" That little connection was huge in a world where suddenly making connections with strangers felt like it was outlawed.

Now with the proliferation of facemasks, that little bit of human contact has disappeared. Even though they aren't mandatory when you are outside, only in stores and situations where you are likely to come into close contact with other people, they are now everywhere. The smile has been hidden. Only a pair of eyes poke out from above the mask and reading those is difficult. The connection, small as it was, has gone. Strangers are now hiding their faces away from you, and that feels like a brick wall has gone up. The masks are there for a reason, and I would never discount their necessity. This lament is not an anti-facemask rant but a recognition of a loss of a way of reaching out to those you pass in the street.

Homeschooling.

Don't do it! I love my children; I'd do anything for my children, but I am the last person on earth who should be teaching my children.

The Coronavirus pandemic seemed to accelerate quickly. Lockdowns were alien things that happened in other countries such as China, Spain, and Italy. They were the fodder of news stories until the number of cases started climbing in California, New York, and Washington. On March 16th, we had the first day of student dismissal in Monrovia Unified School District, and it was the first mandated shift in the foundation of our lives. The schools worked hard to get materials to students. There was a designated day for parents to come and pick up materials to get the students up to spring break. I ended up picking up packets for four families with children in my son's class. I was like the world's worst Santa Claus, traveling around Monrovia delivering bundles of homework to kids. We had to get used to sessions with the teachers using the Zoom video calling app, a whole load of other apps for doing projects, and a whole host of other tools for occupying our five-year-old. That was the easy bit. Motivating a student who was used to playing with his toys when he is at home and pushing boundaries with his parents that he would never dream of testing with his teachers was the hard bit.

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(Notes from the Pandemic, continued)

Navigating his schoolwork while also entertaining a two-year-old who was no longer in preschool and trying to keep up with work was horrible. It was a nightmare. It was depressing. Standing over a five-year-old and resisting the urge to scream, “SEVEN MINUS TWO IS FIVE, HOW HAVE YOU NOT FIGURED THAT OUT YET!!!!” has taken a herculean effort. Patience is in short supply for parents adjusting to being around their offspring and each other approximately 23 hours a day. The allowable state exercise has been a fantastic opportunity to get out of the house and away from everyone in it for an hour. Family walks are lovely; solo walks are bliss!

At points, homeschooling has seemed like it was the thing that would break us far quicker than the impending threat of a pandemic. Of course, there have been good days, moments where I have got to see my son understand something new, and those are magical. The painful days have nearly broken me.

Boredom

There is working from home, children to teach, sourcing the latest item to go through a shortage (who remembers people panic buying toilet paper?), but a big enemy is boredom. Now we are talking two decades into the 20th century, so there are plenty of entertainment options with Netflix and other streaming services bringing seemingly unlimited content directly into your home. Happy hour zoom calls let you stay in touch with friends and colleagues and make drinking at home seem a bit more like a social activity. At the end of the day, though, your surroundings start to close in on you, and the desire for change gets overwhelming.

I have a very nice home. I like my home. I desire nothing more than to leave my home. A trip to the post office is almost as exciting as a morning at Disneyland. Sure, you can’t get within six feet of another human being, but it is somewhere different. You can also exercise even though gyms are closed, and team sports are out of the question; you can get out for a walk. Our utterly idle dog had the shock of his life when my wife and I started competing for the chance to take him for a stroll around town. Walks and cycle rides get longer and longer because they’re outside the rectangular lot that your house stands on.

Home life has become house arrest. Up at the same hour, the prison guards being a five- and a two-year-old, giving us our wake-up call. The same schooling routine running from breakfast, through lunch and up to midafternoon, then occupying the kids until dinner. There is an almost permanent sense of waiting. At least prisoners under house arrest know when they’ll get released. At the time of writing, “safer at home” is supposed to last for another 13 days; however, there is almost no chance that will be the end of it. Even if restrictions are lifted, it will be gradual, so there is still plenty of time to fill.



PUTTING OUR SPACE TO GOOD USE

While the Museum remained closed, Monrovia Community Services put the building and the surrounding park areas to good use. Throughout the late summer, an outdoor Zumba class met on the courtyard. During the month of October, Recreation Park hosted three family movie nights in the lawn next door to the museum. The lobby and restrooms were open for movie goers.

EXHIBIT UPDATES

By Sarah Farmer Earll

The Exhibit Committee took advantage of the shutdown to start some large-scale updates in the West Wing. Old failing light fixtures have been replaced with energy-saving LED fixtures. Display cases were repainted and refurbished to create new exhibit opportunities.

Military exhibit: While the majority of our military exhibit consists of World War II memorabilia, we plan to incorporate some World War I artifacts from our collection.



West Wing Work

Additionally, we will include stories of the broader community in war time, such as the Japanese internment. Monroviaans served in all the Armed Forces, but they also served in myriad capacities at home; we hope to explore these stories and themes in greater detail.



Donation of Military gear for our exhibit.



Military exhibit in process of being updated.

Donation Request

The Monrovia Historical Museum is doing some enhancements to our exhibits during Covid closures. We are looking for an authentic U.S. WWII helmet for our military exhibit. If you have one you'd be willing to donate to the museum please let us know.

Do you have a veteran in your family? Send us a photo or two, so we can include them in our slide show! Haven't seen our slide show? Check it out on our website:

<https://www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org/videos.html>

VINTAGE PHONE EXHIBIT

“IS THIS THE PARTY TO WHOM I AM SPEAKING?”

By: Pam Barkas

The vintage phone exhibit has not been upgraded since it first went up around 1990. There is no information about the phones' dates of manufacture, styles, or years of use. Research attempts had been made in the past, but none was ever completed.



Volunteer Erin Starr's arrival means that the vintage phones will get the attention they deserve! The phones have been removed from the wall where they were hung, cleaned, researched and photographed. They will be rehung with visually appropriate signage. Finally, board member Sarah Farmer Earll and volunteer Nate Bernstein are going to work on getting some of the phones to actually ring using the original ring boxes. Because of COVID concerns, people will no longer be able to handle the phones, but at least they can hear how a 1930s phone sounded.



MONROVIA FIRE DEPARTMENT LENDS US A HAND



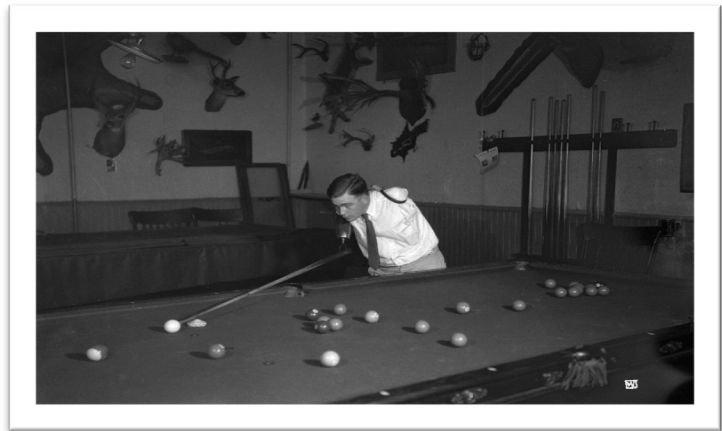
Late last year, the Monrovia Fire Department started demolition on a storage room in the West Wing, with the aim of creating a space to tell their story. Their volunteer work on the exhibit took a backseat to their very real work on the Bobcat Fire and other hot spots around California. As all residents of Monrovia, we thank them for saving our city from the threat of fire, and we look forward to working with Captain Jansen and his team to complete this exciting new addition to the Monrovia Historical Museum.

Did you know: What do firefighters do when they're not fighting fires? Training takes up a good deal of their time when they are not on call. Firefighters are required to have at least 20 hours of emergency-related training each month.

Don't You Just Love Old Photographs?



Unidentified adorable young boy.



Armless man playing pool at Baxter's pool hall. 1930's.

By: Pam Barkas

The museum received a donation of negatives from Cynthia Farley. They came from her step-grandfather, William A. Ward, who owned photo studios around Monrovia and Azusa. Ward's grandson, Kim Anderson, still lives in Monrovia and allowed me to interview him for this article.

According to Kim, his grandfather was from Boston and worked for the B&O Railroad company as a yardmaster. One winter, he got pneumonia, and the doctor told him he wouldn't make it through another winter because his lungs had weakened. He, his wife Eunice, and their daughter Beulah loaded themselves all the family possessions on a train for Los Angeles. Once here, William Ward came to Monrovia to visit Pottenger's Sanatorium in 1924 to treat his weak lungs. After several visits, Ward decided Monrovia was the place he wanted to set down roots, so he moved his family from Los Angeles to Monrovia, renting a house at 717 Wild Rose Avenue.

William Ward had had some experience back in Boston with photography as his brother owned a studio, so William and Eunice opened a studio. They sold photographic equipment, took studio portraits, did framing, and sold other items not normally found in a photography studio. Eunice Ward discovered canaries, so they added canaries, cages, and seeds to their inventory

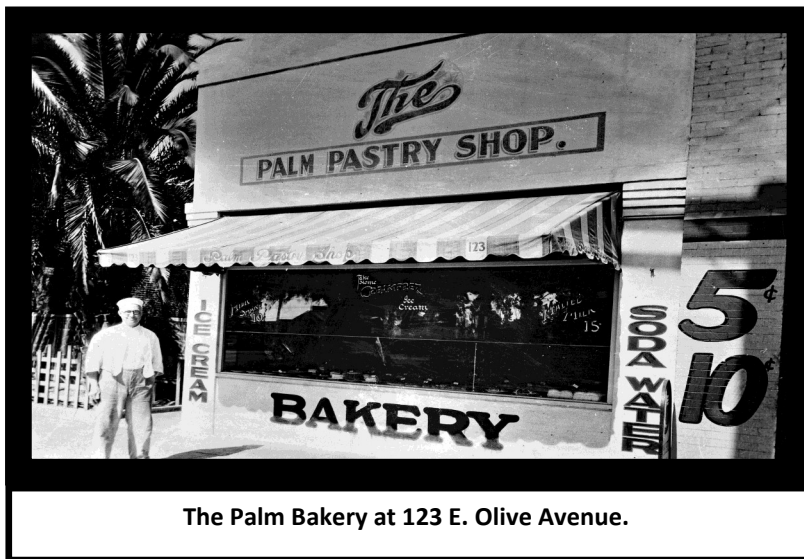
Because of the Depression, the Wards moved their studio at least four times during their stay in Monrovia. Ward eventually left Monrovia for Azusa over a dispute with the Kodak company over licensing. Even so, William Ward still drove his route in Monrovia. Kim Anderson recalls his grandfather stopping to pick him up and then driving around Monrovia to pick up film from the drugstores and delivered the prints he had processed. William Ward died in 1945 and is buried at Live Oak Memorial Park with his wife, Eunice.

The negatives we received were primarily shots of original photos that people would bring in to request reprints and/or enlargements. We cleaned the negatives and scanned them. Where the negative was identified by someone's name, we researched the family's role in Monrovia. When the negative was a picture of a store or house, we researched the location and the history of the property owners.

We are presenting some of the pictures and hope you find them as interesting as we did.

(continued on next page)

This first picture is of 124 May Avenue originally owned by Frank A. and Margurite Argue. The house has since been granted historical landmark status.



The second picture is of The Palm Bakery at 123 E. Olive Avenue. Clarence Jacobs decided to build a business block (a long narrow building which can be divided so that different business can operate). The building still stands and the addresses in the business block are 113, 117, 119, and 123.

The third picture shows the 300-500 block of North Magnolia. The house is 351 N. Magnolia and has been granted historical landmark status.



Thank you Erin and Mary Ann!



Volunteer Erin Starr



Volunteer Mary Ann Garcia

In the midst of trying to comply with pandemic orders and contemplating the political dilemma, the Monrovia Historical Museum had bit of good fortune with the surprise emergence of two people wanting to volunteer at the museum. Mary Ann McQuigg Garcia brought in a donation and stayed to chat, telling us that her mother had donated items in the past, one of which was a wicker baby buggy used with all four of the McQuigg children, including Mary Ann. She then mentioned that she would like to do volunteer work. Magic words!!! We were happy to have her as she has excellent skills and quickly grasped the difficult task of accessioning.

At this time, she is finishing up work on accessioning a collection of Victorian calling cards and wedding invitations. Without being asked, Mary Ann used her subscription to Ancestry to research the names on the calling cards so that personal information could be included in each entry. Additionally, she researched calligraphy as many of the calling cards are written with such elaborate script that they are very difficult to read.

Mary Ann works online with the Monrovia School District to assist her nine-year-old grandson with his schoolwork and monitors him until his mother comes home. Now that COVID has curtailed her work at the museum, she continues to work for us remotely from home.

Our second volunteer came to us through a request in our newsletter for volunteers. With her daughter's departure for college, Erin Starr had been looking for volunteer opportunity that fit her interests and her skills. Her first project for the museum was researching our vintage phones so that the museum's Exhibit Committee could make display information for them. We were especially impressed when Erin discovered that one of our phones is worth \$2,000! Erin is presently working remotely entering index information into our database.

Of her experience working at the museum, Erin says the following:

"When this opportunity presented itself, I had to pinch myself to prove that it was real because it fits so perfectly with my background from the corporate world. I feel so unbelievably lucky to be around all of this fascinating history of Monrovia. I was taught to appreciate history and the treasures that come along with it and I couldn't have found myself in a better situation to be more grateful while being productive and at service for my community."

The museum staff feels so fortunate to have volunteers with the skills, enthusiasm, and attention to detail that these two women have.

WANT TO WIN A FREE YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP TO THE MUSEUM? ENTER OUR

“TALL TALES OF ANCESTRY” CONTEST!

Genealogy has become quite a popular past time and obtaining solid proof of one’s ancestry is accomplished with a simple DNA test. It’s almost impossible to make outrageous claims about who we’re related to. And yet, there are some who still think they can get away with telling tall tales about their family history. As an example, a woman claimed that she was a direct descendant of George Washington. Without knowing anything about her DNA, can you tell us why her claim is unfounded? Be the first to submit the correct answer and win a year of free membership to the Monrovia Historical Museum.

Send your answer to us via email: monroviahistoricalmuseum@gmx.com Good Luck!

Special Talents Needed!

Though the museum staff is quite versatile and talented, there are areas where we could use some support. You can volunteer while staying safe at home during this pandemic. We’ll arrange for you to pick up the work that needs to be done from the museum (outside) and include instructions.

Do you have a knack for repairing antiques? We are in possession of an old phonograph that needs repair.

Do you have good eye-hand coordination and patience? That talent would be very helpful to us as we have some books and other vintage paper that need repair. We have the materials and the directions!

Do you have ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO at night when you watch television? Well, we have the perfect mindless task for you! We need someone to remove paper from plastic inserts in many notebooks. We recycle the paper for use at the museum.

Do you enjoy telling stories about local history? Once we can have visitors again we’ll need docents.

Want to get more involved? Consider becoming a board member.

Misc. Needs: website/publicity, writing, photography, education, light carpentry, recording secretary, and data entry.

Amazon Wish List

The Monrovia Historical Museum has an Amazon Wish List. We are in need of office supplies, items for current and future displays, and especially archival materials to store and preserve our artifacts. If you, or anyone you know, wishes to donate any of these items to the Museum, you can do so via the Amazon web site. The items can be mailed to your home to then be brought to the Museum on our open days or you can mail them directly to 231 N. Myrtle Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016. We will mail you a receipt for your donation.

The Amazon Wish List can be accessed directly via this link: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/3QFUT1TKX40ZH>. The link to the wish list can also be accessed via our web site <http://www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org/> under the “Get Involved” tab.

Our Social Media Presence You Can Help!

The Museum now has listings on both TripAdvisor and Yelp. These sites host reviews of businesses and are often consulted by people who are deciding to visit the Museum. Your kind words are needed! If you can log on to each site and give us a positive review, that would be very helpful!

Monrovia Historical Museum
P.O Box 2359,
Monrovia, CA 91017

Membership Application

At the Monrovia Historical Museum we keep the story of Monrovia alive. Our 8,000 square foot museum consists of two wings that introduce guests to the origins of the city founded by William Newton Monroe in 1886. Our displays depict life in the growing city as well as exhibits covering the local Native American groups, natural history, Monrovia through the World Wars and so much more!

Your membership and support helps us to continue to tell the story of Monrovia. Without our members we wouldn't be a resource for school groups, citizens researching their history and individuals who just want to learn a little more about what makes Monrovia the city it is today.

Please fill in the information below and mail it along with a check to the address listed at the bottom of the form, or you can drop it off at the museum any **Thursday or Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Payment may also be made through PayPal on our website, www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org by selecting the **DONATE tab** at the top of the page. The Monrovia Historical Museum Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, ST, ZIP _____

HOME PHONE _____ CELL PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

One Year Membership (circle one): Student/Senior: (55+) \$15 Individual: \$20 Family: \$30 Supporting Member \$50:
Sustaining Member; \$100: Business Sponsor \$250 **Or a one-time donation in the amount of \$ _____**