



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

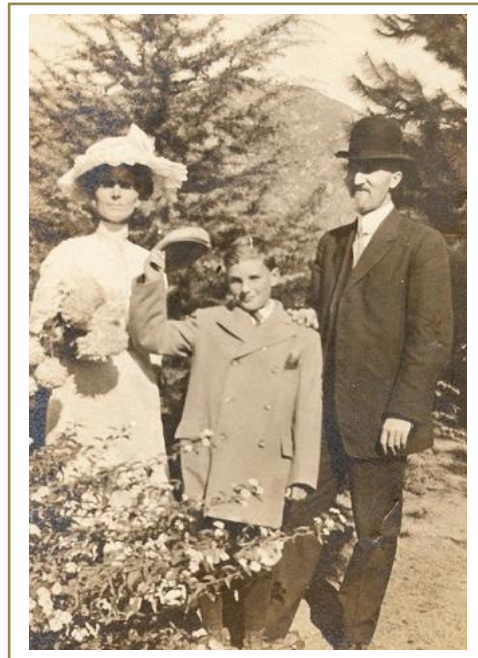
January 2017 Newsletter

The Great TB Epidemic and Sierra Madre

By Maggie Ellis

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Georgina Perry, not long for this world, with husband Charles and son Hall.

(Courtesy Paula O'Donerty Collection.)

When historian Michele Zack was in the process of writing her award-winning history of Sierra Madre, there were still those who whispered to her to play down the great TB epidemic that occurred around the turn of the last century and its tremendous role in shaping early Sierra Madre. What happened back then, and why would some people, even now, still feel that it should be hushed up?

According to the Harvard University Collections, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, 70 to 90% of the urban populations of Europe and North America were infected with the TB bacillus, and about 80% of those individuals who developed active tuberculosis died of it.

PBS, in their documentary "The Forgotten Plague", state: "By the dawn of the 19th century, the deadliest killer in human history, tuberculosis, had killed one in seven of all the people who had ever lived. The disease struck America with a vengeance, ravaging communities and touching the lives of almost every family." They state that eventually one out every 170 Americans would be in a TB sanitarium.

Doctors at the beginning of the epidemic, unaware that TB was caused by a bacillus and was infectious, urged sufferers to get out of crowded cities, where bad air was thought to be the culprit, and into the healing fresh air of the countryside. Warm and dry climates were thought to be the most beneficial. The Transcontinental Railway, which had been completed in 1869, just a decade before the outbreak, made it possible for debilitated souls to take that advice and come west.

Sierra Madre boosters, spotting an opportunity for growth, advertised our ideal climate. Foremost among those was our town's founder, Nathaniel Carter, who himself suffered from TB. His advertisements featured before and after photographs of himself to show how he had gone from gaunt and wasted to the full bloom of health.

Come listen to Ms. Zack's talk about this stupendous epidemic, hardly remembered now, about how it affected every aspect of life in the entire U.S., how it dramatically changed Sierra Madre and the lives of our citizens, and what happened when science discovered that it was contagious.

Michele Zack's history of Sierra Madre, Southern California Story; Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre is available for sale at Arnold's Frontier Hardware, the Sierra Madre Library and Savor the Flavor. There is an extensive section in it about TB in Sierra Madre, with moving accounts by those who lived the epidemic, either as sufferers or caretakers.

The Architecture of Personal Reinvention — a look at how illness shaped Southern California Culture
Thursday, January 19th, 7:00 p.m.
Hart House in Memorial Park, 222. W. Sierra Madre Blvd
\$5.00/per person

President's Message

Sometimes you just get lucky. Out of the blue, an email appeared in the Historical Society's inbox from one Casey Seyb, who said that she'd moved to town just last summer and that she had just completed her Master's degree in Library and Information Science with a specialty in archives. She had looked at our website and noticed that our Archives Chair board position was open. Did we need help?

She barely had time to blink before we'd recruited her as a member and voted her into the board as our new Archives Chair. Imagine getting an archives volunteer with such experience and knowledge!

It's particularly helpful, as the library's outstanding archivist, Michelle An, works only Tuesdays and Fridays and alternate Saturdays. She would love to work more hours, and we wish she could, but City budget constraints limit how many hours she can work. Also, while she's at work, she has other responsibilities at the library besides the archives. So she needs all the help she can get.

Casey ran right down to the archives after work, and she and Michelle hit it off. What an amazing team! If you attended the holiday party, you got to see both these archivists in action, as they were the program for the evening, talking about the archives and showing old postcards of Sierra Madre.

And, speaking of luck, we were very fortunate to have an outstanding army of volunteers who made the extremely successful cemetery event a huge hit. There were the event co-chairs Judy Webb-Martin and Leslie Ziff, and all those who put a tremendous amount of work into enacting the historical figures. Many did extensive research and came in costume. And there were the helpers who worked the event, set-up people, ticket takers, drink sellers, check-in people, etc., and the astonishingly capable teens who worked the dinner tables like pros. If you were there, you know what a hit the musicians were.

Maggie Ellis, *President*

Membership Report

We are very happy to welcome new members Michael Swain and Casey Seyb. Casey has already joined the SMHPS board as our new Archives Chair!

Maggie Ellis, *Membership Chair*



Library Archivist Michelle An (left) and new Historical Society Archives Chair Casey Seyb (right) standing in the archives.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

2017

January 18	TB and its history in Sierra Madre – talk by Michele Zack
February 16	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
March 12	Wistaria Festival booth
March 16	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
April 20	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
May 6-7	Art Fair booth
May 18	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
May 27	Mt. Wilson Trail Race booth
June 15	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
June 17	Lizzie's Chicken & Ravioli Dinner and Annual Meeting
June 30	End of SMHPS year

Board Report

October Ryan Baker, the new Director of Library Services, visited us and talked about the archives as well as his ideas for money-generating programs at the library. As he is also the new Director of Community Services, he was asked about the Richardson House restoration project. Treasurer Richard Mays discussed asset tracking as well as fund allocation for the Richardson House project. The three old photographs we discovered in storage will be photographed professionally so we have digital copies, and the originals will be donated to the Huntington Library. The upcoming cemetery event was discussed at length by Event Co-Chair Leslie Ziff and volunteer Shari Eing. It was decided to forgo the Pack Station tour this year, as the cemetery event was scheduled just a week before the Pack Station tour, and our time and resources were focused on the cemetery event. Museums Co-Curator Mike Manning discussed work he'd been doing at the museums, and some discoveries of fun items he'd found there (a 1950 juicer manufactured in Sierra Madre, a 1923 Brunswick Victrola, and a light for hiking the trail made out of a coffee can). Museums Co-Curator Norma Bachwansky reported that the tack shed had been cleaned out and organized.

November Rod Spears spoke about the historic Darling House, a matter of community concern due to the drastic changes during reconstruction. Joe Catalano spoke about the new cement works behind the Richardson House, and then both left to attend a meeting about the Darling House. Our new volunteer, archivist Casey Seyb, was welcomed enthusiastically and was voted onto the board as the Archives Chair, as that position had been vacant. Judy Webb-Martin spoke about member Eric Neel, who was unable to attend. He has a number of terrific ideas for fundraisers and programs for us. Cemetery event co-chairs Judy Webb-Martin and Leslie Ziff talked about the very successful cemetery event, now past, and how it could be improved upon in the future. Museums Co-Curator Norma Bachwansky credited Co-Curator Mike Manning with making basic repairs and doing improvements to Lizzie's. She recommended calling on volunteers to paint Lizzie's exterior. Mike Manning presented a hiking trail map he had created from a satellite view, which shows the stops on the trail and has a history on the back. These will be printed for sale. He also proposed a sign for Lizzie's, and presented some history logo wear he had created.

2016-2017 Board of Directors

Officers:

President	Maggie Ellis
Vice President	Amy Putnam
Secretary	Pat Karamitros
Treasurer	Richard Mays

Committee Chairs:

Archives	Casey Seyb
Education	Leslie Ziff
Facebook	Jan Wiles
Membership	Maggie Ellis
Museums Curators	Norma Bachwansky Mike Manning
Newsletter	Diane Sands
Oral History	Louise Neiby
Ways & Means	Christel Chang
Website	Maggie Ellis

Directors at Large:

Joe Catalano
Teresa Chare
Matt Malley
Joan Spears

Non-Board Members:

Library Board of Trustees Liaison	Rod Spears
Board Development	Judy Webb-Martin



Many images of old Sierra Madre are unidentified. Here's Librarian Donna Howard with a display of postcards she created for the library to see if visitors could help identify them. (Photo courtesy Maggie Ellis)

www.smhps.org

SMHPS@outlook.com



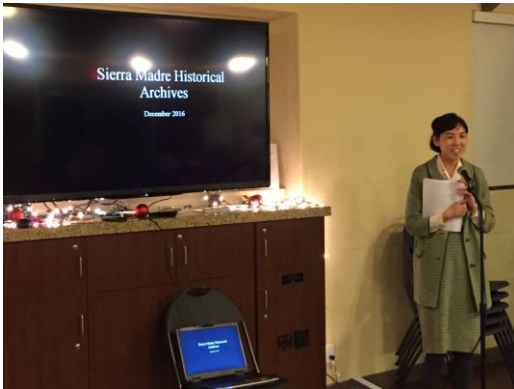
Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society



Holiday Party!



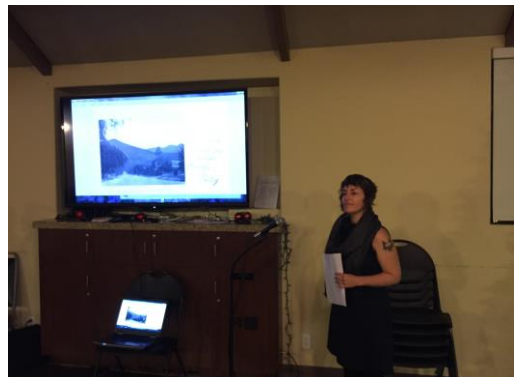
Louise Neiby making introductions



Michelle An talking about the archives



Members provided the splendid cookie feast!



Casey Seyb showing old postcards of Sierra Madre

All photos by Michael Ellis

Up at the Museums

By Norma Bachwansky

With the holidays upon us and a new year looming close we'd like to take a moment to thank some of the many volunteers who have contributed to the growth and success of our little museums on the hill.

The storm drainage at the back of Richardson House is complete, routing water off the hill and safely around the museum and through the grounds. Thanks to resident architect Joe Catalano, and the City's Bruce Inman, and Chris Cimino, as well as their crew, for this substantial upgrade to the museum grounds. Let's hope it gets some good use this winter!

Our museum is looking pretty professional with the new labels and signage that Museum Co-Curator Mike Manning has installed throughout Lizzie's. The displays are easily identified and very informative. If you haven't been to the museum in a while, drop by and see what's new!

Once again our Scarecrows took an award at the Scarecrow festival, thanks to the creative juices of volunteer Jan Wiles and her team. Our adorable Lizzie and the three little goblins really spoke to the theme of Best Representation of Sierra Madre! Well done Jan and crew!

Special thanks to the Sierra Madre Garden Club for helping out in our gardens. At times it's seemed an uphill task (no pun intended!) what with the drought's water issues and the hungry wild life, but we're figuring out what works in the garden with both those issues, and have high hopes for continued improvement around the buildings.

And finally, we'd like to give thanks for two wonderful men who gave so much to the museums. Our beloved docent John Pigott, who greeted our visitors with warmth and humor, and shared his lifetime of experiences and memories with our visitors, is sorely missed. Some of you may not know that John donated his books to the museum to use as fund raisers in the museum. The book was marked for sale for a \$10.00 donation to the museum. Once, after a particularly slow period when no books were being bought, a new sign appeared on his book: "Free book with every \$10.00 donation". They flew off the shelves! Clever John and his great sense of humor!

And our dear friend, Maurice Orme, who was a living connection to Lizzie's and Richardson House, a gentle soul who loved to share memories of his youth, growing up at Lizzie's and living at Richardson House, is also greatly missed. Maurice's first-hand stories of life at that time gave the museum staff an opportunity to "get it right", making sure the details are correct in our displays and in our stories we share with our visitors. He donated his mother's original kitchen tools that were used at the restaurant to serve those famous chicken dinners. You can see them on the shelves in Lizzie's kitchen. He also contributed lots of family photos, giving us a pictorial history that will carry on far into the future. We are grateful to have had both of these special men in our Society.

Happy New Year to all!

Curb and Gutter Repair at the Museums

Story and Photo by Joe Catalano

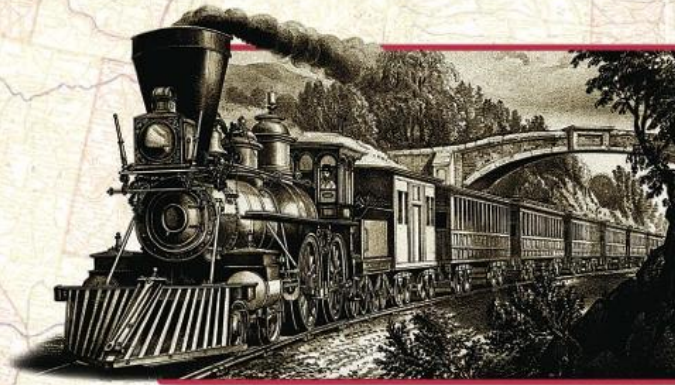
For many years, when it does rain, the steep hillside behind Lizzie's and Richardson House has been slowly eroding and washing dirt down behind Richardson House. This has helped deteriorate the bottom of the walls on the Shed at the back of Richardson, and filled the underfloor space with dirt.

A means to divert this was needed before work can continue on the restoration of the Shed. Early in November the City installed a concrete curb and gutter at the base of the hill, just in time for winter rains (if they actually materialize). Some finish grading is still needed around the new work, and eventually the area between this and the Shed may be paved with asphalt. Originally the area behind Lizzie's and Richardson was asphalt, according to former SMHPS board member Maurice Orme, who lived there as child and passed away in 2016.

Thanks go to Interim Public Works Director Chris Cimino and his crew, shown in this photograph finishing the concrete.



**FROM THE CITIES OF THE EAST THEY CAME
TO SIERRA MADRE
TRYING TO SAVE THEIR LIVES!**



In the late 1800s and early 1900s, 70 to 90% of the urban population of Europe and North America were infected with the TB bacillus.

Sierra Madre boosters eagerly advertised for sufferers to come for our dry climate, and they came in droves.

And then what happened when it was discovered TB was infectious?

**The Architecture of
Personal Reinvention**

A look at how illness shaped Southern California culture



PHOTO: CHARLES ALLEN

Historian
Michele Zack



smhps.org

Join Us

**7:00 PM THURSDAY, JANUARY 19
AT THE HART HOUSE IN MEMORIAL PARK**

EVENT PRICE \$5

A Cemetery Thank You Note!

From Leslie Ziff

I have already written each of the people directly involved with this year's Cemetery Tour and Dinner a personal "Thank you," but I also want to thank all of you that attended our Oct. 29 event. We had a wonderful response to the evening's tours, dinner, and great entertainment. We are already planning next year's tour with a little different "flavor". We will be introducing you to several new interesting, historical people in our cemetery. We will also be offering an earlier starting time for those of you who would like to just take the cemetery tour. We will keep you updated. Look for more information by September of 2017.

Once again thank you to all who attended and participated, and I hope to see you all next October!



Event Co-Chair Leslie Ziff prepares for the event!



Former SMHPS President Dane Lenton



Photo by Dave Felt/Mountain Views News



Photo by Dave Felt/Mountain Views News



Vin Fiz Flyer



*Board Member Christel Chang and attendees
Photo by Dave Felt/Mountain Views News*



Left to Right, Shannon King, Frank Moore, and Barry Ziff



Bartender Jeffrey Plaut



From left, Board Member Diane Sands, Judy Webb-Martin (event Co-Chair), and Jeff Lapides



Joe Tortomasi and Corey Brendel



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society
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www.smhps.org



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Membership / Donation Form

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Membership Level

- ___ \$20 Individual
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- ___ \$5 Student
- ___ \$30 Contributing
- ___ \$60 Patron
- ___ \$100 Supporting
- ___ \$500 Lifetime

Specific Donations

- \$ _____ Sierra Madre Historical Archives
- \$ _____ Oral History Program
- \$ _____ Museums
- \$ _____ Richardson House
- \$ _____ Lizzie’s Trail Inn

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make check payable to SMHPS.

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society is a 501(c)(3).
 Your contributions are deductible within the limits of the law.
 Thank You.

Yes, I would like to be a volunteer for the SMHPS. _____