



# Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

## Spring 2018 Newsletter

### The Mount Wilson Observatory

By Robert Anderson, Astronomer and Observatory Docent



Photo: Elisa Webster

For the first half of the 20th Century, Mount Wilson was the most famous observatory in the world. The biggest telescopes were there. And the telescopes were new designs that changed the way astronomy was done. It is where astrophysics took over. Whether you were an astronomer observing the sun during the day, or the stars and galaxies at night, this was where you

dreamed of working. It remains the most productive observatory in history in the number and importance of discoveries made.

The discoveries that flowed from the mountain top are too many to list, but a few of them revolutionized our understanding of the universe. Nearly 500 years ago, Copernicus removed the earth from the center of everything. In a similar way, Mount Wilson astronomers forever changed *(continued on page 2)*



Photo: Huntington Library

Mules bringing the lens up

### Richardson House Restoration Update



Photo: Joe Catalano

The drawings are completed for the restoration of the Shed at the back of the Richardson House, one of our two museum buildings, along with Lizzie's Trail Inn. We have begun working with Chris Cimino, the City's Public Works Director, and City Manager Gabe Engeland about which parts of the work will be performed by City crews, and which parts will require that we hire a professional restoration woodworker.

You may know that for many years the Richardson House

was home to the Ormes, who worked at, and later ran, Lizzie's. This simple shed at the back housed Lizzie's laundry, the beer and wine storage, and a tool room. At one time, it is said that it also housed a still.

The Shed's major restoration challenge is the replacement of deteriorated lower wood walls and floor joists. This deterioration has been caused by the lack of adequate concrete foundations in the Shed's original construction. This will be corrected "blindly" when the deteriorated wood is restored, that is, that new concrete foundations will be hidden from sight in the finished work.

This restoration work has been designed by former SMHPS Board member Joe Catalano, who is a licensed architect who specializes in historic restoration work. Presently he has under construction a similar project, for the bunkhouse at The Joel McCrea Ranch in the Santa Paula Valley, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The bunkhouse was built by cowboys in 1890, using simple materials and construction methods very much like those of the Richardson House Shed, and has been suffering from the same kind of deterioration.

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# Calendar of Upcoming Events

<b>May 26</b>	Trail Race booth	TBA
<b>June 21</b>	General Meeting / Mt. Wilson talk	7pm
<b>July 14</b>	Whiskey Tasting	TBA

## New Members!

Welcome to new members Roger & Carolyn Brown and Patrice Yokum!

Maggie Ellis, *Membership Chair*

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[SMHPS@outlook.com](mailto:SMHPS@outlook.com)

 Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

# The Mount Wilson Observatory

(continued from page 1)

how we view our place in the cosmos. Here, for the first time, astronomer Harlow Shapley measured the size of the Milky Way Galaxy and found our location in it, far from the center.

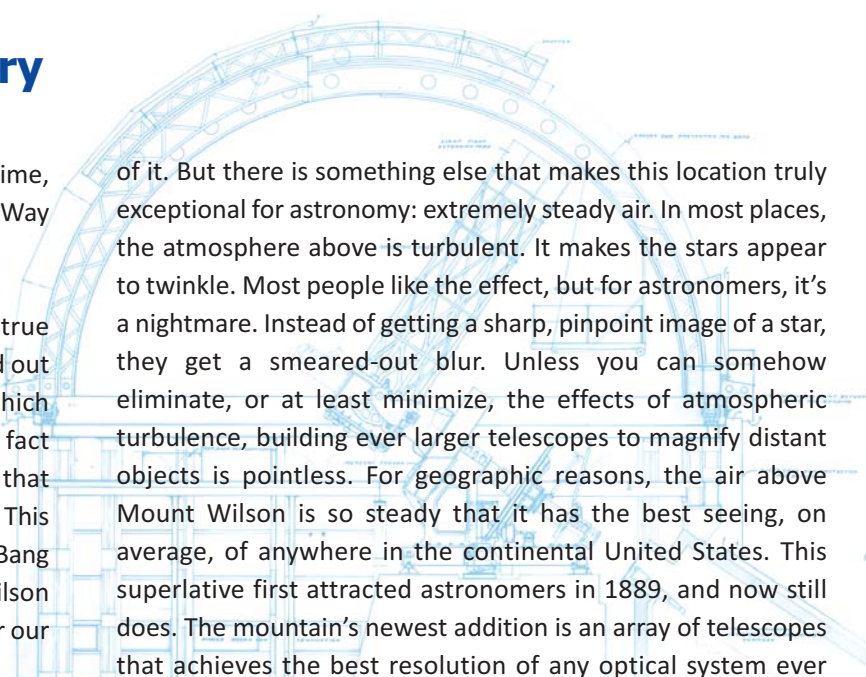
Then came Edwin Hubble's work, which revealed the true immensity of the Universe. As vast as the Milky Way turned out to be, he proved that the mysterious spiral clouds, which astronomers had speculated about for decades, were in fact distant galaxies similar to our own. And then he discovered that this universe was expanding. Space itself was getting bigger. This finding, when run backwards in time, led straight to the Big Bang Theory. This is where modern cosmology began. Mount Wilson holds a unique place in human history, in our long search for our origins.

So why is this famous observatory up on Mount Wilson? On this hard-to-reach mountain top, over a mile high? Originally it was reached by a narrow foot trail leading up from Sierra Madre, then by the unpaved Mount Wilson toll road from Altadena.

There are two reasons: The first is location, location, location. Earthbound astronomers are forced to observe the stars through a thick blanket of air. With altitude we get above some

of it. But there is something else that makes this location truly exceptional for astronomy: extremely steady air. In most places, the atmosphere above is turbulent. It makes the stars appear to twinkle. Most people like the effect, but for astronomers, it's a nightmare. Instead of getting a sharp, pinpoint image of a star, they get a smeared-out blur. Unless you can somehow eliminate, or at least minimize, the effects of atmospheric turbulence, building ever larger telescopes to magnify distant objects is pointless. For geographic reasons, the air above Mount Wilson is so steady that it has the best seeing, on average, of anywhere in the continental United States. This superlative first attracted astronomers in 1889, and now still does. The mountain's newest addition is an array of telescopes that achieves the best resolution of any optical system ever built. Better even than those in space.

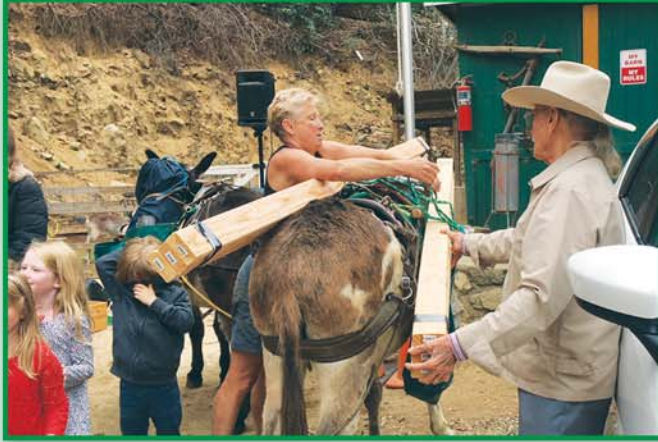
The second reason the observatory is on the mountain is George Ellery Hale. He was the force that made it happen. The story of Mount Wilson is his story too. His achievements were astounding. He built four telescopes in succession, each one the largest in the world. For 96 years—from 1897 to 1993—Hale's telescopes reigned supreme. Two of them are on Mount Wilson.



# Great Times

## Pack Station Visit in November

Photos by Leslie Ziff



Deb Burgess demonstrating how to pack a donkey



## Holiday Party

Photos by Michael Ellis



Our members provided a cookie feast



Dr. Bill White telling us about the pack trains of Sierra Madre



## Board Tour of the Archives

Librarian Jill Scholfield showing us the map cabinet



Photo by Maggie Ellis

## Thanks to All the Booth Volunteers

By Jean Coleman

Huge thanks to the members who staffed our recent event booths.

These public events really help us get the word out that Sierra Madre has a rich history and that we are endeavoring to collect as many photos, stories and oral histories as we can, as well as preserve Lizzie's and the Richardson House.

### Wistaria Festival Booth, March 18

Leslie and Barry Ziff, Brian Abernathy, Teresa Chaure, Christel Chang, Jan Wiles, Andy and Julie Bencosme, Norma Bachwansky, Louise Neiby, Jay Whitcraft, Judy Gold, Jean Coleman, Chris Leclerc, Marie and Neil Lavick.

### Art Fair, May 5

Leslie and Barry Ziff, Andrea Gayhart, Christel Chang, Teresa Chaure, Joe Tortomasi, Mary Lou Caldwell, Jean Coleman, Jay Whitcraft, Shannon King, Jennifer McClarin, Isaac Martinez, Richard Mays, Mike Manning, Louise Neiby.

### Art Fair, May 6

Christel Chang, Linda Saurenman, Jean Coleman, Louise Neiby, Mike Manning, Teresa Chaure, Richard Mays, Isaac Martinez, Leslie and Barry Ziff.



One of our wonderful volunteers, Frank Moore

Thanks to Maggie Ellis who channeled the replies to the eblasts. Also, credit goes to these folks who volunteered for shifts but got ill at the last minute and had to cancel: Marilyn McKernan, Terry Terrell, Sandra Dickey.

So next time the eblast or call goes out for volunteers, say Yes to volunteering. A shift is only a few hours and I know you'll have a whole lot of fun.

# A Day at our Art Fair Booth

Photos by Jean Coleman



Christel Chang



Shannon King and Frank Moore



Richard Mays and Mary Lou Caldwell



Jennifer McClarin and Isaac Martinez



Jean Coleman, Mike Manning and Jay Whitcraft



Teresa Chauré

## President's Message

I step back at times and marvel at how fast our time goes by! It is already spring and we are moving swiftly into the summer of 2018. It may seem that it has been a quiet few months – but the Board and Volunteers of the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society have been hard at work.

As you will see in an article about the Richardson House, we have started putting our planning for renovation into motion. We have met with the city to start finalizing the work for the back kitchen area and are also working with the Questers to furnish the rooms in period furniture to better understand how life was in those times.

I am told that we had a wonderful Holiday Party at the Hart Park House in December. I had just broken my ankle and was not at all mobile at that time! Thank you Dr. White for your great talk!

We have had volunteers at our booths for December's Winter Village, the Library Open House, the Wistaria Festival and the Art Fair. A heartfelt thanks to all of you who donated time to help with the set-up, tear-down and all the time in between! We have our booth at the Mt. Wilson Trail Race coming up – which is an exciting morning and always fun to see all the runners – young and old!

I have participated in two different projects with the Library. Archivist Debbie Henderson and I went to a workshop at the Huntington Library to learn how to salvage books and documents that have been damaged due to earthquake or rain damage. It was very interesting and hands-on! We gathered materials to bring back to our library as guides for this process.

The second project was due to a grant that our library was awarded to participate in a two-day workshop sponsored by the California State Library and directed by the Berkeley-based Story Center's staff. We were able to have ten people share and record their stories. Stories ranged from ones about historical figures in their families who have contributed to our city's history to personal experiences living in Southern California. Debbie Henderson, Jill Scholfield and I helped to facilitate the two-day workshop. We were also taught how to continue this type of recording so that we can add more stories to our own database at a later time. Pictures, videos and music enhanced the stories that were recorded at this workshop. They will be uploaded onto the California State Library's website in a few months for all to view. We will also receive a CD of all the Sierra Madre stories that were done at our workshop. This is an amazing experience and I hope that many more of you will join me in recording more stories in the coming years.

Because of the tremendous amount of work it takes to put on the Lizzie's Chicken and Ravioli Dinner in June we decided last year to make it an "every other year" event

alternating with the Cemetery Tour. So this year we will have our annual June Membership Meeting at the Hart Park House on Thursday, June 21. We have a great program planned; we have invited a speaker from the Mt. Wilson Observatory to talk about some of the Observatory's history and also what they are up to now! This coming October we will be doing the Historical Cemetery Walk. If you are interested in being one of our "ghosts" or just helping out in general please let me know. We will be selecting our tour guides and ghosts in the next few months.

Also please note that we have a Whiskey Tasting at Lizzie's on Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup>. This will be a fundraiser for the Richardson House renovation. More to come on that!

Thank you all for all your support whether it is by volunteering, attending our events, visiting our museums, purchasing our maps and books, or donating to the museums. It truly takes a village to help and that is what is so great about our little town – we all pitch in to help each other!

Leslie Ziff

## 2017-2018 Board of Directors

### OFFICERS

President	Leslie Ziff
Vice President	Maggie Ellis
Secretary	Pat Karamitros
Treasurer	Richard Mays

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Education	Leslie Ziff
Facebook	Jan Wiles
Membership	Maggie Ellis
Museums Curators	Mike Manning Jay Whitcraft
Newsletter	Maggie Ellis
Oral History	Louise Neiby
Ways & Means	Christel Chang
Website	Maggie Ellis

### DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Teresa Chaure
Joan Spears
Jan Wiles
Jean Coleman

### NON-BOARD MEMBERS

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

It was **illegal** back when  
G-Men raided Lizzie's Trail Inn



Photo: Library of Congress

**But it's legal now!**

## WHISKEY TASTING



Saturday evening, July 14  
\$40

Music of the British Isles

## Lizzie's Needs a Face Lift!

By Leslie Ziff

Photos by Leslie Ziff



If you have been up on a Saturday morning to visit, or even hiked on by, you know that the paint is peeling and some of

Yes, it is time to paint the outside of Lizzie's Trail Inn. We have gotten our bids and are about to embark on this project. The city owns the property and the buildings, but it is the responsibility of the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society to maintain the buildings, along with caring for the items inside and supplying docents to give tours.

the wood needs to be repaired. So – if you are looking for a good charity – 501(c)3 to donate some of your money to – we may just be the one! It seems like everything always comes at the same time. We would really appreciate your contributions and support! With the renovation of the Richardson House and now the painting of Lizzie's there is never a dull moment!





Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society  
 P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202  
 (626) 836-6709  
 www.smhps.org

**Save The Date**  
 Sierra Madre Historic Preservation Society  
 Presents

**MT. WILSON**  
 Then  
 and Now

*Photo: Huntington Library/Carnegie Observatories*

*Photo: Elias Webber*

**Astronomer and Mt. Wilson Historian**  
**Tim Thompson**

**Thursday, June 21**  
 7:00 p.m.

**Hart Park House**  
 in Memorial Park **\$5**

**SIERRA MADRE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY**  
 P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202  
**Membership / Donation Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Level**

- \_\_\_ \$20 Individual
- \_\_\_ \$25 Family
- \_\_\_ \$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 \_\_\_\_\_