

ARTI-FACTS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

April 2007

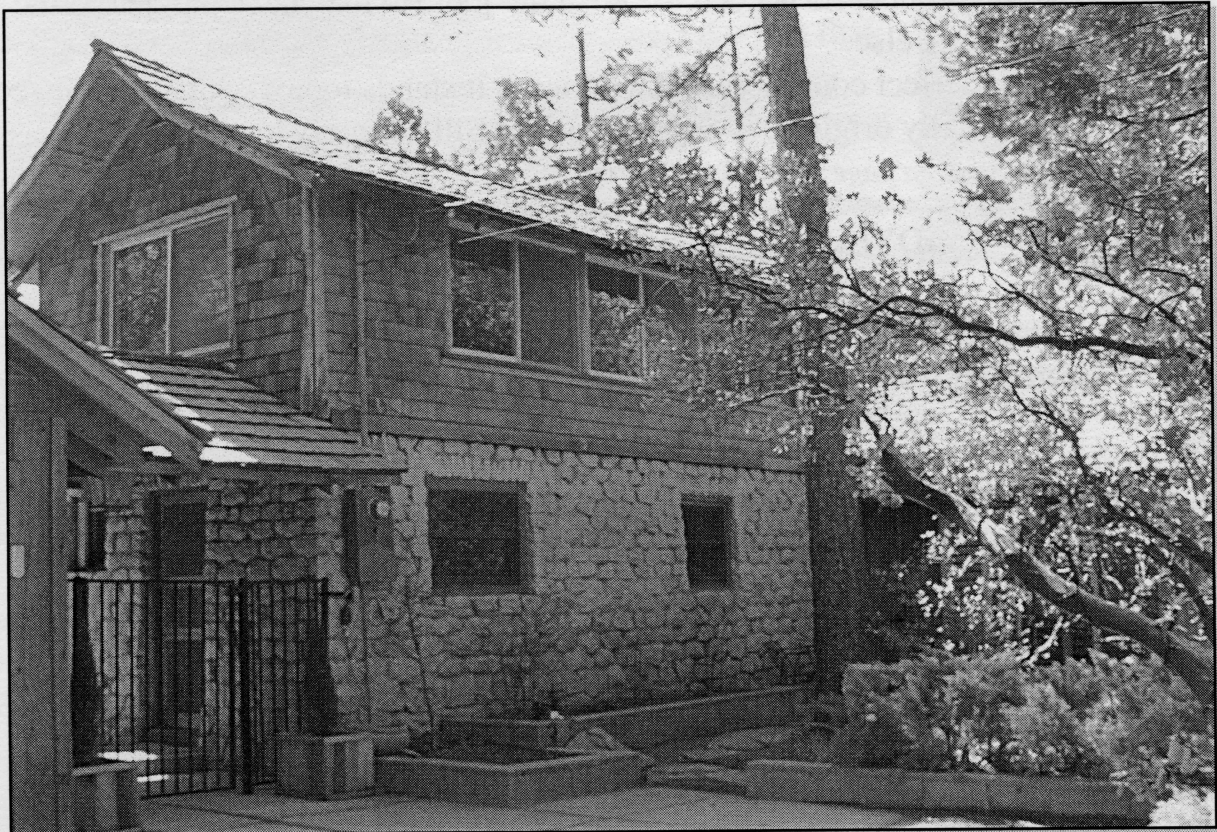
Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Neighboring Communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

THE HOUSE BUILT FROM ONE ROCK

By Ben Killingsworth

Long before anyone thought of sponsoring a 'home tour' in these parts, there was a home up here that people came from far and wide to explore.

Built by Bill Rogers and his wife, Hazel, who designed it, along with daughters Madaleine Rogers, who served as decorator, and Katharine Rogers, whose title was, "suggester," the home was completed on July 4, 1933, and still stands today, the granite block walls as sturdy as ever.



Photos by Ben Killingsworth

It all started when Bill, a Los Angeles newspaper man, lost his job during the Great Depression. The family had been coming to Idyllwild during the late 1920's, and, at Hazel's suggestion, they decided to move the family to the mountains.

In all probability, there were very few homes on what is now Double View Drive, but they found a lot they liked, (*Cont. on page 2*) See **ROCK HOUSE**

ROCK HOUSE (Continued from page 1)

even though it was covered with large granite boulders, and decided to build a home on it. They also decided to build it themselves. What transpired from that point on is somewhat incredible, especially by today's standards.

Hazel's design called for the home to be constructed of solid block walls, so what else was Bill to do but select one large boulder on the property and blow it apart with dynamite, thereby providing the raw material for the block walls. It's unclear whether Bill fashioned the blocks himself, or had it done elsewhere, but the important fact is that they all came from one huge boulder found on the property, which no doubt is why the home became known as, "The House Built From One Rock."

But the rock only provided material for the walls. What about the wood needed to complete the house? Well, the property was not only covered with boulders, but cedar trees, as well. So Bill, who was in the Army Corp of Engineers during WWI, cut down some of the trees, bought a large mechanically powered saw, hooked it up with a belt to the rear axle of his car, and proceeded to make all the lumber he needed to finish the job. He may have purchased the shingles, but little else.

And if the perfect condition of the home as it stands today, which is believed to be almost totally original, is any indication, Bill certainly knew what he was doing. (Continued on page 3) See **ROCK HOUSE**

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Newsletter: Ben Killingsworth, Adele Smith

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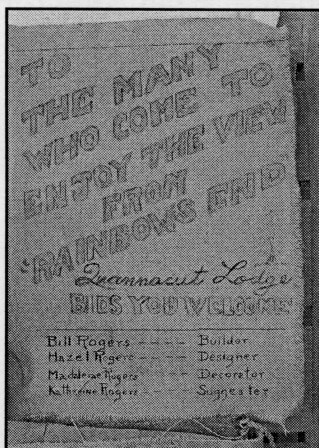
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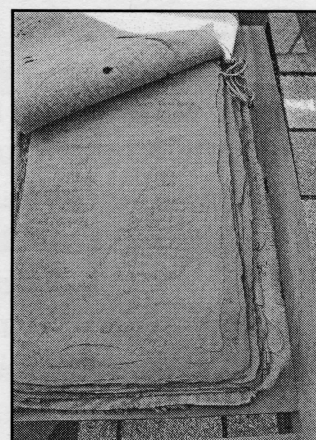
ROCK HOUSE (Continued from page 2)

Probably owing to Bill's previous life as a newspaper man, not long after construction was complete, Ripley's 'Believe it or Not' got wind of the unique structure, and featured it in an article in the LA Times. As a result, a series of organized tours came up the Hill, allowing the curious to view it for themselves. We're told that in those days Ripley's was only published in newspapers, but their readership must have been substantial and the articles convincing, to say the least.

The Rogers family were understandably very proud of their accomplishment and were thrilled by the attention they received. Their daughters, Madaline and Katharine, who were teenagers at the time, went to great lengths to keep records of the people who came to visit their home. They fashioned two large homemade



binders with cloth covers and pages which appear to have been made from paper used for grocery bags. They are in remarkably good condition today, especially considering that the new owner found them lying on the living room coffee table. Contrast that with the fact that our museum workers would never dream of handling them without wearing special gloves!



Most remarkably, however, is that, according to a 1934 log entry, an astounding 1,452 people had visited the cabin as of that date. From what we could learn, the visitors continued coming, up to and during WWII, although most came during the 1930's. There's no telling how high the total number reached before the Rogers family said, "Enough, already!"

The present owner, Jack Cromer, bought the home in August, 2006, from Peter Woodruff and his wife, Retha Ott, (Continued on page 5) See **ROCK HOUSE**



COFFEE MUGS

We've just been told that a new shipment of our ever popular coffee mugs has just arrived, and are available for purchase in our Museum Gift Shop. They make great gifts, by the way. So hurry while supplies last!

Membership Update

Five new members joined the Historical Society between January 9, 2007 and March 6, 2007

Sponsor

Karen and Thomas Higgins, Idyllwild, CA

Contributing

Leigh Humphrey, Idyllwild, CA

Family

Brent and Jean Dunn, Long Beach, CA

MUSEUM ANNEX PROJECT GATHERS MOMENTUM

By Bob Smith

Readers of this newsletter know that IAHS is planning to build a museum annex for our growing collection of historical artifacts and documents. To get a running start on fund-raising for the \$125,000 project, we decided to apply this winter for a substantial grant.

The California Cultural and Historical Endowment is an agency that specializes in funding construction projects. We had applied there in 2006 for a small planning grant, and although we were unsuccessful, our project was rated highly enough to reach the final round of competition. That encouraged us to try again for the full project.

Easier said than done. The application package came to 99 pages, counting a multitude of essential definitions and regulations, forms and examples, not to mention a constantly ballooning Web page with answers to questions we hadn't thought to ask.

Our experienced grants manager, Shirl Reid, took charge of the process once again. I translated thoughts and dreams into words on paper, and President Marcia Donnell shared her editing skills and experience in historical preservation.

The professional curator on our Board, Lynn Voorheis, contributed invaluable advice. IAHS member Chuck Clayton and architect Jim Marsh provided essential technical data. Our consultant from an earlier federal grant project, Janet Ruggles, helped formulate specifications.

Six weeks and over 300 volunteer hours later, Shirl put our 5-lb, 14-oz application for \$73,500 into the mail. Submitting a grant proposal 9 days before a deadline is unheard of. She deserves a vacation.

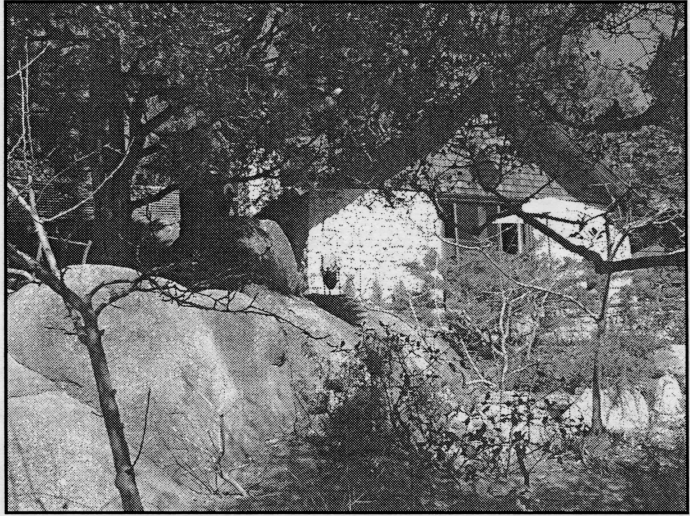
Why put ourselves through such an ordeal? If we get the grant, we will avoid a laborious private fund-raising campaign, and construction can begin by year's end. But even if we fail, the process has been worthwhile.

It forced us to come up with convincing answers to fundamental questions: What is the essential Idyllwild story we're trying to tell here? Do we have coherent plans to do so? Who is our audience? How can a building further those plans? Once built, can we afford to maintain it? Precisely what will it cost to build? How much of our own reserve funds dare we commit?

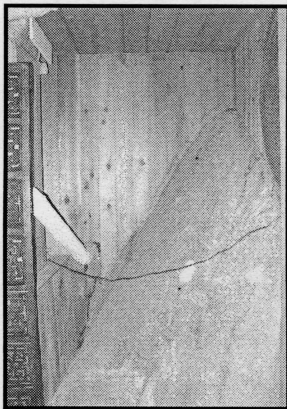
Win or lose, we've come away with a much clearer idea of how to go about preserving and sharing the history of the Idyllwild area.

ROCK HOUSE *(Continued from page 3)*

who bought it in 1989 from Susie Hoffman who was, at that time, owner of Hilltop Realty. Beyond that, the names and order of previous owners of the home are less clear. Betty Walker is said to have been an owner, and the person who is said to have purchased it from Bill and Harriet was a ham operator who erected tall radio antennas which were anchored to some of the boulders.



There are still a number of



large boulders on the property, one of which extends through an outside wall into the building, leading one to wonder whether Bill might have run out of dynamite at some point, or maybe that's just the way Hazel designed it.

In addition to "The House Built From One Rock," the home has also been known as The Rock House, and Quannacut Lodge, the latter printed on a sign attached above the garage door. Cromer says he is trying to think of even another name, partly because he's not sure what Quannacut means. Probably of Indian origin, it is a place in New York State, not far from Long Island, and right near Weekapaug and

Wawaloam, if you're familiar with the area. It's also the name given to a number of Girl Scout and YMCA camps, as well as several chemical dependency treatment centers and hospitals. Knowing that, who wouldn't want to change the name?

DOCENTS APPRECIATION LUNCHEON A GREAT SUCCESS

By Ben Killingsworth

It's not every day that museum docents and other Historical Society volunteers are treated to a wonderful lunch prepared by fellow volunteers Larry and Linda Turner. So it was indeed a special treat to meet at Silver Pines Lodge on March 21st to take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the company of our fellow volunteers, listen to words of gratitude and encouragement from our leader, Board President Marcia Donnell, and a fine presentation by Nancy Wenzel, *(Continued on page 6)*



Board President
Marcia Donnell

Photo by
Ben Killingsworth

DOCENTS APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

Continued from page 5)

Interpretive Service Supervisor, Riverside County Parks Department. Nancy's topic was "How to keep your docents happy," based on her own eleven years of experience as supervisor of the docents who conducted tours of the Mission Inn Museum in Riverside. She had to come up with 72 docents a week, she said.



Mary Austin
Photo by
Carolyn Levitski

Mary Austin, (left) who's in charge of rounding up and scheduling our docents thanked her lucky stars. Just getting up to six a

week during our busy season is challenge enough, which could

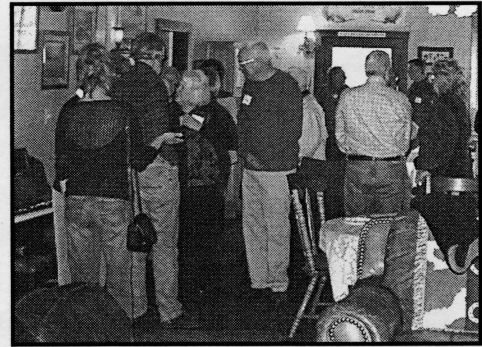
be made a lot easier if more Historical Society members volunteered to be docents by calling her at 659-2250.

Marcia appeared to be paying close attention to Nancy's suggestions on how to keep us all happy.

One of the unexpected highlights of the day was the unveiling and singing of a very special song written by volunteer Mary Carroll.



In the foreground, Board Treasurer and all-around hard worker, Bob Smith, enjoys lunch with volunteers Adele Smith and Dan and Sharla Carpenter
Photo by Ben Killingsworth



Docents and other volunteers exchange pleasantries before lunch.

Photo by Ben Killingsworth

IDYLLWILD

If you're fond of pine trees and clean fresh air,
Quaint little village shops here and there;
You're sure to fall in love with Idyllwild.

If you like the taste of a warm beef stew,
Served by a window with a forest view;
You're sure to fall in love with Idyllwild.

Winding trails that seem to beckon you,
Miles of green beneath the skies of blue;

Friends shakin' hands sayin' "How do you do?"
They're really sayin' "I love you."

If you spend an evening, you'll want to stay
Walk through the galleries and spend the day;
You're sure to fall in love with Idyllwild

Sung to the tune of 'Old Cape Cod' (Written by Rothrock, Yakus and Jeffrey), everyone joined in with enthusiasm, led by Mary at the piano. There were even some tears of emotion as the sound of Mary's words brought forth strong feelings of pride and love for our community.

All in all, it was a wonderful event, complete with good food, good company, great surroundings, and good advice from our speaker and our President. I think most would agree that we truly do feel appreciated.

TENDING THE STORE

Watching over and sharing our beloved museum

Susan Righetti (*pictured at right*) and her husband Bob have lived in Idyllwild for 33 years, and have been members of the Historical Society since 2002. Susan has been volunteering as a docent for about two years and, she says, even though her busy life often makes it sometimes difficult to fit it into her schedule, she enjoys it very much.

Those sentiments probably apply to most of us who volunteer, but making the effort is well worth it. Just knowing that we are serving our community by helping to make our visitors aware of our rich history is reward enough to most of us.

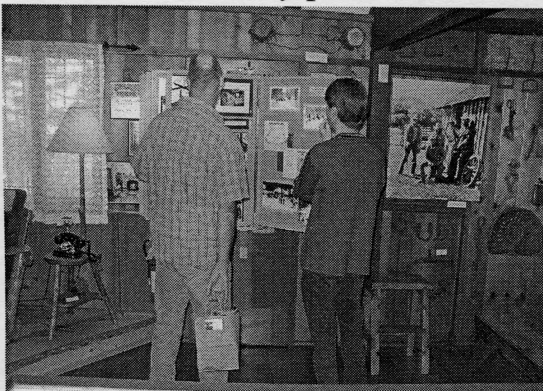


On the day we visited Susan, a Sunday, she entertained fifty-one visitors, every one of them expressing their appreciation for the museum in general and for Susan being there to answer their questions. As



most docents would agree, a day at the museum is often punctuated by periods of relative quiet, followed by periods of near overcrowding. Either way, it's fun just

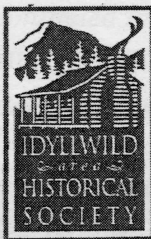
Susan explains some of the history surrounding the 1917 efforts of Claudius Emerson to make Idyllwild Southern California's premier vacation spot



being in the museum. If you would like to join the team, which, by the way, is called the 'Cabin Club,' give Mary Austin a call. She's our hard working volunteer in charge of recruiting and scheduling docents, and can be reached at 659 - 2250. You'll be glad you did.

(All photos on this page by Ben Killingsworth)

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Note: The 2007 Home Tour will be on Saturday, September 15th
Be sure to mark your calendar

IF NOT ALREADY A MEMBER, BECOME ONE TODAY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name(s) _____ Address _____

Please select one of the following categories:

- Individual \$15 Family \$25 Contributing \$35 Business/Organization \$35
- Sponsor \$100 Benefactor \$250 Patron \$500 Corporate \$750
- Founder's Circle \$1,000 (one-time or cumulative) (Lifetime, with name on museum plaque)

If this membership is a gift, please list donor's name and address:

Name(s) _____ Address _____

Please make your check payable to IAHS and mail with this application to: P.O. Box 3320, Idyllwild, CA 92549.

Telephone: (951) 659 2717

Website: www.Idyllwildareahistoricalsociety.org

Be sure to visit our wonderful museum, located at 54470 North Circle Drive

Our doors are open:

May 31- September 3: Thursday through Sunday
September 4 - May 25: Saturday and Sunday
All 3 day Holiday weekends and July 4th
Hours: 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Admission
is free

Donations are
welcome