

# ARTI-FACTS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and the surrounding communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

Fall 2008

## THAR WAS GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS - OR WAS THERE?

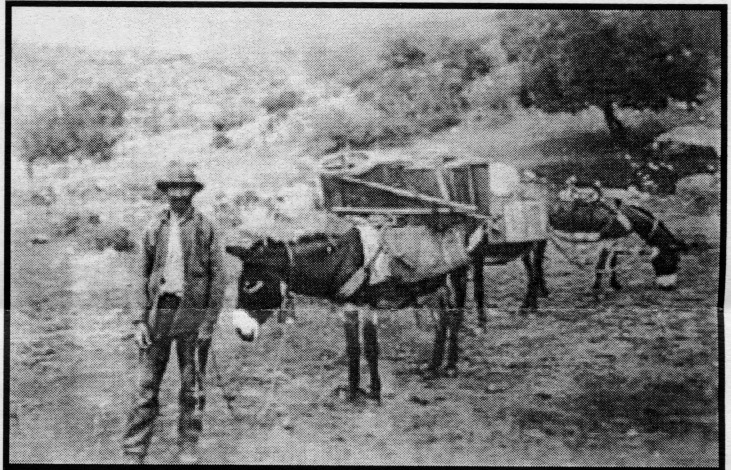
By Ben Killingsworth

Everyone knows about the 1849 California gold rush. It brought tens of thousands of excited people out west, intent on making their fortunes the easy way— by picking up big nuggets of gold scattered here and there, just waiting to be turned into cold, hard cash. Some did make their fortunes, but many others did not.

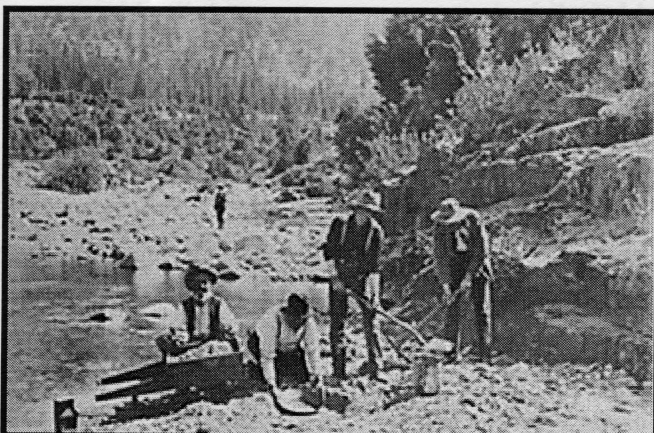
In any case, after the main event in Northern California, in what we now refer to as “The Gold Country,” was about over, many of the more determined miners began to look elsewhere, including right here in our own San Jacinto Mountains. The exact time they appeared is unknown, but the best guess is around 1860, based in part on an article written by a San Bernardino-based reporter that appeared in the Los Angeles Star on August 4, 1860, which said, in part, “Rich diggings have been discovered in the San Jacinto mountains, twenty-five miles east of this place.”

Although one would think that any miner with an ounce of good sense would be the last one to tell anyone, least of all a newspaper reporter, about any rich diggings he had found, still another article appeared in the Los Angeles Star on July 6, 1870, about the discovery of an old abandoned gold mine, which said, in part, “The party at once proceeded to clear away rubbish and soon obtained quite a lot of ore, which is rich enough to satisfy the heart of the most rapacious miner—assaying from \$600 to \$1000 per ton.”

Information like this was sure to attract a great deal of attention, to say the least, because an assay of only \$100 per ton was considered very promising. But one thing to keep in mind is something that most miners were probably unaware of at the time: a few unscrupulous miners took advantage of others by making their mine appear much more valuable than it really was. The method was called “salting” the mine, and it was often very successful, as we shall see. What they did was very simple; they loaded a few shotgun shells with gold dust and fired them into the walls of their mine, giving the rocks lining the walls a decidedly attractive appearance, especially to someone with not a lot of experience but very eager to make their fortune. And while there is no conclusive evidence that any of the mines referred to in the rest of this



*Searching for gold was no easy task for man nor beast  
Photo Courtesy of historichwy49.com*



*“Rich diggings” were where they found them  
Photo Courtesy of historichwy49.com*

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(Continued on page 3) **See Gold**

# THE COMPANY WE KEEP

## NEW MEMBERS

### Sponsor

Dorothy & William Koepcke Palos Verdes Estates

### Business/Organization

Acorn Pest Control (Jeff Litten) Idyllwild

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Scott Solomon & Melinda Gardner Calabasas

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## Renewing Members Continued)

### Family

Annette & Bill Cooper Idyllwild

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Ellis & Shirley Greenwall Rancho Mirage

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Bob Blankman Idyllwild

Jim Carlson Idyllwild

Diann Coate Idyllwild

Donna Curran Morongo Valley

Barbara Czescik Del Mar

Marcia Donnell Idyllwild

Francoise Frigola Idyllwild

Patricia Hair San Jacinto

Barbara Jones Idyllwild

Bronwyn Jones Idyllwild

Kimberley Maywald Idyllwild

Joan McCullough Idyllwild

Patricia Norrell Idyllwild

Paula Panich Los Angeles

Alma McGaugh Peters Mountain

Center

Percy Schultz Palm Springs

Trish Tuley Idyllwild

Bill Waring Palm Desert

**THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL  
YOU TRULY MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

## Gold *(Continued from page 1)*

story were “salted” in this manner, there is a distinct possibility that they were.

From time to time over the next twenty-plus years more newspaper articles appeared, most of them containing glowing reports about recently discovered gold mines, most of which were abandoned not long after the story was written. But not so in Garner Valley.

One of the main reasons Garner Valley seemed to promise such a golden future was the Hemet Belle mine, which was started in about 1887 by Richard Chilson and his son Eames Chilson. The operation was believed to be so successful that a May 25, 1893, article in the San Jacinto Register said, referring to Eames, who had by now taken over the mining operation from his father, “When he went to San Jacinto he lit his cigars with \$10 bills.”

The fact that the Hemet Belle was apparently doing so well was one reason other miners were attracted to the area, including one Lewis Hansen. He and his two partners, Ira Harmon and William Vaughn, appeared on the scene in 1895, and the trio promptly filed a claim on a mine they named Little Lily, which just happened to be close to the Hemet Belle mine. Then a year later Hansen bought out Harmon and Vaughn, and became sole owner of the gold mine.

Hansen let it be known that Little Lily was worth \$100 a ton, while at the same time filing several new claims in the area, for which he paid very little.

And now begins a most interesting story.

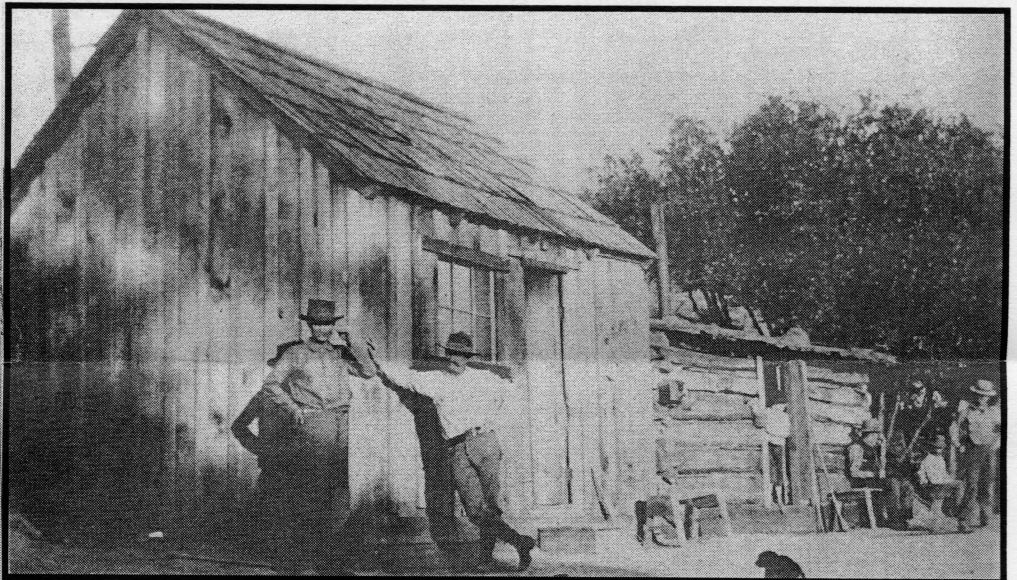
On December 10, 1896, Hansen sold all of his claims, including Little Lily, to the newly formed Corona Mining and Milling Company for the incredible sum of \$120,000. Figuring an average annual inflation rate of 4% over 112 years, in today’s world that sum would amount to about \$9 million.

What made it possible for Hansen to sell his mining interests for such a high figure was the involvement of one Harold Kenworthy, a very wealthy Englishman who, for reasons known only to himself,

decided to plunge headfirst into the gold mining business. He became the major shareholder in the mining company, but he also had four partners; George Coffin, Edwin Stearns, Robert Furlong, and now, as it turned out, Lewis Hansen. In fact, Hansen was named general manager of the company, which operated out of a mining camp called Kenworthy after the man with the most money invested, and, of course, the most money to lose.

As general manager Hansen apparently had free reign and began spending more and more of Kenworthy’s money, including \$45,000 for new equipment and pay for the 22 new workers Hansen hired.

It wasn’t long afterward that Coffin and Stearns decided it was all too rich for their blood and sold



*Eames Chilson, second from left, owner of the Hemet Belle Mine, is shown leaning against his cabin in 1887. Photo taken from the book, *The San Jacintos*.  
Photo by Lela Lockwood Noble*

their shares to Hansen for \$20,000, who in turn sold half of the shares to Kenworthy for \$10,000. By this time Kenworthy had spent in the neighborhood of \$80,000, and although he didn’t know it, was just getting started.

Meanwhile, Hansen concentrated on completing what was no longer a mere mining camp, but was now considered the town of Kenworthy. It included a 2-story hotel with a capacity of more than 60 guests, cabins for the workers, a general store, an assay office, a sawmill, and 10,000 feet of 2 inch pipe used to carry water to the town. In 1897 a post office was added, and in 1899 the Kenworthy School was established.

*Continued on page 5*    **See Gold**

## ICE CREAM, ANYONE?



On a rainy September afternoon our annual ice cream social went off as planned. A visiting family waits eagerly for their treat as Larry Turner, at right, and Nancy Fletcher, hidden, take orders.



Shown relaxing after the ice cream ran out are, L to R, Sue Miller, Linda Turner, Geraldine Sperling, and Richard Levitski. Mary Carroll, in background, rummages for more music at her keyboard while Richard regales the ladies.  
Both of the above photos are by Adele Smith

## A LETTER AND QUESTION FROM AN ENTHUSIASTIC FIRST TIME VISITOR

Dear Idyllwild Historical Society,

When my husband and I visited Idyllwild for the first time I met Adele Smith at the Bread Basket. We had so enjoyed visiting your delightful town that she sent me literature on the museum. I wanted to thank her for taking the time to send me the information.

Also there are a group of us ladies (around 10) who do something special once a month. When I mentioned Idyllwild, they all have been and love it there.

Then I showed them the literature for the museum and they all wanted to see it. We wanted to come in September, but you are only open on the weekends.

We are retired so do our outings during the week. Here's my question; do you ever open for a group during the week? If you do, how large does the group have to be?"

Sincerely,  
Gretchen Williams  
Moreno Valley

And the answer is—

We're delighted to open the museum for special tours any day of the week, and we're arranging for this group to visit in the near future. There are no established limits other than common sense considering the size of our museum. If you or anyone you know is interested please call (951) 659 8725

## THANK YOU, LINDA AND LARRY

A very special thanks to the Hospitality Committee, Linda and Larry Turner, for doing such a great job of providing food and beverages for the Docents Appreciation Lunch, the Annual Meeting, the Ice Cream Social, and the Home Tour.

## IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Officers

Vice President: Carolyn Levitski  
Secretary: Adele Voell  
Treasurer: Bob Smith  
Past President: Marcia Donnell

**Assistant Curator:** Shirl Reid

**Office Manager:** Sue Miller

**Media Consultants:** John Drake  
& Rebecca Frazier

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Corrinne Brown  
Scott Fisher  
Nancy Fletcher  
George Groty  
Joe Hart  
Killingsworth

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Harry Bubb  
Craig Coopersmith  
Kent Steele  
Kay Cenicerros  
Walter Parks  
Lynn Voorheis  
Janice Lyle

## GOLD (Continued from page 3)

The school had eight students and an annual budget of \$400, which included the teacher's salary.

While all this was going on Kenworthy kept buying more and more mines, most of which turned out to be worthless. He also put up \$34,000 for an option to buy the 8,000 acre Thomas (later called Garner) Ranch.

The general store was owned by one of the more prominent citizens of Kenworthy, Charles W. Lockwood, whose parents, Thomas and Lorinda Lockwood, owned the Lockwood Hotel in San Jacinto and gave Charles the money to build his general store.

Meanwhile, all of the newspapers continued publishing glowing accounts of the supposed success stories of the dozens of mines still in operation, which is probably why Lorinda Lockwood, now a widow, decided to dive headfirst into the gold mining business. She bought several mines in and around Garner Valley, along with a share in the Corona Mining and Milling Company. The latter purchase came just in time to see the company begin to falter due to the lack of gold produced by its mines, and it wasn't long before the cost of operating the mines exceeded the income.

But before this became evident to everyone else, Lewis Hansen quietly sold his share of the company to the unsuspecting Lorinda Lockwood. And at the same time Robert Furlong, the lone remaining original partner besides Kenworthy, sold the balance of his interests in the company to an equally unsuspecting Kenworthy. As a result of these two transactions the sole owners of the Corona Mining and Milling were Lockwood and Kenworthy.

After a short time the fortunes of the Corona Mining and Milling Company went from bad to worse, and finally, for all intents and purposes, worthless.

The biggest loser, of course, was Harold Kenworthy who wound up selling all of his holdings, in-

cluding all of the aforementioned buildings and improvements to a J. R. Newberry for an unbelievable ten dollars. He then sold his option to buy the Thomases' Ranch, for which he paid \$34,000, back to the Thomases for five dollars.

In the end it turned out that of all the people involved in the ownership and operation of the Corona Mining and Milling Company the only one who profited was Lewis Hansen. Hansen stuck around for a few years after the company's demise, filing a few claims here and there, and perhaps hoping another Kenworthy would come along, but as far as we know he never found another sucker, especially one so willing to be taken.

The town of Kenworthy lingered on for several years, serving as a home for several prominent families, and the school continued operating for another ten years. But today nothing remains of the once proud Kenworthy, although there is a ranger station by

that name about a mile from where the town once stood.

In spite of all this, gold mining continued in Garner Valley for many more years. The most prominent mine was the Hemet Belle, the same one started by the Chilsons in 1887. By this time, however, the newspapers were singing a different tune. The Hemet News, for example, ran an article on January 16, 1914, saying, "There are a number of gold mines in the mountains, but very few have ore which will justify development." But old

dreams die hard sometimes, as witnessed by reports that one D.C. Wayne tried working the Hemet Belle during the 1960's.

And who knows? There may still be gold in them thar hills, enough to make someone rich beyond their dreams, but don't bet on it. Just ask Kenworthy.

*The information used as a basis for this story was found in the wonderful book, The San Jacintos, by John Robinson and Bruce Risher. The book is on sale at the Museum and in several Idyllwild shops.*



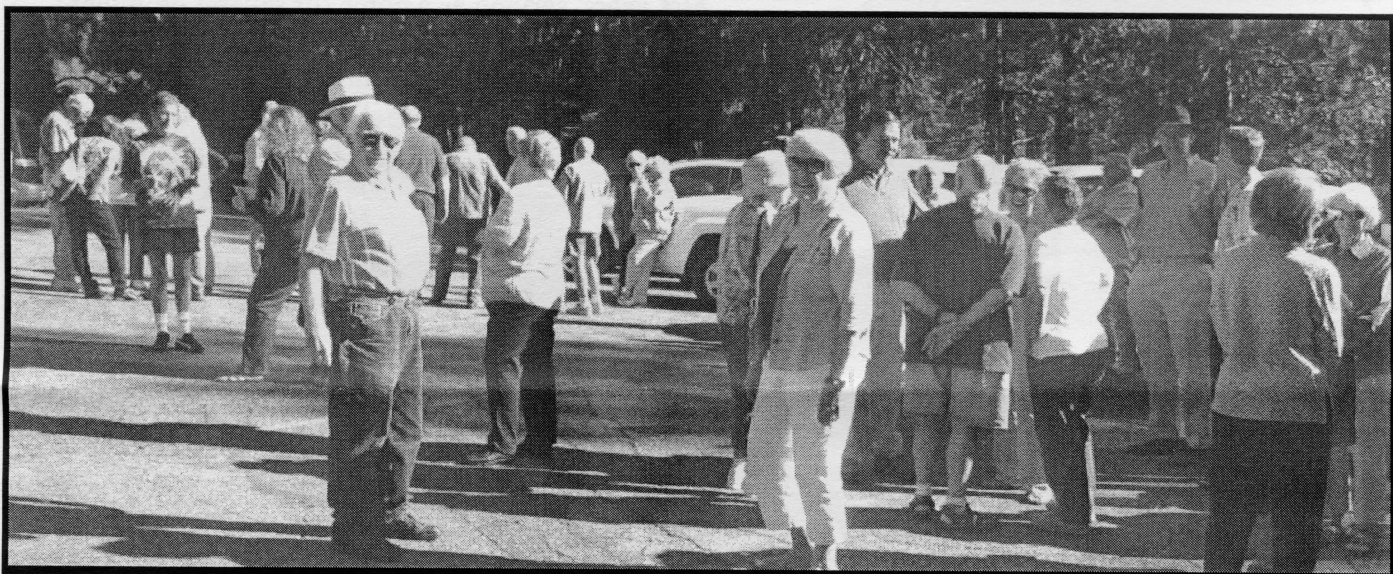
*The Kenworthy Schoolhouse, built in 1899, served the area until the early 1920's, standing longer than any other Kenworthy building. Photo found in the book, The San Jacintos . Photo by Nell Emerson Ziegler*

## 2008 HOME TOUR A SMASHING SUCCESS

Following months of hard work, mostly by Co-chairs Corrine Brown and Nanci Killingsworth, the 2008 Idyllwild Home Tour went off without a hitch. For the first time the tour featured six homes instead of the usual five, which made rounding up the necessary number of volunteers a little more challenging, but thanks to the 45 volunteers who stepped forward that too was a great success and very much appreciated.

The bottom line, however, was the outstanding measure of financial success this year's tour produced. The Annual Home Tour is the society's principle fundraiser and this year it grossed \$9,435, a healthy increase of 13.6 percent, or \$1130 over last year's take. Ticket sales of 366 topped last year's gate of 321 and the 296 who attended the 2006 tour. In addition, booklet advertising receipts were \$2,115 compared to last year's \$1,885. Expenses were down, too, Treasurer Bob Smith said.

But neither Corrine or Nanci are resting on their laurels, nor should the rest of us. There are interesting homes to be found, owners to be interviewed, photos to be taken, ads to be sold, advance tickets to be sold, publicity to be generated, ticket books to be written and printed, volunteers to be enticed, and lots and lots of worry to contend with. "You just never know," they keep saying, but it'll be great next year, too.



*In the foreground, Earl and Peggy Parker mug for the camera after receiving their Home Tour assignments while they and the other 43 volunteers get ready to participate in a private tour of the six homes they will help to display. Don't they look like a happy bunch?*

*Photo by Carolyn Levitski*

### IT WAS PARTY TIME IN PINWOOD

*OK, they called it a summer retreat*



*Bob and Adele Smith's Pinewood cabin was the site of our board of directors' summer retreat recently. They reviewed the past year's activities and discussed 2008-2009 priorities.*

*Left to right: Carolyn Levitski, President Marcia Donnell, Corrine Brown, Nanci Killingsworth, Joe Hart, and Bob Smith.*

*Photo by Adele Smith*

# ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

This year's August 8th annual meeting marked one of Marcia Donnell's last official acts as she completed her two year stint as IAHS president. It also marked one of new IAHS board member George Groty's first official acts as he begins his first term. And it was the first time many of us met our newest Advisory Committee member, Janice Lyle.

Treasurer Bob Smith told those in attendance that the society now owns the Museum building and property outright and that we had, at that time, \$79,000 in the bank.

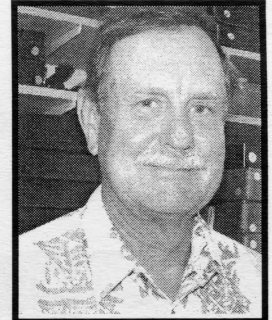
Marcia thanked Nanci Killingsworth and Corrine Brown, Co-chairs of the then upcoming Home Tour for their hard work. Both Corrine and Nanci commented on their progress and urged members to volunteer as docents. Marcia also thanked the nominating committee consisting of Shirl Reid, Adele Smith and Nanci Killingsworth.

Shirl Reid brought us up to date regarding recent acquisitions. She said we are experiencing a steady increase in our collections, which are sometimes dropped off on our doorsteps. Shirl said archiving all of these items is a time consuming job, but that we are making steady progress.

*All photos on this page are by Carolyn Levitski, except the one on the right which was taken by Ben Killingsworth.*



*Marcia Donnell accepts flowers and our gratitude for serving as president for the past two years.*



*George Groty, our newest board member.*



*Janice Lyle, right, our newest advisory committee member, chats with Dan and Sharla Carpenter while Nancy Fletcher looks on.*



Featured speaker Margaret Jaenke presented an interesting slide show and talk about the history of Anza Valley and her new book, *Around Anza Valley*. Much of her talk, as does her book, centered on the early families who settled in the area.

## DOCENT LUNCHEON

IAHS docents were treated to a gourmet luncheon served around picnic tables in Linda and Larry Turner's back yard. As usual they did all the cooking, serving and cleaning up. There were no speeches, or any other formalities—just great food and wonderful company. Docents rock, don't you think?



*Hungry docents gather round, sipping wine and telling tall tales*



*Photos by John Drake*

**Be sure to visit our wonderful museum!**

**54470 North Circle Drive**

**FALL/WINTER DAYS & HOURS**

**Saturday and Sunday plus Christmas week**

**11 am - 4 pm**

**For special tours and other business, call 951.659-2717**

**Our e-mail address is: [Info@Idyllwildhistory.org](mailto:Info@Idyllwildhistory.org)**

**Visit our new website at: [www.Idyllwildhistory.org](http://www.Idyllwildhistory.org)**

**Admission is free**

**Donations are welcome**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email 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)

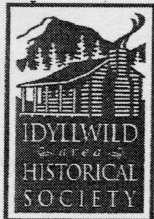
**If this membership is a gift, please list donor's name and address:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make your check payable to IAHS and mail with this application to  
PO Box 3320, Idyllwild, CA 92549**

**All dues and contributions are tax deductible.**

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*Lauren  
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*Vanessa Brianna*

**A Date to Remember**

**November 29, 2008— Drawing for carved bear on second day of Harvest Festival at Town Hall—Be sure to buy your drawing tickets at the Museum. You can also buy them on the first day of the Harvest Festival and on the second day before the drawing.**

**They are \$1.00 each or \$6.00 for five drawing tickets**