

# 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

Spring 2008

## COWBOYS AND INDIANS

By Ben Killingsworth

We all need reminding once in awhile that our beloved mountain paradise once belonged to the Cahuilla Indians, who undoubtedly loved it as much then as we do today. They led a comparatively simple life, and for several thousand years were left alone to enjoy the freedom to live in complete harmony with nature. We can only imagine what it must have been like to live in these mountains before the hustle and bustle of "civilization" took over. Imagine the beauty of just plain old peace and quiet, of walking through the woods when the only sound was your moccasins crushing a few pine needles.

But, as we know, all that changed when first the Spanish, then the settlers decided to move west, and in so doing tried to either kill or conquer every Indian who stood in their path. In a sense it was fortunate that when the westward onslaught finally reached the San Jacinto Mountains, the white man's takeover was accomplished more or less peacefully, owing to the fact that the Cahuillas were not particularly warlike.

In addition to what we learned in school about this chapter of American history, there have been dozens of novels and almost as many movies on the subject. Most of what we were told described the Indians as brutal savages and the white settlers as the good guys who were only trying to take what was rightfully theirs.



Father Junipero Serra oversaw much of the missionization of California

Most of us didn't find out until much later in life, if we ever did, that what was really happening was an unprecedented land grab and an ethnic cleansing of biblical proportions. Some historians have even referred to it as genocide. We may have also learned that the once proud Indians, at least those not killed in battle, or who didn't die of smallpox, were herded onto so-called reservations where they would spend the rest of their lives in misery and squalor.

In his book, The San Jacintos, John Robinson writes, "California has no sadder chapter in its history than the demise of the Native Americans."

1) First came the Spaniards with their conquistadors and priests. The conquistadors were interested in gold and silver, which led Hernando Cortes to con-



Spanish Conquistador Hernando Cortes, conqueror of the Aztecs

quer the Aztecs and claim Mexico for Spain in (1521). During the next three centuries Spanish rule spread throughout South, Central and North America, going as far north as Alaska. Then, in (1769), Spanish Catholic priests began building what eventually became 21 missions spread out over the length of California. The purpose of the missions was to facilitate the colonization of the land, spread the Catholic religion among the indigenous people, and turn them into civilized and loyal Spanish subjects. In most respects, the attempt was a failure, although many Indians were taught to read and to perform other skills which made it easier for them to become assimilated into the new culture when circumstances forced them to do so.

One bright spot was that the Spanish also introduced domesticated grapes and oranges to the area, which we should be eternally grateful for.

Continued on page 3 - See **COWBOYS AND INDIANS**

# BEHIND THE SCENES

By Adele Smith

## Elvis Club coming here

The Las Vegas Elvis Club will visit Idyllwild in May to tour locations here for the mid-century filming of "Kid Galahad." They'll take advantage of a self-guided film tour recently researched and put together by Bob Smith.

\* \* \* \* \*

## New historical exhibit at the Post Office

Next time you're in the Idyllwild Post Office, be sure to take a few moments to look at our latest historical exhibit—the work of our Exhibit Committee (Marcia Donnell, Nancy and Jack Fletcher, Nancy Killingsworth, and Carolyn Levitski).

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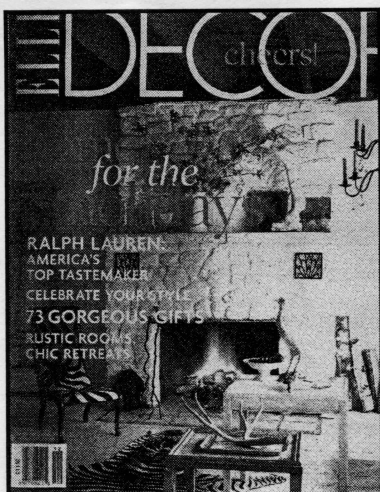
## Rave review from long ago

On the back of a 1920s postcard in our museum archives, sent to a friend in Cambridge, MA: "Here's a glimpse of some more wildness—oh, it is sweet here. We are up in the mountains about a mile high—'twas a thrilling ride up and will be another down. Will try to tell you all about it in my letters. Mabel"

\* \* \* \* \*

## Home tour house featured in national magazine

The December 2007 issue of "Elle Decor" magazine featured a full-color cover photo and major story about one of our 2006 Home Tour houses! Mike Clifford, of Idyllwild and New York City, is shown in the magazine's "Rustic Rooms, Chic Retreats" issue as he is interviewed and shows photographers around in a feature called "Cabin Fever."



The article plays up the Idyllwild ambience: "Publicist Mike Clifford spends his downtime high up in the San Jacinto mountains, in a rustic retreat far from the big-city bustle. Hiking boots are required, and there's not a BlackBerry in sight." Clifford says he heads to Idyllwild every weekend he can when he's not jetting between the Hollywood Hills and New York for his work.

As the writer points out, "The most up-to-date personal communications tool is a bright red rotary phone. Yes, rotary."

Every year our Home Tour draws raves from locals and visitors alike, and the coming event in September will be no exception. Our hard-working Home Tour committee, headed by Nanci Killingsworth and Corrine Brown, spends months finding just the right homes to feature.

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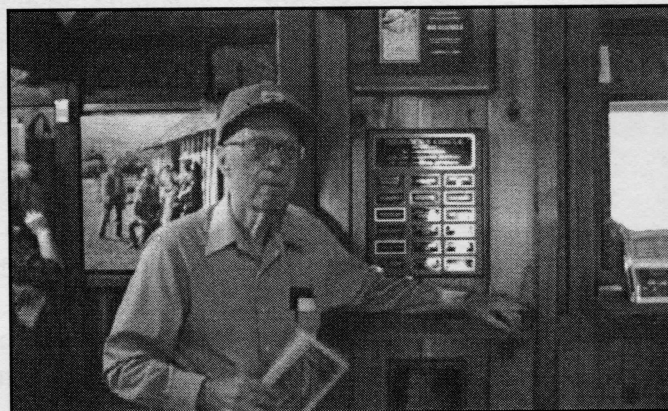
## Staff and volunteers keep the office humming

A recent Tuesday found our IAHS office in high gear. According to assistant curator Shirl Reid, Nancy Fletcher, and Joan McCulloch were busy inventorying the Wendelken photo collection, recently donated by the Town Crier. They made sure each of the hundreds of valuable negatives was in its own acid-free sleeve, then placed into archival boxes to keep them safe. Accurate donor records require a thorough inventory, Shirl said.

Later on, John Drake and Rebecca Frazier, our media consultant team, dropped by to deliver some photo scans. And Marcia Donnell made one of her regular presidential visits to take care of business.

Small room, wonderful people, busy scene.

\* \* \* \* \*



*Bill Wootton, pictured above, who so generously kept his home off the market until the Historical Society raised enough money to purchase it, has moved off the Hill.*

*Thanks to him, we found a wonderful home for our museum, and we shall be eternally grateful to him for putting the interests of the Historical Society above his own. Before leaving, Bill made a contribution in his wife's name to become a member of the Founders Circle. He will be missed!*

## COWBOYS AND INDIANS (Continued from page 1)

By 1825 Spain had lost all control of their colonies in South, Central and North America due partly to lack of interest and support by Spanish leaders back home, and the rapid colonization of North America by American settlers and the United States Army. It was also around this time that Mexico gained its independence from Spain. It's also about the time when the trouble really began for the "Native Americans."

There is wide disagreement about how many Indians lived in what is now the United States before the Europeans arrived, with estimates ranging from around 8 million to over 112 million. The "consensus" population is estimated to have been around 54 million. According to the 2000 census there are about 4 million Indians living in the US today, including 2.5 million people of mixed race.

There are many reasons for the decline in Native American population, but far and away, chief among them were the disease epidemics, including smallpox, typhus, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, mumps, yellow fever, whooping cough, and syphilis. These diseases decimated the Indians, partly because the diseases had never reached the Americas before, and the Indians had not developed any resistance to them. In many cases 90 percent or more of a single tribe died as a result. Small tribes were especially vulnerable. Another reason for the decline in population was the forced relocation resulting in lower birthrates.

But there's no denying that thousands of Indians were killed by the US Army and settlers, and a few by cowboys, to be sure. The "Indian Wars" went on for many years, gradually leading to the defeat of the Indians and their eventual grudging acceptance of their fate.

There were atrocities committed by both sides, and many famous battles and famous Indian Chiefs and army generals who led them are easily recognizable, even today. The Battle of Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee are familiar to most of us, as are the

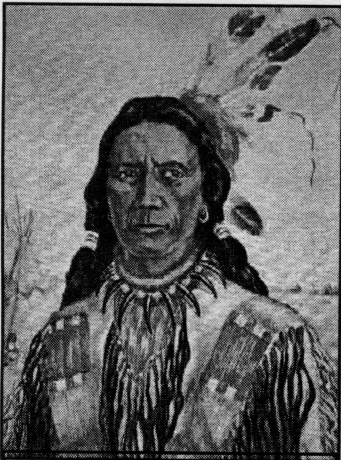
names of Indian chiefs like Black Hawk, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, and Geronimo. And, of course, there was George Armstrong Custer, General George Cook, and General William Sherman, who famously pronounced that, "All Indians who are not on reservations are hostile and will remain so until killed off."

Meanwhile, the history of the San Jacintos and the Cahuilla Indians was slowly evolving. The first Spanish explorer to come to the area was the military commander of Spanish California, Captain Pedro Fages. In 1772 he led a party of soldiers in search of army deserters on a trip from San Diego around the base of the San Jacintos and into the San Bernardino Valley. He and his men are believed to be the first Europeans to enter the area.

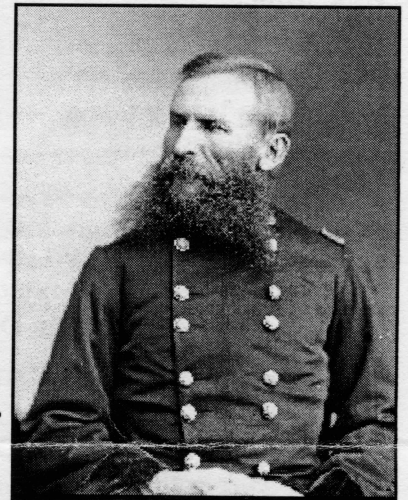
Next, a much more famous Spanish explorer, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, appeared in 1774. His purpose was to find a route from Sonora to San Francisco, and, in doing so, he actually crossed over the San Jacintos, which, incidentally, they called the Sierra Nevadas, and returned one year later to do it again. On this second trip he brought along 240 people, including 29 women, whom he was taking to San Francisco to start a Spanish colony there.

Oddly enough, Captain Anza was born in what is today Arizona, and both his father and grandfather were frontier soldiers.

Aside from Anza's route to San Francisco over the San Jacintos, it is not believed that the Spanish ever ventured into the mountains, which allowed the Cahuilla Indians living in the mountains to avoid them for some period of time.



*Red Cloud, Chief of the Sioux, fought against the white settlers on the northern plains.*



*General George Crook. Known as the greatest Indian fighter of them all. As a young officer he fought Indians in the Rouge River and the Yakima wars.*

*Continued on page 5 - See COWBOYS AND INDIANS*

# IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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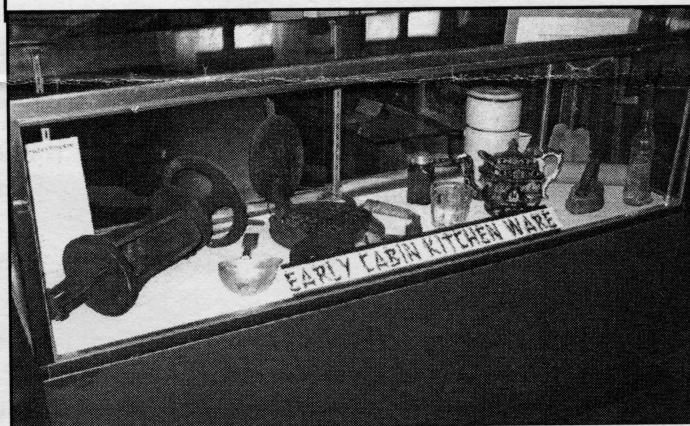
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Newsletter: Ben Killingsworth  
Nominating Committee: Shirl Reid

**C'mon, have some fun by volunteering to be a docent at our wonderful museum. Meet new friends and brag about Idyllwild. Pick up your phone today and make that call to the office-951- 659-2717. You'll be so glad you did!!**

## NEW MUSEUM DISPLAYS



*Museum docents Pat Norrell, at left, and Sharla Carpenter, far right, greet visitors and tend the museum on a busy Saturday afternoon recently. Come and view the newly arranged space, masterminded and executed by our museum committee, headed by Nancy Fletcher. Photo by Adele Smith*



*Our collection of early kitchen utensils has come home, after a lengthy loan to the Nature Center. Come and marvel at how our forebears managed to put it all together for their families. Photo by Adele Smith*

As you can see, our Museum Exhibit Committee, composed of Marcia Donnell, Nanci Killingsworth, Nancy Fletcher and Jack Fletcher, are working on giving the museum a fresh look. Your feedback and ideas would be appreciated, so drop by and have a look at what they've already accomplished.

## COWBOYS AND INDIANS (Continued from page 3 )

In 1822 California became a part of Mexico, which led rapidly to the greatly reduced influence of the Spanish missions and their accompanying mission rancheros. The padres lost control of the vast amounts of land they had been given, and instead were relegated to providing the spiritual needs of their church members.

But it was only 26 years later that California was taken away from Mexico through the 1848 Guadalupe Treaty following the Mexican War of 1846 – 1847, and became a US territory. And then came the California Gold Rush of 1849, which brought thousands from all over the world in search of a quick fortune. Before the gold rush there were about 2,000 non-Indians, most of them missionaries, and by 1853 California's population had exploded to 300,000.

During this period, on September 9, 1850, California became the 31<sup>st</sup> state of the union. Even after the end of the Gold Rush in 1859, California was never to be the same, primarily because the great influx of people led to ranching, farming, and businesses of all descriptions. In fact many of the greatest beneficiaries of the gold rush never spent a day mining for gold.

Of course, none of this bode well for the Indians, including our local Cahuilla tribes, who had lived in relative peace. Such a rapid rise in population only meant one thing – much less land for the Indians to call their own. As the Indians began losing their territory, and their culture along with it, they found it more and more difficult to survive in ways they had followed for thousands of years, and so became more and more dependent on the white settlers who gladly offered them jobs as laborers, ranch hands, and even as cowboys.

While the Cahuillas were too isolated to have been bothered by the Spanish missions, they, like all Indians, were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and to become laborers for the white man. They were not an especially warlike people, and in the few instances when they did attack the settlers they did so while on foot, mainly using the few horses they had as pack animals.

And, like other Indians, they lost control over most of their land, and suffered an estimated loss of 80 percent of their people due to disease epidemics.

The man believed to be the first European settler to make contact with the Cahuillas in the San Jacinto Mountains was Charles Thomas. He and friend Tom Casey, along with a few friendly Cahuillas, rode from his ranch in Temecula to what is now called Garner Valley, in 1861. There are a number of stories about how Thomas happened to be led there by the Indians, and several other stories about how he came to own the valley where he later established his ranch.

According to the various stories handed down, Thomas gave the Indians somewhere between 22 and 200 (depending on who's telling the story) head of cattle for the valley. But, in fact, that did not actually give him title to the land, which he gradually obtained through homesteading, and by buying parcels from the Southern Pacific Railroad, the United States Land Office, and other homesteaders. The Southern Pacific was involved because they had been given every other section (square mile) of land by the US government for building their railroad through Coachella Valley. Of course, most of the land given to them had once belonged to the Cahuilla Indians.

It wasn't long before Thomas had a 1,700-acre ranch complete with thousands of cattle and herds of sheep roaming the beautiful valley, which by then was called Thomas Valley, later to become Hemet Valley after the Hemet Dam was built in 1895, then, finally, Garner Valley. Later on, the ranch boasted 8,000 acres. And, as we might imagine, many of Thomas's ranch hands were Cahuilla Indians.

After about 30 years, Thomas and his wife, Genoveva, after seeing most of their children grown and moving away, decided to sell the ranch. The eventual buyer was Robert F. Garner.

*Continued on page 7 - See COWBOYS AND INDIANS*



*Cahuilla Cowboys roping calves in Anza Valley, ca. 1910*  
From "The San Jacintos" Photo by Charles Van Fleet

## THE COMPANY WE KEEP

We very much appreciate our new members and for the encouraging continuing support from renewing members during the first quarter of 2008. You keep our doors open and our work expanding!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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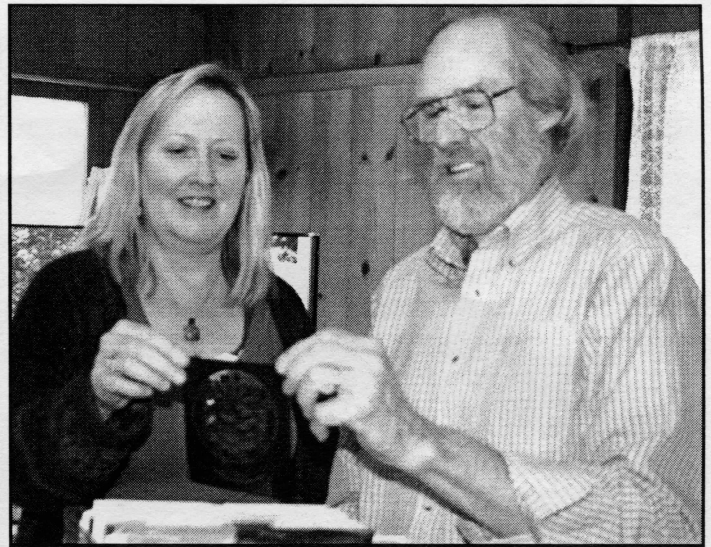
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*Town Crier publisher Becky Clark and IAHS treasurer Bob Smith admire a photo negative from the collection of eminent Idyllwild photographer Harry Wendelken. IAHS is deeply grateful to the Town Crier for its recent donation of hundreds of original Wendelken negatives dating from 1920 to 1950. Added to our Avery Field collection, this gives us the world's finest archive of historic Idyllwild photo negatives. Photo by Marshall Smith*

### Family (Continued)

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## JOHN ROBINSON SPEAKS IN IDYLLWILD

Those of us who attended the ICRC speaker series at the Creekstone Inn on March 26, 2008 had the pleasure of listening to a talk by a man we all admire.

John Robinson is a former teacher who has spent many years traveling, researching and writing about the mountains. His books include *The San Jacintos*, *The San Gabriels*, *The San Bernardino*, *Trails of the Angeles*, *San Bernardino Mountain Trails*, and, most recently, *The Gateways of Southern California*.

John was introduced by Bob Smith who said he has known of John's books for 35 years.

John presented a slide show along with his very interesting talk about how he first became interested in the mountains when he began hiking in the San Gabriels when was 10 years old. He said he joined the Sierra Club right after graduating from college, and has maintained his interest in the outdoors ever since.

During his talk John displayed an almost unbelievable ability to impart the smallest details, including dates, names and locations. Listening to him was a fascinating experience for all of us, especially those who enjoy reading about our Southern California mountain history, and, most definitely, the people who write this newsletter.

## THE ANNUAL DOCENT LUNCHEON

The highlight of the docent luncheon on March 12, 2008, at Silver Pines Lodge was a talk given by architect Jim Marsh about our planned museum annex.

The purpose of the new structure is to store our collection of artifacts in a safe, hermetically controlled environment. The structure will be approximately 32 feet long and 26 feet wide.

Jim was introduced by IAHS President Marcia Donnell, who said the Board of Directors decided 2 years ago that we need more space in which to store our artifacts and that Jim was asked to submit a conceptual drawing. The design is now completed, and, thanks to Jim's generosity, did not cost IAHS a penny, which we are extremely grateful for.

Marcia said that she, Bob Smith and Shirl Reid have been working on the project as a team and that they have already raised half of the \$150,000 needed to make the new building a reality.

Jim remarked that both labor and material prices are coming down due to the slowdown in construction, which may lower our overall cost.

Along those same lines, Chris Austin of Austin Tile has offered to install the tile, without charge.

And while we were listening to all this we were enjoying a great lunch put together by our Hospitality Committee, Lynda and Larry Turner.

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## COWBOYS AND INDIANS (Continued from page 5)

who paid \$30,000 in 1905 for what was then a 1,700 -acre ranch. Garner was an experienced cattleman and was soon operating one of the largest and most productive cattle ranches in Southern California with over 1,500 head of cattle on 9,500 acres. Garner also employed many Cahuilla Indians as ranch hands.

Robert Garner died in 1930 and his son, Robert Jr., took over until he died in 1945 when his son, Jack Garner, took over. The Garner Ranch story is a long and eventful one, and is extremely well told in the book, *The San Jacintos*, by John Robinson and Bruce Risher. Just driving by what remains of the ranch on Highway 74, seeing the cattle grazing on the vast grassland as they have for over 140 years, is enough to make one's imagination run wild. For a few moments the past is right there in front of you, making you almost wish things had never changed. But driving further east on Highway 74 offers a view of dozens of homes priced in the million dollar range on land with plenty of room for horses.

As for the Cahuillas, in 1970 the Bureau of Census estimated that there were 1,629 Cahuilla Indians still living, but, over the years a high percentage of those have intermarried with white Anglos and Hispanics. Many of them still live on their reservations, but for once, fortune has smiled upon them, and they now operate several gambling casinos on their land, bringing in thousands of dollars monthly for each member of the tribe.

If only someone had thought of that a couple of hundred years ago.

Some of the material used in this article was found in the wonderful book, *The San Jacintos*, by John Robinson and Bruce Risher. The book is available at the Idyllwild Historical Society Museum and at other locations around town.

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

**54470 North Circle Drive**

**Currently open Saturdays and Sundays**

**11 am - 4 pm**

**COMING SUMMER DAYS & HOURS**

**Thursday - Sunday**

**June 26 - September 1**

**11 am - 4 pm**

**For special tours, call 951.659-2717**

**Website (to be changed soon):**

**www.Idyllwildareahistoricalociety.org**

**Admission is free**

**Donations are welcome**

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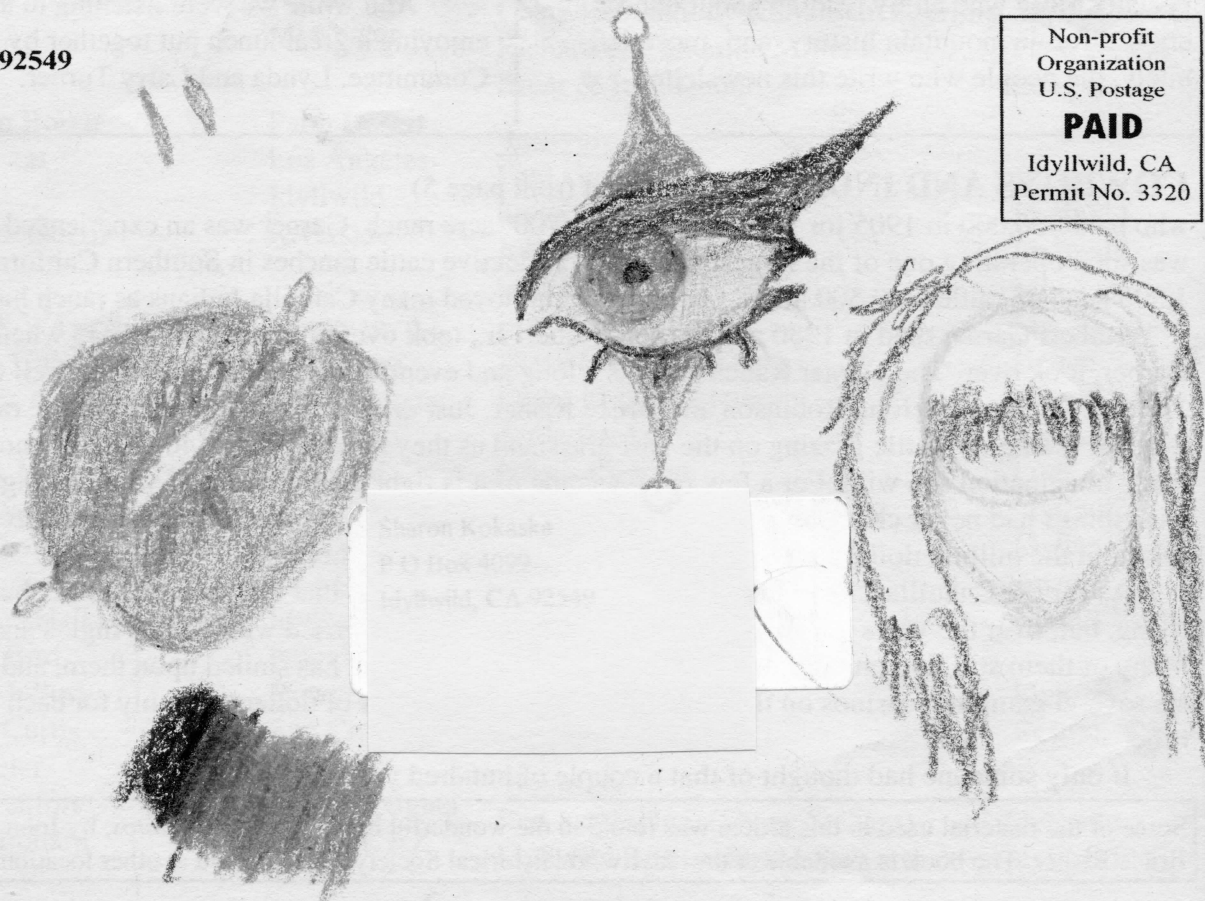
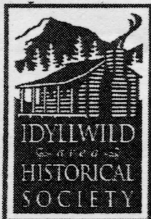
**\_\_\_ Founder's Circle \$1,000 (one-time or cumulative) (Lifetime, with name on museum plaque)**

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

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