

ARTI-FACTS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

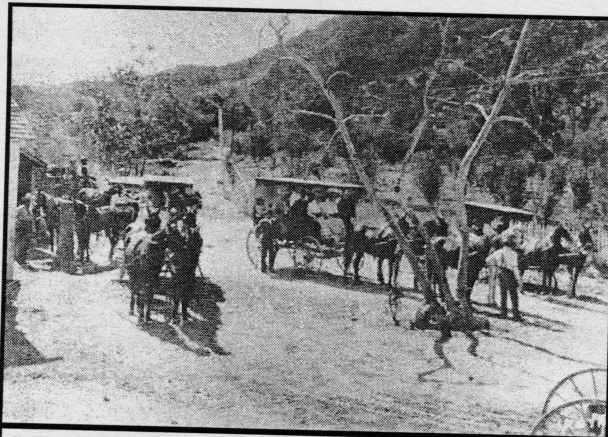
Preserving the History of Idyllwild and the surrounding communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

Winter 2009

FROM ALL WORK TO MOSTLY PLAY

By Ben Killingsworth

When Idyllwild was born way back in the late 1800's it was a place where everybody worked, and worked very hard. There was no time for play, and even if there had been, there wasn't much to play with. Oh, there was hiking, of course, but people in those days thought of walking as the only way to get from place to place without relying on a horse. They certainly didn't look at it as a form of recreation.



Stopping at Oak Cliff Station for a change of horses before continuing on up the rugged trail to Idyllwild. From the book, *The San Jacintos* - Photo from the San Jacinto Museum

But, as it turns out, much of their hard work laid the groundwork for what we have today; a beautiful little town almost hidden in a beautiful forest, where people come from far and wide to enjoy the many things we have to offer in the way of recreation. For most people just coming here for a day or a weekend is a source of great pleasure – a chance to get away from it all, breathe the clean mountain air, take a hike in the woods, watch the squirrels play, throw some snowballs, and much more.

The first thing that had to be done in order to make all that possible was to build the roads. Using what we would now consider very primitive tools, either horse drawn, or manipulated solely by human power, the workers struggled to build what we probably wouldn't even consider an actual road, today – certainly not anything we would consider driving over. They were unpaved, of course, and in places were as steep as a rise of three feet every ten feet.

However, both of the newly constructed roads; one from San Jacinto and the other from Beaumont, were toll roads, which is perfectly understandable since the

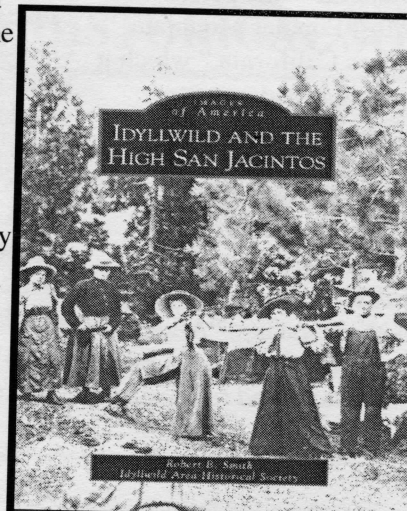
money used to build them was furnished by private individuals. Their reason for building them in the first place was to provide a way of transporting lumber down the hill where it was used for a variety of purposes; first to make railroad ties, then to build homes in the rapidly developing communities below – even to make orange crates to meet an ever growing demand from orange growers in Riverside, then the orange growing capital of the country. As for providing a way for people to enjoy the mountains, it's doubtful that ever entered the minds of the original road builders.

Even so, there was a steady change taking place. It would never be no work and all play, but people did start coming to the mountain for pleasure. Coming up over those primitive roads on horseback or in a buggy hauled over steep grades by skittish horses probably wasn't all that

much fun, especially if the weather took one of those sudden turns we've become accustomed to, and the bumpy road became a muddy trail. And it was a toll road at that.

Then, around 1889 some political shenanigans got

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Great News!!

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For Details

MOSTLY PLAY *Cont. from page 1*

rid of the 25-cent toll, which prompted even more people to make the arduous trip, and the loggers began to see an opportunity to make a little side money.

First they opened campgrounds, like the one operated by Anton Scherman, owner of the Strawberry Valley Lumber Company, where one could stay for 50 cents a month, which included firewood. Then he opened a small hotel and a dance hall on grounds complete with croquet sets and swings for the kids. Incidentally, Sherman was the one who got the toll on the toll road removed by getting the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to declare the road "most unsuitable and totally unfit"

Of course Joseph Crawford, the man who built the toll road in 1875 and was given a 50-year franchise on it by the same County Board of Supervisors, was none too pleased, but in the long run it probably worked out best for everyone concerned

Others who opened camp grounds and hotels

were George Hannahs (often referred to as the father of Idyllwild), who operated "The People's Favorite Mountain Resort in Camp Idylwilde" around 1891, and G. W. Henry, who ran The Henry House, also located in Camp Idylwilde, around the same period.

Henry advertised it as "The Most Popular Mountain Summer Resort in all of Southern California," which it apparently wasn't because he only lasted one year, after which Mrs. M. Mitchell bought it and renamed it The Mitchell House. Included in her ad was "Everything new. No China Cook. Bathhouse Connected With the Hotel. Everything First Class."

There was also The Keen House, operated by John and Mary Keen around 1890. As advertisements go theirs was probably the most promising. "After leaving the train in San Jacinto you have only 16 miles of well-graded, picturesque mountain road to travel. A

few weeks in these cool, pine-scented surroundings in the pleasant company of other campers, will prove a healthful and enjoyable pastime. All pulmonary diseases relieved in the bracing air."

The last sentence in their ad might sound a little misleading by today's standards, but, in fact, it was fully supported by several physicians as was reported in the San Jacinto Register in 1892. "It has become pretty generally known that the cool, invigorating air of Strawberry Valley is the most beneficial known for diseases of the throat and lung. Physicians, for several years past, have recommended their consumptive patients to summer in Strawberry. The altitude, 6000

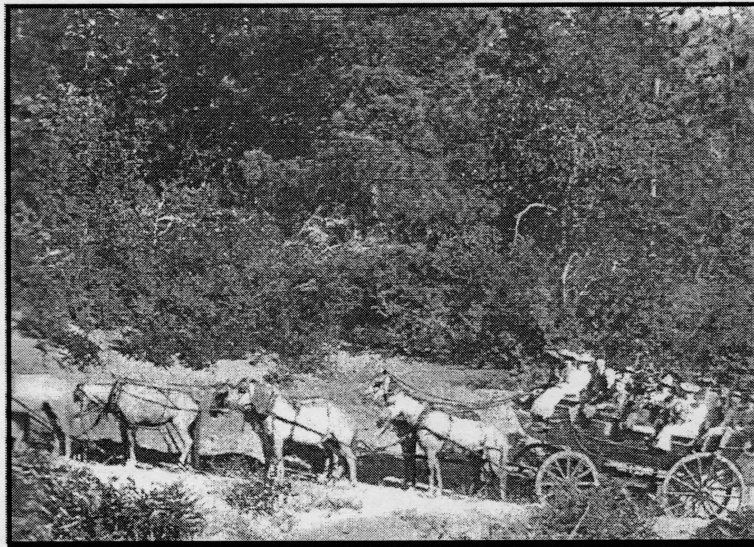
feet, has been found to possess just the dry, healing qualities necessary to worn-out lungs. Several hundred invalids sought out Strawberry last season and received untold benefits from the trip."

Consumption, of course, is also called tuberculosis, and it was only nine years later that two vacationing Los Angeles physicians decided it would be a swell idea to open a tuberculosis sanatorium in Strawberry Valley. With the backing of several other L.A. doctors they formed the California Health Resort Com-

pany and invested \$250,000 in a forty-room, 2-story sanatorium, along with several cabins, a livery stable, tennis court, golf course and a gymnasium, all situated on 2000 acres. It was named the Idyllwild Sanatorium, and was a beautiful facility in a wonderfully picturesque location, but in two years their doors were closed. Why? Because they soon learned that TB patients could not take the high altitude and the cold weather. There was even a saying that the "sanatorium hauls its patients up on buckboards and down in boxes."

And that brings us back to having fun, because another reason the sanatorium closed was that the healthy people who came to the area seeking recreation didn't like the idea of having a bunch of TB patients in their midst. And, since the beautiful buildings

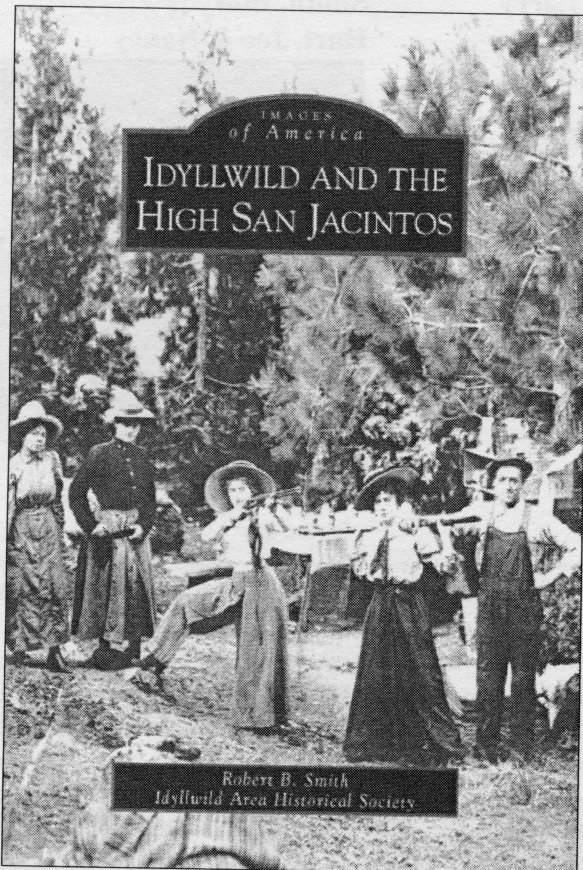
Continued on page 4 See MOSTLY PLAY



They huffed and they puffed and they climbed all the way up to Idyllwild, ca 1896

Photo from The San Jacintos

COMING SOON - A NEW BOOK!



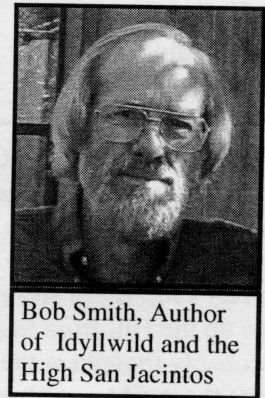
Bob Smith, IAHS researcher and treasurer, has written a book about Idyllwild's history. A one-year labor of love, "Idyllwild and the High San Jacintos" describes, in words and fascinating photos, our village.

The book features 218 historic photographs of old Idyllwild, 1880 to 1960, most from our overflowing archives and never before published. It also includes pictures of Pine Cove, Mountain Center, and Pinewood.

ALL royalties will go to the historical society.

Smith, a retired university vice president and provost, has deep family roots in these mountains harking back to family property and a cabin in 1925.

The book has something for everyone, and makes a great gift idea, too, for housewarmings, cabin visitors, and far-flung friends.



Bob Smith, Author of Idyllwild and the High San Jacintos

You can see a preview of the charming photos in the January-February issue of "Idyllwild Life" magazine, pages 12 and 13. All aspects of life in our area are covered, from camping, recreation, logging, tourism, businesses, and disasters to skiing (yes, skiing!).

It goes on sale April 20th Call 951-659-8725 for more information

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Treasurer: Bob Smith
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 Coate, Diann
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 Cooper, Annette
 Donnell, Marcia
 Groty, Charlotte & George
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 Norrell, Pat
 Olsen, Diane
 Rice, Gene

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 Turner, Linda & Larry

Voell, Adele
 Watts, Nickie

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 Dorisse, Kick
 Miller, Joyce
 Van Zanten, Jan
 Buchanan, Jeanne and Jerry

Ricord, Carolyn

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 Grigsby, Katie
 Parker, Peggy

Pekrol, David
 Smith, Bob
 Hart, Joe & Nancy



Corrinne Brown works hard to fill those empty docent spots. Please say "yes" when you can

MOSTLY PLAY *Cont. from page 2*

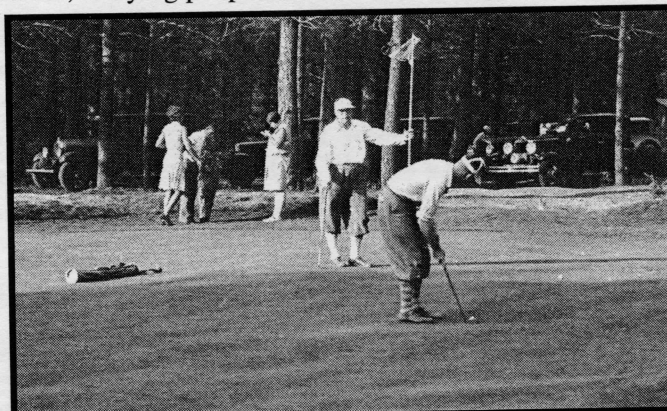
and grounds could no longer serve the sick, they began serving the healthy pleasure seekers by turning it into a luxurious hotel.

Pretty soon there were stagecoaches making regular trips up the Hill from Santa Jacinto, carrying people who probably thought at the time that the world was changing too fast, that trails were becoming too crowded. "What," they probably wondered, "is this world coming to?"

A good question, as it turned out, because while holding onto whatever they could grab ahold of inside the bouncing coach there sometimes came a moment none of them had been expecting, the kind of moment they may have read about, but never expected to experience themselves.

"Land O'Goshen," they must have thought, when halfway up the Hill a band of masked riders came rushing from behind some rocks, waving their pistols as they brought the team of horses to a dusty stop. Then, shouting above the screams coming from the terrified passengers, the masked men demanded all of their money and jewelry, and before they knew it, it was all over. They

were safe but now apparently destitute, and must have traveled the last few miles in stunned silence. It wasn't until they reached their destination that they learned, with a sense of both relief and anger, that the holdup had been one big joke, and their money and other valuables were there waiting to be returned. It's unknown how



*An Avery Field photo captures serious golfers battling it out on Claudius Emerson's golf course in the 1920's
 Photo from the Avery Field collection*

many unfortunate heart attacks these pranks may have caused, but at least the passengers couldn't claim it was a boring journey.

With the arrival of Claudius Emerson in 1917 recreation reached new heights. After buying the Idyllwild Inn and a thousand acres in Strawberry Valley, he set out to make Idyllwild the premier resort town in the southland.

There was a golf course, tennis courts, dances, parties, scavenger hunts, and what have you. He also donated land for our County Park, the Camp Emerson Boy Scout Camp, and Idyllwild Pines, which today plays host to our skateboard park. He even made plans to dam up Strawberry Creek and put in a lake on the 450 acres he bought where people could fish, swim, and picnic.

Continued on page 6 See MOSTLY PLAY.

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

October 1 through December 31

NEW MEMBERS

Sponsor

Stacy Ann Emmons Long Beach

Family

Heath ("Bo") & Penny Bottomly Idyllwild
Zara McMullen & family Idyllwild
Gina & Larry Randall La Mesa

Individual

Kimberly Creighton Los Angeles

David Kobosa Los Angeles
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Bill & Ginny Millard Rancho Mirage
Liz & Walt Mueller San Diego
Anthony Pearson Glendale
Susan & Bob Righetti Idyllwild
Jodi & Kevin Short Anza
Carol & Will Summers Laguna Niguel
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Roy Wilson Idyllwild

RENEWING MEMBERS

Founders Circle

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Dotty & Mel Goldfarb Idyllwild
Richard & Susie Hampson Idyllwild
Marcia & Mac McQuern Riverside
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Nancy Brothers & Larry Shute Idyllwild

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Chuck & Sara Clayton Idyllwild
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Kathy & Robert Curtis Sun City
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Bonnie Doshier Idyllwild
Norma Gibbs Huntington Beach
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Frank Tysen Sherman Oaks
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Francie Spears Cardiff-by-the-Sea
Kevin & Judy Underdahl Columbia Falls, MT
Bill & Margaret Wootton Prescott, AZ

THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL

IAHS FINANCES WEATHER THE STORM

"Despite the spike in gasoline prices and the general economic turmoil, IAHS came through the past year in good financial health. Like nonprofits everywhere, we're coping with the effects of recession on dues, donation, and sales revenues, but the 2008 Home Tour was our most successful in four years. And by severely restricting our operating expenses and deferring long-term projects, we were able to put over \$11,000 into the future building fund at year's end."

The museum welcomed 4,322 visitors in 2008, down just a bit from the all-time record of 5,039 in 2007

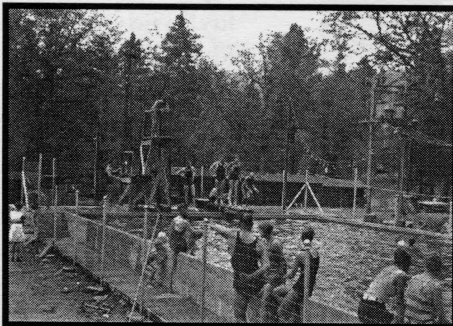
MOSTLY PLAY *Cont. from page 4*

Now we were talking recreation, even if old pictures show the women in long dresses with pretty bonnets to keep the sun out, and the men wading in creeks while wearing suits and ties. You see a woman in a dress or a man wearing a tie these days and you find yourself staring at them, wondering if they might be from another planet.

For a time things were going very well for Emerson and other entrepreneurs. People from the valleys below kept coming, and the half-acre lots Emerson was selling from the 1,000 acres he had purchased were going rapidly. Movie stars abounded, including Mary Pickford, Paulette Goddard and Katherine Hepburn, and money was being made. The future looked bright.

But then it happened – the Great Depression, which ruined everything. Emerson lost it all, and in 1938 left the Hill - a severe setback to everyone

Most plans for further development were put on the back burner until shortly after the end of WWII. Oddly enough,, one of the things that helped keep



Maybe our last public swimming pool.
Photo from Avery Field Collection

things going during the war were the frequent visits by military officers who came up from Camp Young, which was located near Indio, and served as General Patton's training camp in preparation for the military

assault against German forces in North Africa. There is some evidence that even General Patton himself visited Idyllwild for a little R & R.

At the end of the war in 1945 there were fewer than 450 full-time Idyllwild residents, but that was to change rapidly. People no longer had to use stamps in order to buy gasoline, and they began coming up the Hill again.

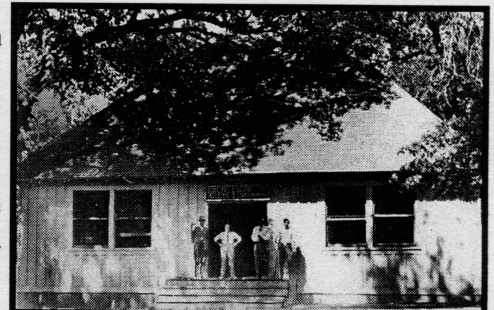
Of course, by now the roads had long since been paved and the trip was a relatively easy one. And for a time there were more recreation opportunities than there are today. There was a public swimming pool right in the center of town, and even a



Horseback riding was very popular in the early days. Photo provided by IAHS

bowling alley for a few years. And, surprisingly, there were a few slot machines in town during the mid-forties, which lasted until there was a crackdown on illegal gambling in Palm Springs, which proved to be too close for comfort.

And then, over the strong objections of the religious community, along came the first liquor license ever issued – two of them, in fact; the Fern Valley Inn and the Idyllwild Inn. That doesn't mean there was no drinking in Idyllwild before that. You just couldn't buy it here.



The Bowling Alley - popular for awhile in the 1950's. Photo provided by IAHS

And, although you'd never know it today, there
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BEHIND THE SCENES

By Adele Smith

We-can't-do-this-all-by-ourselves department: Area museums are a close-knit community, generous with their expertise and consulting each other over sticky questions. A recent example: Help with complicated details about the making and dating of two Native American baskets donated by Burdette Nelson and Jim Johnson, son of early Idyllwild developer Jerry Johnson. We also thank Bob Cox, owner of Vintage Shoppe in Idyllwild, for helping us greatly in valuing memorabilia and antiques donations.

Recent work and donations: An oral history with Jim Johnson, son of Jerry Johnson, taken by Lynnda Hart and Bob Smith. Also, a huge, old, bound album of historic Idyllwild photos.

Just a reminder: We're delighted to offer special museum tours any day of the week to visiting groups. To arrange, leave a message at 951-659-2717 or 659-8725.

New in our museum shop: Quality poster-size prints from our **Avery Field photo collection**. Idyllwild ski posters, full color, drawn by Avery Field's son **Thyrsis**. (Two photos of past Idyllwild skiing are included in our upcoming book, "**Idyllwild and the High San Jacintos**," coming in April from Arcadia Publishing.)

Recent area books by Arcadia Publishing: San Jacinto City, Hemet, Banning, and Anza Valley.

MOSTLY PLAY *Cont. from page 6*

was a popular ski slope for a few years, mostly used for tobogganing, but remembered well by the old-timers still living here. But, if there's one thing full-time residents can probably be thankful for, it's that we didn't become a ski resort.

Speaking of full-time residents, that 450 figure at the end of WWII quickly grew to 1,200 by 1948, and to about 2,500 by the end of the 1950s. It seems remarkable that during the ensuing 58 years the population has only grown by another 1,000, or so. Are we lucky, or what?

Hunting and fishing in the San Jacinto Mountains was probably more popular during

the early days leading up to the forties and fifties than it is now. As for fishing, there is Hemet Lake, constructed around 1895, Lake Fulmor, built in 1948, and Tahquitz and Strawberry Creeks, which were popular trout-fishing venues during that time, but not many fishermen can be seen in the area today. Deer hunting also is not what it used to be, probably due to a lack of deer habitat, and more forest areas closed to hunting.

But the most popular kinds of recreation are still available here in abundance. Hiking is no doubt one of them, and there are many trails open to hikers, including the Ernie Maxwell Trail, a 2 ½ mile-long trail along the foot of the mountains to the south of Idyllwild, named after the man who initiated its construction. In addition to its recreational potential it was used for many years as a way to travel from one end Strawberry Valley to the other without running into too many tourists.

For the serious hikers there are many well-maintained trails, some of which are open to mountain bikers. There is also the Pacific Crest Trail to follow if you happen to have a spare six months, or so. The closest most of us will ever get to that adventure is the chance to see some of the people who participate stopping by to pick up their mail and lay in a few provisions.

And then, if you want to get real serious about it, there are rocks to climb. In fact, there are world-class climbing opportunities, both on Tahquitz (Lily) Rock, and Suicide Rock. These two huge rocks also give our Mountain Rescue and Idyllwild Fire Department something to do when someone either falls off a sheer cliff, or finds himself stuck in a crevice or dangling from a fraying rope.

Other recreation venues, for residents in particular, are the Rustic Theatre, which has been showing first-run movies up here for decades, the ISIS Theatre Company, a group of women who offer professional theatre productions to our little town, and the Idyllwild Arts Academy, which enriches our community with wonderful musical events, art, plays, and the annual Jazz Festival. For those who like to camp out beneath the stars there's the County Park, the State Park, and Idyllwild Pines, the latter which plays host to our relatively new skate park.

Many visitors say they have fond memories of their first camping experience as children here in Idyllwild, or recall how thrilled their own children were when they brought them here for their first camping trip years ago.

Of course, there's always tree hugging, wading in the creek, going to the Historical Society Museum, visiting the Nature Center, and shopping. Yes, shopping – perhaps the greatest fun of all, some might say.

*Most of the information used in this article was found in the wonderful book, **The San Jacintos**, by John Robinson and Bruce Risher. It is on sale at the Museum and local shops.*

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

Visit our new website at: www.Idyllwildhistory.org

Admission is free

Donations are welcome

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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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:

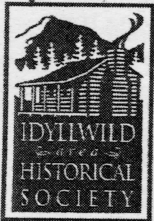
Name _____ Address _____

Please make your check payable to IAHS and mail with this application to

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