

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

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

WINTER 2018

THEY WERE KEEN ON OUR MOUNTAINS!

By Robert B. Smith

Our beloved Strawberry Valley hasn't always been the main tourist attraction in the San Jacinto Mountains. Between 1915 and 1924 the Idyllwild Inn had strong, and at times superior, competition from Tahquitz Lodge, located six miles down the Hill at Keen Camp.

While Idyllwild tended to draw from the coastal cities, Inland Empire residents actually preferred Tahquitz Lodge. It was a bit quieter, more rustic, and easier to get to. And it attracted a steady stream of movie crews, after Cecil B. DeMille discovered its usefulness for scenes in his (and Hollywood's) first feature film, "The Squaw Man."

Keen Camp is dimly remembered today, its name preserved at the nearby summit on Highway 74. But it once designated a resort and settlement at the site now occupied by the Living Free animal sanctuary.

John and Mary Keen were two experienced hotel owners running the Florida Hotel at Valle Vista (then called "Florida"), when San Diego County in 1888 opened the original toll road between Hemet and Strawberry Valley for free public use. The resulting flood of summer visitors to the valley lured the Keens, as well. In 1890 they bought pioneer logger Amasa Saunders's cabin at the site of today's Idyllwild Elementary School. Christening it the "Keen House," during the next decade they expanded it into a precursor of 20th-century motels as it became the valley's premier



IAHS photo archive

lodging.

By 1901 the Keen House was doomed by the scale and elegance of new hotel facilities at the Idyllwild Sanatorium. So the Keens bought a ranch on the old Mayberry Road to Lake Hemet in 1905, set up a campground named Keen Camp, and had their buildings in Idyllwild disassembled and reused as material for new cabins and a modest lodge.

The Keens retired in 1911 and sold the camp and lodge to Percy and Anita Walker, a ranching couple from Sage. Within a year Percy met a tragic end, drowning in Lake Hemet while trying to rescue a capsized fisherman. Anita carried on by teaching at Kenworthy School in Garner Valley, where she lived with her two daughters during the week, then opening Keen Camp to weekend guests.

In 1914 widowed Anita hired Robert Elliot to manage the lodge, which promptly burned down.

See Keen, page 3

IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Vice President: Marlene Pierce
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Board meetings are open to the membership
and are held in the office on the
2nd Friday of each month at 4 p.m.

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Arti-Facts

Editor: C. Levitski
Feature Writer: Bob Smith
Layout: Halie Wilson



Charlotte Groty, IAHS President

IAHS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At our IAHS Annual Meeting in August, the President's gavel was officially passed to long time IAHS member Charlotte Groty.

Charlotte and her husband George, are part-time residents of Idyllwild, who have supported IAHS with enthusiasm and expertise. They serve on the IAHS board, are active museum docents, and Charlotte has chaired the annual IAHS Home Tour for seven straight successful years.

Thank you all for your continuing support as we continue to work to fulfill the mission of preserving and sharing the history of the Idyllwild area. IAHS will continue to prosper with Charlotte Groty as the new IAHS President. ♪

Best wishes Charlotte!

Marlene Pierce
IAHS Past President

Save the Date! Saturday, September 15th
IAHS 18th Annual HOME TOUR

Volunteer and/or docent at our Home Tour and
enjoy a free preview of this year's homes.

Call Charlotte Groty at 951 201-1400
or Marlene Pierce at 951 808-3632

KEEN ...

(continued from page 1)

Undaunted, the two married and rebuilt a grander facility they named Tahquitz Lodge. 1914 was also the year DeMille arrived. The lodge's resurrection and DeMille's publicity brought the resort into its golden age.

Tahquitz Lodge had all the amenities: tennis courts, swimming pool, stables, comfortable cabins, and reputedly the largest ballroom in Riverside County. Renowned photographer Stephen Willard publicized it with picture postcards he created after his 1917 stay. (Elliott changed the spelling to "Tauquitz" after 1920, believing it closer to Cahuilla pronunciation, only to restore the "h" by 1937, consistent with other area landmarks.) The lodge became more popular than Idyllwild among Inland Empire residents

In 1924 the Elliott family sold the resort to a group of Los Angeles businessmen, who turned it into a private club. The deal bogged down for six years in lawsuits over payments and title issues. Anita Walker Elliott caught pneumonia at Tahquitz Lodge and died shortly before the court returned property to her family.

Robert reopened the resort in 1930, managed by Anita's daughter Alyce Walker Murphy, but while it



IAHS photo archive



IAHS photo archive

could still attract 500 people for special dance dates, its day had passed. In foreclosure by 1942, the final blow, with a sale already in progress, was a 1943

wildfire. Propelled by a Santa Ana gale, the fire first raced past Keen Camp on both sides, sparing the lodge. But when the wind shifted, the flames reversed direction and returned to raze the nearly entire resort, sparing only the general store and the lodge's swimming pool.

A year later the Pasadena YWCA bought the scorched property, which became Tahquitz Meadows summer camp. The Keen Camp post office was relocated to a newly populated, nearby settlement and renamed "Mountain Center." In 1980, Emily Jo Beard acquired the defunct camp for Living Free. ♪



John and Mary Keen are at the right.

IAHS photo archive

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

New and renewing members April through December 2017

We welcome new members and thank renewing members for their continuing support.

Membership coupon on page 7

PATRON

J. H. Deal Riverside

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No Hollywood

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Darlene & Jerry Beebe Idyllwild

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Joe & Diedre Vail Walnut

David Kobosa & F. Maurer Northridge

Ruthe Donlon Pine Cove

Bill & Joyce Miller Santa Ana

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Lisa & Tim Smith Agua Dulce

Susan & Bob Righetti Pine Cove

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Carole Ann Hayes Palm Springs

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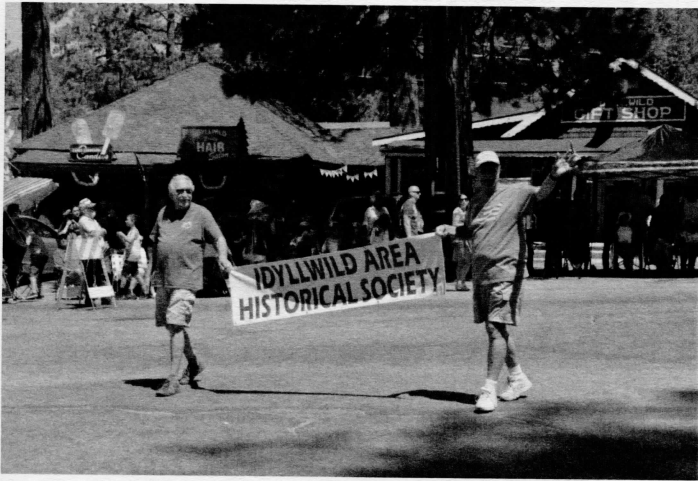
Alma Peters Mountain Center

Lana Ickes Idyllwild

Donald Giger Omaha NE

William Cooper Newport Beach

2017 IAHS EVENTS



Larry Turner and George Groty carry the IAHS banner in the village parade. Other volunteers handed out candy to children along the way.
FrazierDrake photo



Jimmie and Hedy Tyson drove one of their classic cars, a 1959 Thunderbird, for IAHS in this parade. This was the third year they have provided a beautiful car.
FrazierDrake photo



The 17 Annual Home Tour was very successful and enjoyed by 425 people. It is our major fundraiser. Join us next year, September 15.
FrazierDrake photos and design



The Ice Cream Social on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend is always popular. Larry and Linda Turner and George Groty are serving ice cream sundaes and rootbeer floats.
Photo by Tom Pierce



The museum was resplendent for the holidays with a beautiful tree decorated with woodsy animals, birds and colorful ribbons.
Photo by Tom Pierce



Board members Steven Ernez and David Martin generously used their talents and materials to make the museum festive for the holidays.
Photo by Tom Pierce

WE TREASURE IAHS DOCENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

Our historian Bob Smith was so right when he said docents and volunteers are “what makes IAHS tick.” To accomplish our mission of preserving the history of Idyllwild and surrounding communities in the San Jacinto Mountains, we depend upon these jewels. They help with our annual Home Tour, docent at the museum, assist with archive duties, create museum displays, efficiently complete accounting and office duties, maintain IAHS membership, and maintain the IAHS campus property and Village Garden.

We recognize our docents and volunteers each spring with a yummy luncheon, including awards, door prizes and surprises. Our heartfelt thank you to all of our IAHS docents and volunteers, (especially IAHS * New 2017 Docents):

Susie Avon *
 Julia Ledesma *
 Darlene Beebe
 Carolyn & Richard Levitski
 Nance Borchers
 Virginia Lumb
 Maureen Boren
 Sherri McClain
 Suzy Bowman
 Joan McCullough
 Dan & Sharla Carpenter
 Art Mason
 Diann Coate
 Kathy Massey *
 Morry Copeland & Dick Dorrsey
 Joyce Miller
 Barbara Cutter
 Dainne Pappalardo

Steve Ernnez & David Martin
 Marlene & Tom Pierce
 John Drake & Rebecca Frazier
 Shanna Robb
 Hollis Ann Fulmore *
 Bob & Adele Smith
 Bob Greenamyer
 Gisela Stearns *
 Charlotte & George Groty
 Linda & Larry Turner
 Lynnda Hart
 Kay Wanner & Charles Wix *
 Barbara Jones
 Betty Wilcox
 Dianne & Terry Kurr
 Sandy Wyckoff
 Idyllwild Garden Club members

We love new recruits and offer docent training to those interested in Idyllwild area history.

Please call Barbara Jones, docent coordinator, at 760-835-8387. We look forward to a successful 2018.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Names(s) _____ **E-mail** _____

Mail Address _____ **Telephone** _____

Individual (\$15)
 Contributor (\$35)
 Benefactor (\$250)
 Business (\$35)
 Family (\$25)
 Sponsor (\$100)
 Patron (\$500)
 Corporate (\$750)

(Please make your tax-deductible dues check to IAHS & mail to PO Box 3320, Idyllwild CA 92549)

If a gift membership, please enter your name and address:

Name _____ **Address** _____

IDYLLWILD THROUGH TIME

In a new book about Idyllwild, FrazierDrake lead a tour of the area's familiar places, while writer Robert B. Smith illuminates their significance with explanatory text, and comparative images from the archive of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society, illustrating both continuity and change. Available from the Idyllwild Area Historical Society.

About the authors

JOHN DRAKE & REBECCA FRAZIER are freelance photographers and videographers who first picked up cameras in their early teens and had both been coming to Idyllwild with their families since they were young children. They realized their similar interests and love of the mountain community while returning from a first date in Idyllwild. As adults they took the opportunity to move from San Francisco and take residence in the Drake family cabin in 2001.

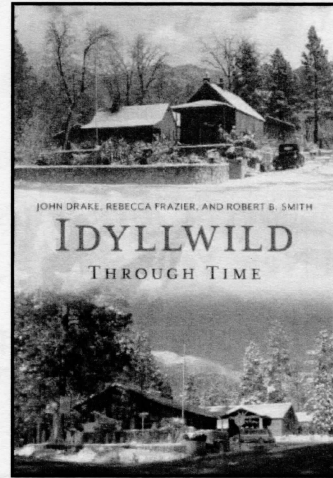
In 2006, they sought to use their years of digital and reprographic experience by volunteering for the Idyllwild Area Historical Society, just as IAHS was undertaking digitization of its collection of tapes, video, documents and photos. They continue to provide media consultation as well as the design and photography for the society's major annual event, the Idyllwild Home Tour.

Since 2007, they have combined their talents and experience as the photographic team FrazierDrake. They blog their photos and experiences to their website, MyIdyllwild.org, as well as showcasing artists and all things Idyllwild.

ROBERT B. SMITH has been visiting annually or residing full-time in the San Jacinto Mountains since 1939. He has volunteered for the Idyllwild Area Historical Society as its treasurer, archive supervisor, and newsletter co-editor, along with research and writing. For six years he wrote a monthly history column for the local newspaper, and this is his third book on the San Jacinto Mountains.

Smith's professional career before retirement was as a chemistry professor, college dean, and university provost. Along the way he has been a prize-winning nature writer and an op-ed columnist on science, environment, health, and education.

Excerpt from material provided by publisher, Arcadia Publishing. ♪



Copies available from the Idyllwild Area Historical Society for \$25, tax included.

LIFE DOES INDEED GO ON ...

Bob and Adele Smith, long-time supporters of IAHS are leaving the hill to relocate in Hemet.

Bob's enchantment of the San Jacintos began with yearly childhood visits after the Moote family, his grandparents, acquired "Pinewood" in 1925. After many summer visits together, Adele also fell under Idyllwild's spell. Upon retiring, Bob and Adele fulfilled their dream of enjoying alpenglow sunsets and life on the "Hill," by moving to Idyllwild.

Administrator, archivist, hiker, historian, scientist and writer, Bob Smith is well known to Idyllwild. Bob's background includes past years as a scientist and administrator, then after moving to Idyllwild in 2001, IAHS archivist and historian. As a writer of note, he submitted monthly historical columns to the Town Crier newspaper, and authored two successful books *Idyllwild and the High San Jacintos*, and *Idyllwild Through Time* (a collaboration with Frazier/Drake).

Bob supported IAHS by serving on the board of directors, working many years as treasurer, and as a popular guest speaker and archivist, spreading his historian's expertise of the Idyllwild area. Adele Smith has shared the years with Bob, as companion, copy editor, and supporter, while also acquiring artifacts for IAHS. They are a magnificent team.

Thank you Bob and Adele. May the alpenglow remain with you in fond memories of our forested mountains and village. We will definitely miss you. ♪

Museum Hours

10am to 5pm

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

and Monday Holidays

Also daily between Christmas

and New Year

Follow us on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety>

Visit our website

www.idyllwildhistory.org

For special tours and other business,

call (951) 659-2717 or

email info@idyllwildhistory.org

Admission Free

54470 North Circle Drive

Donations Welcome

Dates to Remember:

Spring Volunteer Luncheon - date TBA

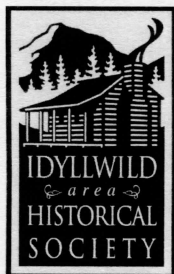
Fourth of July Parade - Wednesday, July 4

Ice Cream Social - Saturday, September 1

18th Annual Home Tour - September 15

Art Alliance Wine Walk - October

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Idyllwild, CA 92549



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