

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 2019

GIANTS IN OUR FOREST

By Robert B. Smith

Idyllwild has weathered another holiday season, although it felt a bit different this year. The massive, traditional Christmas tree at the heart of the village was dark. It needed a rest to help restore its health, long compromised by our warming climate and years of heavy foot traffic in the former Jo'An's beer garden. And now that the restaurant is gone, and a tranquil park lies at the heart of the village once again, a somewhat smaller companion tree bore this year's uplifting lights of the season. Both these sequoias stand out in the accompanying photo.

Wait a minute....sequoias? "Everyone" knows



Idyllwild's traditional and current Christmas sequoias tower over Jo'An's in this photo taken shortly before the restaurant was razed.

Frazier-Drake photo

Giant Sequoias grow only up north on the slopes of the Sierra Nevada. And the other familiar sequoia species, California Redwood, is confined to a moist strip along the Pacific coast. Neither claims a home in Southern California.

Well, in fact there's a tiny stand of thriving coastal redwoods down at Halfway Spring on the old Control Road that was the main route from Hemet until 1929. That cluster's origin remains a mystery. But there's no mystery surrounding the dozens of giant sequoias that dot the landscape throughout the Idyllwild area. Once you learn to distinguish them from cedars, you'll see them everywhere.

This all started in the 1940s. In 1941 Marion Michael Null, a physician and human perpetual-motion machine, retired with his wife to Idyllwild to pursue his love of horticulture. As an Illinois farm boy who had little time for school as a child, he learned to be self-sufficient by tending his own 30-acre cornfield. Lacking a high school diploma, he managed to educate himself well enough for admission to medical school and postgraduate training.

Around 1900 he began serving as a medical missionary in Korea, Japan, and China. Returning to the U.S. he set up practice in Seattle, while carrying on research at the University of Washington. During World War I he supervised nearly 300 doctors in an overseas hospital unit. Back in Seattle after the war the gray weather got to him, and after a camping trip to Joshua Tree he relocated to Southern California for the rest of his career.

In Idyllwild the Nulls settled into

See Giants, page 3

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David Martin, Joan McCullough,
Linda Turner

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: Carolyn Levitski
Feature Writer: Bob Smith
Layout: Halie Wilson



Charlotte Groty, IAHS President

We now have come to the end of another year at the Idyllwild Area Historical Society. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to make 2018 a successful year. A big thank-you, also, to a wonderful group of people who volunteer as members of our board of directors. They are a hard-working and a fun-loving group who make volunteering a wonderful experience.

We again this year held a very successful Home Tour, a tasty Ice Cream Social, and a delicious Volunteer Luncheon. And we are continuing the archiving of items about the history of Idyllwild. We had to say good-bye to Bob and Adele Smith, who have been with the museum since the beginning, as they moved off the hill. We wish them only the best.

We are looking forward to a wonderful 2019. The Garden Club volunteers will continue to maintain the beautiful museum gardens, and docents will continue to share their knowledge of Idyllwild's history with museum visitors. The Ice Cream Social is scheduled for Saturday, August 31, and the 2019 Home Tour will be held on Saturday, September 14.

If you would like to learn more about Idyllwild's history and are willing to share that history with visitors as a museum docent, contact Barbara Jones at 760-835-8387. Join our special group of volunteers.

**IAHS President
Charlotte Groty**

GIANTS ...

(continued from page 1)

a trailer on Hemstreet Place and set about planting on their acre-and-a-half. Perhaps inspired by the sequoia that pioneer Idyllwild gardener A. W. Cole had planted in the mid-1920s at the corner of Cedar Street and River Drive, Null began experimenting with them himself. But as a natural leader, he couldn't resist also getting involved in the community. He started by offering First Aid instruction for local residents during World War II, and before long he was president of the Chamber of Commerce.

In that capacity he encouraged newcomer Ernie Maxwell to form a chamber "sports and conservation committee," which quickly evolved into a separate organization. As a chapter of the national Izaak Walton League (IWL), that group would ultimately shape Idyllwild's long-lasting conservation ethos.

Upon the death of his wife in 1947, Null threw himself into popularizing sequoias. He obtained a hundred seedlings from a nursery in Glendale and resold them at cost to all takers.

The project hit a brief snag when he suffered a heart attack in 1948, but after a quick recovery he procured more seeds and went into mass production. He later estimated that from 1949 through the 1950s he distributed about 12,000 sequoias here and elsewhere



Portrait of Dr. Marion Null
IAHS archive

in the country. In 1955 he was one of 60 IWL members across the country selected by the national organization for special recognition as conservation leaders.

One of Null's seedling recipients was Eleanor Johnson, who was in the process of transforming the site of the fire-ravaged Idyllwild Inn into what became known as Eleanor Park. She planted seven of Null's seedlings in 1952, then started the holiday lighting tradition. One of her trees eventually became the first Idyllwild Christmas Tree.

Some of Null's seedlings were planted in front of the Idyllwild School by students in 1953-54. They formed a dense grove screening the school from Highway 243 for a time, [photo here] but were pared away as the highway was widened, leaving only a single

row of sequoias along the parking strip. In 1968 the Idyllwild Garden Club installed the plaque embedded in stone near the school's main entrance to honor Marion Null's massive contribution to the welfare and beauty of Idyllwild.

The Millennium Drought appears to have been the death knell for most of the remaining trees of the schoolyard grove. Idyllwild sequoia seedlings have always faced daunting obstacles to their establishment.

See Black Mountain Sequoias, page 5



Young sequoias hide the front of Idyllwild School
IAHS archive

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

New and Renewing Members July 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018

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

Membership coupon below

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Ed & Brenda Warner	Idyllwild	Leona & Carl Rice	Napa	Bonneta Doshier	Calimesa
Jim & Dawn Deshefy	Laguna Hills	Deidre & Joe Vail	Walnut	Donald Giger	Omaha, NE
CONTRIBUTING		Lisa & Tom Smith	Agua Dulce	Virginia Lumb	Santa Barbara
Eileen & Jim Gates	Idyllwild	William & Mary Coman	Glendale	Kathleen Kieferdorf	El Cajon

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Names(s) _____ E-mail _____

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(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 _____

BLACK MOUNTAIN SEQUOIAS

(continued from page 3)

Recurring droughts cause havoc, requiring younger trees to get adequate irrigation. The smaller trees are attractive to rodents and deer, as well. Heavy attrition in the early years was par for the course, but with proper attention in favored locations, dozens of the trees have thrived to become mature sentinels throughout Strawberry Valley.

Less well remembered is Marion Null's effort to



Dr. Schmid examines a sequoia on Black Mountain
Rudolf & Mena Schmid in "Aliso: A journal of taxonomic and evolutionary botany"

encourage the Forest Service to include sequoias in its continual reforestation efforts. One project was authorized in 1952, for which Null led a volunteer crew planting 2,000 seedlings along Highway 243 above Mountain Center in the burn scar from a 1943 wildfire that erased Keen Camp. Those trees failed to take hold, probably due to summer heat at that low altitude. But after the big Soboba Fire in 1974, foresters made another try, this time at a higher elevation on the less sun-baked north flank of Black Mountain.

The long-term result of that project was discovered

in 2008 by UC-Berkeley botanist Rudolf Schmid and his daughter and collaborator Mena Schmid during a hike on the Black Mountain Trail. As they passed the head of Indian Creek, the source of Lake Fulmor, at an elevation of about 7,000 feet, they came upon a healthy stand of live sequoias. More than 150 of them were scattered over 17 acres. The trees' varying ages, from seedlings to 20-foot-tall mature specimens, plus the fact that they had spread from their original five acres, showed that this is a naturalized, self-sustaining population, the first one reported outside of the Sierra Nevada range.

Come summer, you can see these trees for yourself most readily by hiking down from the Boulder Basin Campground just below the peak. There the Black Mountain Trail descends in a series of switchbacks that quickly bring you to an unnamed saddle, where you'll find the greatest concentration of sequoias. (But it's a good idea to check first with the Idyllwild Ranger Station on the condition of Black Mountain Road and current parking restrictions at Boulder Basin.)

Thus one man's obsession has left a legacy now enjoyed both by Idyllwild residents and back-country adventurers. ↙



Commemorative plaque honoring Dr. Null, created by Idyllwild sculptor Lora Steere and mounted on granite in front of the school in 1968

LAHS archive

IAHS Events

The 2018 Home Tour was a wonderful success with over 550 people in attendance, and we could not have asked for better weather. We give a very big thank you to the home owners for sharing their wonderful homes that showcased Idyllwild's unique history, and to Nancy Killingsworth, who discovered them.

It takes a village to have a successful home tour. Another big thank you to the following people who helped to make this happen:

HOMEOWNERS AND DOCENTS FOR 2018 HOME TOUR

Home Owners:

Dana Francis & Anthony Albano
Susan & Bill Judkins
David Martin
Cathy & Rick Morrison
Stephanie Yost & Steve Olson

Hosts/Hostesses:

Maureen Boren
Morey Copeland
Dick Dorisse
Diana Kurr
Marlene Pierce
Annamarie Padula

Parkers:

Dan Carpenter
Chic Fojtik
Chuck Lumia
Mike Kollar
Terry Kurr
Keith Mathahs
Tom Pierce
Ed Warner

Tour Booklet Sales:

Sharla Carpenter
Kathy Duncan
Virginia Mathahs
Dawn Miller

Muscians:

Paula King
Vicki Jakubac
Barbara Rayliss

Docents:

Charlotte Anthony
Lynette Banks
Nancy Borchers
Susy Bowman
Jorgine Brause
Diann Coate
Jim Gilliland
Aubrey Killpatrick

Lynn Kollar
Dan Larazzo
Mary Beth Larazzo
Julia Ledesma
Virginia Lumb
Martha Lumia
Lynnette Mathews
Julia Meadows
Joan McCullough
Dinna McKimmons

Larry Robertson

Jeff Robertson
Carol Simonet
Giesella Sterns
Jimmy Tyson
Debra Vernardo

Brenda Warner
Betty Wilcox
Sandy Wycoff
Hedy Zikratch

Refreshments:

Larry Turner
Linda Turner
Turner Family

Photography and Tour Booklets:

John Drake
Rebecca Frazer
Tom Pierce
Joyce Miller – Writer

Setup, Name tags, Banking, Sign:

Richard Levitski & Carolyn Levitski
Marlene and Tom Pierce
George Grotty

Homes:

Nancy Killingsworth



Visitors enjoy touring Hidden Lodge during the Home Tour.

Photo by Tom Pierce



IAHS hosted a visit from 55 members of the Sierra Club in October.

Photo by Tom Pierce

What Makes Us Tick

Getting To Know You Docent Coordinator, Barbara Jones

MUSEUM DOCENTS 2018

Dana Albano	Barbara Cutter	Kathy Massey
Anthony Albano	Hollis Fulmor	Sheri McClain
Susie Avon	Charlotte Groty	Joyce Miller
Lynnette Banks	George Groty	Marlene Pierce
Nancy Borchers	Lynnda Hart	Shanna Robb
Maureen Boren	Dianne Kurr	Gisela Stearns
Suzu Bowman	Terry Kurr	Linda Turner
Dan Carpenter	Julia Ledesma	Larry Turner
Sharla Carpenter	Carolyn Levitski	Kay Wanner
Ira Chomsky	Eileen Loiacano	Charlie Wix
Diann Coate	Virginia Lumb	Betty Wilcox
Morry Copeland	David Martin	Sandy Wycoff
Dick Dorrise	Art Mason	Stephanie Yost

Without these wonderful docents, we could not achieve our mission of sharing the history of Idyllwild at our museum. Serving 3 hours once a month will keep our museum open. Call Barbara to volunteer. It is easy and enjoyable. Call (760) 835-8387.

Ernie Maxwell Retrospective

July 4 through July 15, Courtyard Gallery

By Joan McCullough

The Art Alliance of Idyllwild has scheduled "The Art of Ernie Maxwell" for July 4 through July 15 at the Courtyard Gallery. The reception will be on July 7, which is Ernie's birthday. The exhibit will include highlights of our extensive Ernie Maxwell collection of cartoons, illustrations, paintings (including portraits), sculpture, and woodcuts. Some locally owned pieces will also be included.

The exhibit will also include a retrospective by the Idyllwild Town Crier of Ernie as founder, editor, journalist, cartoonist, and general factotum, along with his wife, Betty, at the paper.

Although the emphasis of the presentation will be on Ernie's art work, it will soon be obvious to the observer that his major impact on the Idyllwild area involved his dedication to conservation. With his foresight, imagination, humor, leadership, and very hard work, he helped to mold and protect this beautiful area, allowing Idyllwild and its surroundings to remain the rustic, unique town we love. You will understand why we call Ernie our "Renaissance Man", and why his nickname was "Mr. Idyllwild".

If you have any small memory of Ernie to share, please send your remembrance to Becky at the Town Crier (becky@towncrier.com). Some may appear in the paper, but all will be on display at the Courtyard Gallery as part of the exhibit. Your effort will be appreciated very much. 🐿

In her own words:

I spent the first 25 years of life in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, and ended up with a Master's Degree in Bacteriology. Through the vagaries of life, I found myself teaching first grade in the Coachella Valley. The Idyllwild area is a happy medium between Midwest cold and desert heat.



Barbara Jones

I have three children, 9 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren, but I no longer babysit. I live in a little house in Pine Cove that was purchased in the mid-sixties. I have lived in California longer than anywhere else, but I am basically a Midwesterner.

As a school teacher, I became interested in the history of the Coachella Valley. Then I started learning about the mountain area. I am fascinated by the arbitrary way things develop. When the call came for museum docents, I volunteered and spent many hours reading the books in the museum and talking to visitors. Visitors often have a lot of information.

When I joined the IAHS board, what was needed was someone to schedule docents. I have to confess that I don't much like making phone calls. It is my fate to get involved in things that are challenging for me (I didn't plan to be a teacher, either)

I appreciate the people who are willing to give some time to docent at the museum. Prior knowledge is not required of docents. There is generally time for you to study the exhibits and read the history in between visitors. Visitors are very forgiving if you don't know the answers to their questions. If you are interested in the beginnings of the Idyllwild area, the museum is the place to start. 🐿

Museum Hours

10am to 5pm

Friday, Saturday, Sunday
and Monday Holidays

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 — Wednesday, May 1

Fourth of July Parade — Thursday, July 4

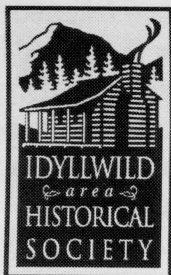
Ernie Maxwell Retrospective — July 4 through 15

Ice Cream Social — Saturday, August 31

19th Annual Home Tour — September 14

Art Alliance Wine Walk — October

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