

San Clemente Historical Society

"Forward with the Dream"

WHAT'S HAPPENING

January 1, 2021



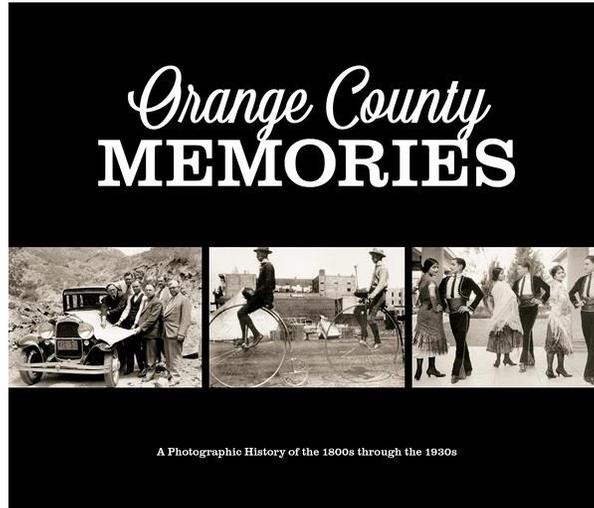
Historical Gift!

On December 21, just prior to our Board Meeting we received notice that Rainbow Sandals Foundation was donating \$10,000 to the Historical Society! What a wonderful Christmas gift. We are so grateful to them. We encourage everyone to visit the Foundation's website to learn more about them. And stop by the Rainbow Sandals store on Los Molinos and buy some sandals. Thank you, Sparky,!

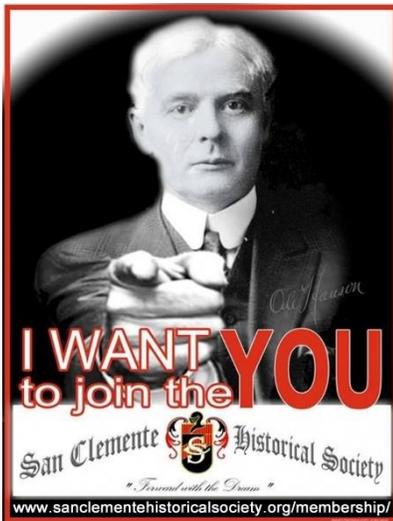
Below is a photo of Board of Directors members Carla Blanco, Mary Ann Comes, Larry Culbertson, and Tom Marshall, safely accepting Rainbows generous donation. Don Kindred, left, was instrumental in making this happen. Thank you, Don,



Orange County Memories: A Photographic History of the 1800's through the 1930's



Sales of this book exceeded our expectations, but we do have a few left. It contains hundreds of high quality rare photographs of Orange County, including many of San Clemente. . We are offering the book for \$35 regularly \$45. Contact **Mary Ann at 949-280-4960** if you wish to purchase one. Great gifts for anytime!



YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

January marks the kickoff of our 2021 Membership Drive. The Board of Directors of the San Clemente Historical Society wants to thank the loyal members who have supported the Society this past year. We encourage new members to sign up and current and lapsed members to renew. 2020 was an extremely challenging year for all of us, but it is behind us now and we are planning for a productive 2021!

Our Mission Statement has been and will continue to be our guide.

- To unite all persons who are interested in the historical and cultural aspects of San Clemente.
- To foster greater community appreciation and identity.
- To preserve and promote the heritage of San Clemente.
- To present the Society's views to the appropriate governmental agencies regarding proposed major developments and legislative actions affecting our historical environment.

- We are working on a teleconference meeting for our Membership in February
- The Village Art Faire is on hiatus but we are ready to set up our booth as soon as it is safe
- Our monthly What's Happening newsletter and Tom Marshall column in the SC Times will continue, as will our quarterly SC Journal articles
- All issues pertaining to historic preservation in San Clemente will be monitored and acted upon as needed
- Our Archives and Website will continue to furnish information on the history and preservation of San Clemente
- We will move toward the completion of our Landmarks on Del Mar murals project
- Your Board of Director's will continue to meet monthly to make all of the above happen

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP! We are not mass mailing renewal letters this year. Please visit our website at sanclementehistoricalsociety.org where you can renew online or get the address to send in a check if you so choose.

We need more than just money. We need more volunteers. Most of the Board of Director's are NOT youngsters. We need prospective Directors to become involved NOW to insure the continuation of the Society. We need a Membership Chair, a Webmaster, help with social media, a newsletter team and more. Please contact Larry Culbertson, larryculberston3@gmail.com or 949-412-7682. You can attend one of our Board of Directors meeting to see where you might fit in.

The following is a reprint of another great article by **Tom Marshall** that was recently published in the *San Clemente Times*.

Treasures Found in Miramar Theater Restoration



The restoration and rebuilding of San Clemente's historic Miramar Theater and bowling alley complex has continued despite the pandemic. Some interesting artifacts from the Miramar have been discovered over the past few years.

It started when someone turned over to the San Clemente Historical Society a couple dozen canisters of old movies from the 1920s and 30s, they found in an alley next to the theater. We, in turn, donated them to the UCLA film archives. A few filled holes in the school's massive collection. Others such as *Don Juan*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Mutiny on the Bounty* were early day blockbusters.

"Quite a few of these are very famous...some are even considered classics," notes SC Times movie columnist Megan Bianco. Two films, "*Greed*" and "*Intolerance*" were big influences on modern film directing, she points out.

Also left behind by the previous owners was the projection equipment, still set up as though a movie was about to start. Sitting there unused for thirty years, the projectors are probably destined to be a decoration or museum piece for the project.

While sand blasting the theater's exterior this fall, workers uncovered the original artwork painted on the stucco. A fresco depicts a Spanish-style crest on the building's tower while a hand-painted sign sports "El Hidalgo", used for promotional photos of the theater before it opened as San Clemente Theater. "We will be pushing the developer to restore the original fresco and sign," said Jonathan Lightfoot, Economic Development Officer for the city.

In the neighboring bowling alley, wood from the actual alleys has survived quite well even as the building itself greatly deteriorated over decades of disuse. Plans are to repurpose wood from the lanes into counter tops for a bar or tables for a new, food court.

The hope is the project will be completed late next year with a grand reopening ceremony capping off years of bringing the North Beach area back to its original glory and perhaps landing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Historical Society Board Member **Jim Hamilton** continues his in-depth study of the downtown businesses and the people who make our historic downtown so interesting. This month we have Part 1 of Russell Stationers, about the business. Next month, Part 2, Recollections of San Clemente.

Russell Stationers



David Russell is a multigenerational, dedicated, successful San Clemente business owner and resident. Russell Stationers has always been located on Avenida Del Mar. Just not in the same location. It is one of the few continuous historic businesses in this Spanish Village by the Sea. It is the only one on Avenida Del Mar to be in business for 70 years. Sam's Shoes runs a close second. This store and its family owners have changed with the times.

It was opened in 1950 by David's grandfather, Russell M. Russell, who went by Mike. Then his father, Chuck Russell, got into the business. This makes the current patriarch, David M. Russell, the 3rd generation. He started at age 13. Now his sons Brian & CJ makes the 4th generation. CJ's children Nolan

Mirick Russell, & Forest John Russell are also involved.

David explains, "We started as an office supply store, well before Staples and Office Depot. When they came in, we had to leave that market. We gradually shifted to being a gift and souvenir shop. We changed to keep us in this community. There is not a single independent office supply store in Orange County. Now even the big chains are closing. Our business now is clothing, and home decor. Our merchandise is very San Clemente oriented. We are also known for having a variety of collectible seashells."

When they were in the office supply business typewriters, carbon paper, file cabinets, and copy machines even slide rules were the main items. "Our first electronic calculator sold for \$300, which was a lot of money back then," David Russell notes. Change is ongoing. "What doesn't change is our customer service. Our local, loyal, customer base keeps this family business going every day," he adds.

Back in the day, the store's busiest times were weekdays. The slowest was Saturdays since offices were usually closed on weekends. The store was closed on Sundays. "Currently, it is the opposite. Saturday is

our busiest day. It has totally switched, with Sunday being second busiest," notes David. Tourists are now a major part of their customer base. David no longer needs to be in the store. The 4th generation has competently, seamlessly, effectively taken over the family business. The various times I have walked in, there is a family member present helping customers.

David continues, "From Jr. High, I took the bus from school to the store. The store was my after-school activity. We did not depend on outside salespeople. Our location was everything. Just like now. I am proud to note that only 2% of 4th generation businesses survive in this country. We are doing well and looking forward to a long future. My grandkids enjoy visiting along with helping in our store. "

Preservation



The proposal to use the historic building at 1531-1533 N. El Camino as an "events venue, café, office, indoor and outdoor live entertainment, full alcohol service, parking waivers, valet parking, and ancillary church services," is scheduled for the January 20, 2021 Planning Commission meeting. The applicant is proposing major modifications to a historic resource that has already been much modified over the years.

A seven-foot wall has been proposed to enclose the historic open space garden on the building's north side. Solid sliding gates would close off the garden most hours of the day. We are concerned that the wall will hide the beautiful exterior staircase and other architectural details. Please drive by the site and let the Planning Commission know what you think of the proposal.



**That's all for now, see you next month.
Please Stay Healthy!**

