



# The INNsider

3696 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92501 \* 951.781.8241 (Foundation) \* 951.788.9556 (Museum)

[innsider@missioninnmuseum.org](mailto:innsider@missioninnmuseum.org)

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Editor: Lynette Loveland

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## *Easter Sunrise Services Celebrated on Mount Rubidoux*



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Mount Rubidoux is a small hill compared to the other which surround the Inland Empire, even Box Springs is higher! Those mountains provide many of the physical creature comforts we enjoy – snow becomes water, the climate is mild for the growth of a wide variety of crops, and the valley is broad enough to be home to many.

Views from the top of Mount Rubidoux can inspire or calm a troubled soul – it is a restful peaceful view. You can leave the stress and turmoil at the bottom of the hill. DeWitt V. Hutchings termed it “soul-satisfying”. Frank Miller realized the power and influence which the diminutive mountain could exert on the well being of those who climb to the summit.

A road was needed to allow more people to enjoy the charm and tranquility offered by the hill. The roadway was developed by the Huntington Park Association (consisting of Frank Miller, Charles Loring, Henry Huntington and H. M. Chittenden primarily). Work began on the roadway in 1906 and finished in February 1907.

The first ceremony held on the summit was on Washington’s Birthday 1907. It was a flag raising during which Jacob Riis eulogized the mission padres who brought the cross and Fremont who brought the flag. Newspaper reports credit Riis with mentioning to Miller that he thought the summit was a great place to hold a sunrise service, maybe for Easter.

April 26, 1907 saw the erection of the Serra Cross with its bronze plaque commemorating the event. Huntington Rock was celebrated in the Summer of 1907. It was not until the Easter of 1909 that the 1<sup>st</sup> Easter Sunrise Service was held to celebrate the Living Christ. Other notable events on the summit are Taft’s visit, the 1911 Peace Service, the installation of the St. Francis Shrine and the dedications of the Loring Rock and the Louis Robidoux Tablet.

Let us briefly return to the 1<sup>st</sup> Easter Sunrise Service. It was a simple service with a few songs and pastoral readings attended by about 200 hardy souls who were inspired to make the trek up in the dark on the crisp morning. The service grew year after year as attendees recounted their experiences to their friends. Word spread like wildfire!

### **Notable Easter Service Highlights**

Cancellations: 1924 – Due to Hoof and Mouth Disease epidemic  
1944 – WW II  
1945 - WW II  
1969 – Due to heavy rain fall which damaged to road up the mountain  
2020 - CO-VID 19 epidemic

Almost Cancelled: 1927 – Heavy rains reduced the area to muddy conditions  
1943 – Blackout conditions during WW II in effect so no lights permitted  
1950 – Torrential rains

### **Other Noteworthy Firsts**

1911 – First year the poem “God of the Open Air” performed  
1912 – Isabella Hardenberg Miller honored  
1914 – Carrie Jacobs Bond’s first service  
1915 – Marcella Craft’s first performance  
1917 – Harold Bell Wright’s first services  
1919 – First airplane flies over to film service  
1921 – No fly zone enacted during service  
1922 – The first year the local Boy Scouts act as guides. They also provide trail maintenance and clear the trails to the summit. They have continued this tradition every year since.  
1928 – Amplifiers first used. A second service was held in July  
1929 – Fox Films Movie Tone Pictures films service  
1932 – Standard Oil install upgraded sound system  
1936 – Frank Augustus Miller honored  
DeWitt V. Hutchings resigns from the Sunrise Service Committee  
1937 – Jessie Van Blunt’s first service  
1939 – Zona Gale honored  
Services first broadcast  
1943 – DeWitt rejoins Sunrise Service Committee  
1946 – Service broadcast over ABC  
1947 – Carrie Jacobs Bond honored  
Last time Dewitt Hutchings reads “God of the Open Air”  
1951 – Last time Allis Miller Hutchings plays the carillon  
Service broadcast over Voice of America  
1952 – First time services not sponsored by The Mission Inn  
1953 – DeWitt and Allis Hutchings honored  
1955 – Mount Rubidoux given to the City of Riverside by Marion Miller and Frank Miller’s grandchildren  
1959 – Concrete Serra Cross installed

We also know that during the war years Marion Miller went up and celebrated with her cousin and a few close friends. Many were disappointed this year and may be yet again in 2021 but considering the intervening 111 years if the 5 cancellations are subtracted and the 2 secret trips my Marion readed then the 2021 service should be the 108<sup>th</sup> Annual Easter Sunrise Service.

*But who's counting??!??*



Photo by a friend of Nancee Richardson taken Easter 2019

### **A Sad Footnote -**

On June 26 of this year the Serra Cross on Mount Rubidoux was vandalized. Not only were slogans and words spray painted in bright red across the base and up the cross, but the side of the cross was damaged by a tool striking the concrete and dislodging pieces.



# Passages

Much has happened in all our lives during the past three months but not much has happened at the Mission Inn Museum. In fact, nothing at all. Why? Well, our Nation has been in the grip of a health pandemic the likes of which was last seen in 2003 (SARS virus) or even as far back as 1918 (Spanish Influenza). These past crises have not affected the economy as much as the current crisis. The economy was complete shut down in less than 24 hours and has remained so for over 80 days.

While we may not be meeting each other over the counter of the Museum, we have learned of the passing of several wonderful docents.

## Donna Duran

Contributed by Ursula Dube

Donna Duran, class of 2013, ended her last tour at home on her beloved ranch on February 28, 2020. Donna will be remembered for the joy she found in life and her aim to “make each day a Masterpiece”. She did double duty for the Mission Inn Foundation by volunteering both as a tour docent and front desk worker at the Museum. In addition to her work for the MIF, she loved volunteering with an equine therapy group which allowed her to work with her horses and others. She was a member of 100 Women Who Care.

Donna worked for the County of Riverside for 25 years. Her 15 minutes of fame came when she was featured on the news for “horse-pooling” to work.

Donna is survived by her husband David, 2 sons, 2 daughters, 8 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. She was much loved and will be missed.

## Gail Nelson

Contributed by Walter Parks

We have lost a blithe spirit from our docent ranks. Gail Nelson delighted guests with her arm-waving enthusiasm for over 30 years. She passed away on March 19, 2020.

Gail joined the first docent class, formed in 1987 in anticipation of the reopening of the Mission Inn Hotel. When that did not happen, she continued to attend docent classes in various locations and participate in the mock training tours in the old church building on 14<sup>th</sup> Street owned by the Press-Enterprise. Her first “real” tours were conducted on the sidewalks outside the chain link fence that surrounded the closed Inn.

After the Roberts’ grand opening in early 1993, she began her long stint entertaining and education regular tour guests.

Gail’s interest focused on the tour. She never was Docent of the Year because she was not comfortable serving on committees or the council. She was a tour guide – pure and simple. She continued to research INN history to make her tours more interesting. After years of conjecture, it was Gail who discovered the reasons behind A.G. Disi’s unfinished painting of the Spanish Wing wall. While few would even try to emulate her, everyone (guests and docents alike) loved her style.

She will remain a unique member of that long list of quality docents who have so effectively told the Mission Inn story.

# Doug Hargis

Contributed by Judith Runyon

It is with deep sadness that we have learned of the recent passing of Doug Hargis, a graduate of the class of 1999.

Doug's love for the Mission Inn was widely recognized as he shared photos, he had taken on his IPad. Doug served on continuing Education Committee of the Docent Association for several years and the Board of the Friends of the Mission Inn writing their newsletter. Doug was also honored as Docent of the Year and gave many Under the Stars tours.

Last year, along with fellow Docent, Dauris Slaughter, they received their 20-year pin as Docents for the Mission Inn Foundation. Dauris remembers his love of the Inn and that he had the nicest smile.

Doug will be sorely missed, and we will fondly remember him for his long-time service as a Docent of the Mission Inn Foundation.



## Previous Docents who have recently passed away

Carol Stadler class of 1988

Harriet (Boo) Bloom class of 2004

Millie Gilbert class of 1994

# Ho-O-Kan and Buddha History

Philip Falcone



Much of Frank Miller's eclectic collection is often believed to be solely Europe-centric, however the Inn's collections have enormous Asian influence with this Amithaba Buddha serving as patriarch.

In May of 1925, Frank along with his wife, Marion Clark Miller, and sister, Alice Miller Richardson set off for a trip through China and Japan. After a month's sea voyage the Miller's docked in Yokohama later traveling to Hakoni, where they were warmly entertained by government officials and various Japanese-American societies.

After being away for six months visiting more than the originally planned China and Japan by adding the Hawaiian Islands and the Philippines, the Millers were back in Riverside in late November of 1925. Frank marveled at how enamored he became with Japanese life, culture, and art—buying many new items for the Inn on this trip including the massive Buddha.

The Buddha sits in a prominent location, measures over eight feet in height greeting guests that enter the Asian inspired portion of the Inn. This serene figure was made in Japan during the Tokugawa period (1615-1868) of wood, gilt, and lacquer. While in the temple in Japan, much of the red lacquer that once covered the Buddha's knees and hands had been rubbed off by the hands of visitors wishing to touch the spiritual figure.

Buddha Amida is made from huge hollowed blocks of wood carved into the desired shape then glued with their grains opposed to minimize shrinkage and expansion. Next a coat of clay paste is used to shape the finer details of the image. A layer of linen/hemp cloth is draped over so the lacquer will adhere. Many layers of lacquer\*, made from the runny sap of the *Rhus Verniciflua*\*\* (a historically cultivated and lawfully protected tree), are added and slowly allowed to cure. Finally, the details are painted, gilded, and the crystal jeweled urna added. All the details of a Buddha are carefully regulated by religious and cultural constraints thus assuring uniformity.

Our heroic figure sits on an eight-sided lotus blossom, symbolizing the lotus rising from a murky pond in its pristine whiteness—the lotus blossom in this statute has multiple gold leaf layers rather than being a radiant white color usually depicted. The double lotus blossom is customary. The lotus blossom is the symbol of purity, the openness of the flower represents the present, thus Buddha is shown as rising above the impurities of the world.

Other symbols in this carved statue include the “urna”, a white curl between his eyes, from which emits the light that illuminates the universe. In the center of his forehead is the “ushnisha”, the crystal circle symbolizing wisdom and enlightenment. It also reminds one of Buddhas' all seeing nature. Hand gestures are especially important for each Buddha, known as “mudras”. The gestures of this

Buddha are the mudra of meditation. Note the joined thumbs and index fingers. The elongated ears show that the Buddha was born of the noble class giving up his regal life to search for spiritual enlightenment.

The “snail” hair is a symbol of the story of the garden snails who witnessed Buddha meditating in the glorious sunshine. So deeply involved in his meditations, his burning scalp went unnoticed. The snails noted the burning and not wishing to interrupt Buddha, they crawled up and covered his head. Thus, they gave their lives for Buddha.

The Buddha took over two years to be transported from Asia to the Inn. This was usually due to issues with ownership of the artifact as the United States wanted to stop cultural theft (as was happening in Egypt at this time).

In 1926, a specific room on the second story of the Inn was set aside for Asian art, but one room would not be enough for the collection that significantly expanded in 1928 and 1929. With more Asian objects and little space to display them, Frank ordered the building of new exhibition rooms. In addition to the existing Fuji-Kan Room would be the Pagoda Room, an oriental tea garden and the Ho-o-Kan Room (aka “Temple of the Buddha”) for its prominent displaying of the Amithaba Buddha.

Throughout the years, the Ho-o-Kan Room and surrounding spaces have gone through many cosmetic changes. For several years, the Buddha sat in the corner of the room, overlooking a mirrored bar that served as an Asian inspired lounge. This was documented in the 1975 movie, “The Wild Party” which was filmed at the Inn starring actress Raquel Welch—her dancing near, on, and around the Buddha bar has become an infamous story at the Inn.

During the 1980’s restoration, the bar was removed, and the Ho-o-Kan room was returned to a meeting room. Between 1999-2001 the Friends of the Mission Inn cleaned and restored the Buddha. The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa did an extensive remodel of the room in 2014—removing the pink wallpaper and aged carpet to create a lighter space to better showcase the room’s many artifacts. The room was repainted, carpeted, and silk embroidered panels were hung behind the Buddha adding to the ambiance of the room.

\* To make lacquer used on Buddhas and other Asian artifacts, is a long and arduous task. Clear tree sap is harvested in summer. The sap darkens when exposed to air. Once collected the sap is processed similarly to maple syrup. It is boiled to remove waster and impurities, stirred constantly to avoid scorching, strained to eliminate impurities. The resulting product is an aggressive adhesive which bonds readily with bamboo, porcelain, metals, fabrics, and most types of wood. Color is added to the final few layers.

Between each layer of lacquer, the artifact is vigorously sanded and polished. Chemicals used in the process are poisonous as well as the lacquer, fumes, and dust.

\*\* Chinese lacquer tree – very poisonous.

## From the Editor's Desk

Life has become interesting for all of us! The CO-VID 19 epidemic has brought life to a standstill. It is interesting to note: Flu season produces many of the same symptoms, is more vicious to the same victim pool, clears up in warmer weather, and is eradicated by the same chemicals. Every year we are told to wash our hands, cover our mouths, and to stay home if we are ill or have symptoms. Hope CO-VID 19 leaves us all sooner rather than later. Until then, keep safe, stay indoors, and enjoy the government mandated vacation!!!

Most of the upcoming events are cancelled so the paper may be getting slimmer. If you have any ideas of articles you would like to see or artifacts whose history you would like explained, drop me an e-mail at [insider@missioninnmuseum.org](mailto:insider@missioninnmuseum.org).

Lynette

Editor