



City of San Bernardino

Historical and Pioneer Society

P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402

LIBRARY NEWS December 2007

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

Stained Glass Windows Tour

This is to remind everybody that the Stained Glass Windows Tour will begin at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, December 8, 2007, at the Heritage House. This is Suzie Earp's brainchild, and it is really a good one. I had no idea how rich San Bernardino is in these tremendous artistic features.

We will be visiting the First Presbyterian Church, St. John's and St. Paul's, as well as a little church on Sixth Street originally known as Trinity Lutheran. This latter is the oldest, built by Allen Bone's great-grandfather in 1902. It is a modest building, and since it doesn't have the soaring vaulted ceilings required for the very tall windows one usually associates with stained glass, the windows had to be designed to fit the building, and as a result are completely different from any other church in town. This is a must-see, and the current owners are opening it up for our tour members. Fortunately, Allen brought this to Suzie's attention, and it is a nice example of what can be done even with a limited budget. The other churches are more traditional, but the stained glass windows are unique to each building, and were especially designed by famous artists. Most of the windows date from the 1920s to the 1950s, although some are newer.

The retired pastor of First Presbyterian has made a study of stained glass windows, and he will be speaking to our group. Also, another thing that would be of interest to tour members, First Presbyterian and St. John's both have little booklets about their windows. The booklets were published several decades ago, and both churches have donated a copy of their book for our Historical and Pioneer Society Library. These will be available for you to browse through if you want to come a bit early, before 9:00 a.m.

I should mention that there are some outstanding windows at the Catholic churches, also unique and very beautiful, but Saturday is inconvenient, as they celebrate mass and have other events on that day. Suzie thinks we can have another tour especially for these churches at a later date.

1875 Directory of San Bernardino Discovered

The folks at the California Room have come up with quite a find: an 1875 directory of Southern California counties. Paul Garrity found an online bibliography that shows such an item had been published, and he informed Sue Payne. A little online searching by the talented California Room crew found that San Luis Obispo had an original copy. Sue Payne was about to make a trip to the area and made arrangements to visit the library there. She came back with quite a story about the problems encountered in trying to obtain a copy for the Feldheym Library, but in spite of the difficulties she was ultimately successful.

USGS Photograph

In the August 2007 Library News I brought attention to the US Geological Survey site which features historical photographs from their archives. For W. C. Mendenhall's photos, see this page:

<http://libraryphoto.cr.usgs.gov/htmlib/new1.htm>

B. Richard Malony, a member of our Board of Directors and a photographer in his own right, copied the following photo, mwc00428, taken in 1904, and found the exact point where it was taken (on Little Mountain). The color photo beneath the black and white one shows the same view 103 years later.



A view of the mountains in 1904



The same view in 2007

Arda M. Haenszel (1910-2002)



Photo from the fall issue of the *Book Mark*, a publication of the S.B. City Library Foundation

California Room docent Sue Payne wrote a request asking that I contribute a letter to the Library Board about Arda Haenszel, as the City Library was considering naming a room after her. I was sick for a while and did not make the deadline, but I thought I would include my reflections about Arda here.

Arda's name is in the forefront again because of the donation of \$749,000 from her estate to the City of San Bernardino Library Endowment Fund. Arda was well known for her book donations – she is responsible for the creation of a California Room in the city's main library downtown, now called the Feldheym Library. At the previous library, the one at 4th and Arrowhead, she bought the materials to build a walled-off space to house the library's increasingly rare collection of Californiana, most of which she had donated. She bought the lumber to build the walls; she bought doors, lighting fixtures, bookshelves and other storage furniture.

Her father had begun as a member of the library's Board of Trustees in 1933, and his interest continued through the years until his death in a car accident in the 1950s. The donation of his books to the library was the beginning of the wonderful collection now held in the California Room. Arda once told me she had made a promise to her father to continue his work of seeing to it that San Bernardino had a first-class collection of local history. Actually, she undertook to supply three libraries with San Bernardino books: S B City, UC Berkeley (her alma mater) and the Huntington Library in San Marino.

The donation of such a large sum of money came as a complete surprise. Arda was an elementary schoolteacher for S. B. City Schools, and she retired in about 1970. I'm not sure of the exact date, but I met her in 1973 and I believe she had been retired for a few years at that point. She lived frugally, but that was to be expected of a retired schoolteacher. Just the expense of supplying three libraries with books every year – four libraries if you count her personal collection – would put a strain on her budget. I do not know how she collected such a large sum of money. The only reason it took five years to come

to light is that she had set it aside to be used as the trustee saw fit to serve in case of need for three of her elderly women friends.

The California Room collection and Arda's part in creating and maintaining it is pretty well known. What is probably not as well known is the unerring sense of what is important in a collection, and the ability to separate the wheat from the chaff. Hardly ever does a general knowledge librarian know what is going to be important in any specialty field, and that is not surprising. It takes an expert to know a scholarly subject sufficiently that he or she can render judgment on whether a newly published book is worthy of purchase. Reading reviews can be helpful, but in the field of local history a print run might consist of 200 or 300 copies, maybe less, and reviews of this material are not often forthcoming. Major libraries at learning institutions have special collections librarians, but I don't know of any in a city library of modest means.

As a book dealer myself for 20 years, specializing in just the kind of books that Arda collected, I became more and more impressed with her skills the more knowledgeable I became. There are a multitude of books that come out each year on the subject of California, but only a very, very few add anything worthwhile to the genre. Some are just rewritings by an author who thinks that creative writing skills can add spice to information gathered from secondary sources, but these are merely repetitive works. Also, given the subjects that seem to interest the general public, the California missions, the gold rush, and perhaps one or two more, there is just so much, after all, that can be said about a subject. Most of us, with the best of intentions, would fill up the limited space with just such works. Not Arda. She had the sense that comes only from thorough knowledge of her field, and by her careful reading of new works in order to determine their worthiness. Thus the California Room has a sizeable selection of California and the West books that are gems selected by the close scrutiny of an expert. Any book dealer in the subject would tell you that this is a dream collection and could now only be reproduced at great cost by the most wealthy people or institutions.

Another thing not well known about Arda, yet certainly should be, was her continuation as a teacher, but this time for adults. She spent a number of years as a docent at the California Room, and her expertise was priceless. The staff that carries on to this day are worthy inheritors of her specialized assistance, and many, if not all, have acquired the skills and knowledge that amazes patrons of the library.

Her teaching skills were also evidenced when she served as historian for the San Bernardino County Museum Association. Because of her willingness and abilities, she would assist people who wrote the museum for historical information. She would direct them to appropriate sources, or put people together who would otherwise not have a way of finding each other, which was an invaluable service. This service alone earned her the title, "Mother of San Bernardino history." She helped amateur historians and well-known published authors alike. Some of the information she supplied made it into publications. At an early date the museum began referring all local history inquiries to Arda. She wrote a monthly newsletter that contained information on who was researching what, and what books were in the works.

I should mention that her work with the Museum Association probably took up the bulk of her time, as she had a special interest, as did her father, in the Indian tribes of Southern California. She belonged to various anthropology organizations, and contributed scholarly articles to some of them. I am only generally aware of the work she did in this field, and perhaps somebody from the County Museum will someday write about Arda's work with that Association.

Sometimes authors would recognize her contribution with an acknowledgment, such as Erwin G. Gudde did in his prefatory note to the third edition of *California Place Names*. She had many famous authors who corresponded and/or visited with her. Her correspondence was extensive – I know from personal experience. She had some ring binders that were stuffed full with hundreds of letters to a single

correspondent. The Feldheim Library has this correspondence, and most of the authors of local history are part of this trove.

In the 1970s there was an organization called the San Bernardino Valley Corral of Westerners, an offshoot of the Chicago and Los Angeles (and other) Corrals. Just about everyone who was interested in local history belonged, including Arda. The members included, as I recall, L. Burr Belden, Larry Burgess, Paul Allen, Dennis Casebier, Harold and Lucille Weight, and many others. The San Bernardino group was never sanctioned by the parent organization, but its members were close to the L. A. group. Even though that group was all male, Arda was welcomed as an unofficial member. She received the L.A. Corral's publications, and the ones that concerned San Bernardino went into her collection.

Her continuing work as a teacher extended to her home, where she would help people with their research, and would even read their manuscripts and give editorial advice. For many decades she encouraged people to visit her apartment in San Bernardino, and in later years at Plymouth Village in Redlands, where she kept her amazing personal repository of research material that could make any local historian envious. Her collection consisted of much more than books and printed literature. She had scores and scores of large ring binders crammed with magazine and newspaper articles on just about every conceivable subject on local history. It might be on some road or trail out in the desert. And accompanying any published information would be letters from correspondents, photographs, picture postcards, and maps (many hand drawn of sites which would otherwise be lost). In her home was a treasure of information, and she knew how to find what you needed for your latest research project.

As for the maps, she had hundreds: a complete collection of USGS maps of San Bernardino County (and probably Riverside County too), plus many others published by such organizations as the Auto Club (including many rare ones going back to the early 20th Century). If maps could not be obtained because of cost or scarcity, she photocopied them. She made lists of the maps, which I haven't seen for sometime, but I presume the Library has them somewhere. And the collection had innumerable photographs. Unfortunately, the photos are not top quality. Arda was good at many things, but she apparently was one of the camera-challenged. Still, it is better to have a poor photo of something than none at all. She began taking photographs for her students in the 1940s, and she never stopped taking them up until just before she died. One thing she did was walk around the downtown area, and lot by lot, take photos of every building, residential and commercial. And the town was not her only interest. Up until her later years she would go out into the desert or up into the mountains by herself in her ancient all-terrain vehicle to take photographs.

Arda wrote extensively on local history. Many of her articles were very original, on subjects that had never been covered before and which she had researched pretty much from primary sources (deeds, contemporary news accounts, lawsuits, correspondence, etc.). She did write some articles on subjects previously written about, but in these articles she gave a new perspective on the history. She very rarely criticized other local history authors; but when she did it was always done in a gentle manner and I don't think she ever offended anyone.

She wrote numerous articles for the San Bernardino County Museum Association. I checked the SBCMA Website and found various writings on archaeology, paleontology, anthropology and history. She also wrote several articles for the San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society's annual publication, *Heritage Tales*. These tend to be essay length; that is, several pages. She wrote extensively in the SBH&PS *Odyssey*. I did a quick count and found 42 articles she had written. All this work was done when she was between 70 and 90 years of age (the last Odyssey article appeared in 2000), and represents quite an accomplishment for someone who was otherwise quite busy with decent work for the

Museum and S B Public Library. I should add that this was done when she was practically deaf and blind.

I certainly hope the San Bernardino City Public Library finds a way to name a room after Arda Haenszel – in fact, if it were up to me, I would name the entire library after her. Recognition is certainly due to the woman who has made such a major contribution to the growth of local history, to the collection of first-rate books in the California Room, and to the library's endowment fund.