



# The Branding Iron

DUARTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

JULY, AUG., SEPT. 2020



## ANDRES DUARTE'S BRANDING IRON SPANS THE YEARS

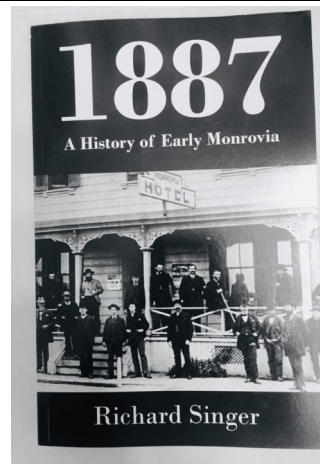
By: Claudia Heller

On display at City Hall is a branding iron, previously believed to be the original branding iron of our town's namesake, Andres Avelino Duarte. A little sleuthing cast doubts on the authenticity of this claim. Soon after, the great-great-grandson of Andres Duarte, Manuel Duarte of Llano Texas, contacted the Duarte Museum indicating he is in possession of the original branding iron of Felipe Duarte, Andres' son.

Duarte's unique "d" on the brand has become a beloved symbol of our town – used on City missives, newsletters, and official publications. So pervasive in our everyday life, the Duarte "d" is emblazoned on our hillside. Its presence was published in a book by Evelyn Corning entitled *Hillside Letters A to Z*. She explains: In 1979, a large subdivision of homes was built in Duarte. As part of the contract, the City had asked the developer to construct Andres Duarte's brand on a hill overlooking the development. The "d" was made of shrubbery outlined with concrete.

During the 1990s, however, because of the constant maintenance required, the City removed the vegetation and filled in the area with concrete. They painted the "d" white and added lights. After lighting the "d" for about three years, a few locals complained, and the lights were removed.

A replica of the branding iron may be seen at the Duarte Historical Museum along with the history of branding irons in general. We do know that branding and cattle ranching were introduced into California in 1769. The first cattle to roam the area that would become the Rancho Santa Anita were from the Mission San Gabriel herd, which at one time numbered as many as 26,000 head. With no fences to corral the cattle, branding was necessary to identify stock. (Cont. p. 3)



## MONROVIA 1887

A recently released book by Dick Singer entitled *1887: A History of Monrovia* could almost add "and Duarte" to its title. So intertwined are the histories of these two neighboring towns that many of the events and

characters are representative of both communities. This is a "must have" summer read for anyone interested in local history. At this time it may be ordered by calling Sandy Burud at the Monrovia Historical Society at (626) 675-8323.

## JACK COLLINS



(1/27/1931 - 6/5/2020)

Jack Collins could be called "the man about town." He took an interest in everything Duarte and was active in several organizations including The Friends of the Library and the Duarte Historical Museum where he served as a docent. He fought for what he believed in and spoke out against perceived wrongs. One of his favorite community events was the program at the PAC Center by Ray Bradbury, which he helped organize. He will be missed by those who knew him.

## BELL GETS RESPECT



THANKS TO THE DUARTE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, THIS BELL RESTS ON A TABLE, OFF THE MUSEUM FLOOR

The creation of the mission bells was an effort to preserve the historic route by members of the Woman's Club of Los Angeles in 1892, resulting in the placement of the first bell in front of the Old Plaza Church in downtown Los Angeles in 1906. The markers were designed with a cast iron bell hung from an eleven-foot post.

Once our lovely historic median on Huntington Drive featured mission bells giving testament to our link with that history. However, a few years ago the beloved bells were dumped and replaced with slick modern signs, the City's recognition of an historic era was erased, the mystic aura of that period tossed. Those mission bells represented Duarte's recognition of an historic era when the California missions were established from the first in San Diego (1769) to the last in present-day Sonoma (1823).

Duarte continues to pay tribute to the mission era with bell-shaped streetlights. They can be seen along Encanto Parkway, and a few are placed elsewhere in town. The mission bell style lights are maintained by the City.



**A BULLWHIP HAS BEEN DONATED TO THE MUSEUM AND IS ON DISPLAY IN THE CITRUS ROOM DISPLAY CASE. HERE IS THE STORY:**

I couldn't have been more than 15 years old when a buddy and I walked by a burnt out lot in East Milton Square Massachusetts. The ashes were still smoldering from a recent fire that took out an antique store. We just started snooping around and found lots of cool treasures. I found an old pistol and this bull whip. Just to have been in the store inventory put it into an antique item. I'm sure it had an interesting history.

Since Duarte's signature is a cattle brand it makes sense that we share a history of cattle and a bull whip sits astride those artifacts one would associate with Duarte. — Alfred Comi



In Memory  
Sheri Luann Uhlig



(CONT. P. 1)

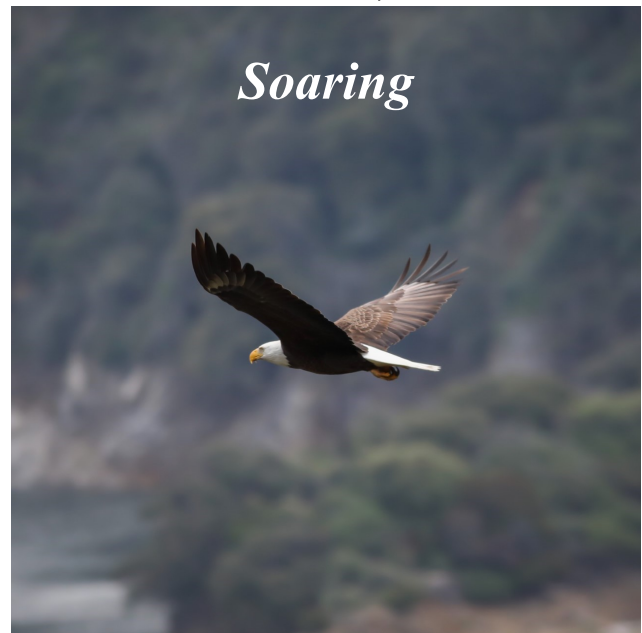
Andres Duarte retired from the Mexican Army in 1848 and was granted 7000 acres which became the Rancho Azusa de Duarte. It was then that he registered his brand. Unfortunately, Duarte lost his ranch because he was unable to pay back taxes levied upon him after the end of the Mexican American war in 1848.

With herds mixing on range land, owners adopted and began registering their own brand. As a mark of identification, the brand is perfect. It is put on in a moment; yet remains as long as the animal lives. Many brands are universal; yet, within each state in the U.S. a brand may be used only once. Permission by the owner must be granted before a brand may be copied. When students from the local elementary schools tour the Duarte Museum, they arrive armed with a series of questions. One question is to find the replica branding iron in the museum exhibits. As a guide, I take them to this relic and explain how it is used, loosely: The “d” part of the branding iron is held in the fire until it glows. Then it is stuck on the animal and the letter “d” is burned onto the animal’s rump. This explanation is met with horror, and even tears. It is usually followed by a single question: “Does it hurt?” And there is only one answer “Yea, I think it probably does hurt.” To be sure, I checked on the Internet and it answered simply: “brand yourself and let us know.”



RICHARD AMADORI.

Richard is a dedicated Duarte Museum volunteer and docent. Here he takes a selfie with the Duarte Hillside “d.”



A family of bald eagles has been continuously spotted in a nest near San Gabriel Dam off Highway 39 above Azusa. This recent photo is courtesy of Ryan McKinney. There is a rumor this bald eagle family has moved to Orange County. The museum sponsored spring bird walk to be led by Kimball Garrett was cancelled due to the pandemic. When it is safe to do so, we will reschedule and announce details at [www.RanchoDeDuarte.org](http://www.RanchoDeDuarte.org).

## OUR SCANNING PROJECT NEEDS YOUR HELP



The museum scanning project involves the scanning of local newspapers dating back to the 1940s. Our scanner, Jan Buck, painstakingly scans the newspapers into a computer and some day they will be available to the public. Also thanks to her helper, Penny Jung, supervisor

Kayo Jorgenson, and director Dilip Tiwari.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT**  
**www.RanchoDeDuarte.org**

Phone: (626) 357-9419

Email: info@RanchoDeDuarte.org

Instagram: @RanchoDeDuarte

Twitter: @RanchoDeDuarte

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

DUE TO THE PANDEMIC AND ORDERS FROM THE COUNTY, ALL MUSEUM ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED THROUGH JULY. BEYOND THAT DATE, WATCH FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS AT [www.RanchoDeDuarte.Org](http://www.RanchoDeDuarte.Org). WE HOPE TO BE BACK TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES IN AUGUST OR SEPTEMBER.

If you would like to volunteer to serve as a docent once every few months, please call Sharman Warner at (626) 358-2001.

**DUARTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM**

P.O. Box 263, Duarte, CA 91009-0263

777 Encanto Parkway, Duarte

(626) 357-9419

[www.RanchoDeDuarte.org](http://www.RanchoDeDuarte.org)

Twitter & Instagram@RanchoDeDuarte

Open: Saturdays: 1-4 p.m.

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays: 1-3 p.m.

Closed holidays

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Janice Buck, Penny Jung

Craft Fair Director: Karen Levein

Duarte Historical Society & Museum  
 c/o Claudia N. Heller  
 277 Opal Canyon Road  
 Duarte, CA 91010

