

# The Branding Iron

DUARTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2013

## President's Message

*Claudia Heller*

It was in 1956 when it started and what happened then haunts our town today. Before that time, Duarteans were reportedly "complacent" about the idea of incorporation, but that changed with the realization that Duarte could shortly become extinct. This town was flung into action when our eastern neighbor, Azusa, announced its desire to annex some 1,335 acres of land west of the San Gabriel River, acreage located inside of Duarte. Wouldn't it make sense that the boundary between Azusa and Duarte would be the river? But our neighbors had an epiphany. They needed to designate a dump site and concluded it would better for their community if they dumped in Duarte rather than their own town.

And so began what has become a habit over the years. Azusa proposes to trash our town, and our residents pack their City Council chambers to persuade them to adhere to the Golden Rule! But being a good neighbor is a tall order when money is involved. Over the years, Azusa's priority has remained constant: to collect the revenue and send Duarte the mess.

In the late 1950s, Duarteans realized that they needed to incorporate to protect their boundaries and fight Azusa's bid for annexation. Duarte argued that it had always been recognized by both communities that the river was the boundary line, a fact Azusa attempted to deny. Later a memo was discovered by an Azusa city council member regarding an agreement made on June 21, 1954 which read in part "it is not the intention of the Azusa City Council to cross the San Gabriel River to annex property in Duarte." This information and other facts stated above, are set forth in detail in *On the Duarte*, published in 1976.

Duarte filed for incorporation with the County of Los Angeles, but the annexation issue raged and then Duarte received another blow:



## BIRD WALK LANDS ENDANGERED SPECIES

Binoculars in hand, a group of bird-watchers scoured Encanto Park in Duarte and the adjacent river area for a glimpse of the birdlife, led by ornithologist Kimball Garrett, collections manager at the L.A. County Museum of Natural History. The walk, sponsored by the Duarte Historical Society, was held on April 21. Although only 38 species were spotted, it was the cooperation of a pair of Bell's Vireos that marked the day as they sang and flitted in plain sight at the west end of the Puente Largo Bridge.

The Bell's Vireo is on the endangered species list, and observing it was certainly the highlight of the morning," says Kimball. On previous walks this bird could be heard singing, but has seldom been actually seen. Its song is unusual, with the first set of notes scaling up, as though it were asking question. Then it sings a scale going down, as if answering the question. This makes it fun to recognize and identify, but the recent actual sighting was certainly an unforgettable experience.

Many of the birds normally spotted this time of year, such as the Western Tanager, were not seen. However, the river was bone-dry and not very appealing to migrating birds.

The Duarte Historical Society sponsors Fall and Spring bird walks each year. For a complete listing of species spotted, see: [www.duartehistory.org](http://www.duartehistory.org).

(Continued on page 3)



## DOCENT TRAINING DAY GETS AN EXTRA TREAT

Our dedicated docents were tutored on the details of the museum exhibits by Steve Baker, Claudia Heller and Mark Montgomery in a day full of fun and education.

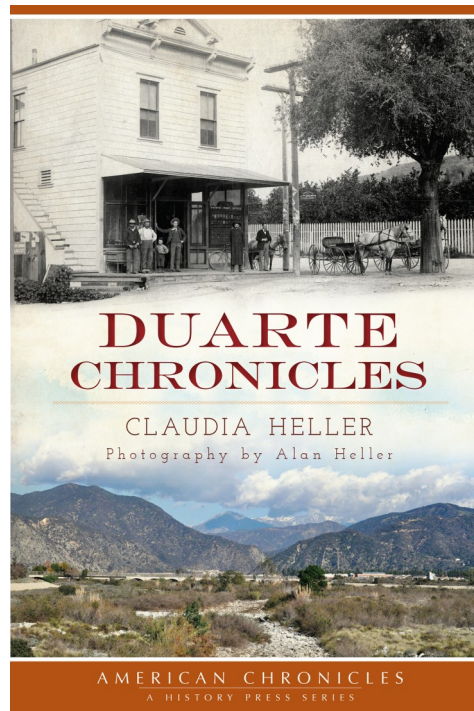
After lecturing in the Chapel Room, Steve sat at the organ which he donated to the museum many years ago, and played for the appreciative audience. The sound was clear and appealing under Steve's talented hands.

Both seasoned and prospective docents exchanged stories about docenting experiences and then enjoyed lunch. Sheri Uhlig presented docents with new name badges.

It's time to think about next year's docent schedule. Docents serve on a Saturday or Wednesday about once every other month, and always in pairs. If current docents wish to make a schedule change or if non-docents wish to ascertain more details, call Sheri at (626) 298-6784.

It is only because of our docents and annual membership dues that the all-volunteer museum is able to continue.

## BOOK LAUNCHING BANQUET CELEBRATES DUARTE CHRONICLES



Nearly 100 supporters filled the banquet room at the Old Spaghetti Factory on May 30 to celebrate the launching of the latest book on the history of Duarte, authored by Claudia and Alan Heller.

A little known Duarte song entitled *Ode to Duarte* was sung by artist Jeanette de Patie in addition to her rendition of the Route 66 song, and as the group finished up their pasta, she belted out "Volare."

A power point program was then presented by Claudia Heller consisting of many of the photos in the Chronicles Book. The book describes a variety of the gems in Duarte which often are overlooked, such as the famed "hanging tree," and a few of the historical houses which remain as well as those icons which are no longer with us. Remember the Trails Restaurant? The Evergreen Motel? The Blvd. Café? These icons and others are featured.

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Books are on sale at the Museum, City Hall or buy a signed copy by calling (626) 358-0329.



(Quarry continued)

Bradbury and Irwindale decided to incorporate as separate cities, shrinking further the Duarte Rancho. To top it off, Azusa then announced its desire to grab even more Duarte land, some 200 acres of partially subdivided land located just east of Royal Oaks Park.

When the rubicon decision of the County Board of Supervisors was released, current boundaries were drawn. The river was not the dividing line. So today, in the historic shadow of the controversies just described, the boundary line is skewed, and Azusa land extends on the west side of the river and includes hillside acreage above Duarte's Fish Canyon homes. It is there that Azusa now plans to allow Vulcan to mine. That way Azusa reaps millions of dollars of fees and incentives (\$65 million according to a recent news article) while Duarte gets the noise, dust and hillside devastation.

Reminiscent of the fight at the time of incorporation, our present day quarrel with Azusa is a losing battle. Duarte funds have been spent on legal battles attempting to force Azusa to be a good neighbor. They can dress up their town, build new homes and put on a happy face, but a town is not measured by its structures and outward appearance. A town needs heart, integrity, and the desire to be a good neighbor, making the San Gabriel Valley an envied area in Southern California. Azusa is failing that test. The book *On the Duarte*, sets forth the historic details as I've explained above. The Azusa City Council has the power and obligation to do right by our town, however it has failed time and again. Will they do right in the future? Time will tell.



## ROYAL OAKS STUDENTS VISIT THE MUSEUM



(L-R) Kylie Lim, Mrs. Lorri Rosenfeld, Omahyra Rodriguez, and Ariya Shahid gather around a smudge pot in the Citrus Room.

Each year excited and eager young local students visit the Museum to learn about local history. Before arriving, they have studied the subject from the days of the Native Americans to the citrus ranchers to incorporation. Students from Valley View and Royal Oaks Schools are able to enjoy this field trip without hiring a bus, opting to walk to Encanto Park, and even take a short detour to the Puente Largo Bridge to enjoy the view of the river and mountains.

Recently several Royal Oaks School classes visited the museum. Armed with clip boards they were excited, yet serious as they followed the clues and sought out answers to the questions prepared by the teachers.

Royal Oaks School third grade teacher Lorri Rosenfeld, a DUSD employee for over thirty years, says that her students learn a lot by visiting the museum and further study local history by such projects as designing their own citrus farm as one of their end-of-year projects.

"Our unit of Duarte history was originally organized by Nancy Ortell, now retired, and Debbie Ogden, currently a 4th grade teacher. We add to and modify the unit as we acquire additional resources," says Rosenfeld.

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE MUSEUM BY  
PAYING YOUR 2013 DUES. Student/teacher:  
\$10; Individual: \$15; Family: \$25; Business/  
Organization: \$100; Lifetime: \$500. Dues help  
pay for this newsletter and our monthly  
operating costs. THANK YOU**

**LIFE ON ROUTE 66 PRESENTATION  
BY ALAN & CLAUDIA HELLER  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1 P.M.  
DUARTE LIBRARY  
\*\*\***

**SALUTE TO ROUTE 66 PARADE  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28  
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**ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF AUTHORS  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5  
9 A.M.-5 P.M.  
AT  
WESTMINSTER GARDENS  
(Admission free)**

**Duarte Historical Society & Museum**

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(626) 357-9419

Open: Saturdays: 1-4 p.m.

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

Web page: [www.duartehistory.org](http://www.duartehistory.org)

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