

# MUSEUM MUSINGS



**Monrovia Historical Museum**

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## **Former Caretaker Pays A Visit To His Old Home — Our Museum!**

From 1971 until 1983, Henry Dorsey lived at and was the caretaker of the Monrovia Municipal Plunge, presently the site of the Monrovia Historical Museum. (You can read a brief history about “The Plunge” here on our website: <http://www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org/history-of-the-plunge.html>.)

On June 22, Henry came back to visit his home for the first time since he left. He currently lives in Summit, Mississippi, with his wife, Dienna. None of the rest of his family now lives in Monrovia. The Dorsey’s made a trip to Monrovia to attend a reunion of family and friends at Recreation Park. One of Henry’s daughters, Yvonne, contacted the museum to make arrangements for the museum to be open so that the family could visit their old home. The museum staff was thrilled at the prospect of meeting people so closely related to an important aspect of Monrovia history.

Henry was accompanied by two of his three daughters, Yvonne and Monique, (his third daughter, Yvette was unable to attend) who lived with him as little girls in the upstairs apartment which the museum now uses as its office.

The Dorsey family lived in the apartment rent-free while Henry was employed as the Plunge caretaker. The girls attended Monrovia grade schools and their father’s alma mater, Monrovia High School.

Yvonne and Monique had not seen their home since 1983. They commented that the apartment looked smaller to them now. As they walked through the rooms reminiscing, they recalled that their father got two Doberman Pinschers to patrol the grounds at night to discourage kids from climbing over the fence. During the day, the dogs stayed on the roof of the West Wing which was also fenced to keep people from climbing over. On the roof of the East Wing, the Dorsey’s had their patio, and the girls talked about all the plants on the roof and how it was their job to water them. Many of these plants were for their father’s part-time gardening service.

Henry took the caretaker position over from John Hess, who trained him for the job. Though the Plunge was only open three months a year, Henry was always employed full time because the pool needed to be maintained even when it wasn’t being used. He kept meticulous records of the condition of the water, keeping the correct level of chemicals, and making daily entries in the pool log book. When the pool was drained, he painted it and made repairs. Additionally, Dorsey also worked as the groundsman for Recreation Park and was pulled in to work at other areas such as Library and Canyon Parks.

## Caretaker Visit (continued)

The museum has an exhibit in the foyer of memorabilia from the days when it was the Plunge, and the Dorsey family enjoyed looking at the pictures from the days when they lived there. Oddly, the museum has no photos of any of the plunge caretakers. This oversight has now been partially rectified with these pictures from this very special visit by very special people.



**From left to right:** Yvonne Dorsey, Monique Dorsey, Francine Williams, Dienna and Henry Dorsey.



**From left to right:** Yvonne Dorsey, Monique Dorsey, Francine Williams, Regina Wethersby (Henry's sister), Dienna & Henry Dorsey

### Helping Hands:

#### Jericho Road and Grant Station

The Monrovia Historical Museum's partnership with Jericho Road is continuing to produce positive changes in the board and how it confronts the challenges of a small non-profit organization with limited funding. Jericho Road is itself a non-profit organization based in Pasadena. Its mission is to offer free (for the most part) assistance to non-profits by providing professionals to coach boards in the areas of board development, strategic planning, marketing, and Internet technology support.

Jericho Road representative Melanie Goodyear had visited with various board members, but because of the basement debacle, it wasn't until recently that museum staff was able to focus on what the organization has to offer.

After board members sent in a needs assessment to her, Melanie was ready to make recommendations on how we could strengthen the effectiveness of the staff. One of those recommendations was for Pam Barkas and Franci Bolen to attend a seminar on June 12, held at the Tournament of Roses House. The seminar presented ways to standardize procedures and policies by updating the museum by-

laws. Pam, Betsy, and Franci are presently working on a presentation on policies and procedures and amendments to the bylaws to be presented to the rest of the board.

Concurrently, Melanie Goodyear has assigned a person with extensive experience in working on boards of non-profit organizations to assist the museum staff with board development. This person is Robyn McCarthy. Robyn, Melanie, Betsy, and Pam met on July 23rd to begin planning out a Scope of Work to determine the specific paths to accomplish

#### Monrovia Historical Museum Foundation, Inc.

##### Board Members

President	Franci Bolen
Vice President	Betsy Woodford
Curator	Open
Collections Manager	Denise Trentalange
Treasurer	Nick Baldry
Recording Secretary	Pam Barkas
Corresponding Secretary	Pam Barkas
Membership	Vicky Hansen
Member-at-Large	Stephen Zampiello
Member-at-Large	Ili Lobaco
Member-at Large	Sarah Farmer-Earll

## BASEMENT UPDATE - The Saga Continues

*This has gotten to be a regular feature in our Newsletters, but the saga is nearing an end — we hope!*

The materials stored in the basement have at this time been transferred to plastic storage bins and labeled.

The City has completed the enormous project of repairing years of moisture damage from past leaks, making improvements to keep the basement dry, and upgrading certain areas to align with the museum's Emergency Preparedness Plan (see story on page 5.)

The Museum staff has designed a floor plan which will make locating collection items much more efficient. With help from the Volunteer Center, the museum staff is tagging collection items in the pod with what their new locations will be when they are moved back to the basement. This is also giving the staff additional opportunity to re-evaluate some items in the collections as to their relevance to the museum.



Denise Trentalange overseeing the boxing and labeling of artifacts stored in the basement



BASEMENT CLEANUP From left: Betsy Woodford, Pam Barkas, Vicky Hansen, and Sarah Farmer-Earll.



VOLUNTEERS Luis and Erica assisted in the work-day. Pam is complimenting Erica on her work of taking a scanner/printer apart because it was too heavy to carry up the stairs.

## Our Social Media Presence

### You Can Help!

The Museum now has listings on both TripAdvisor and Yelp. These sites host reviews of businesses and are often consulted by people who are deciding to visit the Museum. Your kind words are needed! If you can log on to each site and give us a positive review, that would be very helpful!



## WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

### Board Activity for June, July, and August

**June:** The treasurer reports that the museum made around \$600 at the yard sale held the same day as the Monrovia Historical Preservation Group's annual vintage home tour. The museum also moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by getting a Square account so that purchases can be made with a charge card.

A doorbell has been placed outside next to the office door, so when people come to use the Trentalange Research Center when the museum is closed, they can ring the doorbell to let the staff upstairs know of their presence.

The City is also helping out the museum by providing Carbonite, and off-site backup service so that if the computers are damaged, the information on the thousands of items in the museum's collection will not be lost

**July:** An anonymous donor gifted the museum \$14,000 for the specific purpose of digitizing the museum's microfilm collection of early Monrovia newspapers. The database will be searchable so that visitors wishing to do research will only have to enter names and terms to find information. Pam Barkas will oversee the project.

Betsy Woodford continues to use GrantStation, an online clearinghouse for grants of all kinds, and she presented information on grants the museum might qualify for. With the museum staff consumed with returning items to the basement, revising bylaws and the Strategic Plan, the active search for grants will be put on hold.

**August:** Gruber Home Improvement and Deasy Penner Podley have joined in support of the museum as corporate sponsors.

The museum will be purchasing a small voice amplifying device for use with group tours and presentations.

### Special Talents Needed

Though the museum staff is quite versatile and talented, there are still areas where we could use some support.

#### **Do you know how to edit video files???**

We could certainly use a person with that talent to transfer video files from our DVD collection to our computer database. We have the software, Photoshop Premiere Elements, as well as Handbrake.

**Do you have good eye-hand coordination and patience?** That talent would be very helpful to us as we have some books and other vintage paper that need repair. We have the materials and the directions!

#### **Do you have ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO at night when you watch television?**

Well, we have the perfect mindless task for you! We need someone to remove paper from plastic inserts in many notebooks. We recycle the paper for use at the

### Amazon Wish List

The Monrovia Historical Museum has an Amazon Wish List. We are in need of office supplies, items for current and future displays, and especially archival materials to store and preserve our artifacts. If you, or anyone you know, wishes to donate any of these items to the Museum, you can do so via the Amazon web site. The items can be mailed to your home to then be brought to the Museum on our open days or you can mail them directly to 231 N. Myrtle Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016. We will mail you a receipt for your donation.

The Amazon Wish List can be accessed directly via this link: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/3QFUT1TKX40ZH>. The link to the wish list can also be accessed via our web site <http://www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org/> under the "Get Involved" tab.

# Emergency Preparedness Training

By: Sarah Farmer Earll

Did you know ... that an arson fire occurs in a museum or library in this country every 2 days?

Throughout this spring, members of the Museum Board took part in the California Heritage Protection Project (CalHPP) for emergency preparedness and recovery training. This project, funded by the California State Library, taught us tools to make ourselves safer inside the building, to understand potential risks, and to respond and recover more efficiently and effectively to future emergencies.

What is an emergency? Our own recent disaster, the basement flood of January 2017, was fresh on our minds as we learned both preventative measures and recovery techniques. But an emergency could include natural events (earthquake, wind damage), or human-made situations (active shooter, arson). Over a series of workshops, we learned to identify hazards, developed disaster response plans, and networked with other local museums, libraries, and county agencies.

Working with the City Public Works and the Monrovia Fire Dept, we identified several areas for improvement, many of which have already been implemented. The next time you visit the Museum, you will see fully-functional emergency exit signs, evacuation route maps posted in public spaces, and LED lighting installed in the lobby. What you won't see, but equally important to the safety of our guests and volunteers, are safety edging on the stairs leading up to the offices, updated floor plans, and a "pocket response plan" now carried by all members of the staff.

The second part of responding to an emergency is the recovery phase... how to preserve and restore the collections in our museum. We received hands-on training on handling wet photos, documents, and books. The project also introduced us to many resources for salvaging artifacts, including experts in textiles, pottery, and freeze-drying. *[The digitizing and cataloging of items in our collection is an on-going process, and will significantly improve future recovery efforts.]*

Attending these workshops were not only museums and libraries, but also county agencies such as the Registrar-Recorder's office, Dept of Weights & Measures, and Sheriff's Office; arts organizations such as the Music Center and the Ford Amphitheater; botanical gardens and seed banks; and others. One highlight of the program included a tour of the LA County Office of Emergency Management and its "situation room." It's great to know that the County includes the protection and preservation of historical/cultural heritage in its recovery planning.

These sessions provided networking opportunities as well. In fact, we plan to hold joint training exercises with our neighboring city museums in Arcadia and Duarte later in the year. Additionally, our Amazon "wish list" now includes emergency response supplies for your donation opportunities.



Sarah Farmer Earll teaching us how to prepare for emergencies.

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/>

[wish-](#)



Safeguard Nitrile Disposable Gloves

[list/3QFUT1TKX40ZH](#)



Gearlight Tactical Flashlight



Easy Escape 2-story Emergency Fire Escape Ladder

## Museum Hosts University of La Verne Intern

The museum staff is elated to have Julie Hiroto serving a 96-hour unpaid internship as a requirement for her degree in anthropology. Julie had started her work on a college degree while she was still working as an administrative assistant, most recently at Caltech (2005-2019). As with most full-time employed returning students, she was only able to take one course a semester, but due to her recent retirement, she is now a full-time student and planning to earn her degree in the spring of 2020.

Her 20-year experience with Windows and Microsoft Office Suite and her administrative experience make her the perfect person to take on a project that no one else associated with the museum has dared to attempt: renumbering the Salisbury Collection.

Board member Sarah Farmer-Earll will be working with Julie on this enormous project which involves renumbering, photographing, and organizing over 800 artifacts in the collection.

The Salisbury Collection is an eclectic group of artifacts collected by C.C. Cobb and Dr. Samuel Salisbury during the early years of the last century. Artifacts include (but are not limited to) fossils, geological specimens, sea creatures, and Native American objects from all over the United States. Dr. Salisbury, a dentist in Monrovia, donated the collection to Monrovia High School in the early 1930s. However, space for the collection was limited, so it was stored in the basement and under the performance stage of the high school until it was moved to the museum in 1992.

Julie and Sarah are performing work that we never thought we would see accomplished in our lifetimes. The Monrovia community can be very grateful to them for preserving this valuable collection from the last century so that it can be seen into the next.

**Let's take a break here to thank our corporate sponsors!**

**The museum continues to grow and thrive because of your generosity.**

**THANK YOU!**





## Hear Ye Hear Ye! CONGRATULATIONS!

On September 17, The Monrovia Historical Museum was awarded a proclamation by the Monrovia City Council in honor of National Museum Day, which is on September 21st. The proclamation honored the Museum's 27-year history and contributions to the community.



(From left back row)

### Council Members

Tom Adams, Larry Spicer, Gloria Crudginton, Becky Shevlin, and Alexander Blackburn. Front row MHM Board members Vicky Hansen, Sarah Farmer-Earll, Betsy Woodford, Franci Bolen, Pam Barakas, and Stephen Zampello.

## HISTORY LOVERS & STORY TELLERS — WE NEED YOU!

Would you like to connect with people and inspire a love of history while strengthening your ties to the community? Become a docent at the Monrovia Historical Museum! We are looking for a few good people who can share Monrovia's history with museum visitors and deepen the links from the present to Monrovia's illustrious history. Email [monroviahistoricalmuseum@gmx.com](mailto:monroviahistoricalmuseum@gmx.com)

## We Have An Editor!

Hope Langevin, a long-time Monrovia resident, who now resides in Altadena, still considers Monrovia her home town. She's volunteered to serve as Editor for our newsletter.



Hope has a keen interest in local history and enjoys hearing stories about our community that express its character and charm. She's an English major and a former paralegal who made a career change 12 years ago and became a certified fitness professional and freelance health & fitness writer.

You can check out her LinkedIn profile here: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/freelance-writer-fitness-health->

# Monrovia Historical Museum

**P.O Box 2359,**

**Monrovia, CA 91017**

## Membership Application

At the Monrovia Historical Museum we keep the story of Monrovia alive. Our 8,000 square foot museum consists of two wings that introduce guests to the origins of the city founded by William Newton Monroe in 1886. Our displays depict life in the growing city as well as exhibits covering the local Native American groups, natural history, Monrovia through the World Wars and so much more!

Your membership and support helps us to continue to tell the story of Monrovia. Without our members we wouldn't be a resource for school groups, citizens researching their history and individuals who just want to learn a little more about what makes Monrovia the city it is today.

Please fill in the information below and mail it along with a check to the address listed at the bottom of the form, or you can drop it off at the museum any **Thursday or Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Payment may also be made through PayPal on our website, [www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.monroviahistoricalmuseum.org) by selecting the **DONATE tab** at the top of the page. The Monrovia Historical Museum Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, ST, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

One Year Membership (circle one): Student/Senior: (55+) \$15 Individual: \$20 Family: \$30 Supporting Member \$50: