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Giving thanks to all who support us.



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ABOUTTIMES

the newsletter of the Burbank Historical Society



/ 2020Q1001 / WINTER EDITION



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings and Happy New Year!!!

Wow, what a fast year that was. We had some great programs, and hopefully you were able to attend at least one of our events. We also had our Member Appreciation Luncheon. Our members are so important to the success of the Historical Society and we sincerely appreciate your support.



Members posing for the camera at the Member Appreciation Luncheon.



As the year comes to an end and you start this new year with resolutions and the hopes of drowning yourself further into your passions of life, remember that you are creating memories. Memories are what we have to pass on to the future. Memories might be moments captured in photos. They might be in collectables that you have gathered. They might be time that you have spent with friends and family.

Some of my favorite memories are the stories that are captured in our museum. Whether it be the time spent with board members, docents, and visitors listening to their stories of Burbank past or if it's looking at a picture or artifact and imagining what life was like during a certain time in the past, I appreciate the memories that surround me there.

As we move into the new year I will be passing on the baton to another president that will passionately take the helm of the society. I am looking forward to continuing my roll on the board of directors and supporting our quest to preserve the history of Burbank.

Remember to preserve your history by naming and dating your photos. On behalf of our board, I wish you and your family all the best in 2020!

Sincerely,
Dianna Briggs
President





SONG SUNG BLUE

by Susan Hodgson

It's general knowledge that as many as 120,000 Japanese-Americans were locked up in internment camps during World War II, from 1942 to 1945. Of those Japanese-Americans, 62% were American citizens. These internment camps were quickly set up almost immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack in Hawaii on December 7, 1941.

Today you'll hear these internment camps often referred to as concentration camps. Many West Coasters feared that after Pearl Harbor, we'd be next. The United States' war machine pushed that idea. They even tried to round up German-Americans and Italian-Americans, but for obvious reasons, that was a tougher task to wrangle.

Manzanar (located in the eastern Sierras in California) was the first such internment camp. Japanese-Americans were rounded up, forced to sell their homes and give up all they had. Entire families were squeezed into two bedrooms and one bath. Anyone remember the internment camp at the top of La Tuna Canyon? A driving range replaced it eventually and its current fate is up in the air.



Monument at Manzanar Cemetery. Credit: ncook (iStock)

An old LA Times article stated that the children of such camps (before and after the war) enjoyed the camps. They claimed that the Japanese-American kids had friends who were just like them, and took delight in the camaraderie and fun. The parents were less than thrilled; they were bitter, resentful and had lost everything they had. If you ask someone who had grown up in an internment camp how they felt about their experience, their recollections are likely different. Note that internment camps were not just located in California, although most were. Star Trek actor George Takei's family was first placed at Santa Anita racetrack, then moved to a camp

in Arkansas and finally shuttled off to the Tule Lake War Relocation Center in California. In no way did George find the experience "delightful."

That same LA Times article declared that Burbank's own Burbank Historical Society knew nothing of our internment and post-war housing. Today I think we'd call that "fake news." We have entire files on the subject.



Burbank produced thousands of planes used in the war effort.

But what happened after the war? The government ordered both temporary internment camps (to be emptied no later than 1946) as well as the "more permanent" camps which lasted until the early to mid '50s, when the housing crisis finally began to subside. Fred Ross, a district officer for the War Relocation Authority at the time, said that, "We had a terrible time finding housing for them [after the war]. It was an awful mess."

Interestingly and sadly, much like today, back then there was a terrible homelessness problem in California. The Japanese-Americans were let out of the internment camps in droves. War veterans were released by the thousands. And the migration to the warm, beautiful west was in full swing. After all, everyone had seen the paradise that California was in the movies!

Trailer parks were constructed. Quonset huts were hastily put together. The trailers looked like gulfstream trailers. But what were Quonset huts?

A Quonset hut is a small "lightweight prefabricated structure of corrugated galvanized steel having a cross-section" that housed two families. Thousands of them were constructed during World War II to serve as barracks for the military. The first were built in 1941 by the US Navy. They were lightweight and easily transported anywhere in the world, requiring very little assembly. But they were ALSO used for postwar housing for both

returning veterans and released Japanese-Americans after the war.



Burbank was named as one of the repatriation cities for Japanese Americans

One particularly famous Quonset Hut village was called the Rodger Young Village (“RYV”) in Griffith Park. Rodger Young lost his young life in the Pacific Theater, winning the Medal of Honor posthumously. There was even a patriotic song written about him by Frank Loesser. One version of it was belted out by Burl Ives. (Surely you remember Burl Ives from the animated “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”.) Loesser went on to write the music and words for such classics as “Guys & Dolls” and “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying.”

But back to Rodger Young Village, which was more like a little city. RYV had a grocery store, a hardware store, a chapel, a movie theater, a pharmacy, a laundromat, shared pay phones, etc. RYV was also surprisingly diverse and, it is said, people of all ethnicities mingled well. More “camps” were located right here in Burbank, both Quonset huts and trailer parks used for the postwar homeless. A big one was near Winona and Hollywood Way, and a lot of people remember the one in McCambridge (then Glenoaks) Park. Plus there was one by Lomita and Chandler.

It was a sad if not tragic chapter in our American Life. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed into law reparations amounting to \$20,000 for every Japanese interned during the war. And many of them were right here in Burbank.

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A section of the Winona Housing Project where trailer homes were provided for returned evacuees waiting to secure permanent housing in Los Angeles. 11/1945



115 N Lomita St, Burbank, CA 91506
Open Saturdays & Sundays 1:00pm to 4:00pm

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



In memoriam and appreciation
The Sence Room

Have you checked out the Ray Sence room at the museum? Not only will you see room vignettes showcasing furnishings from decades past, but you'll also find dedication pieces -- a wall honoring our major benefactors; a Giving Tree mural bearing golden leaves engraved with dedications; and at the room's center, a bronze sculpture of a 32-mule team pulling a harvester. All are pieces that honor and recognize the support the museum has received from the community. All of you have made it possible for us to preserve and share the city's history.

If you would like to recognize someone special and help support the museum at the same time, consider purchasing a leaf on our Giving Tree.



To purchase a leaf for the tree please ask one of our board members or docents for the Tree of Life form to fill out.



PROGRAMMING

We closed out our 2019 programming with a special presentation from our Burbankia friends Wes Clark and Mike McDaniel.

We're working to bring you more programs for the 2020 calendar year, so check your emails for future announcements.

Thank you again for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you at our next event.

