

**General
Membership Notice**

2nd Thursday of the
month

At the

Senior Citizen's
Center

6:30pm start time

**Tentative 2017
Schedule**

February 18

Black History Day

March 18

Women's History
Month Day

April 8

Baseball Day with
Marge Villa

May 6

Wine & Cheese fund
raising event

May 29

Memorial Day at
Montebello Park

June 10

WWII & D-Day

July 22

Day of the Cowboy

August 1

National Night Out

Calendar continued on
page 4

Adobe Dust

JUAN MATIAS SANCHEZ
ADOBE MUSEUM



J A N U A R Y 2 0 1 7

Message From the President—Chris Vargas

Happy New Year! 2017 is here and the MHS and Juan Matias Sanchez adobe are ready for a year full of events. The year 2016 proved to be a busy year for the MHS and Juan Matias Sanchez adobe with our annual Wine & Cheese, Evening in Italy, several other smaller events and our connection with local organizations. In 2017 we will have a series of scheduled events and exhibits.

January 7	Battle of Rio San Gabriel
February 18	Black History Day
March 18	Women's History Month Day
April 8	Baseball Day with Marge Villa
May 6	Wine & Cheese fund raising event (1920s Theme)
May 29	Memorial Day at Montebello Park

These events represent the first part of the year, and we will continue to have an event and/or exhibit on a monthly basis. Our goal is to encourage visitors to the adobe through hosting different events/ exhibits to strike an interest in the MHS and, hopefully, join the MHS as a member. Growth in an organization through membership is important in order to be viable and fluid. Moreover, we need working members that have an interest in our local/ state history, working with the community and help plan/setting up our events. Please reach out to family and friends and encourage them to join our great organization where they will learn about our local/ state history, work with local high school clubs, Girl Scouts of America, and other local organizations. I look forward to working with all of you and wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2017.

Thank you and persevere.

—Chris Vargas

Montebello's Old Redwood Barn: Taylor Ranch House



From left: Evelyn White, Eugene Biscailuz, Betty Summerhays, Leola Butler and GT June Goldie.

The original five acres was part of the La Merced Grant. La Merced was subdivided at the turn of the century. Albert Taylor was one of seven sons of Eli Taylor who moved to the area with the Mormon Battalion in 1848. The original five room with one-bedroom house was built in 1885 by Albert and Mabel Taylor in what was then the remote countryside of Montebello. Thirteen years later in spring 1898, the couple built a California native redwood barn, which still stands. Room was needed in the barn for the horses of the people who traveled daily to visit the Taylors.

At that time the barn was surrounded by avocado trees. In 1899, the first electric meter in the area was installed in the front room of the Taylor home. The farm was dotted with strawberry and blackberry patches. The ranch became famous for its barbecues and the gatherings of pioneers of that day. When the Taylors left the ranch in 1909, they leased the land to an oil company. Four wells were eventually drilled on the acreage.

Various caretakers looked after the buildings, last three additions added in 1928. In 1950, the Taylor's' friend, Evelyn White, was allowed to live there and to use it as a meeting place for her fledgling arts group, the Southland Art Association. White transformed the ranch into the center of Montebello's art community and the home of the Southland Art Assn., a group of artists who still use the center as a studio, meeting place and gallery.

On June 11, 1961 Poppy Trail No. 266 Native Daughters of the Golden West presented a plaque to the Taylor Rancho House. On the plaque was recorded the history of the redwood barn which was the first redwood barn built in the area. Local band, Mark (Guerrero) & the Escorts played at Taylor Ranch House August 1 (night), 1964. The City of Montebello purchased the five-acre ranch in 1972 for \$200,000, but allowed White to live in the house until she died in 1983.

In 1976 a pond, rock garden and gazebo were constructed on the north west corner of the property by the Bicentennial committee to commemorate the nation's birthday. A wooden structured bridge over the pond has been added with money from the Los Rosas Debutantes as their Bicentennial project. Also that year, the barn was rebuilt by the Soroptimist Club of Montebello. The house has not been inhabited since, but the Montebello Breakfast Club still meets there, and art classes are given several days a week. Montebello officials estimate the ranch property to be worth \$5 million in 1993.

The original building was demolished in 2008 to make room for the Taylor Ranch Cultural Arts Center. Montebello residents continue to use the barn on the same site as a community meeting room.

Continued on page 3



James Knox Polk the Eleventh U.S. President

Who was James Knox Polk and why write about him in the MHS newsletter? James K. Polk was our eleventh U.S. President and was primarily responsible for expanding the U.S. to the southwest and west coast. James Polk was born in North Carolina in 1795. When James was eleven years old, the Polk family moved to Tennessee by ox-wagon. James was a frail child and had surgery as a teenager for urinary stones. Surgery in the early 19th century was very dangerous and survival was not guaranteed. Never asked to take care of farm chores because of his health, James focused on reading and other studies. He graduated from North Carolina, class of 1818, then returning to Tennessee to seek the law profession. The state of Tennessee would be the staging ground for Mr. Polk's political career. He would serve as a state legislature, Governor, a seven term congressman and Speaker of the House. Mr. Polk was referred to as "Young Hickory" because of his relationship with President Andrew Jackson ("Old Hickory"), who served as a political mentor and recommended that Mr. Polk marry Sarah Childress, which he did at President's Jackson's recommendation.

The presidential election of 1844 would prove to be historical as far as presidential elections go giving the narrow victory by Mr. Polk against Whig candidate, Henry Clay. Clay was a skilled politician dating back to the President John Q. Adams era (1820s). Mr. Clay was Speaker of the House and served as John Quincy Adams' Secretary of State. Unlike Mr. Polk, Mr. Clay was opposed to the annexation of Texas and American expansionism. Mr. Polk assumed a political risk with a platform that included the annexation of Texas and a zealous expansionist view that included taking California from Mexico, but his risk paid off and he became our eleventh U.S. President on March 1845. Our country would be a very different country geographically had Polk not won the election because Henry Clay opposed Polk's expansionist views and war with Mexico. However, President Polk believed the U.S. had to become a bicoastal Nation. Many historians agree that President Polk wanted to avoid war with Mexico and had offered to buy *Alta California* for \$20 to 40 million dollars from Mexico through his quasi-diplomat, John Slidell, who the Mexican government refused to meet. This political slight infuriated President Polk and he declared it an insult and an "ample cause of war."

In 1846, tensions along the border with Mexico would escalate as a result of the Nueces River incident when Mexican troops attacked U.S. Dragoons (predecessor to the U.S. Cavalry). This incident would lead to a declaration of war against the Republic of Mexico by the Polk administration. The Mexican-American War would officially begin in May of 1846 and officially end in May 1848 with the signing of the *Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo*. President Polk exercised a great deal of executive power from the Whitehouse to meet his expansionist goals. When Polk campaigned for the presidency in 1844, he promised California would be taken and he would run for only one term, which he did and would die a few months after he left office in 1849.

Continued from page 2

Taylor Ranch Cultural Arts Center has been put on hold due to the unexpected, added expense of dealing with hydrocarbon impacted soil due to abandoned [plugged] oil wells. There are several plugged oil wells in this vicinity including at least one that is directly under the project site. Plugged wells can still "leak" depending on the age of the well, how it was plugged, and the current condition of the well casing. A very, large amount of oil contaminated soil was discovered during excavation for the foundation of the new Taylor Ranch Cultural Arts Center. This contaminated soil had to be removed and disposed of in a special landfill which accepts hazardous waste in 2010. In 2013 Montebello council rejects proposal to reopen Taylor Ranch Park. In 2016, after the State of California dissolved the redevelopment agencies, funds earmarked for the Taylor Ranch Community Cultural Center and other building projects, \$4.6 million left of a \$10.3 million bond in redevelopment, is moved to the Montebello's General Fund. Who knew the future of the old Redwood Barn

Homeopathic Practices in 19th Century America

As flu season is upon us it is appropriate to address the subject of medical practices in the home and the origins of home health care. Barbara Floyd of the University of Toledo shares with us her research on “Alternate Medical Practices” by identifying the German physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) as the pioneer of Homeopathic theory popularized in the 1830s in America. The theory was that “every man could be his own doctor” and that radical treatments by physicians such as bleeding and purging (the practice of cutting patients and bleeding out the disease or inducing vomiting to the point of near starvation) were actually more harmful than good. During the cholera epidemic of 1832, patients under the homeopathic regime were administered weak drugs which replaced the stronger illness by producing symptoms similar to those of the original illness but in a much less severe effect. The weak drugs did not cure the cholera but masked the pain by producing a new discomfort which was more merciful to the patient than being bled to death or starved.

In rural America household libraries were filled with medical guides. Titles of which included, “Our Home Doctor,” “Gunn’s New Domestic Physician,” and “Domestic Medicine” lined the shelves of many homes offering help on every aspect of domestic life. They didn’t address only physical ailments but as Barbara Floyd notes, “Introductory essays offered advice on the proper conduct of mothers toward children and husbands toward wives. “ She further states that hundreds of pages were devoted to topics such as, “The Passions,” “The Dread of Death,” “Early Rising,” “To Young Men—How to Get Rich,” and “Cold Baths versus Warm Baths.” Many books had recipes for healing teas and poultices while others actually proposed theories such as “Our Family Physician” by H.R. Stout (1887). Stout prescribes homeopathic remedies as well as hydropathic, eclectic and herbal. Thomsonian (herbal) remedies were extremely popular particularly in farmlands where people could grow their own herbs and plants and formulate them into medicines when combined with local “spirits.” In fact, the consumption of alcohol was considered medicinal in many cases particularly to relieve pain and many liquid concoctions were utilized for temporary relief as today some of our modern cold medicines have alcohol as a main ingredient.

This new interest in homeopathy led to a new breed of quack doctors. People who had little medical training were selling a new line of goods with the enthusiasm and enticement of dishonest salesmen. All medical guides were optimistic about their cures from baldness to bee-stings and cancers. Homeopathic kits were packaged and sold by mail order. People felt a kinship between themselves and these distributors against the aristocracy of the medical profession. With advances in medicine which were far less drastic and more humane and the growth of larger towns and mobility (doctors performing house calls) future generations detracted from much of the quackery of home medical practices whose results were often questionable from the start. Today we have options and homeopathy is still an option for many where many chemical treatments are not physically tolerable. Today we can utilize both nature and science to treat our physical ailments and a simple flu shot can get us through the winter. It is however comforting to rely on those little home remedies because somehow we trust the care of those closest to us and the security of that which is familiar.

Barbara Garcia-Guzman

Calendar continued from Page 1

August 19	National Aviation Day
September 9	National Teddy Bear Day / Theodore Roosevelt
October 8	Evening In Italy at Salvatore's Restaurant, Big event maximum effort
October 28	Mexican Horror Story: Haunted Adobe, Big event maximum effort
November 11	Veterans Day
December 9	Christmas At The Adobe

Adobe Dust