

The Mission Canyon History Project

by Randy Reetz

Last month, the Santa Barbara County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission retained historian Michel Nellis to supervise Mission Canyon's very own Historic Survey. Her job description includes: identifying and listing our canyon's historic sites and structures, marshalling the efforts of the Mission Canyon citizen-historians, tapping local archives, libraries, and museums, and drawing on the reminiscences of our Canyon's long-time residents. As this survey has long-term value and consequences, MCA is subsidizing a portion of Nellis's costs.

The Historic Survey's target area includes Mission Canyon south of Foothill (cataloging everything more than 50 years old), plus known historic sites north of Foothill (e.g. the Gane House). The project focuses primarily on historic homes and other structures, but also covers archaeological sites, old water systems, adobes, bridges, stone walls, old gardens and orchards, and other artifacts of a cultural or historic character.

Want to help? Call Ray Smith at 682-5583, or Randy Reetz at 451-4067 to learn how you can contribute to the History Project. No experience necessary. Enthusiasm a plus!

The survey should also include profiles of significant personages who lived in Mission Canyon during its earliest days—such as Lockwood de Forest, landscape architect; Petra Reyes, the Cahuica Indian who lived near the Botanic Garden before there ever was a Botanic Garden; and Frederick Hurten Rhead, an Englishman whose pottery, fired in his Mission Canyon studio 90 years ago, now sells for \$500,000 apiece.

The amassing of such an ambitious history of Mission Canyon is a prodigious task. Ancient property records, maps, and surveys must be collected and examined for clues to our community's heritage. The culture and history of the Chumash, dating back 6,000 years, deserve attention, as they depict Mission Canyon as it existed long before Cabrillo sailed to our shores. With the Old Mission on our doorstep, the life and times of the Spanish soldiers and the Franciscan Fathers shaped our water systems and our property lines, and created our oldest still-extant structures.



Who built this tiny adobe, found on the old Ullman estate off Las Canoas Road, why, and when are among the mysteries the History Project hopes to solve.

PHOTO: Lee Anne Dollison

Mission Canyon from the late 1800s on through the 1920s and '30s may have been our golden era, as crafts people and artists, stonemasons and builders put down roots in our community and distinguished us as a unique part of Santa Barbara

Nellis knows, from past experience, the best source for this information will be the residents of our canyon. So we ask that canyon people who wish to participate in this adventure to raise their hands, step forward, and sharpen their pencils and join us in this exciting creative venture!

Are You a Good Neighbor?

by Laurie Guitteau

Fire season officially began on May 12, and was immediately followed by a week of very high temperatures! As the season begins, it's time to be sure that YOU have done all you can to make your neighborhood as safe as possible.

Those who attended the Annual Meeting were reminded again of the importance of defensible space. The most challenging problems are when properties are close together as they are in Mission Canyon Heights. Many residents have commented on how frustrated they are because their neighbor's trees or shrubbery pose a danger to them. Fortunately, our Mission Canyon firefighters at Station

15 have been inspecting properties in the canyon, calling problems to owners' attention. Once they have finished the inspections early in June, they will be doing follow-up on the citations. If you have a problem with a neighbor's property that continues even after the inspections, speak with your neighbor first, and if that doesn't work, call Station 15 (681-5515). Their job is to ensure our safety, and they will do all they can legally do to fulfill that responsibility.

Additionally, be sure that you have contacted all your neighbors to be sure you have each other's phone numbers in case of an emergency. If you have not already met as a group to identify special needs and talk

about how you can all work together in an emergency, do it now.

Parking is the biggest concern in this entire canyon. MCA has been inundated with complaints, and everyone is trying to solve the problem, but it isn't easy. Do your part by being sure that you are keeping your road clear. Make sure your guests do not block access. Remember that parking is completely restricted during Red Flag alerts. Also, MCA's parking committee is in need of a new chairman to work with the county in solving our parking problems. If you have time and tenacity, contact Tim Steele.

We must all work together to make 2008 a fire-free year.

Notes from MCA's Annual Meeting

by Jean Yamamura

The first order of business at our Annual Meeting on April 22 was the election of new Board of Director members Alastair Winn and Georganne Alex. Ralph Daniel, Ray Smith, and Jenny Cushnie were then re-elected to the board.

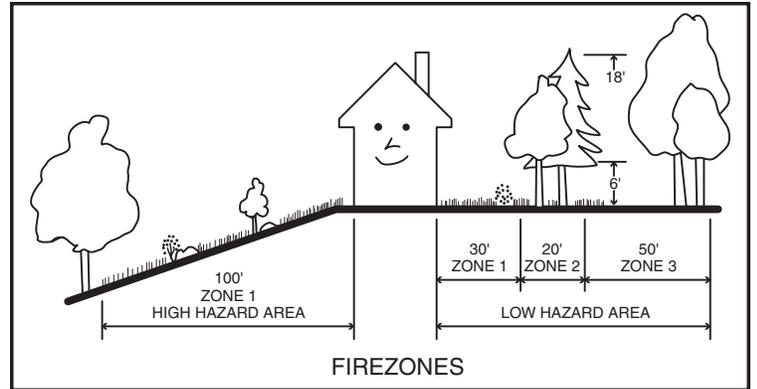
Wildfire Action Plan

Eli Iskow, the public information officer with County Fire, let us know that County Fire has critical information on “shelter in place” that could save your life should you be caught at home by a wildfire. Go to County Fire headquarters on Cathedral Oaks Road or go online to *SBCFire.com* for the *Wildfire Action Plan*. Here you’ll find a simple and straightforward checklist to evaluate your own and your property’s fire-safe qualities.

In assessing a fire-safe shelter, the questions range from housing construction materials to you and your family’s ability to cope with the intense heat, stress, and noise of a brushfire. Even if you plan to evacuate, remember that if a fire breaks out at the foot of your main exit road, you will want to be prepared to ride out the fire at home. This means having lots of drinking water, batteries and a radio, a properly cleared property, and doing a number of other tasks ahead of time to help keep you safe that are fully outlined in the *Wildfire Action Plan*.

If evacuation is possible, you should decide now under what conditions you will decide to leave (don’t wait for fire officials to tell you to evacuate), where you will go,

and what you will do with your pets. You want to drive off early enough to avoid the fire, smoke and road congestion. Consult the *Wildfire Action Plan* now for information on what to do with windows, fireplaces, gas meters, pilot lights, and all the other details you don’t want to mastermind in a panic.



Thirty feet of “lean and green” means well-watered and low plants near homes. For the next 70 feet, trees should be thinned so they don’t catch each other on fire and limbed up: 8 to 10 feet is good. Slopes are especially dangerous as fire can race up a 30 degree slope 1 ½ times faster and be 2 times larger.

SOURCE AND IMAGE: Santa Barbara County Fire Department

Escape Routes

Several audience members asked Iskow why the fire department has not done more to pre-plan escape routes for the canyon. Where a fire is going to break out is entirely unknown, he replied, so it is impossible and imprudent for fire officials to establish a route that may turn out to be inappropriate and dangerous in some instances.

Your best information on the location of a fire will come from local media, Iskow said. For instance, in the Rancho Fire late last June, the smoke reached town from Paradise Road in three minutes. It took engines eight minutes to respond. It was 15 minutes before the on-scene fire captain could give Iskow details about the fire’s direction and severity. He then knew it was no immediate threat to

the Santa Barbara community, and was able to notify the media with accurate information. Channel 3 had an information crawl at the bottom of television screens within a half hour, and some radio stations soon announced fire information.

A federal fire official stood up to say that homeowners have to realize that a fast-moving fire may make it impossible for fire-fighters to be everywhere at once. Canyon residents need to comply with the defensible space law and take responsibility for their own fire safety, pay attention to red flag alerts, be ready, and evacuate when asked.

(Complete Annual Meeting Minutes are at *missioncanyon.org*.)

Mission Canyon Policies Face Review

Policies that may become the law of the land and almost certainly affect every landowner in our canyon have been written into the draft Mission Canyon Residential Design Guidelines and the Mission Canyon Community Plan (MCCP). Some of the more controversial topics in the Guidelines and Plan are: overriding the county’s fast-track system for rebuilding homes after a fire or other disaster; requiring off-site improvements, at the individual homeowner’s cost, after a home is lost in a fire; and placing 232 canyon properties under the “Environmentally Sensitive Habitat” overlay (even though these properties have not been individually viewed or otherwise confirmed as having a significant environmental feature needing protection).

Many of these policies were created based on the 23 public meetings, three public work-

shops, and numerous comments by residents to the Mission Canyon Planning Advisory Committee (MCPAC) and county staff, and reflect the community’s expressed desire to maintain and enhance the character, scenic beauty and charm of Mission Canyon.

For instance, sticking to the rules, even in rebuilding after a disaster, was viewed as necessary when compared to the large lot-line-to-lot-line homes that went up after the Painted Cave Fire. Also, the canyon has long needed the improvements necessary to survive a wildfire; hence, the requirement for homeowners to install off-site improvements when rebuilding. A fuller description of key goals is outlined in the MCCP’s Vision Statement.

The public still has time to weigh in on the policies. To review the draft documents yourself, go to the county Web site at

longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/mission_canyon/missioncanyon.php or follow links from MCA’s site (*missioncanyon.org*). The county Web site has detailed maps where property owners can determine if they will be affected by proposed MCCP overlays. Comments can be directed to the project coordinator, Derek Johnson, County Long Range Planning, 30 E. Figueroa St., 93101, or djohnson@sbcso.org.

Postcard notice of upcoming public hearings—including city and county Planning Commissions, Board of Supervisors, and City Council—will be sent to all in Mission Canyon. Email notices will go to those who have requested them

The City Planning Commission hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 10. Check the county Web site for possible changes and times.

Managing the Trails

After nearly two years of study and nine public meetings, the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force recommendation was approved by Santa Barbara City Council and County Board of Supervisors.

The six-member task force was comprised of individuals from the city and county parks commissions and the Los Padres Forest Service, and significant contributions were made by key stakeholders, including the general trail enthusiast public, Mission Canyon Association, and nine other nonprofit and community organizations.

Administration Organization: A front country trails agency is to develop a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for trail management, maintenance, and funding. The goals are to define clear areas of responsibility for the city, county, and Forest Service;

Develop a front country trails (FCT) strategy or master plan for goals and trail objectives and priorities;

Establish a FCT coordinator position, which would focus exclusively on FCT management and implementation of trail priorities. This would include established trails like Tunnel and Rattlesnake as well as new trails that could be developed;

Foster development of an umbrella nonprofit organization to allow a specific avenue for working with the FCT agency. The umbrella organization is targeted to be a coalition of the 10 organizations that participated in the task force effort.

Community Outreach and Education: The goal is to develop voluntary trail use guidelines, signage, and build broader community support for the FCT.

Trail Management Maintenance: Conduct an assessment of trail use and conditions and make priority recommendations. Develop a trail classification system and trail standards, develop standards for trail planning policy, permits, and regulations. Explore a pilot program with trail use designations.

The MOU should be complete by the end of summer.—**Elizabeth Keate**

Slow Down Mission Canyon

We have picturesque roads to traverse, here in Mission Canyon, but we need to be aware of their particular challenges. These are country roads where many walk and hike, ride bikes and horses. Recently, a traffic representative came through the canyon and felt a car speed of 20 mph was best. Regulations are not clearly defined in all cases, so our

speed limits are expected to be” reasonable and prudent.”

The Tunnel Road and Mission Canyon split can be dangerous because cars come in several directions. The danger is magnified because Andante Road comes straight out across Mission Canyon and drivers have no visibility until they are in the middle of the road. This is also true for vehicles exiting the turnout.

Further up Mission Canyon Road, the narrow stone bridge crossing the creek requires courtesy from drivers coming from both directions. The same is true for the sharp turn onto Las Canoas which winds around and crosses Pedregosa Creek over another single-lane bridge, the scene of many an accident.

There is particular need for care where Mission Canyon Road narrows and winds toward the mountains. There have been close calls with pedestrians at that spot. Also, drivers need to be careful for bicyclists, pedestrians, and the occasional skateboarders at the intersections with Foothill, and at the Tunnel and Montrose intersection.

If we all slow down and watch out for each other, Mission Canyon will be a safer, more pleasant place. The benefits will be noticed everywhere.—**Fran Galt**

Web Cam and Goat Grant

Thanks to the efforts of Tim Steele and Jenny Cushnie, MCA has received a third U.S. Forest Service Grant, this year for \$125,000. Past grants cleared Tunnel, Mission Canyon, and Cheltenham roads, and created a fire-break in the upper canyon. This year’s grant has three major goals.

First, to continue the work on the buffer zone from Spyglass Road to Las Canoas.

Second, to establish a Community Monitoring Station to increase the canyon’s early warning capabilities, allowing more timely evacuation decisions. A Web camera will be positioned to provide a panoramic view of the foothills from Goleta to Carpinteria. A weather station component will provide readings of soil moisture, temperature, wind speed and direction every 15 minutes. These will provide a publicly accessible resource as well as a secure interface for Emergency Services. Mission Canyon residents no longer need to wonder about smoke in the back-country; they can monitor the situation using the Internet.

Third, to secure a goat-herding contract for the maintenance of the cleared buffer zones. Goats can clear areas that are impossible to reach with traditional clearance methods, and Mission Canyon has many of

those areas. We need an interested volunteer to “herd” this project and manage this part of the grant. No, you don’t actually have to herd the goats all day. Please call Tim Steele (687-3378) or Jenny Cushnie (682-7038) if you can help.—**Laurie Guitteau**

Such a Bargain!

About 20 percent of Mission Canyon residents paid their \$25 dues during 2006 and 2007. This year we are up to 33 percent. What do you get for your \$25?

- Newsletters to keep you informed.
- Brush clearance day (one trip to the dump costs more than a year’s dues).
- Forest Service Grants for safety projects.
- Professional consulting to ensure adequate pressure in fire hydrants.
- Close collaboration with all county agencies, especially S.B. County Fire, which allows instant cooperation in case of emergencies like 2007’s Zaca Fire.
- Special mailings and surveys to provide direction to the county in making important decisions that affect all of us.
- Projects that benefit the entire canyon such as the current history project.

Twenty-five dollars is a small price to pay to protect your family. Help us keep the cost of safety low. Be sure you have paid and remind your neighbors to do the same so that we can increase our membership numbers instead of the price of membership.—**Bill McCullough**

MCA Officers & Directors

Tim Steele; President; Land Use, ADRC, Fire Service Grant*, Botanic Garden Focus; 687-3378; bizwpow@verizon.net

Laurie Guitteau; Vice President; Membership, Newsletter; 682-4474; guitteau@cox.net

Bill McCullough; Treasurer; Membership; 563-4363; billmccsb@cox.net

Georganne Alex; Secretary; 682-5064; alexclothing@verizon.net

Dick Axelrod; Traffic & Parking; 687-5296; sbbaldy@aol.com

Jenny Cushnie; Land Use, Fire*, Bylaws, Membership, FS Grant; 682-7038; dallen4191@aol.com

Ralph Daniel; Evacuation Routes, Insurance*, FS Grant; 682-2889; rdaniel@fambus.com

Tom Jacobs; ADRC*, Land Use; 898-8804; tomejd@cox.net

Kathy Koury; Land Use*, Bylaws, FS Grant; 687-3378; ccp@sbceo.org

Milt Roselinsky; Land Use, Fire; 563-9212; milt.roselinsky@cox.net

Ray Smith; Land Use; 682-5583; ray@icess.ucsb.edu

Dorothy Ve; Bylaws*, History, T&P; 682-4654

Alastair Winn; History Project; 687-5682; alastair@appliedsilicone.com

Jan Yamamura; Newsletter*; 687-3371; marzmill@cox.net

*Chair of committee

The MCA Newsletter was prepared with the help of Lee Anne Dollison, graphics, production and photography.



MISSION CANYON ASSOCIATION

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

www.missioncanyon.org



Mission Canyon Association
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Your MCA Newsletter Summer 2008

Get Ready with a “Wildfire Action Plan”

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Survey Reply Requested

It is not too late to mail in your response to the survey regarding the establishment of a Mission Canyon Wildfire Prevention Assessment District. This survey is necessary to determine residents’ interest in establishing a source of dependable funding exclusively to pay for fire prevention work in Mission Canyon. The more responses we have, the more valid the survey, so please be sure your voice has been heard.

The last section of the survey presented some confusion. You are asked to prioritize the services that might be covered by the funding. Although all items on the list are important, we need to know how you rate them in importance. Please rank the most important with a 1, even if that is one that you add under “Others,” and continue until the least important has the highest number. Use each number only once, please.

For another copy of the survey, please “drop us a note” at the missioncanyon.org Web site. Please remember that only one survey can be submitted per property.—LG

C A L E N D A R

- July 1** MCA Board Meeting, 7:30pm. McVeagh House, S.B. Museum of Natural History
- July 10** City Planning Commission reviews Community Plan and Residential Design Guidelines. Please contact the city’s Community Development/ Planning division for accurate date, time, and location information or go to the MCPAC site at missioncanyon.org
- July 12** Solar Open House. 9am-noon. Tom Burt, owner of Sunpacific Solar, opens his house to canyon residents interested in seeing how one Mission Canyon family lives with solar electricity and spends 75 cents a month on electricity. 2449 Las Canoas Rd. Call 689-1479 for info.
- July 17** Fire Safe Council Meeting, 9am. Red Cross Bldg, State and Alamar.
- Aug. 5** MCA Board Meeting, 7:30pm. McVeagh House.
- Aug. 16** Fire-Wise Landscaping for Your Garden. 9am-1:30pm. Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, \$30-\$45.
- Aug 21** Fire Safe Council. 9am. Red Cross Building.
- Aug. 22** Fun Family Nature Night at the Garden. 6:30-9pm. Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, \$15-\$50.
- Sept. 2** MCA Board Meeting, 7:30pm. McVeagh House.
- Sept. 18** Fire Safe Council. 9am. Red Cross Building.