Monrovia Historical Society

Preserving & Sharing Monrovia's Historical Legacy

Quarterly Newsletter No. 36 *Fall 2026*

A hometown road trip—no gas required

Lights, camera, Route 66! Coming right on the heels of the recent video, A Brief History of the Monrovia Airport, the Monrovia Historical Society was excited to debut our new feature: The History of Monrovia's Route 66. Making its red carpet, world premiere on October 16, 2026 at the Monrovia Community Center, it was a community movie night of the highest order with well over 200 people getting their kicks. The planned extras had plenty of character, too: Norm Haley's 1926 Ford truck that had traveled the entire route, a mock-up of the McDonald Brothers' Giant Orange…and let's not forget the merch! A big thank you to Becky Rivanis who donated the best chocolate chip cookies you'll find anywhere between here and Joplin, MO. We also want to recognize Monrovia's Community Services team for helping to make the event a success. You're the cat's pajamas!





Now, we're not ones to toot our own horn, but we did hear some whispers that this was the "event of the season." Who are we to argue? But in all seriousness, we were so excited to share this passion project, led by our own Robert DiDio, with strong support from Sandy Burud. Supplemented by the technical expertise of KGEM (David, Chris and Michael, we're talking about you), and the expertise from many others (check out the movie credits), this movie turns a treasure trove of historical photographs into a journey through the city's roadside past. About half are part of the Legacy Project collection. Think of it as a road trip through time, minus the traffic.

For those of you who missed it, starting from Monrovia's early days, the film follows the highway's arrival in 1926, the changes to its route, and the businesses that served passing motorists. With Route 66 reaching its hundred-year milestone, the subject could hardly be more timely: a legendary highway, told through the places right here in town.



The supporting cast is unmistakably local: the Aztec Hotel, the McDonald brothers' first food stands, roadside motels and cafes. These are reminders that the highway's history isn't just a story of pavement and mile markers. It is also a story of where travelers stopped, what they ate, and the enterprises that grew along the way.

For the Historical Society, this movie offers a fresh way to bring local history into view. For the rest of us, it offers a reason to look again at a road we may think we already know. Sometimes an amazing, fascinating and remarkable road-trip story begins right in your own hometown.

Want more Route 66?

- Missed the red carpet premiere? Watch it on the KGEM **YouTube channel**
- *Monrovia Stories Project*: Route 66 in the 1950s and **Where is Route 66?**

Explore the digital collection of local photographs that made this movie possible as well as **regional Route 66** images and documents by browsing our archives.

A Letter from the President

Sandy Burud



One of the best parts of managing the Legacy Project collection is getting to know Monrovians who have been around a long time, have good stories and great photos to add to it. It's the perfect excuse to meet them and learn more about Monrovia from them.

If you came to our Route 66 movie premiere, you met Kim Ward Anderson. He's a collector's collector whose postcards, photos and map appear in the movie. Kim is the grandson of William Ward, our town photographer in the 1920s & 1930s. We have Ward to thank for the early Monrovia Days Parade photos, which he displayed in his store and sold for 10 cents apiece. He also captured accidents for local police departments, disasters (like the 1938 flood that thrashed Route 66), and the collapse of the St. Francis Dam that ruined William Mulholland and homes and people in its wake. Shots of Ward's own family are a window into everyday family life in Monrovia like his brother George's pony ride business in south Monrovia during the depression. Now, thanks to Kim, we continue adding it all to the **Legacy online collection**, with even more in next summer's upload.

William and Eunice Ward had a series of shops in Monrovia where they sold photos, portraits, paintings, radios, canaries, stationery, fountain pens and clocks. It wasn't easy as a small business in those tough economic times, but with only radios for news, their images of events were popular. One of their shops was in the Neville Building facing Library Park. One was at 504 S. Myrtle. One at 110 E. Lemon (that building still standing) and this one -- just across the street next to the "corset-less corset shop".



They sold enamel plaques that read, "Monrovia's The Place", an expression so charming we made it the motto for our historic postcard series.

When you've been around for going on 90 years like Kim has, you've seen a lot. He remembered as a second grader going to the place Monrovia's sole dog catcher operated — where the Monrovia Municipal Auto Camp had been, now the Public Works yard. He heard military trucks arrive in the night before we officially entered WWII from his home near where Foothill Blvd. dead-ended at Mountain. His grandmother Eunice was a Rosie-the-Riveter during WWII, wearing slacks of all things. He followed the ice man in his deliveries, riding along on his bike begging for ice chips. The family parrot (aptly named Polly) was so good at imitating William's voice that unsuspecting callers thought it was him declaring, "This is William Ward, goodbye!" and so they hung up.



Kim remembered his great-grandmother, Agnes "Alice" Mercier who got a government check each month because she had indigenous roots. We found his ancestral link and the legal dispute that awarded her ancestor — the child of a Sioux man and a Métis woman — to the Frenchman for whom the Sioux was a servant (aka slave). The suit had determined a servant's offspring were his employer's property. Alice was striking in appearance and intelligent, helping Kim with his homework even though she'd apparently never gone to school.

These are just a taste of what Kim's generously shared. Find lots more in the Legacy Project at **monrovialegacyproject.org** with a Keyword Search for "**Kim Anderson**" or "**William Ward**" and be sure to check back next summer. A display of the Route 66 flood in the front room at the Duarte Historical Museum is from Kim and fun to visit. It complements the Museum's larger exhibit on Route 66, one of the few extensive collections around.

Kim is one example – an extraordinary one — of the Monrovians whose memories and photos we must record while we can. I am so grateful to Kim for allowing me to do that, and to enjoy the pleasure of his company.

The Legacy Ledger

What's old, what's new, what's cool in The Monrovia Legacy Project

The Nightmare Before Christmas Catalogs



Ah, the memories of Christmas past. Waiting patiently, day after day, until the postman arrived. And then it was there: a huge catalog of joy. Well, mostly joy, if you skipped past the pajamas section. Then there it was—Santa's entire inventory right at our fingertips! We spent hours poring endlessly over its pages choosing the perfect gifts to ask for. If you were nice, not naughty, those wishes happily manifested into packages under the tree.

For those of us of a certain age, we're incredibly familiar with the massive holiday catalogs from Sears, JC Penney, and Montgomery Ward. But as it turns out, a local Monrovia merchant was years ahead of these retail behemoths.

Remember Caddell's? No? Well, neither do we, but the Legacy Project does.

Buried deep in the recesses of this ever-growing database of Monrovia's past is **Caddell's Toy Fair catalog**—an old-school goldmine of gifts meant to please every local boy and girl. But looking through it today, some of these playthings feel more like psychological warfare than holiday magic.



Take this teddy bear, for instance. He looks less like a "constant companion" and more like a hostage. The ad notes he's "strongly constructed to withstand the most rough and tumble play." Does he look profoundly lugubrious about his impending doom, or just quietly furious? Either way, those eyes have definitely seen things.



If the bear's staring eyes weren't unsettling enough, you could always consult "The Mystic Finger." Billed as "The Peer of Instructive Wonder Toys," this 50-cent box of pure occult energy is strangely aggressive about geography. The ad asks, "If some one should ask you, 'how long is the Panama Canal,' could you give the correct answer?" Luckily, "the mystic finger never makes a mistake." What's more concerning—the giant disembodied hand artwork on the box, or the fact that it promises to tell you "interesting things" in a way that sounds highly threatening?



Perhaps the bear was so furious because he knew what punishment awaited if he got the Panama Canal question wrong. Enter the Toy Laundry Sets. For just $1.25, keeping dolly's wardrobe immaculate "will teach the children the lesson of cleanliness in a forceful as well as enjoyable manner." Because nothing says "carefree childhood magic" quite like a forceful, miniature manual labor boot camp. (Iron sold separately for 25 cents... see page 4.)

Caddell's descriptive prowess could certainly teach Amazon a thing or two. Perhaps this intense marketing strategy is why Caddell's, which was located at 425 South Myrtle Avenue, lasted a mere two years before disappearing from the **city directories**. We like to think they didn't actually go out of business, but rather reemerged as a highly disciplined laundry service along the Panama Canal.

Want to do a little historical snooping yourself? Head to the Legacy Project. Check out the other **Monrovia businesses** and follow whatever catches your eye into Monrovia's past. The archives supply the clues, you supply the curiosity. Any theories involving a Panama Canal laundry service are entirely your responsibility.

Tis the Season...

Gifts for all the Monrovia-philes on your list

Holiday shopping season is officially upon us. If you are currently hunting for just the right gift for that famously hard-to-shop-for friend or family member, the **Monrovia Historical Society** has you covered.

Over the years, we've curated a unique mix of greeting cards, postcards, and coasters, all featuring beautiful local images culled directly from our Legacy Project archives. We also have a fantastic collection of books providing a deep dive into different chapters of Monrovia's past. You can browse and buy all of these items right now at **Charlie's House** in Old Town Monrovia (430 South Myrtle Avenue). You can also check out a sampling of what we have on our **website** before you head over!

(And yes, we refuse to use the term "merch" again. Let's leave that "word" in 2026 where it belongs.)

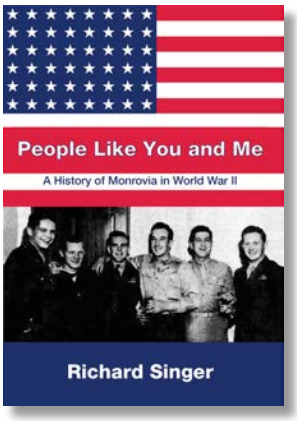
Still More Stockings to Stuff?

Looking for that person on your list who already has everything? We are willing to bet a shiny Buffalo Nickel they don't have a membership to the Monrovia Historical Society. Clearly, dear reader, you already know the incredible value and impact of the **Monrovia Historical Society's work**. How about giving the gift of membership?

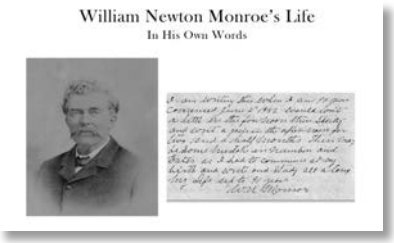
As much as we kind of like the mysterious, exclusive vibe of a tiny inner circle... we aren't a hidden 1920s speakeasy. We are an inclusive bunch, and we are just as excited about preserving our future as you are.

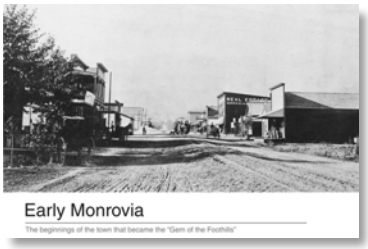
Let's face it: the more we get the word out about the vital preservation work happening right here in town, the more our community's support grows. That support is absolutely critical to furthering our mission. So share the wealth, spread the word, and gift a membership this season!

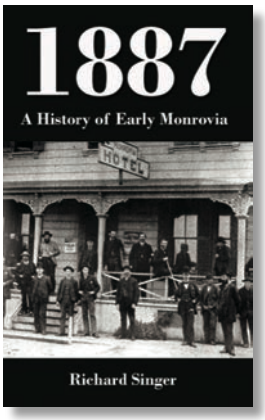
The best part? One size fits all and you don't even have to leave the comfort of your own home to do it—gifting a membership is as simple as a **click on our website**. How easy is that?

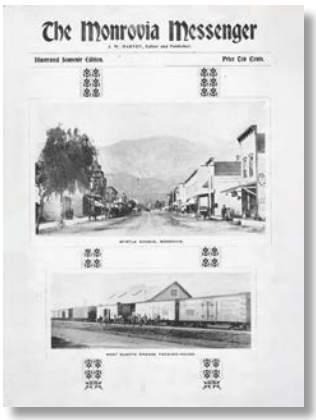














Postcard examples





Coaster design

MHS Happenings



Old Sport, meet Old Town

One City, One Story—affectionately known around town as OCOS—is a fantastic initiative that brings Monrovians together around a shared book. Now, while the Monrovia Historical Society has a very specific historically oriented mission, we are always eager to jump into community events whenever it makes sense. Occasionally, that requires a little creative stretching to figure out how our historical piece fits into the puzzle.

So, when we were approached about joining OCOS, we loved the program, though one big question remained: *How do we fit in?* Our solution? Custom coloring sheets featuring familiar, historic Monrovia scenes to hand out at the various community events.

For you wise and well-read members, we're sure the headline gave away that for 2027, the selected book is F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic *The Great Gatsby*, set right in the heart of the Roaring Twenties. As luck would have it, our **Legacy Project** archives are packed to the brim with photographs and stories from that same era. If you want to see what Monrovia looked like while Jay Gatsby was throwing his lavish parties, take a peek at **our digital collection**!

*(Of course, there are plenty of great books out there to choose from—though if anyone is taking suggestions for next year, may we humbly nominate **Monrovia Confidential**?)*

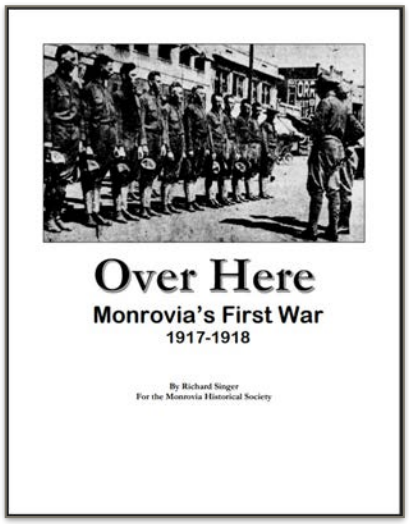
Hot off the presses…

Originally known as Armistice Day, this poignant holiday was established to honor those who served in World War I—the war to end all wars. Today, it encompasses all veterans who have protected our country. Thinking about it, shouldn't every day be Veterans Day?

As we mark the holiday's 108th anniversary, there is no better time to announce the Legacy Project release of Dick Singer's newly digitized history, ***Monrovia's First War 1917–1918***, which beautifully chronicles the courage of our hometown heroes.

While the document honors the profound sacrifices of young Monrovians who served overseas, it also captures the lighter, incredibly anxious reality of those left behind on the home front. In 1917, local patriotism ran so high that everyday accidents—from smoking church furnaces to movie-set explosions—were routinely mistaken for international plots.

We can certainly smile at these historical quirks today, but they reflect a community that cared deeply, gave generously, and stood firmly behind its service members. You can explore the full history—complete with moving personal letters and rare archival photographs—on the **Legacy Project**.



Meet our new Board Member...

Introducing Tina Cherry



Well, yes, she may be new to the Board, but she's no stranger. Not to the Monrovia Historical Society. Not to the City of Monrovia. And probably not to many of you. During a career that spanned over 32 years of public service, she brought her unique talents to multiple communities across the region. Then in 2014, she was brought on as Monrovia's Community Services Director. Serendipity? Absolutely. The glass slipper fit perfectly.

For over 12 years leading the Community Services Department, she had the privilege of helping bring meaningful projects to life while championing the City's rich history and historic preservation efforts.

Among the many projects close to her heart are the community partnerships that transformed Lucinda Garcia Park, the creation of Satoru Tsuneishi Park, and—bringing it home for us—the Monrovia Legacy Project. She also kicked off the rejuvenation of the Community Center as well as the upcoming Recreation Park renovation.

For Tina, these projects weren't just tasks to check off a list; these accomplishments are a testament to what can happen when a community comes together with a shared vision.

In February of this year, Tina retired from the City, and we quickly snatched her up in what can only be described as a coup (sorry, not sorry to all those other community organizations!).

These days, Tina is happily embracing retirement by spending time with her favorite people—her husband, Craig; her daughter and son-in-law, AshLynne and Nathan. Then there are her beloved four-legged family members, Charlie and Gia. She and Craig love hitting the open road in their RV to explore America's hidden gems. When she's not traveling, you'll likely find her on the golf course trying to shave a few strokes off her game or in the garden convincing her plants to cooperate. Both hobbies, she admits with a smile, are still works in progress!





The Anderson Almanac

…your complete guide to the history, updates and happenings of the Anderson House

Welcome to the debut of The Anderson Almanac! We'll use this corner of our newsletter to highlight one of the gems of our local heritage: the George H. Anderson House. Preserving and sharing the stories hidden within this 1886 Victorian home is core to the mission of the **Monrovia Historical Society**.

Whether you are looking for museum hours to plan your next visit, keeping tabs on the extensive renovation or simply to learn more about our hometown history, the Almanac will be your go-to guide. So without further ado…

The Great "Invisible" Renovation

So much and nothing at all to report. What we mean by that is that the project continues to move forward, but we're in that classic construction phase where a ton of work is happening in the background, while to the casual observer…it looks like a whole lot of nothing.

As you may recall (you *did* read the last issue, right?), the City of Monrovia is now the proud owner of the Anderson House, with the Monrovia Historical Society taking the lead in the management and programming of the museum. Earlier this year, a major restoration project was kicked off to give our 1886 treasure some much-needed upgrades to its foundation, plumbing and electrical systems.

The blueprints are officially trapped in the "plan check" phase—meaning they are being reviewed by some very smart people to ensure every aspect meets modern building codes. One of the greatest challenges of restoring a historic property is striking the perfect balance between strict modern health and safety laws and preserving a priceless piece of local history. You can't exactly treat an 1880s Victorian like a brand new condo.

This is where the brilliant, creative architectural minds are crucial and we're lucky that Team Monrovia has that market completely cornered. The Historical Society is working hand-in-hand with them, providing continuous feedback to ensure that preservation stays at the absolute forefront of every decision.

So that's where we stand. Once the final red ink dries and everyone signs off on the blueprints, the City will put the project out to bid. We anticipate the hammers will start flying early next year. In the meantime, we will continue to keep the doors open and operate the Museum on our current schedule. Come by and see it before the dust flies.

Not that we don't want to see you in person, but if you can't get your fill, there's always the **virtual walkthrough**.



Dining room in 1975



Dining room today

George H. Anderson House Museum

215 East Lime Avenue

Open for visitors the 3rd Sunday of each month

November 15, 2026 - 1PM to 4PM

Closed in December

January 17, 2027 - 1PM to 4 PM

The Anderson House will be going through extensive renovations soon, check our website for updates

https://monroviahistoricalsociety.org/activities

Bits & Pieces...

Saxony Donation

This summer, the Arthur Blair Historic Inn opened for business. Now lots of new businesses open up in Monrovia every month. But this one is different. As you might recall, this is the longtime home of City Historian and City Treasurer Steve Baker. After Steve's passing, the property was purchased by Monrovia-based Saxony Design Build.

Over the past two years, the property has been meticulously restored and is now the Arthur Blair Historic Inn. To celebrate the completion of this labor of love, a grand opening event was held on July 4 as a fundraiser for the Monrovia Historical Society. We were happy to be the beneficiaries of their largess to the tune of $1000. A big thank you to everyone who attended and especially to Saxony owners Jeff Godbold and Joshua Cain.

Want to know more about the history of these properties? The **Legacy Project** has you covered!





Digging Deep into Monrovia's Past

We love being part of this community! Once again, the Monrovia Historical Society was honored to lend a hand, partnering with the Monrovia Old Houses Preservation Group (MOHPG) on the annual tour of Monrovia's Live Oak Cemetery.

We've never found cemeteries to be inherently spooky. On the contrary, there is a wealth of history waiting six feet under, serving as a unique window into the people who came before us. While we may not know all their stories initially, these graves offer a surprising amount of insight into our collective past—especially when you team that up with the massive repository of knowledge brought by MOHPG's Jim Wigton, who led the tour. Now *that* is enough to send a good shiver up your spine!

That hour and a half on the afternoon of October 24 was filled with fascinating stories about some of Monrovia's early families, seamlessly tying their lives into the broader history of the City. As always, we were thrilled to lend our support and even happier to listen to Jim weave his incredible tales of Monrovia's past.

Thank you for your support...and don't forget to renew

The Monrovia Historical Society had another terrific year and we want to thank you for your continuing support as we add 2026 into the history books.

And 2027 promises to be a banner year. Our plans include a much-needed restoration of the Anderson House, a multitudinous tranche of new items added to the Legacy Project, and the completion of our first strategic plan to guide our way as we move into the 2030s! (Wasn't Y2K just a couple weeks ago?).

As you look ahead to the new year with us, please remember to renew your membership (don't forget the gift of membership!) so we can keep this momentum rolling. With that, we'll leave you with a heartfelt thank you—and whatever holiday you celebrate...we hope the end of the year is filled with joy and wonder.

Monrovia Historical Society

Preserving & Sharing Monrovia's Historical Legacy

Cruising into the Holidays!

What better way to kick off the season than Monrovia's annual Holiday Parade on Thursday, December 3. Honestly, it doesn't get any more small town than this.

Bundle up (or maybe not), grab a spot along Myrtle Avenue and be sure to wave as our very own Norm Haley rolls by. This year, he'll be behind the wheel of his classic 1954 GMC Suburban—a vintage beauty originally owned by the Castle Rock Fire Department in Colorado and still in original survivor condition with under 56,000 miles on the odometer!



Because we're always looking for another opportunity to plug the Legacy Project, explore the collection to see a few pictures of parades of yore.

Mark your Calendar!

For an afternoon of fun, food and frivolity, please plan on joining us for our annual membership meeting on **February 28, 2027 at 2PM**...keep your eyes peeled for more details at the start of the year!

Canyon Park in the Rearview



Have you ever wondered about the early history of Canyon Park, or what a mountain outing was like for visitors way back in 1887? Now is your chance to find out!

As part of the 2025 renovations at the Monrovia Canyon Park Nature Center, a rotating exhibit space was created to showcase local gems. Through our ongoing partnership with the City, the Monrovia Historical Society is thrilled to curate an upcoming display dedicated to the history of Canyon Park, featuring rare photographs and stories pulled directly from the **Monrovia Legacy Project** archives. Visitors will learn about the Yucca Hiking Club, the Rankin Family, and much more.



Plan Your Visit

- Exhibit Dates**:** February 7 – May 31, 2027
- Hours**:** Saturdays and Sundays, 10:00AM to 4:00PM *(Special viewings can also be scheduled through the Canyon Park Team.)*

Join Us for Opening Day!



Mark your calendars for the official exhibit launch on **Sunday, February 7, at 10:00 AM**. Stop by to explore the display, ask questions, and discover more about the terrific historical resources MHS has to offer!

Want to get a head start? Check this out.

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