



## *You are the stars in my eyes . . .*

Thanks to all who joined our SRO January 13 program featuring astronomer Dr. Douglas Leonard. His informative and entertaining presentation helped us understand the remarkable astrophysics of stars — large and small, birthing and dying! We learned that red supergiant Betelgeuse — one of the 10 brightest stars in our sky — could go supernova any time . . . in the next 100,000 years.

Special thanks to those who assisted our Vice President Judy Hegenauer in providing snacks and beverages — not her job; we still are recruiting for a Hospitality Chair . . . as well as any volunteers who would like to help us plan a big-bang 70th anniversary celebration for our September membership event.

Actively recruiting! Our January 21 Heritage Museum Coffee Klatsch and Tour was a smashing success! Thanks to Brand and Jojo Bogard for the VG donuts and coffee! Lisa Montes (Museum Curator) gave guided tours to more than 25 guests from Canada and Chicago, as well as local residents.

They loved learning about our fascinating history and some offered to volunteer a few hours a year to help keep our museum open to the public. Want to help? [Email us!](#)

**On Friday, February 10, please join our General Meeting for an update from the Nature Collective about the organization's many projects in and around San Elijo Lagoon. See page 4 for details.**  
And please remember to renew your annual membership for 2023.

Since its founding as the Women's Civic Club in 1953, our members and volunteers have kept the Society thriving. It is truly remarkable all that we have achieved together over 70 years; we'll highlight many of these accomplishments in our newsletters throughout the year.

An early focus for the founding members was the beautification of Solana Beach, mainly through landscaping along the 101 and at our Post Office — a legacy that is sustained to this day by our SeaWeeders. **You are invited to join P.O. garden volunteers on Saturday mornings, and the SeaWeeders' meeting on Wednesday, February 8, 6:30 p.m. at the cottage behind the Boys & Girls Club, 533 Lomas Santa Fe Dr.**

Mary Lapham, whose family published the San Dieguito Citizen newspaper, penned this account of the Club's early accomplishments on July 2, 1953: *"It is remarkable how much has been accomplished in the way of beautification and awakening of community interest by the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club in the short time they have been organized. Six months have passed since the formation, planning and consummation of one of the aims and purposes of the organization . . . the planting of shrubs and trees in a mile long strip [along Hwy. 101] through Solana Beach. Over two hundred trees and shrubs have already been planted, including pines, cedars, peppers and acacia trees, white oleanders and lantana. Planned for the safety of the motorists as well as for the beauty of Solana Beach, there are seven gradations in heights of plantings away from the corners for better visibility."*

Society Teas, "Trash to Treasure" sales and donations helped fund the plantings. The Civic Club also donated landscaping for our early Post Offices. Learn more about the history of our Post Office on the following pages, thanks to research by Jane Morton and Richard Moore.



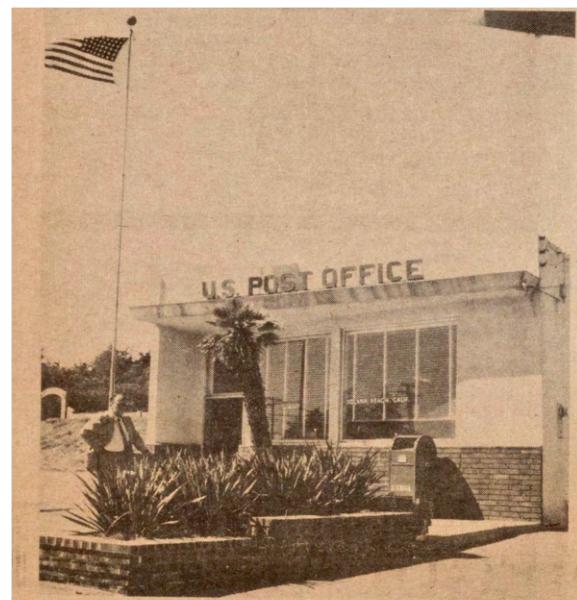
*From grocery storefront to sculpture park . . .*

## ***Here's the history of our Solana Beach Post Office***

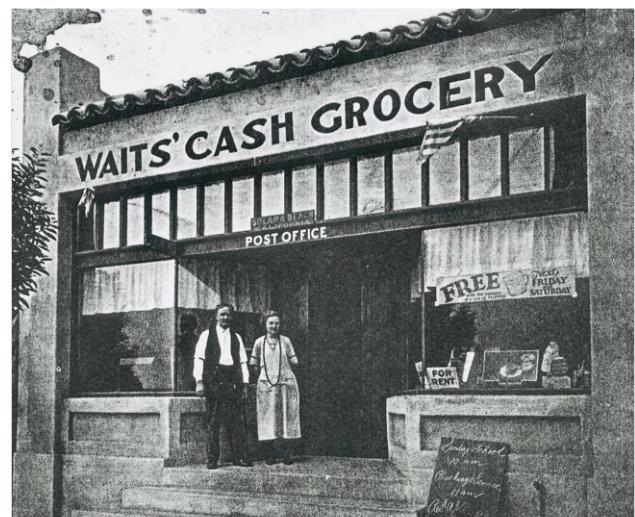
The first U.S. Post Office in what is now the City of Solana Beach operated out of a grocery store run by Addie Waits and her husband George in the west portion of the Harker building, located at the northwest corner of the Plaza by Hwy 101.

Addie Ellen Phillips and her twin sister Emma were born in 1870 in Nebraska. She married George Waits in Kalispell, Montana in 1909. It was the second marriage for both. The Waits migrated to Solana Beach and Addie was named Postmaster in 1923\*. During that time, postal customers would drop off and pick up their mail at the grocery store. But how did "our" mail get there, and how was outgoing mail sent on?

Addie batched outgoing mail in a canvas bag. George then carried the mailbag down the steps from the store to his steel-wheeled wheelbarrow. He had cast a narrow concrete ramp — just wide enough for the wheel — from the sidewalk to the street. He wheeled the mail down the ramp, across Hwy 101 and south along the railroad tracks to a tall 4 x 4-inch post with a snaps on top and bottom. George snapped in the mailbag. As the train raced through town at 50 to 70 miles an hour, a catch release on the mail car would snatch the bag. Workers in the mail car would take it in and at the same time throw out a mail bag for Solana Beach.



Fowler Construction completed a newly-built Solana Beach P.O. in 1952.



Thanks to D.T. Burton for sharing this photo of George and Addie Waits at their grocery.

In 1936, Addie retired and the Post Office moved across the Plaza to what is now the Saddle Bar, where it served the community until 1953. Irene C. Witmer became Postmaster and served in that capacity until her own retirement in 1956. Her husband Howard served as assistant Postmaster. Irene also was president of the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club in 1955 and is described in reports from the era as tireless booster of Solana Beach. The Witmers ran Witmer Drugs and Sandwich Shop at 145-149 Hwy. 101 and lived above it. During Irene's tenure, a new Post Office building was completed at 127 S. Sierra Ave., with planter boxes and plants provided by the Civic Club. She retired in 1956 and was replaced by Postmaster Charles Leffingwell, another local resident.

Neighbors remember Leffingwell, a U.C. Davis-educated horticulturist, for the vegetable and gladiolus garden he maintained around his home across from what now is our Fire Station. Among his first successes: once-daily home and business mail delivery was inaugurated in November, 1956 to 300 addresses. Foot carriers delivered the mail west of Hwy. 101; carrier trucks delivered east of the highway. *(continued)*

## ***History of our Solana Beach Post Office, continued . . .***

However, Leffingwell's stint as Postmaster was not without drama — a smoke bomb went off in the P.O. doorway in 1958 — or controversy. Construction of the current federal building/post office at 153 S. Sierra Ave. during the 19602 was deemed a “boondoggle” dogged by “budgetary bungles” and delays. When postal workers moved into the new 6,500-square-foot quarters on Sept. 2, 1965, there was no ribbon cutting. Nor were there ceilings, signs, nor landscaping. “We are just the U.S. Post Office Department’s step child,” Postmaster Leffingwell commented. He taped a sign to the door and hoped that the General Services Administration would finally put the finishing work out to bid. "We thought about a 'do-it-yourself' project to get the place looking better," Leffingwell said. "But I hesitate to ask for civic money or spend it out of my own pocket if it is just going to be torn out when the contract is finally let."

The tradition of long-tenured Postmasters ended after Leffingwell's term. Since 1969, we have had 12 Postmasters and many more “acting Postmasters” or “Officers in Charge” — some of whom held the titles more than once. In 2014, then Postmaster Betty Rabreau, embraced a “do it ourselves” invitation from the SeaWeeders to update the landscape and create the seating and sculpture garden that graces the P.O. today. “I thought they were just going to pull a few weeds. I had absolutely no idea of the magnitude of the job,” Postmaster Rabreau said at the time.

The \$11,000 rehab was aided by the Society, Solana Beach Presbyterian Church's Community Outreach program and local Rotary Club. Along with new plantings, the re-design included a seeded-concrete patio, bike rack, two benches, sculpture platforms and formal paths that replaced the raggedy trails customers had worn through the old ice-plant.

Ever since, upkeep of the Post Office landscape has been a volunteer activity sponsored by the SeaWeeders and our Society. In 2017-18, work teams tackled overgrown fortnight lilies and added water-wise aloes, aeoniums, agaves and Kangaroo Paws. We trimmed trees, painted the flag pole and railings, laid a bed of newspaper between plants and covered that with a hearty layer of mulch to deter weeds. Recent donations have included Forest Pansy Redbud and Ginko trees, as well as an additional bench in honor of former Society president Gloria Jones. In 2021, Society friend Jimmy Joe Gooding repainted the colorful Topiary sculpture by artist Christi Beniston that was part of the 2014 project. It was never meant for permanent outdoor installation, but Jimmy Joe punched up the colors and finished with an industrial-strength overcoat of varnish that has kept the popular sculpture colorful and shiny.

Meanwhile, inside . . . a '60s kinda vibe is preserved in the faded, pastel interior. But the interior decor actually dates to the 1980s, when Southwestern decor was the craze. (If you know who painted the mural, please share! We haven't been able to track down that detail. . . )

Our current Solana Beach Postmaster, Richard Zamora, was appointed in September 2022. He manages 23 employees and the daily distribution of mail on 12 delivery routes and to 1,500 P.O. Boxes at the facility. Zamora is a 15-year postal employee and U. S. Navy veteran who began his career as a mail handler and previously served as a supervisor at our P.O.

\*Strictly speaking, Addie was the second postmaster. George Nichols served several months in a temporary position before her nomination.



Solana Beach Civic and Historical Society Board Member Trudy Synodis, Postmaster Betty Rabreau and Seaweeders Member Michele Stribling. Photo/Kristina Houck

**Join us — 5:00 p.m at Fletcher Cove Community Center**

## **Catch up with the Nature Collective at our February 10 General Meeting**

Jennifer Bright, Associate Director of the Nature Collective, will provide an overview of the organization's many projects at our next General Meeting, Friday Feb. 10 at Fletcher Cove Community Center.

You probably know the Nature Collective for its award-winning restoration work on the Cardiff dunes and in our San Elijo Lagoon. But did you know they are also involved in habitat restoration and protection of wildlife corridors along the Escondido Creek Watershed and beyond? Or that Nature Collective operates a nursery that grows 3,000 plants indigenous to the area from seed to maturity for planting each year?

Did you know that 40% of all North American resident or migratory bird species next, rest and refuel at the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve? Or that the Nature Collective team does weekly water quality monitoring, so they can perform emergency tidal circulation projects if there's insufficient oxygen for the lagoon ecosystem to thrive? Have you tried out the amazing new Solana Hills trail that dips under the I-5 on a new suspension bridge?

Jennifer will bring us up-to-date on these accomplishments and other ongoing projects of the Nature Collective, including our thriving Harbaugh Seaside Trails habitat.

[Click here](#) to catch up on the impressive history of the Nature Collective, which often intertwines with our Society's and our legacy Women's Civic Club.



Thanks to all who have renewed their 2023 membership dues, based on our calendar-year dues cycle adopted in December, 2021. If you haven't already, please renew today. Return this form or pay securely by credit card or PayPal [online at sb-chs.org](#). Questions? [Click here to email](#).

### **2023 Annual Membership Form**

• Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse / Partner \_\_\_\_\_

• Address \_\_\_\_\_

• Phone# \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

• Please check if interested in joining ...

• Annual Dues (check your category):

Board of Directors

Individual \$ 25.00

SeaWeeders Garden Club

Family \$ 30.00

Crafts Group

Business \$100.00

Other volunteer opportunities

Lifetime \$500.00

• Make your check payable to SBC&HS and mail to P.O. Box 504, Solana Beach, CA 92075

