



SUNLETTER

THE PEOPLE, EVENTS, & EXHIBITS OF THE GRACE HUDSON MUSEUM

SPRING 2021 Volume 30, No. 1

Postcards from Mecca

You probably know about Thelma and Louise, but have you heard of Lula and Susie? In 1929, Lula traveled from her home in Chattanooga, Tennessee to the Californian desert. She was glad to get away from the restrictions placed on southern women and hoped the desert air might aid her health. She stayed with family and helped her cousin Susie in the post office.

Where Lula could be reserved, Susie always had a cheerful smile. She loved the outdoors. Even childhood polio, which left her with a leg brace, couldn't keep her from exuberant exploration. In 1916, when Susie was 16 years old, her family moved from Los Angeles to just south of Mecca at the east end of the Coachella Valley. With her father's support, she started taking their Model T out for her explorations, capturing her discoveries on film. Ten years later, she beat out male contenders for the Mecca postmaster position. Back then Mecca was a supply stop for prospectors and desert rats. Everyone needed to collect their mail, making the post office one of the most popular places in town.

Together Susie and Lula set out for adventure. They traveled by Model T, burro, and foot into the Chuckwalla



Driving the Bradshaw Trail, photographer unknown

Mountains and by the shores of the newly formed Salton Sea which was created when an irrigation canal flowing from the Colorado River to the Imperial Valley was breached. They camped out at a cabin in Corn Springs, an oasis with palm trees and nearly 600 petroglyphs carved into rock. They took pictures for their own pleasure which they turned into postcards and sold at the post office.

While other photographers focused purely on the landscape in their postcards, Susie and Lula's images showcased the hard-to-get-to, off-the-beaten-road places. They also captured the local people of the area. They photographed gold seekers and cowboys, and gained access to public works projects and took pictures of the laborers employed there.



Susie and Lula at Corn Springs, photographer unknown, Warner Graves Collection

Eventually, Lula and Susie each married and went their separate ways. After Susie passed in 1988, her estate, including a cache of postcards and photographs, was handed to a county administrator who tossed everything into the trash. Ron May, an archaeologist and historian, working in the same building as the administrator, was notified and spent the afternoon digging through the dumpster, trying to save the collection.

Today these postcards and images are a lasting legacy of the desert that runs along Interstate 10. Even today, many people, maybe even you, have driven through without much thought to the surroundings. When the Museum is able to reopen, you can explore the desert with Susie and Lula through our latest exhibition from Exhibit Envoy, *Postcards from Mecca*, from early May through August 22.

We'll also augment the show with a sampling of A.O. Carpenter images from the Museum's collections. Unlike Susie and Lula, A.O., who was Grace Hudson's father, traveled by himself throughout Mendocino County, taking people's portraits to earn an income. But just like Susie and Lula, he captured the landscapes, industries, and people, preserving a record of these places that we can enjoy and learn from today.

— Alyssa Boge, *Curator*



Sun House Guild

GRACE HUDSON

MUSEUM & Sun House

Hours: Wed thru Sat 10am - 4:30 pm

(Sun 5-7 of the month til 8:00 pm)

Sun: 12 - 4:30 pm. (707) 467-2836

info@gracehudsonmuseum.org

www.gracehudsonmuseum.org

Reopening Soon

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Eyeing Our Reopening

With vaccines now rolling out and COVID metrics in Mendocino County trending in a good direction, there is a real possibility that the Museum may be able to reopen as we enter springtime. The initial opening will come with limitations, such as no more than 25% of normal visitor capacity. We'll gladly take that as a win. With reopening in mind, we'll begin installing the traveling exhibition *Postcards from Mecca* (discussed on page 1 of this *Sunletter*) at the end of April. For the past few months, we've also been in the process of organizing two exhibitions of our own. The first of these, scheduled for a September opening, will commemorate the 30th anniversary of *An Association of 3: Liden, Magruder & Knight*, which was the first Museum exhibition not about Grace Hudson or the Carpenter family. The show will reflect on each of these three artists' careers, and will include new work by Tom Liden and Mac Magruder. Wayne Knight, as many of you know, sadly passed away in 2009, during the H1N1 swine flu epidemic.

Just as any business that is currently receiving customers, when the Museum opens again, we will abide by COVID safety protocols. I was not at all surprised when I learned of a recent study by the Berlin Institute of Technology evaluating risk factors of different indoor activities. Museums at 30% capacity and with visitors wearing masks were rated the safest place one could be in public, topping public transportation, supermarkets, restaurants, sporting events, multi-person offices, and secondary schools. Which is all to say that you should feel pretty safe in returning to the Grace Hudson Museum.

Finally, just a word about upcoming Museum programs. We've only listed three events on page 4, but there are many others we are currently working on. This includes one associated with our current online exhibition, *Yosemite People*, which we are hosting through April 11, and others tied to *Postcards from Mecca*. Please, please, please visit our website and social media pages frequently to learn about new virtual and in-person programs as they are confirmed. And make sure we have your email address so we can include you in e-blasts about new programs and activities.

– David Burton, *Director*

Melissa E Godlewski,
in memory of Patricia Rabinovitz

Naanue Gowan, *in memory of
Barbara & Walter Eversole*

Jerilyn Harris,
in memory of Barbara Eversole

Colleen & Rick Henderson,
in memory of Joe Scherf

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in memory of Conrad Cox

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Jeannie Broggi Ramstetter*

Gregory Ramstetter, *in memory of
Stella Broggi Sanderson*

Diana & Steve Thomas,
in memory of Joseph Johnson

Diana & Steve Thomas,
in memory of Joe Scherf

Minding the Shop

Dear Friends,

Community support for the Museum and Sun House in 2020 and the first months of 2021 has been truly phenomenal, and we recognize and are grateful to those who have made donations, renewed their memberships, and become new members since COVID forced our closure. The contributor list in this issue of the *Sunletter* truly warms our hearts.

I know some of you have been eager for news about the Gift Shop that has remained closed along with the Museum. When we do reopen, Marian Scalmanini, our excellent manager of many years, will not be returning. Through these many months of uncertainty—almost a year now—we could not ask her to wait indefinitely. Marian will be missed, and we thank her profusely for her many years of service to the Shop, Museum, and Guild.

The Guild's Gift Shop Committee has already begun re-imagining the role a new manager, and will be ready to

start a search as we get closer to knowing exactly when the Museum and Shop will be able to open again. We'll also be contacting the Shop's dedicated and indispensable volunteer staff, in the hopes that many will be able and want to return. Over the next few months, the Committee will be busy replenishing our stock of customer favorites, as well as books and gifts that align with the mission and purpose of the Museum and aren't commonly available from other local merchants. Book orders, now and always, can be placed through the Gift Shop page on the Museum website.

One additional change must be noted. Long-time Sun House Guild Board Member Karen Moon has retired. We will all miss her expertise and positive energy, and her pragmatic approach to the many events and projects she has taken on over the years. Thank you, Karen, so very much! We now look ahead, excited about finding new ways of supporting the activities of the Museum, both virtual and onsite. — Toni Wheeler, *Sun House Guild President*

Heartfelt Thanks to the Following Donors

Suzanne Abel, *in honor of Sherrie Smith-Ferri*

Lynda & Don Coursey, *Endowment*

Colleen & Rick Henderson, *Wild Gardens paver*

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Sun House Guild

GRACE HUDSON MUSEUM

431 South Main Street * Ukiah, California 95482

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your *Sunletter* via email rather than
as a mailed paper version.

Upcoming Programs

*Additional information on these and other Museum programs can
be found on the Museum's web site at gracehudsonmuseum.org/.*

Saturday, March 20, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. ‡ Outdoor in person

Wild Gardens in Springtime

See what's in bloom in the Wild Gardens! Learn from our knowledgeable native plant gardeners, experience miner's lettuce, and discover Native American tools and toys with docent Little Bear. Please note: masks must be worn, social distancing maintained, and visitation limited to 45 people at a time.

Thursday, March 25, 6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. ‡ Virtual program

Carleton Watkins, Picturing Yosemite

Join us for a virtual illustrated presentation by writer, historian, and art critic Tyler Green, as he discusses seminal 19th century photographer Carleton Watkins and his images of Yosemite. Green authored the award-winning book, *Carleton Watkins: Making the West American*. Access the virtual program link by going to the home page of the Museum's website and locating the program announcement.



Cathedral Rocks, 1861, by Carleton Watkins

Thursday, April 22, 3:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. ‡ Virtual program

Inside the Hart Gallery: The Art of Grace Hudson

Former Grace Hudson Museum curator Karen Holmes returns to lead a virtual tour of Grace Hudson's famous oil paintings and works in other media. Some were added to the Hart Gallery shortly before COVID restrictions began. Access the virtual program link by going to the home page of the Museum's website and locating the program announcement.