

# MARCH/APRIL 2004 GENERAL MEETING

Date: Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: Abbot Kinney Memorial Branch Library  
501 South Venice Boulevard  
Venice

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## “KENDRICK KINNEY” Family Historian

VHS cornerstone member, Kendrick Kinney is a grandson of Venice's founder, Abbot Kinney, and the family historian. Join us this evening as he presents his two slide shows in DVD format, professionally recorded. The first 30-minute show will be on Kinneloa, the citrus ranch Abbot Kinney founded in 1880, in Sierra Madre, now East Pasadena. Coincidentally, our guest tonight was brought up in Kinneloa when his father, Innes, managed the ranch.

The second 30-minute showing will feature the founding of Venice, California, in 1904/1905. You will see the building of the town, from the lumber ship which arrived to build the pier to the death of the great Doge, 15 years later.

Kendrick Kinney, a famous man in his own right in the motion picture business, has shown his slide shows all over Southern California, promoting the history of the area and giving a family member viewpoint of his grandfather. He has furthered the knowledge of history of West Los Angeles and Pasadena for the past two decades.

**Free and open to the public**

**Ample parking**

*Cover: Abbot Kinney, front, on his wedding day, (1884) and back page, as a young man, (circa 1868).  
(Courtesy: The Kinney Family)*

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## IN KINNEY'S OWN WORDS

*The following is a reprint of an article by Tom Moran, former VHS Board member who moved to New York ten years ago.)*

It was a March evening, chilly, with a slight dampness clinging to the air. Three men sat in the main room of one of the tent houses which lined the main waterway known as Grand Canal. The furnishings were comfortable and the men lounged back in deep upholstered chairs, sipping coffee.

Two of the men worked for the Los Angeles Times. One was an artist, the other a reporter.

The gentleman they were visiting was thin and strained, rugged pouches sagging beneath his pale blue eyes. A moderate length full beard surrounded his chin, which, with the swooping



*The Doge of Venice, Abbot Kinney, circa 1912, about the time this article was written. (Courtesy: Jackie Gerety Konrad)*

white mustache he wore, accented the longness of his face. The man's hairline had receded halfway across his scalp but a swath of white hair combed forward served to camouflage some of the male aging process.

His long gangly frame was covered with a finely tailored dark suit. Jeweled cuff and button studs shined in the shadowy gas light. A bright blue shantung tie bristled from his neck like the bow on a holiday package. Short white spots covered the tops of his long dark shoes and their own silk bows flapped as he shifted his feet nervously.



*Abbot Kinney and his two sons, Thornton, (right) and Sherwood, (left) at his palatial citrus ranch, named Kinneloa. Circa date 1894. (Courtesy: The Kinney Family)*

The man pulled a rag tobacco pouch from his inside jacket pocket, opened the drawstrings and removed a dark brown cigarette paper. He poured an ample amount of tobacco into the paper's trough, adeptly curled it into a almost perfect cylinder and sealed the shape with a flick of his tongue. He struck a wooden match and touched the flame to the end of his cigarette. The smoke spiraled upward in the still air.

He eyed the two newspaper men carefully. They were young, in their mid-twenties, and seemed awkward in the stillness. This man had run into the fury of the Los Angeles Times before and seen himself crucified on its pages. Harrison Gray Otis, the paper's publisher, was not by any stretch of the imagination a friend of his. Now he would see what they wanted.

The reporter opened his notebook, and without looking up, asked the first question. "Why, Mr. Kinney did you build a resort called Venice of America?"

"I always had a dream of building an ideal city which should be partly for study, partly for recreation, and partly for health." said Kinney. "It was only by a mere accident that it was built in California. I should have built it somewhere."

I had been for a long time traveling about the world in search of health. One of the cities which

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made a strong impression on me was Venice.”

“About twenty-six or twenty-seven years ago, I landed in California. I had been to Australia and the South Seas. I was intending to go immediately to the east to divide my time between the mountain and the sea resorts. But there was a big storm that year and the Sierra snowsheds caved in. I had to wait.”

“Not being able to get out led me south as far as San Jose. The hotels of San Jose at that time were not to be boasted of. I could not stand them long and on the recommendation of a lady whom I met there, I came on south to the old Sierra Madre Villa. The place was filled that winter and they put me up in the parlor. I insisted on staying.”

“Well, I came down on a twenty-day return ticket and I never used the return portion of the ticket.”

“But sir,” interrupted the reporter, what brought you to the coast?”

Kinney glanced at the man with his pencil poised. “I find that for men of Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic descent, the climate of the foothills is used-up in three or four summers, it had that effect on me.”



*Sierra Madre Villa Hotel in Sierra Madre, where Abbot Kinney spent his first night in a parlor in December of 1879. (Courtesy: E. Alexander Collection)*



*The Ocean Park Pier, built by Abbot Kinney and Francis Ryan in the 1890s. Courtesy: E. Alexander Collection)*

“I came to the coast and located in Santa Monica where my dream of an ideal resort began to stir. It had been growing in my mind for years.”

“In the meantime, however, I opened in Los Angeles, the first tract ever thrown on the market. It was out near the site of Chutes (an old amusement park located near the present intersection of Washington and Main Streets in Los Angeles). In those days we did not grade the streets nor put in sewers or sidewalks as tract owners do now. We merely surveyed the ground, made a plot and sold the lots.”

“I acquired two pieces of property at the oceanside - one a long sand spit where Ocean Park and Venice now stand, the other, the bluff back of the long wharf at Port Los Angeles.” (The bluff is now part of Pacific Palisades).

“In buying the sand spit, I had in mind such places as Sandy Hook, Atlantic City and a very popular resort near Alexandria in Egypt.”

“At that time it was impossible to do anything with the sand lots. We tried to sell the lots without any success. We actually had to build two houses on the present site of Ocean Park and offer them as prizes in a lottery - a chance to be given with every lot sold. Finally, we had to lease the lots to builders.”

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“I turned most of my attention to the bluff back of the Long Wharf. I had various schemes in view, but they all fell through. We couldn’t find a way of getting access to the top without costing too much. We thought of an elevator and bridges, but they all cost too much.”

“I remember I once took Mr. Huntington down to the place with a view of getting him interested. That was the old gentleman, Collis P. Huntington.”

“He came down in his private car and I went to see him before breakfast. I remember that he only ate bread and milk, no meat, coffee, or anything, just bread and milk. I brought a hack down to meet him but he wanted to bring his chief engineer, Mr. Hood, and the two other engineers along, so we dismissed the hack and went out in a bus that was run by an old man, queer old character named Flores.”

“We went out and looked at the place and coming back one of the engineers - Mr. Hood and Mr. Huntington had been talking but the young man had said nothing - spoke up and said to Mr. Huntington that he could not forbear expressing his admiration of a man who had the means to enter into any enterprise he chose.”

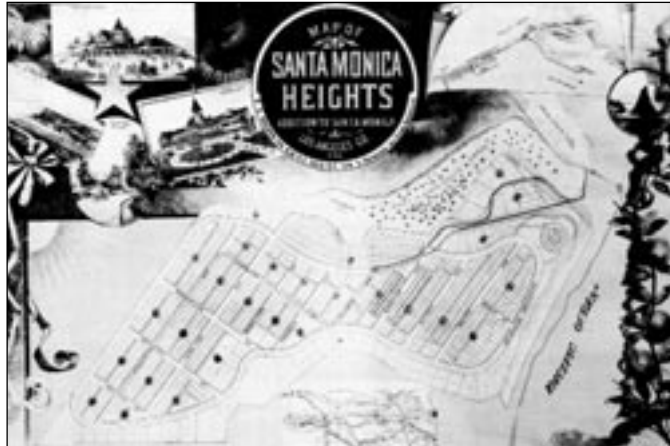
“Mr. Huntington placed his hand on the young man’s knee and said, ‘Young man you were never more mistaken. I was never more hard-up in my life. As my plans have expanded, the pressure for money has grown.’”

Kinney shook himself as if awakening from a dream. “Well”, he snapped rather curtly, “this is getting off the story.”

“I had to give up the idea of making a resort on the bluff. That was the first in a long series of disappointments.”

The financial crash of ‘87 came and we had to abandon the idea of a resort for a long time.”

“I next thought of the beach strip. I had a partner in the ownership of that, Francis Ryan, a most charming gentleman.”



*Santa Monica Heights, Abbot Kinney’s bluff development which was never built. (Courtesy: Betty Lou and Randy Young)*

“We got the Santa Fe to build down there from Inglewood. Finally the Electric Road came in and bought the Santa Fe tracks. I won’t go into all the details. There was another disappointment in it. I saw the whole plan smash.”

“My partner, Mr. Ryan, died. His widow married Mr. Dudley and Mr. Dudley sold out to Frazier and Jones of Ocean Park fame.”

“I had started, meanwhile, to build an electric road direct from West Jefferson with a traffic arrangement with Mr. Hook of the Traction Company.”

“My new partners sold their rail road-right-of-way to the electric road at one end of the line. At the other end, Mr. Hook got into financial difficulties and that road didn’t go through.”

Abbot Kinney chuckled a bit, “You see,” he said, “I was sold out, as it were, at both ends of the line.”

“The end of it was that I made a division with Jones and Frazier. They took the Ocean Park end of the beach and I took the present site of Venice”.

“I felt that my old ambition was about to be realized.”

*( This ia the first segment of a three-part article. Watch your next two Journals for the balance of the piece.)*

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## VENICE LEGEND PASSES

Pearl White, the legendary Venice activist, passed away January 19th., at the age of 84. Born in Texas in 1921, she moved to our wartime seaside community in 1944. During her 60-year residency, she founded Venice Skills Center, the Oakwood Recreation Center, the Teen Post on Abbot Kinney Blvd., as well as a Head Start Program in Oakwood.

She was the recipient of many honors, the most recent being the Spirit of Venice award in September of 2003, given by the Abbot Kinney Boulevard Association.

Credited with being a fiery, outspoken advocate until the end of her life, she mounted a protest when the City of Los Angeles sought to tear-down the Venice Pavilion.

Survived by a daughter, Sheila Borders, two siblings, nieces and nephews, her memory lives on in the community via the services she rendered.

If we take only the esteem of our fellow men with us, then Ms. White left the earthly plain as a wealthy woman.



*Pearl White, the fiery and legendary activist who passed away January 19, 2004 in an Inglewood, CA. hospital. (Courtesy: Pearl White Family)*

## PENNY NASTIES

VHS member in San Francisco, Arlene Getz, was surprised to get our January-February Journal with vinegar valentines on the cover. As a collector of penny nasties, she has sent us some color copies of her cards and, boy, are they nasty!

These cards are of the type one would only send to their worst

enemy. How about: "ROAD HOG"...

If you keep viewing every sight  
Instead of keeping to your right  
Your next address, you dirty dog  
Will be an icebox in some morgue!!!

Know anyone you would like to send that one? Or how about "TOWN GOSSIP."

You're in awful shape with your ears to the ground

And a tongue that wags at both ends,  
And your nose in everyone's business-  
NO WONDER YOU NEVER HAVE FRIENDS!

I wouldn't I sign my name to that!!

And "THE BORROWER:"

The way YOU BORROW ALL THE TIME  
Makes everybody sick,  
But .... I'd GLADLY LOAN YOU POISON  
If I thought YOU'D TAKE IT QUICK!

Well, you get the idea. Thanks Arlene, we learned a lot about our parents' or grandparents' sense of humor from your astonishing collection.



*"Radio Bug." You play that thing so gol derned loud, you oughta be in chains. Here's hoping you blow out your tubes, and then blow out your brains! (Courtesy: Arlene Getz)*



A recent donation from Elayne Alexander's postcard collection shows people in an Ocean Park photo studio, "flying" in a new-fangled machine, circa 1910.

## May Archival Event

VHS will present a showing from our photo archives this coming May 16th, at a time and place yet to be determined. If you attended our event two years ago at Beyond Baroque, we have added some very interesting views to our collection.

One shows Abbot Kinney Boulevard as a dirt track with both the Venice-of America canal system behind and our small town in the distance. If you own a house built before 1910, in the vicinity of Venice and Abbot Kinney Boulevards, you may want to search this five-foot-long panorama.

Many other new additions from the past two years will also be displayed.

Other features will be a silent auction featuring some wonderful items, our sales table with lots of our brand new vintage cards, local authors signing their books, and a zippy 1960's fashion show. Of course, everyone is invited to attend in period costume be it Jacqueline Kennedy or Frank Zappa.

This should be a wonderful event and a great get-together for all those interested in the past of our unique community. Further details will be in the coming May-June edition of the VHS Journal. But please mark Sunday, May 16, on your calendar.

## ARCHIVAL ACCESSIONS

Thalia Johnson donated a copy of a black and white photo she purchased for her own collection. It is a view of the oil derricks on the peninsula, facing the ocean. Taken in the 1930s it features a rare view of a wharf, probably built for off-loading crude oil to tanker ships.

Elayne Alexander gave two panorama photos printed from a computer and a Barnes Circus ad.

One photo shows a 1923 Shriner's bathing beauty contest, taken around Rose Avenue. The tops of ocean front buildings can be seen in the background.

The second panorama depicts a 1910 motorcycle convention posing in North Venice with the Ocean Park Pier in the background. This may be the same group of motorcyclists who were snapped on Windward avenue in another panorama VHS owns of 1910 motorcycles.

The Barnes Circus publicity probably dates from the 1930s when the performers wintered in Barnes City on Washington, just east of Venice.

Dean Galman of Manhattan Beach donated six 4'X6' boards fashioned by activist, Annette del Zoppo and her photographer husband, in the 1980's,

depicting the history of Venice. These and other accessions will be displayed at our May event



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## OUR MEETING IN REVIEW



**Clockwise from left:** Our guest speaker, Julie Lugo Cerra, lecturing about Culver City history; New member 'Liz' Abbot of Virginia Beach, VA, Regina Barton, Julie Lugo Cerra & Schell Alexander waiting the arrival of the crowd; Our President, Mary Jane Weil, opening the general meeting; Photographer Larry Bronstein pitching his new LA book which he graciously donated to VHS; Our meeting attendees looking over past historic materials while arriving.

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