

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Our Mission: To Preserve, Promote and Make Accessible the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

SUMMER 2025

A Pierce-Arrow, a Pyramid, and a Place for a Museum

By Edward Warner

Our village is laced together with stories, like colorful ribbons, woven in and out of the fabric of this place. They twist and turn and lay back over themselves, layer over layer, wrapping us warmly in our history. Arrivals here a century ago were prompted by glowing newspaper ads pitching the opportunity of recreation on your own little plot of wooded paradise. I would like to share a tale of a few families that were part of this history, and one in particular with 3 generations spanning 60 years enjoying an Idyllwild cabin. There is also a connection between this family and a famous skyscraper in San Francisco. The cabin, on North Circle Drive is now the Idyllwild Area Historical Society Museum. Join me as we peel back some of the layers!

Claudius Lee Emerson to his surprise had sold well over 100 Idyllwild homes sites by 1921, and in the fall of that year a parcel on the corner of Circle Drive and Oakwood was deeded to Hugh E. Drayer. It may have been problems with payment or a disappointed customer because in three months it reverted back to Idyllwild Inc. and Emerson sold it again to Della W. Ferguson. Della was a widow living in Los Angeles with her younger brother. She was active in society and seemed to be at a station in life where she might seek a rustic spot in the local mountains to escape the heat of the city. Having said that, I was not able to find even a thread of her story in Idyllwild after she bought the lot.

The next owner of the property is one Edward Fenton Martell and his wife Ellen. Edward grew up

in the Calaveras County town of Murphys, in the heart of gold country's mother lode. His father, a gold miner as the strike was waning, sold his mine and found his fortune in the timber industry that fed on the abundant local redwood trees. Edward's early years were punctuated with the sound of timber crashing to the earth and the whine of saw mills. While his hands learned the feel of lumber, his mind was keen to master the skills of a carpenter. During WW1 he worked at Mare Island Navy Yard in Vallejo as a builder. After the war he became a contractor and did residential builds in the Stockton area, and likely did well.

At age 41, he and Ellen moved south to Palm Springs. It was 1926 and the city's resort status was just emerging, with just a few movie stars and well-heeled visitors escaping to the Spanish style casitas at the new La Quinta Hotel. Martell's timing was perfect, a skilled and experienced contractor landing where a dusty town was transitioning into a budding tourist retreat. The Martells soon discovered the San Jacinto Mountains, seeking respite from the desert heat. Growing up in the timber rich gold country of northern California, Idyllwild must have felt like home, and Edward was an avid hunter, never missing an opening day if he could help it. To have a second home up here made sense and I believe the Martell's acquired the property from Della Ferguson, and it was Edward who built the original one room cabin that is the entrance, fire place area and kitchen of the Idyllwild History Museum today. The construction is very stout and professional, clearly by an experienced hand and it has stood the test of time, as

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IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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*Board meetings are open to the membership
and are held in the archive building on the
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Arti-Facts

<i>Editor:</i>	Edward Warner
<i>Feature Writer:</i>	Edward Warner
<i>Layout:</i>	Halie Wilson

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Welcome New Members! During our open house-membership event, Untold Tales of Our Town, we enrolled almost 60 new members! During the event we heard time after time the words: "I had no idea..." Our archive collection has quietly grown to the point that many in the community had no idea the treasures preserved in that environmentally controlled facility. The message was clear, make this part of our collection more accessible. We will conduct more public events where we open those doors, however to really do it justice might require a significant investment and many more volunteers and community partners. The Frank and Mabel Moote Archive building itself was designed well with one purpose, to preserve and organize the Idyllwild centric documents, photos, art and artifacts that gradually found their way to our door. It was not intended to be public museum space. As history buffs, we look back, but as caretakers of this collection, we need to look forward and find ways to work within the existing footprint to bring more of this collection into view.

2025 Home Tour. Many of those who occupied this valley before us believed as we do that preserving its wildness is an active and conscious effort. There is a fine line between changes that improve our quality of life, and development that forever damages our paradise. We see homes and cabins all around us being renovated and expanded to enhance the experience of those who occupy them. That work, when done with an eye to the surroundings, to nature, to the trees and rocks, can be uplifting and bring us closer to the land. Join us on Saturday September 13th for the IAHS Annual Idyllwild Home Tour and see for yourself what we Idyllwillians can do!

In the Spring Arti-Facts we announced the upgrades to our museum exhibits. The new Communication Through Time Exhibit was made possible in part by a grant from the Idyllwild Community Fund at Inland Empire Community Foundation. To learn more about their vital mission, go to www/iegives.org.

Edward Warner
President, Idyllwild Area Historical Society
Contact me at edward54625@gmail.com

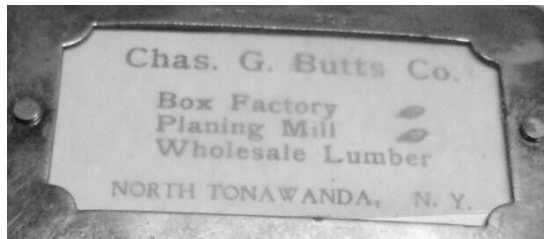


MUSEUM

(cont. from page 1)

we enjoy it 100 years later. One feature of this cabin, unlike others of the same period, are the quantity of large windows arrayed throughout, allowing the sunlight, after filtering through the pine and cedar greens, to wash over the rooms inside. Ellen Martell hosted her friends from Palm Springs in Idyllwild in 1930 but soon after in the summer of 1931, Ellen and Edward sold the cabin to Charles and Augusta Butts of Los Angeles. It should be noted that after his career as a contractor, Edward Martell became a member of the Palm Springs City Council.

Like Martell, Charles was born into logging, sawmills and lumber, his life starting in 1868 in Grand Blanc Michigan. He was the last born of 9 children in a town where a new railroad brought opportunity from logging the rich Michigan forests. As Charles came of age in the mid 1880's the country was at a turning point as factories were drawing the younger generation away from the farms and into the cities. Charles was by then a skilled woodworker, and within a few years was manufacturing shipping boxes.



I believe his manufacturing prowess was augmented by his skills in finance. Along with his own business, he quickly became partners in other lumber and milling operations that were thriving in the Great Lakes region. By 1899, Charles at age 26 now owns a box manufacturing company in Hinckley, NY, a strategic location for lumber barges and finished lumber. A year later he moves his operation to booming North Tonawanda N.Y. alongside the Erie Canal and the Niagara River. As his firm grew, he met and married Augusta E. Eilenberger. His box company grew to include a planing mill that transformed rough cut lumber to finished dimensions for builders. His son William E Butts was born in 1906, and son Charles Webster born in 1909.

Lumber was still king in North Tonawanda but Charles saw the future, seeing the appetite of a growing nation for iron. Foundries sprung up, their stacks belching black soot and smoke, the orange glow of molten iron seen from the windows. The

fuel of necessity was coal-based coke, used for its intense heat to melt the iron ore. Charles Butts deftly transitioned his assets into the metals industry, and by 1920 he was the manager and likely part owner of a cast iron works, proving to be very successful. By the early 1920's Charles now 52, and wife "Gussie" seemed to have tucked away a significant nest egg and began to travel, suggesting they had sold their holdings. In 1921 they booked passage to France and England, leaving their 14 and 11 yr old sons with their live-in nanny at home for three months.

A few years later, son William with a state scholarship in hand, attends Cornell University with its renowned manufacturing and engineering programs, laying the groundwork for his career, following his father's footsteps into the offices of a cast iron foundry. 1929 brings the devastating crash of the stock markets pushing the debt laden industrial world into turmoil. It is hard for us to know exactly when, but it seems the whole Butts Family pulls up stakes and migrates west to LA and Charles and Gussie purchase a lovely home in what becomes the Hancock Park area. By 1930, William, still single, is now the Vice President and General Manager of Western Metals Foundry on Alhambra Street in LA.

Charles and Gussie find the climate of Southern California delightful and it helps with the asthma that Gussie has suffered for years. We do not know how they learned about Idyllwild. Was it a feature in the popular Sunset Magazine, or did a friend suggest they visit? When they did wind their way into this valley the effect on them, like many of us, caused them to write a check. It was June of 1931 when they acquire the Idyllwild cabin from Edward and Ellen Martell, beginning a legacy lasting 6 decades.

Charles kept a journal at the cabin where he noted dates, the current weather in the valley, who traveled up with him and what had to be done on the property or needed to be fixed. He would jot down which neighbors were in town or note a visit to the "Rustic Shop" for breakfast. On the drive up they often stayed the night at Gilman Hot Springs, so Gussie could be attended to by her doctor there. Charles would record which car they took up the hill, the Pierce-Arrow clearly his favorite. He notes a new Packard as well but ultimately a Ford Coupe was a

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THE COMPANY WE KEEP

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

PATRON

Robin Levitski
Patricia Austin
Lambert Timmermans
Jim and Hedy Tyson

BENEFACTOR

Leslie Jacobs
Christine Lewis
Eric Tracy
Sponser
Phil Bailly
James Boyd
Darlene Breen
Diane Cardinali
Laurel Corbett
Marianne Corey
Ben & Debby Cossart
Robert Cox
Dawn Deshefy
Wayne Donaldson
Ferguson, Jim and Doris
David Fraser
Eileen Gates
Robert Grossman
Carol Anne Hayes
Robert M Hibbard
Richard Honn
Jake Jacobs
Marilyn Kemple
Tom & Sharon Killeen
Jon & Ann King
Barbara & Ted Kinoshita
Diana Kurr
Bonnie Lawrie
Steve Lech
Mike & Penny Mihaly
Chris & Steve Perreault
Marlene & Tom Pierce
Tiffany Raridon
Jesse Sandoval
Cheryl Sautter-Kronyn
Terry Shirley
Joyce Silberstein
John & Cynthia Stern
Stephen Sutton
Brenda & Ed Warner
Chuck Wilson
Donald Wopperer

CONTRIBUTING

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Halean Brunzel
Dawn Bush
Kevin Cadieux
Jayne Davis
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Susan Judkins
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Jeannie Lagorio
Linda Lee
David Leonard
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Mitzi Matijevich
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Joyce Miller
Carol Munro
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Dawn Plonski
Chris Plourde
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Henry Sokol
Keith Teeuwen & Haans Lee
Joanne Tenney
John Thomford
Derrick Thrasher
Janice Ulmer
Deidre Vail
Michael White
Stephanie Yost & Steve Olsen

FAMILY

Lou Bacher
Lynnette Banks
Chris Berger
Jeannette Boller
Douglas & Maureen Boren
Michelle Bowen
James Brock
Stephen Bryne
Jeanne Buchanan
Jeffrey Burke, & Haans Triolo
Cathie Davis

R. Bruce Denney

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Ronn Rohe
Sylvia Rountree & Ed Ham
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Mike & Cindi Whitehead
Lenore Will
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INDIVIDUAL

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Kathy Bryson
Cosette Carder
Laurie Cole
Susan Cowper
Barbara Czescik
Damon Day
Lorie DeMarco
Cecily Disana
Dawn Finlayson
Roland Gaebert
Joann Graham
Joanna Hill
Tunnell Jolie
Barbara Jones
Beaufort Kathleen
Janet Keller
Kurt Leuschner
Virginia Lumb
Candace Mann
Mary McCann
John McCully
Cindy McKenna
Judi Milan
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Nancy Pearlman
Frances Perez
Alma Peters
Steve Proffitt
Jackey Queen
Erin Randall
Julie Reilly
Bonnie Reynolds
Richard & Patty Schwartz
Marilyn Sears
Donald Steffes
Margaret Stimson
Helen Strahan
Judy Sweeting

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please make your tax-deductible membership check to IAHS and mail to PO box 3320, Idyllwild, Ca, 92549
You can now also can renew membership online!

www.idyllwildhistory.org/membership-application-2/ and pay with a credit/debit card.
Please list your name(s) as you want it to read in our newsletter.

MUSEUM

(cont. from page 1)

better car for the road, as the “Pierce” overheated on many a drive up.

He recorded with glee who won the critical governors’ race in 1934, with incumbent conservative Frank Merriman beating the famous author Upton Sinclair, seen by many as a socialist. The journal then announces proudly that William and new wife Marie will honeymoon at the rustic cabin. William in the meantime has been climbing the corporate ladder. The next rung, due to a merger, means a move to the bay area in 1936. With Marie and daughter Judy, they buy a nice home in Piedmont, where they will raise their family. William is now running what has become General Metals, now a division of the Transamerica company, while Marie thrusts herself into organizations that do good in the community. They continue to visit the Idyllwild cabin as often as they can.

Charles notes in one journal entry that prohibition was being voted down in other states, but even by 1938, Mrs. Curry has yet to get a liquor license at the Idyllwild Inn. The Butts add on two bedrooms and another bath to accommodate the growing family and in the initial years Charles and Gussie visit every few months year-round. As Charles reports all too often his cars getting stuck in the snow, it gradually becomes a summer cabin, concurrent with the story we tell our museum guests today.

The hand written journal tells us in the first entry of the 1940 season of his discovery of a dead skunk under the cabin, but happily reports “there was no bad odor.” He also notes an earthquake in May, and I think with a tone of relief, the purchase of the cabins first refrigerator, replacing the old ice box. The last and final entry in Charles’s journal is June of 1940, reporting that they are getting the cabin ready for Daughter-in-law Marie and the grandkids for summer.

In September of 1940 Charles deeds ownership of the cabin to William and Marie, as Idyllwild reports is biggest Labor Day crowds ever. By 1941, all was about to change with the bombing of Pearl Harbor bringing the US to war. Gas rationing now defines life and tourism in Idyllwild goes quiet, with the war effort now the focus of Southern California.

The Butts family felt keeping up with seasonal activities was vital, and helped to keep things feeling



William E Butts with his father’s Pierce-Arrow

normal in the unnormal world of war. In 1942, 6-year-old Judy Butts and her Idyllwild girlfriends, all students of Norma Gould’s Summer Dance Class, perform “A Sailors Hornpipe” at the Idyllwild Campfire, on Labor Day weekend.

William continued to advance his career in Oakland as Vice President of General Metals. During the war they built diesel engines for the Navy used in tugs and harbor craft, and electric generators for larger ships. As the war effort tapered down, its parent corporation, Transamerica merges its metal companies including General Metals, into one division, and William becomes the president of that division, marking his rise in the growing conglomerate.

In 1949 patriarch Charles Grant Butts dies at 81. He has successfully transitioned his love of the Idyllwild cabin to his kids and grandkids, and left a considerable legacy to them as well. Throughout the 1950’s and 60’s the family summers at the cabin having BBQ’s with friends, playing bridge, enjoying the mountain air and the brilliant stars at night. William had planted tulips, and each year anticipated their bloom.

In his role as VP of Transamerica, William is part of the team that is responsible for planning and building their new flagship skyscraper in downtown San Francisco, The Transamerica Pyramid. They define a path focused on safety of the occupants of



Transamerica Pyramid, under construction

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IDYLLWILD HOME TOUR

September 13, 2025 - 10am-4pm

Tickets are \$30 per person and are non-refundable.

ONLINE TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW! THE LAST DAY TO BUY TICKETS ONLINE IS THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11: <https://www.idyllwildhistory.org/home-tour/>

TICKETS WILL BE ON SALE DURING OUR MUSEUM'S OPEN HOURS NOW THROUGH SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7.

TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE DAY OF HOME TOUR AT THE WILL CALL BOOTH NEAR THE TOWN MONUMENT BEGINNING AT 9 AM.

This year we have truly captured the essence of Idyllwild on a grand scale! Guests will tour homes with breathtaking views of the Strawberry Valley, historic sites from the movies, great rooms with expansive windows framing our famous monolithic

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We need more adult volunteers who would be willing to join our team for this year's Home Tour. No special knowledge is needed.

One of the benefits of volunteering, is that you will get to tour the homes on Friday without all the visitors that will attend on Saturday.

We would really appreciate your help.

Please contact Nanci at 951-659-0575 if you are interested. Thank you.

ridgelines, renowned architectural homes, each one of the five homes evoking its owner's mountain lifestyle. The artwork, decoration and unique features were designed to inspire and engage, making this a very special day for those who attend, getting a rare peek into these private mountain havens.

*Children, accompanied by an adult, are welcome. Only Service Dogs will be allowed at the homes. You will drive to each home. Parking assistants will help you park. Then you will take a walking tour of each home. Docents will be spread throughout each home to provide background information about the home. Please join us for this very special day! 📖

MUSEUM

(cont. from page 5)

the building. The building is started in 1969, and in a press conference at city hall, William explains the remarkable safety features to city officials and the gathered press. Here is yet another Idyllwild neighbor, an avid home handyman, on a world stage!

In 1980 William arrives in town anxious to see how his prized tulips are doing, however suffers a heart attack, and is hospitalized in Hemet. He never fully recovered and in 1982, he passed away. His Idyllwild neighbors had fond memories of him spending time at the cabin before grabbing his brief case and dashing off to a board meeting in New York or San Francisco. The Butts family's time at the cabin gradually tapers down, so with a heavy heart, they sell the beloved cabin to Daniel and Farida May, of Hidden Hills in 1993.

Like some of today's buyers, the May's after a year, find it does not fit their lifestyle, so they sell it to Arllyn and Donlyn Kling of Laguna Beach who hold on to it for two years before selling it to Bill and Margaret Wootton in 1996. Bill had retired and lived here a number of years before owning it, and seems to be one of our cherished Idyllwild characters. He prepared the cabin to rent out, and had various

tenants for a few years.

One of the most interesting was the Idyllwild Film Institute, nurtured by Leonard and Lena Marcel. At the time, the cabin was divided up into separate rooms, however Leonard needed the main cabin to be an open space for a film screening room so he hired Idyllwild's colorful J.P. Crumrine to do the remodel. J.P. tells us that he designed and installed the internal posts and beams we see now, to support the rafters, thus allowing the removal of the bedroom and bunkhouse walls, creating the open architecture our guests enjoy today. J.P. then converted the garage into a Foley sound effects studio, a very complex, and likely expensive venture. The film institute, like a few of today's Idyllwild "dreams" might not have been economically viable, and closed. The cabin eventually went back on the market.

The final layer wrapping around this story is a bit of an "arranged marriage." The Woottons take the cabin off the market in 2002 as part of a well-orchestrated three-way transaction thus allowing it to be acquired by the County of Riverside. The county in turn granted it to our budding Historical Society for perpetual use as a local museum! We are indebted to the families who loved and lived in this cabin, their stories coming alive winding amongst all of us as we warm up the cabin for a weekend of Museum Guests. 📖

The Idyllwild Cabin Book, A Work in Progress, by Betty Parks

Betty is a “boots on the ground” Idyllwild historian. As part of the Historical Society, she single-handedly compiled a resource that documents many of the older historic cabins and homes in this area. She took pictures, climbed over and under fences, knocked on doors, asked questions and learned the origin story of many of these treasures.

She documented what she learned in a digital format so it can be used by those that follow in her footsteps. Betty and husband Walter are leaving Idyllwild and its important for us to embrace her work and pass it on to future generations. If you want to see if a cabin you love is in her book, stop by the Museum! Thank You Betty, you are a Treasure! 📖

The Historical Society in Action



July 4th Parade, Nancy and Hedy (and Gracie the Nash)
Photo by Dan Lauderbach



Steven Lech, Presentation, General Meeting
Photo by Bob Greenamyer



Garden Club Work Day, IAHS Garden
Photo by Ed Warner

The Mission of the Idyllwild Area Historic Society

To preserve the history of Idyllwild and neighboring communities in the San Jacinto Mountains; to maintain artifacts thereof in a manner accessible to the public; and to promote public awareness of local history for the enrichment of visitors and residents.

Furthering the mission of our organization our lead Archivist Bob Greenamyer has recently digitized and posted all 71 past issues of this newsletter to our website, Idyllwildhistory.org. Typically, each issue beginning 23 years ago,

featured a well-researched article that illuminated people, places or events from our past. These issues with their feature articles were authored by highly regarded local writers including Bob Smith our notable Idyllwild historian, Ben

Killingsworth and John Blodgett, amongst others. This is a valuable free resource now available to anyone on our website or the result of an online search of an Idyllwild area historic subject. Enjoy these fine articles! 📖

Museum Hours

11 am to 4 pm

**Saturday and Sunday
and Monday Holidays**

Also daily between Christmas and New Years

**History Gardens Open Tuesday Thru
Sunday 9 am to 4 pm**

Follow us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety

Visit our website

www.idyllwildhistory.org

For special hours and other business, call
(951) 659-2717 or email info@idyllwildhistory.org

Admission Free

54470 North Circle Drive

Donations Welcome

Upcoming Events

IDYLLWILD HOME TOUR – SEPTEMBER 13, 2025 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Tickets are \$30 per person and are non-refundable.

ONLINE TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW! THE LAST DAY TO BUY TICKETS

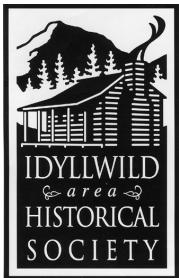
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NOW THROUGH SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7.

**TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE DAY OF HOME TOUR AT THE SALES BOOTH
NEAR THE MONUMENT BEGINNING AT 9:00 AM.**

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