Building Mission Dam by Belle Baranceanu — studies and completed mural at Roosevelt Junior High School, 1938
In looking at the images inside on page four, I am quickly reminded of how busy it has been at the Museum this summer. The central map of the core exhibition on San Diego history opened in July, and it is a joy to stand above the gallery and watch families, especially children, walk and crawl over the map of the County and experiment with the transparencies of different physical features. As content is developed—and funded—for projecting on the map, the opportunities to learn about our local history will be unlimited.

In September, we continue with the opening of Belle Baranceanu: The Artist at Work, the first major showing in over twenty-one years of the art of one of San Diego's finest artists during the WPA Era. The exhibition is drawing a great deal of interest from collectors all over California and will not only bring to light an important part of the Society’s collections, but will also illuminate a period in San Diego's history. Closely tied with our evolving permanent exhibition, the Baranceanu murals, especially, will delight viewers of all ages.

In addition to her position as a preeminent San Diego artist, Baranceanu taught art for many years at Francis Parker School. To further bring the exhibition to life, Education Director Rebecca Lawrence, will be inviting students from Parker today to interview Baranceanu's students from the 1940s and 1950s, and create oral histories of the period. One wall in the new Student Gallery is also being dedicated to the creation—by students—of a mural modeled on the Baranceanu style. We look forward to seeing this come alive.

We also welcome the creation of a new “Council” for the Society in support of all our magnificent fine art collections, including our paintings and sculptures. Much as the Costume Council has done over the years, the Art Council will exist to further the conservation, storage, care, and exhibiting of these wonderful collections. We are immensely pleased at the interest shown by art collectors and other interested individuals in our efforts to portray history through fine art.

Many thanks, once again, to all our members, volunteers, and especially, to our Trustees and committee members, for your strong support of the Society. Without your contribution of time, boundless energy, and good will, the Society’s educational, research, and exhibiting programs would simply not be possible. It is what has made it possible to bring you these exciting new exhibitions.

David S. Watson
Executive Director

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Belle Baranceanu: The Artist at Work

by Claudia Leos, Senior Curator

The career of San Diego artist Belle Baranceanu (1902-1988) will be explored in an exciting exhibition opening to the public on September 16, 2006. The exhibition will revisit the important work of this artist through objects held in the San Diego Historical Society's collection as well as works in local government, museum, and private collections.

Belle Baranceanu, born in Chicago, settled in San Diego in 1932 and emerged as one of the city's preeminent artists. She is known for a series of WPA-era murals, some of which still continue in their original location, as well as bold and abstract paintings of landscapes, portraits, and a series of striking wood block prints focused on animal studies from the San Diego Zoo. A highlight of the exhibition will be the large-scale murals on canvas that the artist created for Roosevelt Junior High School, entitled Building Mission Dam and Portola's Northern Expedition. These murals are on long-term loan to the Society and have not been on public display for over thirty years.

The artist left much of her work — paintings, prints, preparatory sketches, plus personal effects — to the Society and a selection of these holdings will also be on view. This material will allow the artist’s creative process to be traced in stages, giving visitors a behind-the-scenes look at how Baranceanu created her large-scale works.

The fascinating personal story of Belle Baranceanu, a child of Romanian Jewish immigrants who became an independent and pioneering artist in her day, will be also be shared. Visitors will learn about the artist's development, her participation in the San Diego art community, and her teaching career in local schools.

We look forward to sharing the artistic legacy of one of the most innovative artists in San Diego's history with the community.
After much anticipation, the San Diego Historical Society opened the first installment of its new core exhibition, *Place of Promise: Stories of San Diego* on July 25, 2006. Located in the North Gallery, *Place of Promise* allows museum guests to walk throughout San Diego County on a thirty by thirty foot floor map. Visitors are also able to participate in a number of interactive features within the gallery: transparent floor cards that examine both contemporary and historic topics pertaining to the county; *Guide by Cell*, an audio guide that allows guests to use their cell phones to learn more about the exhibition; and a gallery mailbox that encourages guests to leave their suggestions and comments to assist in the future development of the exhibition. Also on display in *Place of Promise* are two large scale paintings by local landscape artist, Charles Reiffel. Visitors can also see Streetcar Number 54, a 1910 streetcar from the San Diego Electric Railway Company.
Audio Tour by Cell Phone at New Exhibition

by Gabe Selak, Education Programs Manager

What better way to hear the Stories of San Diego than through our new, innovative audio tour distributed by Guide by Cell? This exciting interpretive program encourages visitors to call an authorized phone number, (408) 794-2822, using their personal cell phone, to hear various experts talk about objects on view in the exhibition gallery, as well as unique stories of San Diego’s history. Once the main number is dialed, simply enter the prompt number followed by the # sign to hear the recorded segment. The best part of the program is that calls can be placed from anywhere in the country, opening our interpretation of San Diego’s history to people nationwide!

The featured experts include Dr. Iris Engstrand (2#), Professor of History, University of San Diego, discussing the Works Progress Administration Federal Arts Project of 1935 and its impact on public art in San Diego; Charles Young (3#), Director of Education at the San Diego Model Railroad Museum on the San Diego Electric Railway; Alexis Miller (4#), Associate Conservator of Paintings, Balboa Art Conservation Center, explaining the conservation of the Charles Reiffel paintings, and Matt Bokovoy (6#), author of San Diego’s World’s Fair; relating the creation of Balboa Park. Other stories available include gold mining and the founding of Julian, California (5#), and the 1931 Lemon Grove Incident (7#).

Don’t be shy! Pick up your phone, and give us a call to hear more about San Diego’s intriguing past!

Model T on Display

The latest exhibition at the Museum of San Diego History is a 1921 Ford Model T. It was purchased new in 1921 by San Diego’s Olympic medalist swimmer, Florence Chambers Newkirk, and donated to the Society in 1972.

Apart from some minor restoration, the automobile remains in its original condition.

Looking to the Future...

The San Diego Historical Society plans to further develop the core exhibition by displaying a variety of items from the archival and curatorial collections. Opening in early summer 2007, the next installment of the exhibition will include a detailed timeline of San Diego’s history, complete with ephemera, artifacts, photographs, and interactive displays; a stagecoach built in 1866 will also be featured.

New educational programs are also planned as the exhibition continues to expand: gallery tours, lectures on topics related to the exhibition’s content, and new school programming.

Be sure to see our website www.sandiegohistory.org for updates on the progress of the exhibition.
An Update from the Education Department

by Rebecca Laurence and Katrina Glynn

Here are some of our program highlights, as we move into a new season and a new school year:

- We are really excited to be opening a student gallery in November dedicated to showcasing student work on an ongoing, rotating basis at the Museum of San Diego History. Teachers of all grades and youth groups are welcome to submit project ideas to the Education Department that have a San Diego connection.

- In our new LandQuest San Diego program, third grade students will be exploring San Diego’s geography and landforms on our thirty by thirty foot floor map of the County at the Museum of San Diego History.

- San Diego Before Statehood will begin again in October at the Serra Museum. Fourth grade students will journey back in time and tread in the footsteps of the padres, soldiers, and settlers who established the first mission and presidio in California.

- In our History Case outreach program for fourth-graders, The Case of the Undercover Presidio Merchant, students will piece together the clues to find out who at the Presidio is guilty of trading with another country.

- Junior Girl Scouts can now earn two badges at the Society. In addition to the Architecture Badge workshop, girl scouts will be well on their way to becoming local historians by participating in our Local Lore Badge workshop.

- School In The Park starts again in September, but this time with many more students. Hamilton Elementary School will be joining Rosa Parks Elementary School for the expansion of this innovative park-wide program.

- Look for more information on our website about our Fall Lecture Series and new gallery tours at the Museum of San Diego History.

- Teacher and school groups can sign up for a free orientation of the Research Library. Teachers can also schedule a research session for their classes to study source material on the topic of their choice for $2.00 per student.

- If these programs and activities sound like fun, become a volunteer! We are always looking for dedicated San Diegans to help educate students and the public about our rich and diverse history.

For more information or to schedule a program, please call the Education Department at (619) 232-6203 ext. 104 or contact us at edu@sandiegohistory.org.

School in the Park students working in the Research Library.
Student Gallery to Open This Fall

by Rebecca Lawrence, Director of Education

Displaying student work at the San Diego Historical Society is not something new, but devoting an entire gallery to perpetually displaying student projects is new. Beginning this November, the Museum of San Diego History will showcase exhibitions produced by students on an ongoing and rotating basis.

One of our goals with this program is to bring new perspectives on history into the museum, while at the same time helping students develop their skills in researching, analyzing, and writing, as well as design and installation. In addition, we will be able to teach them about career opportunities in museums. While some projects may be completed entirely in classrooms and after-school programs, others will be integrated into the museum and archives. These projects will include talks by Society curators, registrars, archivists, and exhibit designers on the individual roles they play in the development of exhibitions. Students will then carry out these tasks as part of their own projects.

Exhibitions may also be collaborations between local organizations and youth groups. In fact, the first exhibition to be on display in this space is called *Nikkei Youth: Past, Present and Future*, which was curated by the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego with help from some young community members. It was featured at the Obon Festival in August at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego. This exhibition explores the history of young Japanese Americans in San Diego, including internment during World War II, and draws connections to modern youth here today.

Look for exhibitions in this gallery to change every few months. Teachers of all grades and community organizations are welcome to submit project ideas to the Education Department. Projects must have a connection to San Diego.

Contact us at: edu@sandiegohistory.org.

The Costume Council

The mission of the Costume Council is to conserve, promote and support the exhibition of the San Diego Historical Society’s costume collection, evaluated to be among the top collections of historical societies nationwide.

Membership dues and fund raising activities help support the research and preservation of this important collection as well as providing for curatorial expertise.

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L to r: David Watson, Pete Wilson, Gayle Wilson, Lois Olson, Elisabeth Bergan. Former Mayor of San Diego Pete Wilson and his wife Gayle visit with the Executive Director and officers of the Costume Council. After visiting the Curatorial Department, they toured the new exhibition Place of Promise: Stories of San Diego.

The Society wishes to express its gratitude and appreciation to these donors who so generously supported the work of the Costume Council in the past year.

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Society News

Claudia Leos, Senior Curator
Claudia Leos has recently been named Senior Curator. Ms. Leos, a former Assistant Curator at the San Diego Museum of Art, holds an M.A. in art history and museum studies from USC and a B.A. degree in art history from UCLA. Most recently, she conducted doctoral research sponsored by a Fulbright fellowship at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City. Her specialties include Latin American and Latino art, Spanish colonial art and history, and the history of diverse communities in the U.S.

Nicholas Vega, Associate Curator
Nicholas has joined the San Diego Historical Society as the Associate Curator. He received a Master's degree in History, with an emphasis in Teaching and Public History, and a Bachelor's degree in History from the University of San Diego. His studies concentrated on local San Diego history.

Nicholas comes to us from the Coronado Historical Association, where he served as Director of Archives and Exhibits.

Victoria Cranner, Registrar
Victoria Cranner (Tori) comes to us from Massachusetts where she served as the Registrar/Senior Collections Manager at the Peabody Museum at the Phillips Academy. She previously worked at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University where she spent several years in the collections department before becoming the Image Services Coordinator.

Tori has a Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from Tufts university, a B.A. in Theater from the University of New Hampshire, and has done archaeological field work in England and New Mexico.

As Digital Archivist for the International Catacomb Society, Tori is part of an on-going project to document, study, and preserve the Catacombs underneath the city of Rome.

Before turning to a museum career, she worked as a professional stage manager in Connecticut and as artistic director for a New Hampshire Theater company.

Long-Time Volunteer Retires
Pat Sumner has been a mainstay in the Research Library since 1984. She has worked tirelessly in the Photograph Archives, assisting with large collections such as the Charles Schneider Collection, as well as the Society’s collection of original prints. She also worked side by side with Laura Finster, entering the thousands of membership records (handwritten on 5x7 index cards), into what was then a brand new computerized system.

The Research Library staff is so grateful to you for all your years of effort on our behalf. Thank you, Pat!

Intern Researches for New Belle Baranceanu Exhibition
Sarita Villanueva, a junior at Humboldt State University, spent the early summer researching the contents of six boxes of documents from the Belle Baranceanu Papers for the upcoming exhibition highlighting her work.

In total, Sarita gave over 100 hours working with the Curatorial and Archives departments, reading personal letters between Belle and her close confidants, looking at working sketches and artwork, and creating a research file detailing her findings. Exhibit consultants Bram Dijkstra and David Swanson, along with Claudia Leos, Senior Curator, have been using this research to create the catalogue for the Belle exhibition.

A big “thank you” goes out to Sarita. We wish her luck in the upcoming school year.
Donations to the San Diego Historical Society
The San Diego Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the following organizations and individuals in the period from July 2005 to July 2006.

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Annual Showcase House
The Society’s Annual Showcase House has been a tradition for nearly thirty years. Since its inception, it has brought together thousands of wonderful, devoted volunteers and scores of talented designers who worked their creative magic, which generated significant operating revenues for the Society. It was the focus of the Society’s annual fund raising efforts and greatly anticipated by many. Even in the face of dwindling attendance and the increasing expenses of doing business in today’s complex times, we hoped that it would again be a good financial success. This past year, unfortunately, it was not.

Thus, there has recently been increased talk about the future of Showcase as a way of raising significant funds: The question whether Showcase made efficient, effective use of volunteer and staff time had to be answered. Many discussions have taken place in which deep, honest opinions were expressed. There was spirited debate but never was there a closed mind or a blind eye in the room.

After weighing all sides of the debate, and reviewing the recommendations of David Watson, the Society Director, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees voted on Tuesday, August 22, to discontinue the event this year in its present form. A standing Special Events Committee will be formed to explore possible alternatives to Showcase, including the possibility of revamping the showcase house idea in a different form.

The extraordinary contribution of the thousands who have worked on Showcases can never be adequately thanked, even if we say, “Thank you, a thousand times, thank you.” We look forward to working with you all again as we move forward with two new events this year. We deeply value your support, time, and talent. Thank you all so very much.
Images: Keep Them COOL and DRY!

by Chris Travers, Director of the Booth Historical Photograph Archives

There are many reasons for the deterioration of photographic prints and negatives, but the main culprit is high temperature and humidity fluctuation. Although our photographic collections have been stored in an air-conditioned space for many years, with a portion of the negative and film collection stored in a small cold room, many more of the negatives should ideally move into cold storage.

A few weeks ago, work began on the new cold room, which will triple the size of the existing space. The room or “tomb,” which is being converted to this new use, had been a storage area for the museum store. It is ideal for cold storage because it has a concrete floor and ceiling and one long concrete wall, all below ground level. Two of the other walls have now been sheeted with insulating foam panels to help make the space more energy efficient.

The temperature range of the new cold room will be 45 - 50 degrees with a humidity level of 40 percent. This will more than quadruple the lifespan of the images. This cold room project was funded by the Crabtree bequest. To help your own photographic images last longer, try to keep them in a cool, stable and dry environment. For more information about image preservation, visit the website of the Image Permanence Institute at http://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org.

Marriage Records: To Have and to Hold

by Jane Kenealy, Archivist

About a year ago, I was working in our storage area with a group of volunteers, when I noticed that some of them were missing. Following the sounds of enthusiasm that were coming from one of the aisles, I found they had discovered our collection of marriage licenses. This consists of about 300 large volumes with the certificates of marriages in San Diego County from 1871 through 1959. One of those volunteers, Jane Cowgill, is an enthusiastic genealogist and was very excited to find that we had such a wonderful collection.

Apart from the names and occupations of the bride and groom, they also contain their ages, places of birth and origin, the details of who performed the ceremony, and the names of the witnesses. For genealogists, these books are a wonderful resource; they do exist on microfilm with San Diego County, but there is nothing quite like seeing the real thing.

Encouraged by Jane’s enthusiasm, we decided to start the enormous task of making this great collection of records more available to researchers. So far, we have them shelved in chronological order and Jane has volunteered to undertake the mammoth task of entering all the details into a searchable database. To date, she has reached July 1918 and volume 44!
Volunteers Needed!

The San Diego Historical Society relies on its volunteers. We need volunteers in all departments - working with our historical collections, helping with administration, and assisting in the Education and Exhibition departments.

To volunteer or for further information please contact: Laura Finster, Volunteer Coordinator at (619) 232-6203 ext. 163 or finster@sandiegohistory.org.

SAN DIEGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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