

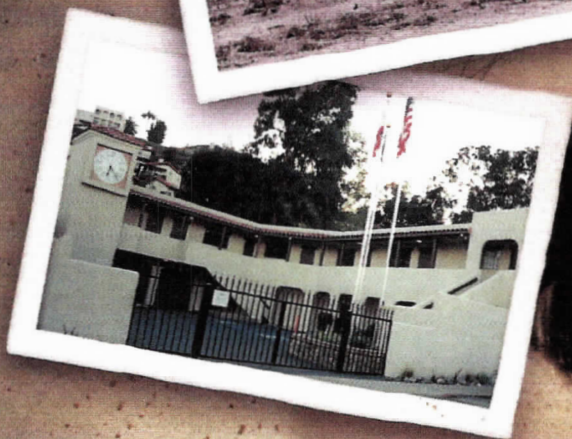
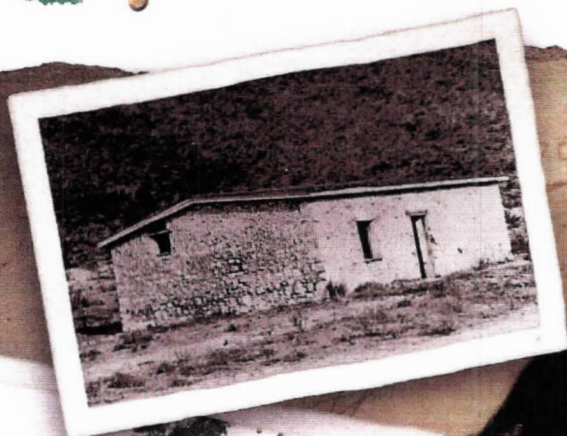
CA



# SHERIFF

CALIFORNIA STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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## This Issue

2003 CSSA Signed  
Bill Report

Memorial for Retired  
Sheriff Charles Byrd,  
Siskiyou County

Gangsters Find  
No Disneyland in  
Orange County

...and MORE!

## the SHERIFF'S museum





# Sheriff's Museum

By Chris Saunders



AGOSTIN HARASZTHY

San Diego's first Sheriff was an immigrant Hungarian Count who had the job for only about a year, from 1850 to 1851. But Agostin Haraszthy's true legacy is much more lasting than his brief stint as the county sheriff – Haraszthy is the father of the California wine industry. More on that later.

Today, right next to the site of the cobblestone building that served as San Diego's first jail, stands the San Diego Sheriff's Museum and Educational Center. Unlike that first jail, this museum will be around for a long, long time.

In fact, that cobblestone jail was so prisoner-friendly that its first inmate managed to easily dig his way out and free himself with a spoon, because Haraszthy's construction crew hadn't used quite enough mortar in their mix.

That first escapee's name was Roy Bean, who as Judge Roy Bean, went on to become a bit more of a lasting legend than did Agostin Haraszthy. By the way, Bean was arrested on what was probably a misdemeanor 647(f) charge for being drunk in public.

The San Diego Sheriff's Department is full of colorful characters, legends, and rough and tumble lawmen, but it also has a proud modern history of professionalism and innovation.

You can capture it all with a visit to the Sheriff's Museum. When you walk in the front door, you are suddenly in the Sheriff's office and jail, much as it must have looked to Roy Bean in 1850. There's a pot-bellied stove burning next to the Sheriff's desk, where the Sheriff is sitting, right beside the gun rack. The Sheriff's saddle is sitting on a bale of hay, ready to throw on his horse and head out with the posse.

Across the room, against a cobblestone wall, is an iron-strap jail cell, in the exact dimensions of one of the old ones, with a "captured bandit" doing time. The effect is perfect.

Right off the entry way, you find yourself in the weapons gallery, surrounded by the tools of the trade in the "sheriff-ing" business, from an original 1886 Winchester Yellowboy rifle to the Colt AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, and everything in between. There's a prohibition area Tommy Gun, an Uzi, and AK-47 and an example of just about every firearm a Sheriff's Deputy ever carried, along with quite a few they didn't carry.

There's also a near-life sized cardboard cutout of Sheriff "Wild" Bill Kolender, wearing a silver star, a black hat, a moustache and drawing his six-shooter. Kolender, San Diego's current Sheriff and a major reason why the museum was built, had a great time dressing up for the role in 2000 to commemorate the department's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Much of what's on display at the museum used to be housed in a room at the Santee Sheriff's Station. It wasn't well known, and not

easily accessible to the general public. It was all started by a retired deputy named Don Van Hooser, who was not only a history buff, but was interested in the history of the Sheriff's Department in particular. That one room was open to the public only on Friday mornings starting in the mid-80's, and that was how the museum operated for more than a decade.



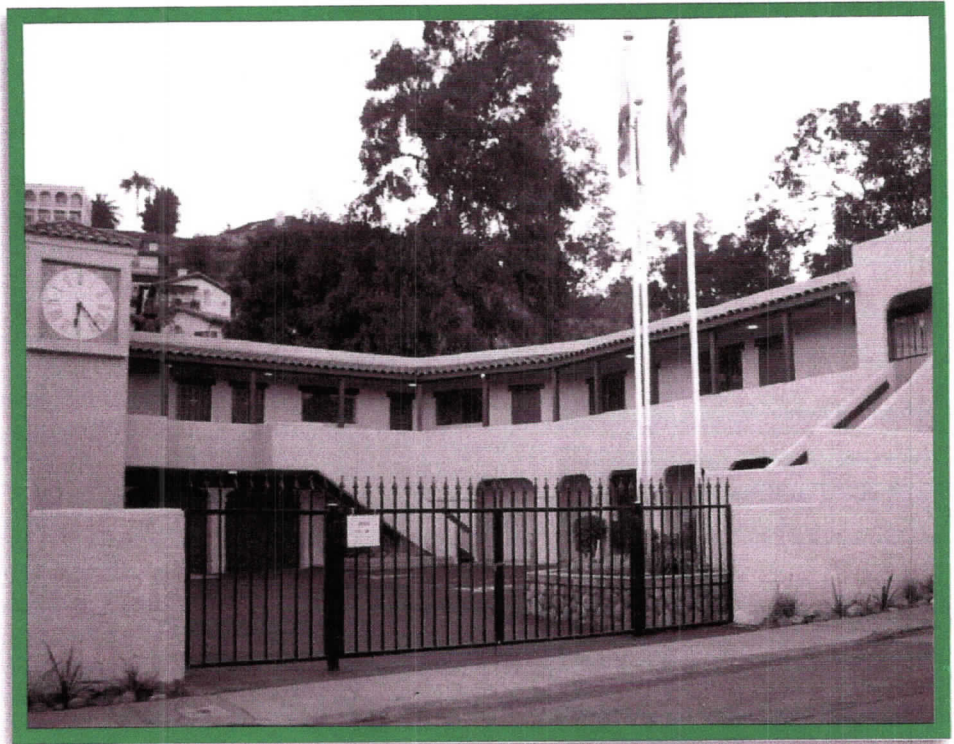
When Bill Kolender was sworn-in as Sheriff in 1995, one of his first official acts was to in turn swear in Don Van Hooser as the official Department Historian. Three years later, Kolender approached his Senior Executive Assistant Mary Walsh and said, "Let's find a real home for the museum! One where the public can actually visit and learn about our rich history and the role of law enforcement."



Walsh immediately formed a site selection committee, which also included Don Van Hooser, Fred Grand of the Old Town Chamber of Commerce, Architect Ron Davis, retired Sgt. Bob Torbett, President of the Retired Deputies' Association and Lt. Jim Duffy, a Sheriff's Deputy and son of former longtime Sheriff John Duffy.

The committee concentrated its search in Old Town because that's where the department has its roots. One day Fred Grand saw a "for sale" sign on a two-story office building on Old Town's main drag – a sign that he'd seen two days before when it said, "sold." A two-story out of escrow office building with a courtyard, practically right on top of the site of Agostin Harazthy's original-cobblestone-Roy Bean escape-tested cobblestone jail. Grand thought to himself: "This would be perfect."

It took nearly two years of very intensive fund-raising and hands-on work to turn the museum into reality. There were some major benefactors, including Ed Gaylord, Art Bartlett, former President & CEO of Century 21, County Supervisor Ron Roberts, City Council Member Byron Wear and the Honorary Deputy Sheriffs' Association (HDSA), a citizen volunteer group comprised of business executives, dedicated to providing specialized equipment and training to law enforcement in San Diego County.



Recognizing Haraszthy's name as Hungarian, and being Hungarian himself, Fulop decided to donate his services to building the beautiful cobblestone walls. The story of the Sheriff's Museum is full of "all kinds of miracles," according to Mary Walsh.

It opened its doors officially on November 17, 2001, an extremely exciting day for Walsh: "Just beyond words," she says. Then, as now, admission is free.

On the day I visited the museum recently, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class had just shown up to tour the museum. They excitedly gathered around the bubble of a helicopter – a mock-up of a Sheriff's ASTREA chopper, adapted to fit its new home in the facility's garage. Next to it is one of the green and white Sheriff's patrol cars, which were ubiquitous in the days of Sheriff John Duffy, who was Irish to the core. Just inside, is a Sheriff's Kawasaki motorcycle, which makes the kid's eyes light up when they see the blue and red lights go on and they hear the siren.

"What do you do when one of these comes up behind you in traffic?" the guide asks. "You stop the car," say the kids, practically in unison.

The kids always gravitate right to the motor unit. In fact, museum director Dorothy Strout says when the kids sit on the motorcycle and put on the oversize helmet, "all you can see is their smile."

"This museum is invaluable," says Jodi Merchant, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher who brought the students today. "It's a wonderful teaching tool."

Hundreds of 4<sup>th</sup> graders from the San Diego City School tour the Sheriff's Museum each week as part of the school district's Old Town Cultural Historical Program. All children who visit the museum are



Project Leader Mary Walsh says she received over \$400,000 worth of donated in-kind services, including flooring, drywall, security gates, display cases, much of the labor and the cobblestone walls.

As a matter of fact, the stonemason, Dennis Fulop was looking over the museum one day to see whether he was interested in bidding for the job and he noticed the portrait of Agostin Haraszthy on the bare wall.



given an identi-kit to take home to their parents – to help identify them should they ever be missing.

Close to the motorcycle is a display case full of pipe bombs, illegal fireworks, dynamite, blasting caps, hand-grenades and even artillery shells. The guide tells the 4<sup>th</sup> graders “anything you see here, you never pick up.” He asks the kids what they should do if they find one of these things. Again, practically in unison, “Call the police!” Lesson learned, hopefully.

As you wander through the next room of the museum, you come into a communications center and display of radios past, although you hear actual calls going on the Sheriff's modern 800 mhz radio system. Visitors can take the mike and radio calls to the mock up of station's briefing room nearby.

Other exhibits – a mock murder scene, with the chalk outline of the victim, and lots of evidence, a photo booth for mug shots, a line-up wall where visitors like to have their pictures taken, a real jail cell, and a display case full of homemade weapons confiscated from inmates in the real jails – including ingenious examples of knives and shivs made from almost anything they can get their hands on.

On the second floor, is a gallery of all of San Diego County's 28 Sheriffs, including Agostin Haraszthy, who moved to the Bay Area after being Sheriff to try his luck at being a winemaker. His grapevines, brought over from Europe, were the seeds of the California wine industry, which literally grew from Haraszthy's vineyards. His winery, Buena Vista, is still in existence in Sonoma County.

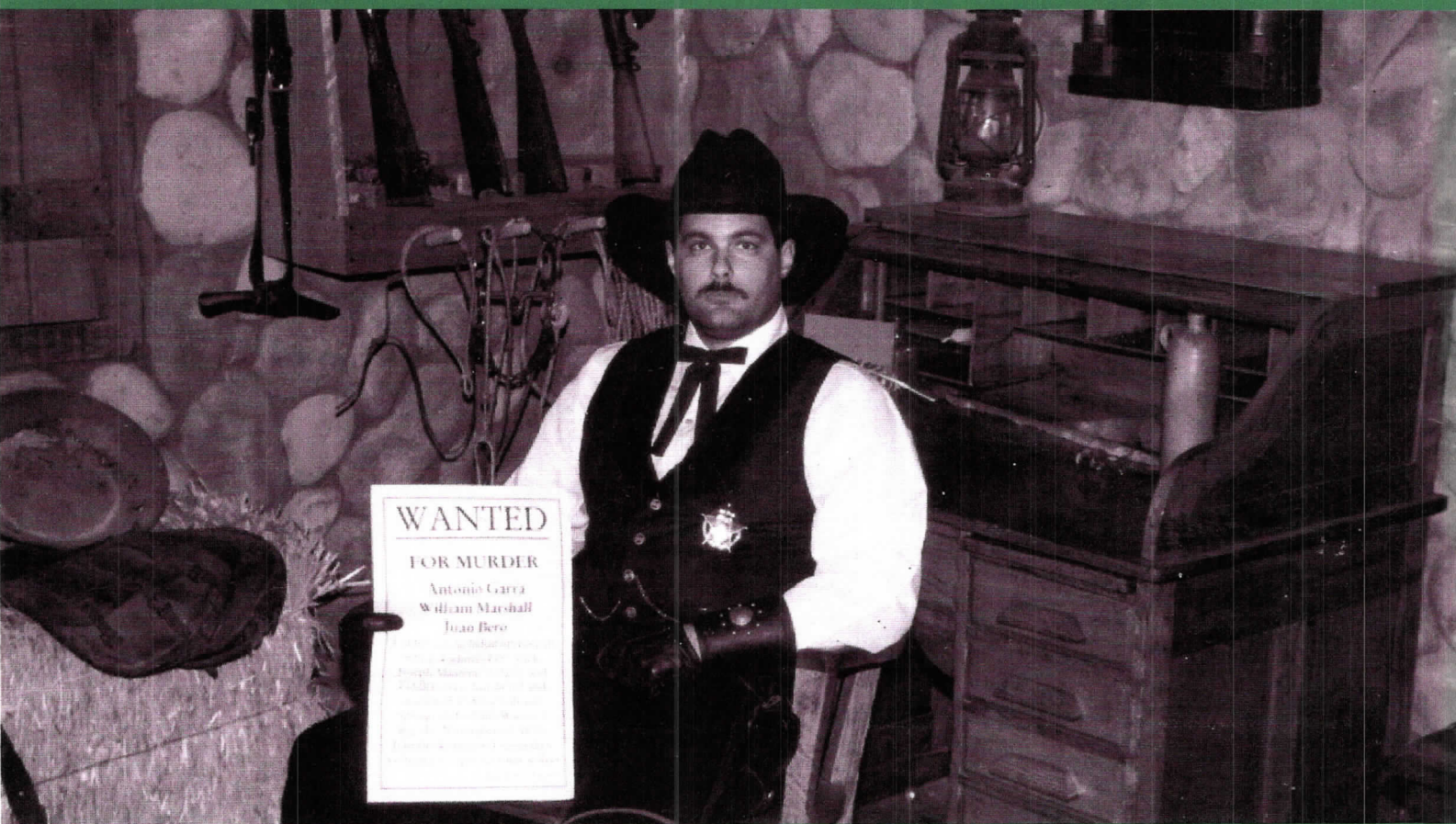
Some of the Sheriffs in the gallery look as dangerous as the desperadoes they once locked up. There are no known likenesses of



some, so we can only imagine what they looked like. Next door there is a fully equipped SWAT Team mannequin, next to a courtroom mock-up and polygraph exhibit.

My personal favorite was the gallery of counterfeit bills. You can see why they call it funny money—some of the attempts at bogus bills are pretty laughable. Often they get the wrong dead president on the bill. Or forget to change the “One” over the treasury seal if they're trying to fake a 20. One really pathetic counterfeiter pasted a picture of U.S. Grant's head on George Washington's body, then changed the numbers to 50's. One of the counterfeit 20's looked pretty authentic though.

After passing by exhibits on gang and drug paraphernalia, and the







## ***"Pride in our past promises hope for our future"***

Sheriff's Search and Rescue volunteers, you enter the Gallery of Honor. It is the last exhibit, and honors those Sheriff's Deputies who have been killed in the line of duty. Also, in a display case in the center of the room, is a post-9/11 tribute to the New York Police Department, including three NYPD badges with black tape, a red rose and a folded American flag.

That tribute has been very moving to New York area residents, some of whom have even been moved to tears. "Thank you for this," they say. To which Dorothy Strout can only say, "It's all the same family." A moment that moved Strout more than any other happened on September 11, 2002, when some school children were standing by the flags in the museum courtyard. When a sudden breeze unfurled

the American flag, the children spontaneously recited the Pledge of Allegiance. It gave Dorothy goose bumps, and still does.

The story is also heartwarming to Mary Walsh, who has seen the dream of a permanent museum grow into reality – and also into a very popular destination, especially for the school children. "A safe, fun place to learn about law enforcement," she says, "to make sure they grow up not being afraid of cops, and learn crime prevention tips to keep them safe."

"The Sheriff's Department is very proud of the museum," Walsh adds. "It's one of only three law enforcement museums in the Western States. We invite everyone to visit, especially law enforcement people, so we can show it off a little."

### **Her excitement and enthusiasm are understandable.**

Every new employee, both sworn and professional staff, are required to visit the museum as part of their orientation. Sheriff Kolender believes "it's important for them to know their roots and see first-hand how law enforcement has evolved over the years." Kolender adds. "When our sworn deputies pin on their badges, they should feel a sense of pride not only in the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, but the law enforcement profession as a whole."

The museum's slogan and mission are summed up beautifully in a quote from a letter written by the late Sheriff John Duffy, who brought the department into the modern era. Duffy simply said. "Pride in our past promises hope for our future." If he were around to see this today, he'd not only be proud, but very optimistic about his department's future.

### **Come to think of it, so would Agostin Haraszthy.**

The museum is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) entity and relies on financial support from citizens and corporations. Donations are very much appreciated and can be sent to:

### **The Sheriff's Museum**

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