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The Burbank Historical Society's new President welcomes in the new year and issues well wishes to all members.



P2 / JEFFRIES HONORED

Meet boxing great, Jim Jeffries and read about how the National Boxing Hall of Fame honors him at a recent gala.



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Mary Howard celebrates a milestone birthday. Read about how she and her husband helped bring Burbank history to the city.



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Old news, new news, as well as any upcoming museum news.

ABOUTTIMES

the newsletter of the Burbank Historical Society

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SPRING EDITION



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



“To all of you, thank you so much for your gift of time and energy to help others enjoy the rich history of our beautiful town of Burbank.”

I look forward to an exciting and prosperous New Year for you and your family.

Best Wishes to all
Dianna Briggs, President

Hello and Happy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful and safe New Year's. I can't believe another year has gone by. Is it just me, or is time flying by faster and faster these days?

TIME. What a priceless and precious commodity. It's something we cannot create, accumulate, buy or borrow.

This brings me to the debt of gratitude I'd like to extend to ALL our volunteers -- from our board members, to the docents that give unselfishly of their valuable time, and many others that volunteer behind the scenes, each committing themselves to supporting the Burbank Historical Society. I am looking forward to this coming year with much enthusiasm. Together we will continue to preserve, educate others, and build upon our city's history.

As time marches on, don't forget to preserve your personal history by putting names and dates on those photos and items of value. And please make it a point to come in and wander through the museum, and get to know the real history of your town.



MARY HITS MILESTONE

The museum you see today could not have been possible without the support of Gordon and Mary Howard, who were both instrumental in helping our own Mary Jane Strickland realize her vision of a very special place to highlight the history of Burbank.

Gordon, for whom our facility is named, passed away on February 9, 1996, but Mary continues to support our efforts. Thanks to her and the Gordon family, many children from our local schools get to travel to the museum to learn firsthand about our city's history.

Mary recently became a centenarian, so please join us as we wish her a very happy birthday, and of course continued thanks for making it possible for us to share our city's history with all of you.





THE GREAT HOPE of BURBANK

His name was Jim Jeffries and chances are you've driven right through his ranch and didn't even know it.

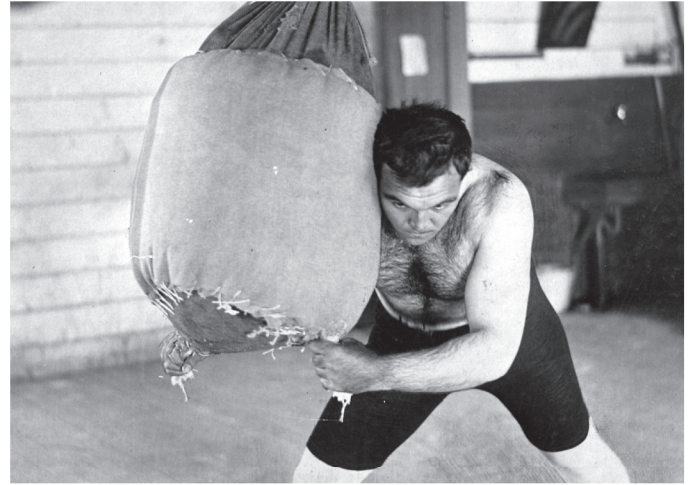
Jim was born in 1875 in Ohio. By 1891, his family had picked up and moved to Los Angeles. The muscular, strapping young Jim had trained as an amateur boxer for years already, but took a job as a boilermaker, which is a craftsman who produces steel fabrications from plates and tubes. At 20, he turned pro and (surprise, surprise) his nickname in the ring was "The Boilermaker." By 1899 he was the world heavyweight champion.

Jeffries could take a beating and still win. In one famous fight in 1902, Jim was viciously battered in the face, with a broken nose, gashes to his eyes and his cheeks ripped down to the bone. There was blood everywhere. Everyone thought he was done for. But he came back swinging and knocked his opponent out. Jeffries became known for that kind of boxing. By 1905 he retired, undefeated, as World Heavyweight Champion.

He settled in Burbank at an alfalfa ranch at Buena Vista and Victory in Burbank – but more about that famous ranch later.

In time, another heavyweight champion came along. Jack Johnson. Johnson was another strong, muscular, strapping young man and, needless to say, one hell of a boxer. He was also African-American -- the very first black champ -- and, yes, that's pertinent.

Johnson kept winning and not everyone was happy about it. In fact, the more he won, the louder the grumbling got. It was time to stop him, said the Powers-That-Be... and not to replace him with another African-American! The search was on — for The Great White Hope. A white man to beat Jack Johnson.



“His nickname in the ring was *The Boilermaker*.”

Perhaps you've heard this story? If so, it's because "The Great White Hope" was made into an award-winning play and movie. And it was based on a true story. THIS story.

The names were changed in the drama (just barely) but the story remains the same.

Boxing promoters, driven by prejudice and greed, went on a search and soon found themselves The Great White Hope. They marketed the fight with a fairly sick form of glee, cashing in on the country's overall fear and hatred of the black man. Especially this black man. They said he flaunted his success; that he was "uppity;" and worse yet, that he consorted with white women.

At first Jim Jeffries didn't want anything to do with fighting Jack Johnson. After all, he hadn't fought in six years. He was 100 pounds overweight – and he was happy with his new life at his peaceful alfalfa ranch in Burbank.

But the boxing promoters pushed and pushed him. That means, they threw more and more money at him – to the tune of over three million dollars (in 2017 money). Even famed author Jack London joined in the fray and urged Jeffries to fight, telling him to "emerge from his alfalfa farm and remove that smile from Johnson's face."

They called it "The Fight of the Century." It took place on July 4, 1910 in a newly-built outdoor arena in Reno, Nevada where the mercury shot up to 110 degrees. Ringside seats were being scalped for the equivalent of over \$3,000 each. Jim Jeffries versus Jack Johnson. You could take a look at each of the boxers and know who would win, who was in better shape. Still, newspapers were printed saying that JEFFRIES WINS!



Not quite. Not even close. Although it took nearly fifteen sweltering rounds, Jack Johnson soundly beat the so-called Great White Hope, Jim Jeffries. Jeffries later commented that he knew early in the fight that he didn't have a chance, and not even when he was in the best of shape would he have ever had a chance against Jack Johnson.

That night, race riots broke out all across the United States. Twenty people were killed and hundreds more were injured.

Jack Johnson continued fighting until he was 60 years old. He was in lousy shape, not financially successful, had done time in prison on a bad rap, and one of his three wives had killed herself. Johnson died at age 68 in a car accident which today we'd call road rage, in a fight that had to do with a diner that wouldn't serve him.

Jim Jeffries, on the other hand, flourished. He went back to his Burbank ranch, where he eventually raised cattle as well as alfalfa, turned his barn into a big boxing ring and auditorium. In addition to farming, he trained young boxers, he promoted fights, he held amateur boxing matches in his barn, and he trained Hollywood stars how to box incase they needed to do so in a film (e.g., John Garfield). He was definitely a community leader and something of a local celebrity.

Jeffries' house was located at the corner of Buena Vista and Victory, where a big strip mall is today housing an America's Best store, Yogurtland and Round Table Pizza. (Fresh N Easy Market used to be there.) Across the street, where today you'll see a Ralphs Market and CVS, used to be the home of the Jeffries barn. Jim Jeffries passed away in 1953 at the age of 77. His house was later torn down, but the barn was moved to Knott's Berry Farm where it still stands to this day.

As for that play and movie, "The Great White Hope"...? Well, it won a lot of awards. The play took the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1969. Its star, portraying the Jack Johnson character, a guy whose voice I promise you know – James Earl Jones – won a Tony for his part. The play itself also won a Tony as did the female lead, Jane Alexander. James Earl Jones and Jane Alexander were also nominated for an Oscar when they went on to recreate their roles in the film version in 1970.

So next time you're driving down Buena Vista Street, take a moment and think about Jim Jeffries, Jack Johnson and the story of "The Great White Hope." How much have things changed? We can hope. Yes, we can hope.



JEFFRIES IS HONORED



On Saturday, February 17, the National Boxing Hall of Fame (NBHOF) was proud to induct James J. Jeffries and the Jeffries Barn into its ranks. The NBHOF expressed its gratitude for Mr. Walter Knott's foresight when he decided to move the historic barn from Burbank to Santa Ana and make it a part of its Knott's Berry Farm experience. In addition to honoring other notable boxers at the event, the NBHOF also extended its deep gratitude to the Burbank Historical Society and bestowed on museum board members -- Carey Briggs and Don Baldaseroni -- a bronze glove commemorating Jeffries' induction. More details on the event to follow.

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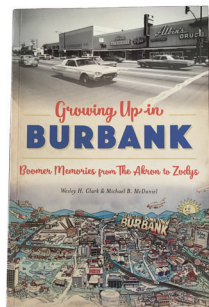


115 N LOMITA ST, BURBANK, CA 91506

DID YOU GROW UP IN BURBANK?

If so, you've seen a lot!

Remember Spector's Market?
The Dip? The Cornell? Genio's?
Mar-Lindo Bowling alley?
Unimart?



There's all that and more in Wes Clark and Mike McDaniel's wonderful new book, *GROWING UP IN BURBANK: BOOMER MEMORIES FROM THE AKRON TO ZODY'S* – and we have plenty of copies for sale right here at the museum! Come visit and pick up a book or two! You'll be absolutely delighted and swept back to another time and place – way before Ikea and Starbucks!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Save the date -- Saturday, September 8!! Join us for a Barn Blast when we'll celebrate our members and all in the community who have supported the organization since its inception.

MEET OUR NEW OFFICERS

As is our custom, we have a new President and Vice President of the Burbank Historical Society. (We rotate our officers.)

Dianna Briggs, our new President, has been associated with the Society for many, many years. Besides being a lover of history and of Burbank, she is an absolutely amazing cook! Just try her world-famous fudge and you'll know what we mean!

Vice President Marie Dennis is a wiz at technology with a real flair for the creative. She also simply sparkles and when you meet her, once again, you'll know what we mean!

Congratulations on your new roles, Dianna and Marie!

NEXT ISSUE:

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

