

## **FROM WHITE TO GOLDEN: THE ELEPHANT SALE HISTORY**

Before there was an Elephant sale, the Women of St James-by-the-Sea would hold fundraisers from time to time. The first recorded sale by the ladies was held in 1905 at the home of Imogen Van Schaick on Hillside Drive. The merchandise was handmade items created by the ladies of the church. Tea was served to all who attended and \$143 was raised for the Missionary Fund. Sales were held occasionally when funds were needed for the Sunday School, the Altar Guild or the Missionary Funds. These sales were held in Wisteria Cottage - which was John Cole's bookstore and is now home of the La Jolla Historical Society - and the Women's Club on Herschel.

The White Elephant Sale as an annual event began in 1932. This was in the depths of the Depression when times were hard and people resented handouts, but were glad to purchase much needed items at very low prices. Three goals of the White Elephant Sale were funding outreach programs which widened the scope of the old missionary fund, providing the community with needed items at very low prices, and promoting fellowship as the church members worked together on a common cause. Initially sales had been one day but expanded to become a two day event held in the Parish House in what came to be known as the Van Schaick Room. After World War II the sale expanded to Saint James Hall also.

The history of St James Hall, now the site of the Golden Elephant Sale, is interesting. In 1942 the government saw a need for a USO facility for the service people stationed at the newly opened Camp Callan, located where UCSD now stands. Since no available building in La Jolla at the time was suitable, the city authorized construction of such a site at Eads and Silverado. Because erecting a new building solely as a USO was so rarely done the Hall has particular historical status. Many St James parishioners and community members have had happy memories of good times in the building. After the war, the property was returned to the City. In 1952 Mayor Van Schaick persuaded the City to sell the property to St James and so it became known as St James Hall. Sunday School was held there as well as meetings of various civic groups, youth groups, etc. Dances in the Hall followed many football games. And, of course, the Elephant Sale then, as well as now, continues using the building. By the 1980's and 1990's the building had begun to deteriorate. Because of its historical status, it could not be torn down so plans for renovation began. The original form had to remain, but new code measures such as handicap ramps, etc. had to be met. The remodel took all of 1994 to complete.

In all the years of the White Elephant Sale, 1994 was the most unusual. Since the Hall was undergoing renovation, there was a debate whether the sale could be held at all. It was decided not to break the tradition of an annual sale although planning was a challenge. No sales were held in the sacred areas of the church, but everywhere else was used. The departments were in all parts of Glazebrook Hall, on the porches of the church, in the patio and on the paved area in front. In 1995 the sale returned to both the Van Schaick Room and the beautiful new Hall. The sale continued as a White Elephant Sale using both buildings for another 10 years with antiques, collectibles, artwork and jewelry in the Van Schaick Room and with clothing, books, holiday, linens, electrical, shoes, toys, accessories and everything else in the Hall.

In 2006 the decision was made to become an “upscale rummage sale’ and thus was renamed the Golden Elephant Sale. All departments were moved to the Hall where the air conditioning was enjoyed by all. The Sale continues its long tradition of providing outreach funds, cultivating fellowship among the workers, and reaching out to the community with some bargain items and some one of a kind, unique finds. The 2008 GES will be the 76<sup>th</sup> annual Elephant Sale. We hope to see you there.

*...submitted by Nan Thomas from notes by Mary-Alice Haupt...*