



EL ALISAL, HOME OF LUMMIS — Charles Lummis built his famous home near E. Ave. 43 and the Arroyo Seco from boulders that he hauled from the river bed. The home is now a State Historical monument.

on Carlos of El Alisal

# Charles Lummis—famous pioneer of the Highlands

By Wilfrid Dellquest  
His friends often called him Carlos. Distinguished as author, explorer, archaeologist, mentor of the great, Charles Fletcher Lummis was closely associated with the Highland Park section of Los Angeles. Presidents and princes, statesmen, poets, artists, actors, singers, musicians and scientists made pilgrimages to his home, "El Alisal," close by Arroyo Seco E. Ave. 43. A fitting monument to his vision, the Southwest Museum perpetuates his memory from a hilltop above the valley.



CHARLES LUMMIS

**HE WAS UNPREDICTABLE**  
Lummis was born in Lynn, Mass., on Mar. 1, 1859 and brought up in the New England traditions of scholarship and independence. He was a non-conformist. He was both an individual and an individualist. He delighted in reversing the odds, in doing the unexpected. Men of that breed often make reality out of dreams and emulate the world by the originality of their minds. The earliest attempt to educate little Charlie was discouraging. On the opening day of school, he rebelled against pedagogical discipline by crawling under a chair, either threats of whipping nor smiles of cajolery could bring him forth. Now, in order to catch a boy, the first thing is to catch him. Charles Lummis refused to be caught. His teacher called him ornery. His father, the Rev. Henry Lummis, regarded his conduct as an exhibition of determination and individuality, removed him from school to take personal charge of his education.

**AT HARVARD**

There was never any doubt about the boy's ability to read. He absorbed learning through the pores of his skull and made himself at home in the 4000-volume library of his father

He celebrated his 10th birthday by reading the New Testament in Greek, and also — for good measure — in the Latin Vulgate. He entered Harvard with the class 1881, but left before graduation. Years later, Harvard presented him with an honorary degree.

Young Lummis helped to pay his way at Harvard by publishing a 12-page pamphlet of his poetry. He printed the tiny book on leaves made from birch bark. It was an endeavor that won him the friendship of Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes,

Lowell and other giants of Cambridge coterie. It is well to remember Charles Lummis was not a intellectual stuff-shirt. He was an eager devotee of boxing, wrestling and poker; also a willing participant in such kinds of collegiate deviltry. Lummis asserted that the only thing he learned at Harvard saved his life more than once during western adventures.

**DESTINATION: LA**  
There was a brief interval in Ohio where Lummis, following an abortive attempt at farming, became editor of the "Scioto Gazette." His enthusiasm for archaeology began when he studied the mysteries of aboriginal mounds of the Ohio Valley. In 1884, Lummis made a decision that was to change the course of his life. He left for California. His destination was Los Angeles where he hoped to find employment with the newly founded "Times" then under the editorship of General Harrison Gray Otis.

**Autograph session on Lummis book**

Dudley Gordon, chronicler of the life of Charles F. Lummis, will autograph copies of his new book, "Lummis, Crusader in Corduroy", at a special session tonight at 7:30 p.m. at the Lummis Home, El Alisal.

The autograph session is co-sponsored by the Southern California Historical Society and the Friends of the Library. For further information, call 222-0546.

The reasonable way for a migrant to get to California was to take the train. Charles Fletcher Lummis seldom did things the ordinary way. He decided to walk! He tramped across the continent turned out to be one of the famous walks of history. On Sept. 12, 1884, 26-year-old Charles Fletcher Lummis of Cincinnati on what he claimed was the longest walk for pure pleasure on record. He hiked a distance of 10,000 miles along a leisurely dangerous route, arriving in Los Angeles 143 days later. It was not only an historic pedestrian accomplishment but raised the curtain on an amazing career that made him one of the great personalities of the West.

Lummis wrote "A Tramp Across the Continent," a volume (Continued on Page 4)

# Charles Lummis--pioneer

the candle at both ends; he took the whole candle and threw it in the fire. Like a lamed eagle, he exerted himself digging for aboriginal

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fast-paced account of his great hike. His book was published in 1892, and 15 years later was still in print and widely read, an indication that it was one of the best-sellers of its time.

To this day, it remains one of the most readable travel narratives in our literature.

He explains what led him to undertake the formidable walk: "I was after . . . life in the truer, broader, sweeter sense, the exhilarant joy of living outside the sorry fences of society, living with a perfect body and a wakened mind, a life where brain and brawn and leg and lung all rejoice and grow alert together. I am an American and felt ashamed to know so little of my own coun-

try as I did, and as most Americans do. . . Furthermore, I wished to remove from Ohio to California. So here was a chance to . . . learn more of the country and its people than railroad travel could ever teach; to have the physical joy which only the confirmed pedestrian knows; to have the mental awakening of new sights and experiences; and to get, in this enjoyable fashion, to my new home."

The long trip afoot may have been exhilarating; certainly it was packed with thrills. Lummis tells of encounters with robbers, cougars, venomous snakes and tarantulas. He describes his experiences with the Indians of New Mexico and Arizona. There were days of easy-going sunshine, and there were days of horror.

## PLAYING WITH RATTTLERS

Lummis had a fondness for teasing rattlesnakes. He tells of his strange fascination: "From boyhood I have had a curious affection for snakes — an attraction which invariably prompts me to play with them awhile before killing them. . . Even the scar of a rattlesnake bite on my forefinger and the memory of its torture, have not taught me better.

"I know of nothing more dreamily delicious than to tease a rattler with some stick or other object just long enough to keep those grim fangs from one's own flesh. . . No one who has ever played with a rattlesnake can fully disbelieve the superstition that if fascinates its prey. I have felt it often — a sweet dreaminess which has tempted me to drop the stick and reach out my arms to that beautiful

death. Unluckily for them, the field mouse and the rabbit have not a mulish man's will."

## HOW TO SET A BROKEN ARM

Near the petrified forest of Arizona, Lummis fell off the edge of a 50-foot mesa and broke his arm. It was compound fracture with an end of the broken bone protruding through the flesh. He went about setting the broken bone with the fortitude of a hero of ancient Sparta:

"Here was a bad job — an ugly fracture, and so far from any medical help that the arm would probably be past saving before I could get there. I placed the discolored hand between my feet and tried thus to tug the bone back into place; but flesh and blood could not stand it. Ah! The strap of my discarded canteen! It was very long and broad and strong leather — just the thing! I gave it two flat turns around the wrists, and buckled it around a cedar tree. Beside the tree was a big squarish rock. Upon this I mounted, facing the tree; set my heels upon the very edge, clenched my teeth and eyes and fist, and threw myself backward very hard. The agony, incomparably worse than the first, made me faint; but when I recovered consciousness the arm was straight and the fracture apparently set — as indeed it proved to be."

## CITY OF ANGELS

On Feb. 1, 1885, Charles Fletcher Lummis arrived at Los Angeles. He had walked slightly over 3507 miles, had crossed eight states and territories along their greatest length. The next morning he reported for work as city

editor of the Los Angeles Times.

The following year, Lummis was sent by General Harrison Gray Otis, owner of the Times, to cover the campaign then being waged by the savage Apaches in Arizona against the white settlers. He was there when the Apache revolt was ended by the capture of Geronimo by General Nelson Miles.

When Fletcher Lummis became city editor of Los Angeles Times he was still a young man who boasted of his perfect health. But he drove himself unmercifully, often working 22 hours a day. The gruelling pace would have quickly broken a weaker man.

Nature warned him repeatedly that the human body could not continue to take such punishment. He foolishly ignored the warnings. When friends advised caution, he told them he never felt better and that two hours sleep each night was sufficient for him.

## WHEN TRAGEDY STRUCK

Tragedy struck the foolhardy editor when he suffered a paralytic stroke and collapsed on the floor of his office. He showed some improvement after three months in bed, then forced himself to get up and announced: "I will get well! I'll go to the wilderness and live outdoors until I am healed!" With his left arm dangling helplessly, he headed for Old Santa Fe Trail in New Mexico where under blue skies of the great outdoors at the ranch of Amado Chavez he began a dogged and valiant fight to recover his health.

The last chapter of Lummis' book "The King of the Bron-

cos," tells how he won and lost again against the darkest odds that ever faced a man. The fierce drive of his will power brought on his collapse. Now, it became his greatest weapon in the struggle to overcome his paralysis. There was never a livelier paralytic.

He hunted and fished and rode horseback under the blazing New Mexico sun, until gradually strength came again to his tortured nerves and muscles.

Charlie Lummis did not burn

# Museum founder

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relics in the buried cities of the desert. He had another stroke, and this time lost his speech. There followed another period of convalescence. Lummis was not discouraged. He smiled and waited until the day when his power of speech returned as suddenly as it had left.

## HUMAN CRUCIFIXION

At his urging, Amado Chavez took Lummis to witness the secret Easter rites of the Penitentes, a small cult in the remoteness of the New Mexican desert, where frightful things happened. Like a noxious bloom of blood and

madness, the practice of human sacrifice had been nurtured from some horror chamber of the Middle Ages. On Good Friday, for over 300 years, the Penitente fanatics crucified a living human being.

Lummis was there with his camera, determined to be the first to photograph the amazing ceremony. The intrepid adventurer took his photographs, and paid dearly for his rashness. He was shot in the throat and face and carried the scars to his grave.

This incredible man recovered from a series of disasters that should never have happened to one person in a single life time. In 1892, he joined the explorer Adolph Bandelier in an expedition to Peru and Bolivia for the American Museum of Natural History.

While there he discovered skulls that proved an astonishing fact. The skulls gave evidence that ancient Peruvians practiced brain surgery. They knew how to relieve brain pressure by trepanning. The skulls brought back by Lummis are now exhibited at the Southwest Museum in Highland Park.

## BACK TO EDITING

In 1894, Charles Fletcher Lummis was selected to be the editor of the new magazine "Land of Sunshine," later renamed "Out West." This valuable magazine not only encouraged the work of native authors but reprinted old Spanish documents and a translation of the diary of Junipero Serra. Ina Coolbirth, Joaquin Miller and Edwin Markham were among its contributors.

The Landmarks Club of California was founded by Lummis in 1893 for the purpose of preserving the old Spanish missions. Many of the Franciscan mission buildings had been long abandoned and were disappearing in heaps of rubble beneath sands and weeds. Through efforts of the crusading editor, the historic monuments of Spanish California were rescued from oblivion and restored.

## TO MAKE

### BETTER INDIANS

Always the crusader, Lummis turned his zeal for justice to the Indians. He founded the Sequoia League and aided by President Theodore Roosevelt,

induced Congress to appropriate \$100,000 to purchase new lands for dispossessed Indians, helping them along the way to self-respect and self-sufficiency. He said: "The only way to make better Indians is by treating them better."

A new phase in his varied career began when he was appointed City Librarian of Los Angeles in 1905. He served in that office for five years, established administrative reforms and splendid History Department that distinguishes this great library.

His intense interest in archaeology and Southwestern history reached its climax in 1907 with the founding of the Southwest Museum.

El Alisal, the famous stone home of Charles Fletcher Lummis, located at 200 E. Ave. 43 was not entirely finished until 11 years after his death. Lummis designed El Alisal and started building it in 1894. Although uncompleted he moved in 1897. But the main attraction about El Alisal was Charles Lummis himself. His genius and striking personality made the stone residence a meeting place for many of the most famous people of the time.

Visitors to El Alisal included Theodore Roosevelt, Blasco Ibanez, Helen Modjeska, Will Rogers, William Lyon Phelps, John Burroughs, William Allen White, princes and counts from Europe and many other renowned representatives of the arts and sciences.

## STATE MONUMENTS

When he was 50 years old, Lummis presented El Alisal to the Southwest Museum. In 1944, the historic landmark was taken over by the state of California and designated as a state monument by the legislature. It is now administered by the Charles Fletcher Lummis Memorial Association.

Charles Fletcher Lummis was once asked to name his greatest achievements. He replied: "My founding the Southwest Museum, building El Alisal, saving four missions, studying and recording Spanish America." To these might be added the driving determination and power of will that overcame handicaps and misfortunes.