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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Original History Exhibition

“The Ojai Theater: 100 Years of Movies, 1914 - 2014”

Tuesday, Oct. 21 through Sunday, Dec. 28, 2014

Community Curator: Elise DePuydt

The Ojai Valley Museum  
Alcove, Hall, and Rotating Galleries  
130 W. Ojai Ave.  
Ojai, Calif.

It’s celebration time at the Ojai Valley Museum from Oct. 21 through Dec. 28 with an original history exhibition, “The Ojai Theater: 100 Years of Movies 1914 – 2014.” The Rotating Gallery features the story of Ojai’s only movie house over the span of a century.

The exhibit has been researched and written by Elise DePuydt, Ojai historian, author of an Ojai guidebook and Office Manager for the Ojai Film Society. As an invited community curator, DePuydt’s wall texts and photo documentation trace the ownership, management and history of the Ojai Theater between 1914 and 2014. The show includes descriptions of the owners, managers, films shown, movie stars, animal stars and films made in Ojai. In addition, celebrity gowns, movie memorabilia, antique camera and projection equipment and facsimiles of vintage movie posters bring pizzazz into the gallery. A mini movie theater will screen films throughout the duration of this show.

DePuydt introduces the exhibit this way: “For 100 years Ojai residents, young and old, have sat in the darkened interior of the building on the southwest corner of Ojai Avenue and Signal Street, watching the past, present and future come to life on the silver screen. They have been entertained, educated, inspired, uplifted and brought to laughter or tears. No one could have predicted when Nordhoff businessman J.J. Burke built his movie theater in 1914 that 100 years later people would still be sitting inside viewing films.”

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The purpose of this centennial exhibit is to describe the Ojai Theater's historical importance as a cultural hub in this community. On the walls of the main Rotating Gallery space, DePuydt structures the history of the theater by highlighting the personalities who owned or leased the facility, and how they used its resources to entertain their audiences. In essence, she uses their stories to trace the theater's 100-year history in a chronological fashion beginning with J.J. Burke in 1914 and ending with current owner, Khaled Al-Awar in 2014.

In addition to the theater management timeline, DePuydt emphasizes adjunct areas of interest for visitors to the exhibit. One section is devoted to "Ojai Celebrities," i.e. movie stars who spent time in Ojai, including Loretta Young and June Allyson. "Animal Stars" and "Films Made in Ojai" sections also serve to describe the rich heritage of Ojai's relationship to Hollywood.

Rare early to mid twentieth century movie cameras and filmmaking equipment are on loan for the exhibit to enrich the textual stories and photographic materials. Visitors will see such items as a vintage Cine Kodak movie camera, rare Bell & Howell Filmo cameras, a wind-up Univex 8mm movie camera and more. Additional loans include small, priceless selections of movie star and film related memorabilia displayed in exhibit cases in the Hallway Gallery.

DePuydt states, "Americans' love for movies never seems to wane, and thanks to the owners of the Ojai Theater, residents have always had a unique opportunity to view films in one of the oldest single-screen theaters in the country. This original history exhibit tells the story."

The Alcove Gallery features the history of the Ojai Film Society and the Ojai Film Festival, their beginnings and their importance to the Ojai cultural fabric. Community curator, filmmaker and Ojai Film Society Board Member, George Sandoval, has organized this section of the exhibition space. With texts, photographs and related ephemera he describes the story of these two film-related organizations critical to the variety of Ojai's art scene.

As an additional enrichment to the physical exhibit, DePuydt will host free movie matinees in the Rotating Gallery's special mini theater every Saturday at 4 p.m. She has personally selected the family-friendly schedule which includes movies starring Charlie Chaplin, Shirley Temple, Jackie Coogan, Loretta Young, Audrey Hepburn, Judy Garland, June Allyson, Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, to name a few. The matinees begin on Oct. 25 and run every Saturday including Dec. 20. A full schedule is posted on the museum website, [ojaivalleymuseum.org](http://ojaivalleymuseum.org), and on the Ojai Valley Museum Facebook page.

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Brochures of the free matinees can be picked up at the Ojai Valley Museum Docent desk and the Visitor Center, and will be distributed around the town.

The Ojai Valley Museum, established in 1967, is generously supported in part by museum members, private donors, business sponsors and underwriters, the Smith-Hobson Foundation, Wood-Claeysens Foundation, City of Ojai, Ojai Community Bank, Rotary Club of Ojai, Ojai Civic Association and a grant from the Heritage Fund of Ventura County Community Foundation.

The museum is located at 130 W. Ojai Ave., Ojai, Calif. Admission: Free for current 2014 members, adults - \$5.00, children 6–18 - \$1.00 and children 5 and under – free. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Tours are available by appointment. Free parking is available off Blanche Street at back of museum.

For more information, call the museum at (805) 640-1390, ext. 203, email [ojaimuseum@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ojaimuseum@sbcglobal.net) or visit the museum website at: [Ojai Valley Museum.org](http://OjaiValleyMuseum.org) Find us on [Facebook Ojai Valley Museum](#)