

Thelma Ryan's Rise: From



Photographs for The New York Times by D. GORTON

The exterior of house where Thelma Ryan, future Mrs. Richard M. Nixon, spent her childhood. Sometime next year it will be dedicated as a museum.

By JUDITH M. KINNARD

Special to The New York Times

CERRITOS, Calif. — With due respect to Thomas Wolfe, if anyone can go home again, it's Mrs. Richard M. Nixon.

Many of the residents of Cerritos are hoping she will come here next year long enough to dedicate the Pat Nixon Museum when the Republican National Convention is being held in nearby San Diego.

Still in its early stages, the museum plans to collect photographs and memorabilia of the life and times of young Thelma Catherine Ryan. (Born an hour before St. Patrick's Day in 1912, she was always called Patricia by her father, William, who didn't think much of Thelma as a name anyway.)

The purpose of the museum, according to the local Chamber of Commerce, is to show "how a small town girl can become the First Lady of the land."

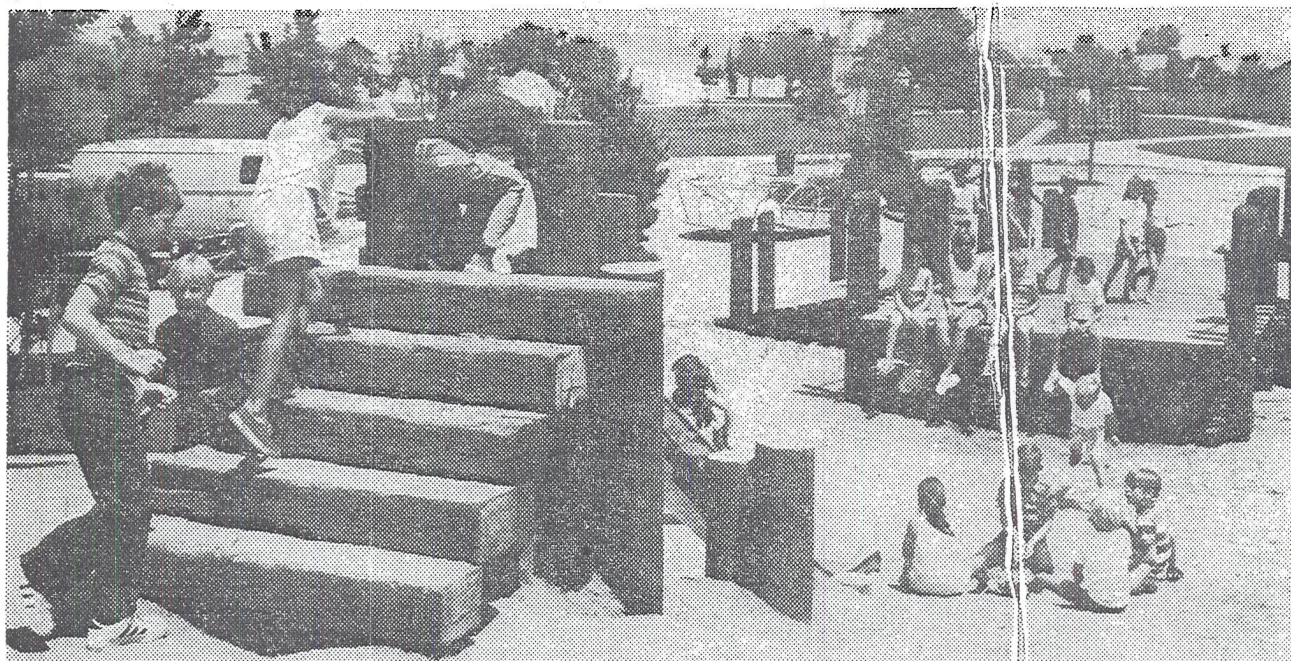
Believed to be the first museum dedicated exclusively to a President's wife, it will be housed in the three-room white frame home where the future Mrs. Pat Nixon moved with her family from Ely, Nev., when she was a year old and lived until she left for New York to earn money for college in 1931.

An adjoining girls' youth center will occupy the two large rooms that were added to the rear of the house over the years.

Former Bedroom

The original rooms are small, totally bare and in the process of renovation. The distinguishing architectural feature is a brick fireplace built with the help of Richard Nixon's father, Frank Nixon, in the main room, which had once been Thelma Ryan's bedroom.

The house is set on the grounds of Pat Nixon Park, 4½ beautifully designed acres dedicated by Mrs. Nixon during her last visit here in 1969. The gracefully curving walkways and young saplings contrast with the Indian theme she had requested.



Part of the 4½-acre Pat Nixon Park has been given over to playground that utilizes thick rustic pilings

White Frame Home to White House



THELMA RYAN

Pseudonym: Buddy
Intention: To run a boarding house
Liability: Her two brothers
Occupation: Watching Tom
Talent: Watching Bill



Associated Press

That's carried out in thick rustic pilings used to build the play areas.

Appropriately, the park, which adjoins an elementary school, is assaulted daily during the summer by a corps of day campers who build sand castles and turn round ice cream containers into tom-toms during the camp's Indian time.

The manicured, almost prim, setting partially protects the future museum from a growing town and its encroaching subdivisions. Until 1967, it was known as Dairy Valley.

The fields of tall grass and patches of tomatoes and corn are gone, but the quality of life in the small house is fleetingly revealed through a 1929 high school yearbook, which is one of the first gifts to the museum.

Senior Year Book

Donated by Mrs. Robert White of Norwalk, Calif., the senior class year book is from Excelsior High School. It was once the only secondary school in this distant southeast corner of Los Angeles County.

The 1929 photograph of Thelma Ryan shows a pretty, dark-haired girl whose face was fuller than it is now. The capsule history of the graduating seniors lists her nickname as "Buddy" and her "liability" as her two brothers. Pushing the point, as high school annuals usually do, it lists her occupation as "watching Tom" and her talent as "watching Bill."

The references were to her full-time job of cooking and cleaning for her father and two brothers after their mother's death from cancer when Thelma Ryan was only 12 years old.

Other entries show her as the senior play heroine who got rave reviews.

"She always knew her own mind, and mine too," laughed Dr. Gordon McHatton, a den-

Picture of Thelma Ryan in her high school yearbook. "Pilot" was the school's athletic nickname. At right, Mrs. Nixon as she looked this week.

A review of her role in the senior class play, "The Rise of Silas Lapham," extolled the future First Lady for portrayal of the role of Penelope.

The Senior Class Presents "THE RISE OF SILAS LAPHAM"

Cast

Silas Lapham	- - - - -	CLIFFORD SMITH
Persis Lapham	- - - - -	RUTH LAPORTE
Penelope	- - - - -	THELMA RYAN

actually living the character.

Ruth Laporte in the role of Persis, his wife, was sweet, motherly, and unaffected. Penelope Lapham, in all her girlish moods, gay or serious, was charmingly portrayed by Thelma Ryan. And how we did sympathize with Mary Dennis as Irene, who was rudely awakene

tist who starred opposite her in the junior class play.

His wife, as well as several other girlhood friends, remembered a certain aloofness, however. "Not that she thought she was any better than the rest of us," explained Mrs. McHatton. "Just self-sustaining."

Her brother Tom Ryan remembers her steely confidence when she told her father that his tuberculosis tests were positive. "She wasn't going to be put down by any adversity," he said.

Mr. Ryan, who bought the house from his brother and sister, sold the museum property to the city for \$144,000.