TRANSFORMATIVE!

(Left to right) Supervisor Joe Simitian, Mayor Sally Meadows of Los Altos, Nan Geschke, Mayor Lynn Swan of Los Altos Hills, and Mayor Alison Hicks of Mountain View at the ribbon cutting for the new Permanent Exhibition, "Making Connections: Stories from the Land."

los altos history museum

2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

February 9, 2023 was a turning point for Los Altos History Museum. That is the day our new Permanent Exhibition, "Making Connections: Stories from the Land," was unveiled to the public. In this Annual Report covering the months of July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, we document the process of finalizing this seminal project and the excitement of opening it to the public.

Our new Permanent Exhibition is the manifestation of years of research and a substantial contribution to understanding our area's local history. It is not only a bold new offering to the public; it is a comprehensive statement about our expertise. Like the trunk of a tree, this resource is something we can rely on to continue to grow in importance for us, and lead us to branch off in new directions. None of this transformational growth would be possible without you, our donors and members, who prove time and time again that the Museum's roots are very deep in the community. Thank you for sustaining all of this.

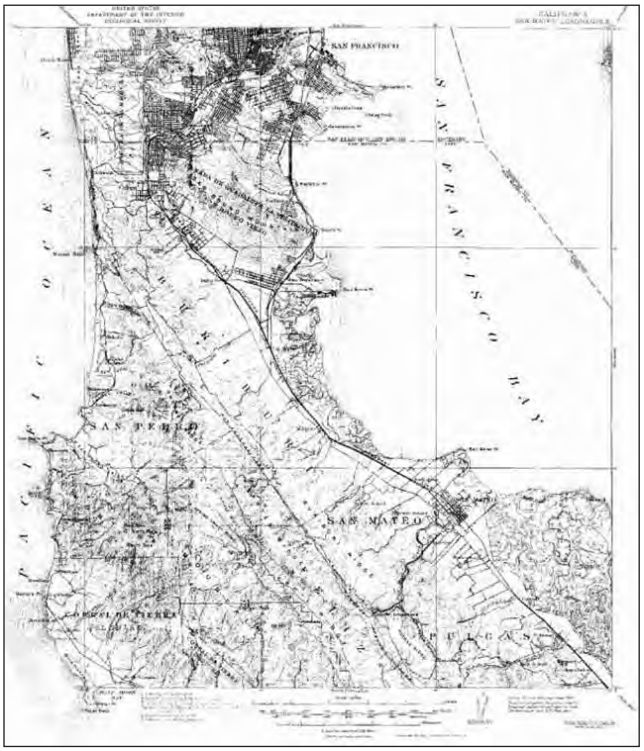
Large video screens are flanked by artifact cases and touchscreens with layers of photos and information covering the entire history of each area.

A map interactive in the Town Section has been especially popular.

Kiwanis and Rotary Club members enjoyed a special preview of the Permanent Exhibition.

The new Permanent Exhibition includes a surround-sound immersive experience for hearing oral histories.

A mural of the Ohlone celebrating a ceremonial dance is featured on the large video screens and was painstakingly researched by artist Ann Thiermann.



One of several maps featured in the map interactive.

The new Permanent Exhibition gives us the opportunity to showcase the many interesting, unique, beautiful, and iconic objects in our collection. It features large glass display cases with custom spotlights, allowing visitors to see all the details of objects ranging from a prototype of a klystron to a rare Ohlone grass basket. We also installed a display of our Sister Cities collection, which features artifacts given to the City of Los Altos from cities in Australia, Russia, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.

Preparing these objects for display required cleaning, stabilizing, photographing, and researching all of the artifacts. This process allowed us to uncover new details about artifacts in our collection, such as learning that hollow bird bones were used by the Indigenous peoples as whistles! We also pulled together many photos, maps, and oral histories to give visitors a variety of authentic information.

Artifacts from our collection now on display include silver spurs from a local equestrian and an employee award from Intel.

VOLUNTEERS: BRANCHING OUT

The Museum gained new volunteers over the year, as visitorship grew and we realized a third docent would need to be posted in the Permanent Exhibition when we are open to the public.

Volunteers also came to work in the store, the garden, the orchard, educational tours, oral histories, the collections area, and of course, as docents. The Permanent Exhibition is greatly enhanced by the presence of knowledgeable and kind docents who can help answer questions for visitors, and we are now scheduling three docents per shift instead of only two. We are delighted to have added many new docents to our cohort, including two that came to us from the Mountain View Historical Association. The Permanent Exhibition is a perfect opportunity to strengthen our relationship with that organization as we branch out to tell a more complete story of how Los Altos has evolved over time. We express thanks to the docent and volunteer development committees who have worked hard over the last year to ensure we are sufficiently staffed. We welcomed a new cohort of Teen Docents in April of 2023, all of whom are now helping explain the Permanent Exhibition to visitors.

Volunteers served 7,405 hours at the Los Altos History Museum this year.

Elisabeth Ward discussed the role of museums in building community with the 2023 teen docent cohort.

Volunteers of the Year were honored at the Members Summer Barbeque in August of 2022.

PUBLICITY: SPREADING THE SEEDS

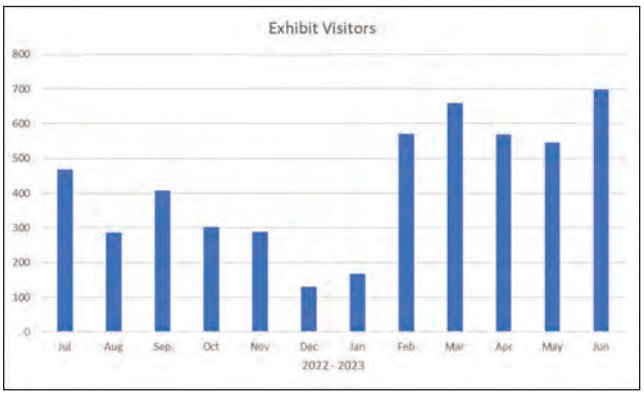
This beautiful postcard helped attract visitors to the Museum.

Reporter Audrey Tsai from *The Talon*, Los Altos High School's newspaper, took photos of the new Permanent Exhibition during Press Preview day.

The Permanent Exhibition inspired the Museum to take on a large publicity push in early 2023, which has brought much greater awareness of the Museum to the public. This includes a direct mail piece that was sent to all households in Los Altos, Mountain View, and Los Altos Hills.

Managing the unveiling of a signature new program also meant revising the website, creating a media package, and inviting regional press to a special Press Preview sneak peek of the exhibition in January. We are so grateful for the professional efforts of staff and the amazing volunteer leadership of Kristen Fuller to bring the public's attention to this towering achievement. Their efforts resulted in a three-fold increase in visitorship compared to the same months (March-June) in previous years.

The Museum received three times as many visitors as normal this Spring!



OPENING EVENT: WIDENING OUR CANOPY

Permanent exhibitions only get revamped once in a generation, and we wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to celebrate this achievement. There were a series of events thanking donors and volunteers, many of whom had spent countless hours and significant resources to bring this project to fruition. Some of those donors were first-time contributors to the Museum, and we wanted to make sure they knew how much we appreciated their confidence in our vision for a future-forward exhibition.

Isabella Gomez from the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of San Fransisco Bay, along with her mother Gloria Gomez, read a Land Acknowledgment before the opening ceremony.

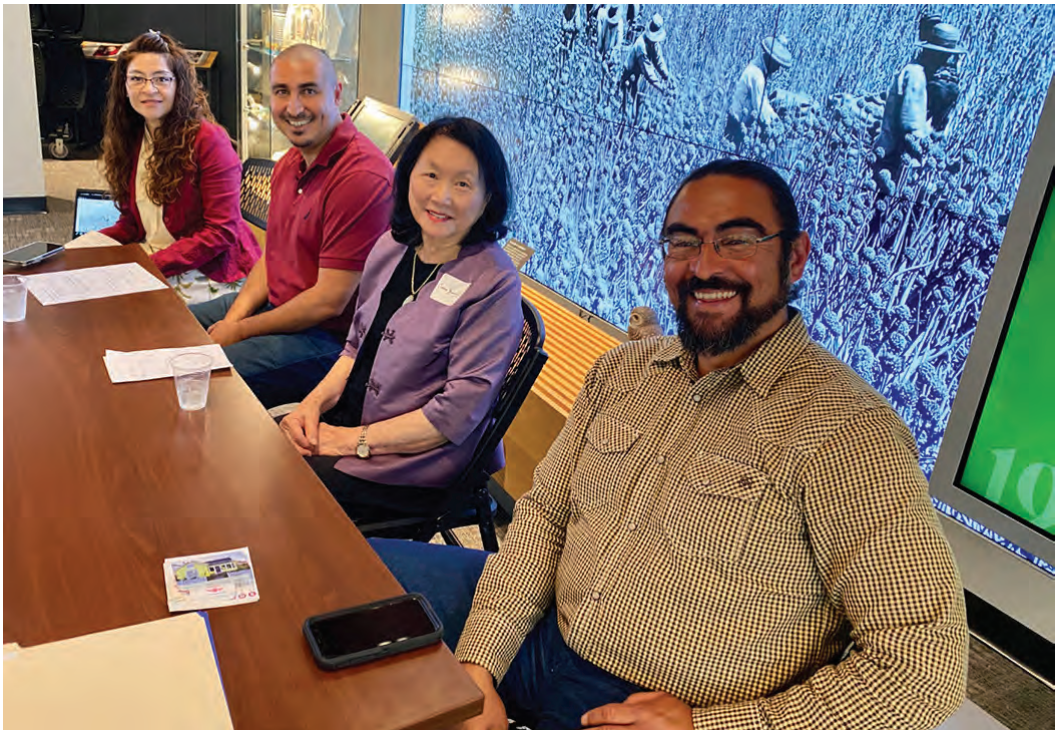
At the large public opening, we emphasized that this Permanent Exhibition was a resource for the entire area. Supervisor Joe Simitian, and the Mayors of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, and Mountain View gave official opening comments that celebrated a dynamic, welcoming, free venue for community gathering. The opening also featured artists from many different backgrounds sharing their joy and talents in recognition of efforts to be inclusive and diverse in the new exhibition.

Dancers from Xpressions joined in the opening festivities curated by Mosaic America.

THIRD THURSDAY PROGRAMS: TURNING A NEW LEAF

Audience participation with questions and discussion during the Third Thursday program.

In May of 2023, the Museum launched a new, ongoing adult educational program focused on exploring the many diverse and intriguing aspects of the Permanent Exhibition. This includes subjects that reveal the complexity of history and the hidden stories that connect us to one another. Our first Third Thursday program looked at agricultural workers from the past in comparison to present day agricultural workers, wonderfully moderated by the chair of our Diversity Advisory Group, Dr. Perlita Dicochea. In June of 2023, we hosted a community conversation about the future of the Los Altos Heritage Orchard led by the Chair of the Orchard Commons Committee, Dr. Jane Packard. These programs were held in the beautiful new Geschke Gallery where the technology of the Permanent Exhibition can be leveraged for breathtaking presentations. The public has responded very well to this regularly scheduled programmatic offering, making them sell out each time!



Panelists at the inaugural Third Thursday Conversations and Reflections event.
(l to r) Perlita Dicochea, Alex Jara, Connie Young Yu, and Joaquin Jimenez.

BOARD AND COMMITTEES: PREPARING THE SOIL

During the fiscal year, every Board meeting began with an update on the Permanent Exhibition, and there were several strategic decisions the Board had to make about opening dates and communications. The Docent Committee was of course the most directly impacted by the opening of the new exhibition: every docent had to learn the greatly-expanded content! There is 10 times as much information in "Stories from the Land" as there had been in the previous exhibition, plus a lot of new technology. The docents did an amazing job getting familiar with that content during training sessions in January and February, and they enthusiastically shared that knowledge with the public.

Dancing through the Decades in 2023 celebrated the iconic Kennedy era and raised much needed funds for the Museum.

The Fundraising Committee rose to the occasion by creating a Dancing through the Decades fundraising event that leveraged the content of the Permanent Exhibition in a fun and creative way. The 1960s theme was inspired by the Valley section of the exhibition, which highlights the many people involved in the early days of the aerospace industry.

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Committee Chairs 2022-2023
Margie Alving, *Collections*
Liz Nyberg, *Docents*
Anne Roberts, *Education*
Pat Hedden, *Exhibits*
Gary Hedden, *Facilities and Newsletter*
Ed Taft, *Finance and IT*
Kelly Davis, *Fundraising*
Larry Lang, *Governance*
Lori Tuttle, *Hospitality*
Carole Flores, *Membership*
Suruchi Mohan, *Oral Histories*
Jane Packard, *Orchard Commons*
Kristen Fuller, *Public Relations*
Sharon Barkoff, *Smith House*
Vicki Holman, *Store*
Cliff Olson, *Train Committee*
Brigitte Ahlfeldt and Peggy Davis, *Volunteer Development*

EDUCATION: NURTURING SEEDLINGS

All of our family-friendly festivals this year had a specific theme drawn from the four sections of the Permanent Exhibition: Hills, Valley, Town and Creeks. In May of 2022, we held Rancho Day: Horsemanship of the Hills featuring our friends from the Los Altos Hills Horsemen's Association and talented performances by Folklorico dancers. In early July, 2022, the Apricot STEM Fair had a theme of "A Tale of Two Valleys" as we gave visitors peeks into the experience of both the Valley of Heart's Delight and Silicon Valley. Train Day in September of 2022 had the theme of "A Train Makes a Town," and we helped visitors understand that Los Altos started as a train stop through informational placards. And finally, the Museum held Creek Fest, which allowed kids to get wet and a little muddy while exploring the history and ecosystem of riparian landscapes. These family-friendly festivals brought in over 3,000 visitors to the Museum and gave each section of the Permanent Exhibition a chance to shine.

Visitors and volunteers enjoyed the water-craft activity at Creek Fest!

We welcomed back train clubs in 2022 for a one-day Trains Make a Town event, to the delight of local families.

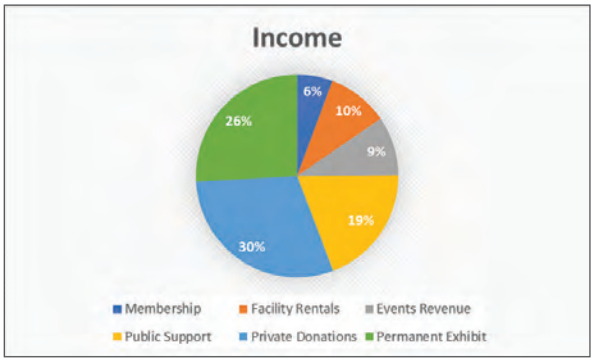
Families tried their hand at roping, among other activities, at Rancho Day.

FINANCES: ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

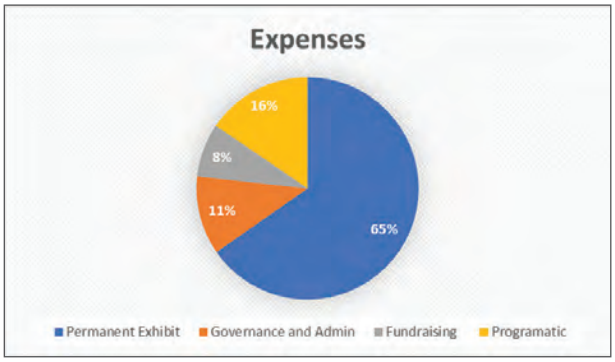
The Museum is grateful for the philanthropic leadership of Ed Taft (left) and Nan Geschke (right), shown here with Elisabeth Ward at the Donor Appreciation preview.

The Permanent Exhibition project dominated all other financial activity of the Museum in the last fiscal year, as it had the year before. The project represents a very substantial investment in the future of the Museum for not just our donors, but for everyone involved in the organization.

Regular operations of the Museum continued to enjoy loyal membership support. Successful fundraising efforts included our signature fundraising event and ongoing city and legacy gift support. But the impact of COVID-19 closures continues to affect the Museum's external rental program, which has still not returned to pre-pandemic levels. We are counting on the impressive new Permanent Exhibition to draw in new members and new opportunities for corporate and private events.



Income total: $869,930



Expense total: $2,353,871

los altos history museum

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Staff

Dr. Elisabeth Ward, *Executive Director*
Sophia Abarca, *Curator of Collections*
Diane Holcomb, *Director of Communications*
Jordan Grealish, *Exhibits Specialist*
Lillie Moore, *Museum Educator*
Lisa Porter, *Rental Events Marketing Manager*
Ken Buscho, *Operations Manager*
Barbara Klein, *Bookkeeper*
Faustino Carrillo, *Gardener*