los altos history museum

Connecting Through History and Culture

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends, Members, and Supporters,

We are delighted to present the 2024–2025 Annual Report, a testament to the dedication of the vibrant community that sustains Los Altos History Museum. This past year has been defined by new beginnings and a renewed commitment to the history we are privileged to share. Our efforts have fortified our foundation of fiscal security and operational stability, positioning us confidently for the year to come.

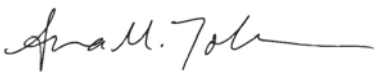
We welcomed **7,880 visitors** to the Museum this year, which is on par with our annual attendance levels from before the pandemic. Our financial health remains robust, with **over $300,000 donated** by our generous supporters. Dedicated volunteers contributed an incredible **9,000+ hours of service**. Our collections also grew substantially, ensuring we preserve more stories for future generations.

We also hewed closely to our mission to produce engaging educational programs and exhibits for the community. We revived key programs, such as **Rancho Day**, and continued time-honored traditions, including our **Apricot STEM Fair** and **Train Day**, which drew more than 1,000 model train enthusiasts of all ages. For our adult audience, our **Third Wednesdays** lecture series proved to be a major draw, with several events attracting standing-room-only crowds eager to delve into the colorful past of the Santa Clara Valley.

The Museum also strengthened its team of dynamic museum professionals this year, with **Anna Toledano** joining us as Executive Director in September. We were pleased to welcome back **Amy Ellison** as Curator and Director of Exhibitions and bring on **Christina Zhao** as Education and Volunteer Coordinator; their combined expertise positions us perfectly to develop more challenging exhibits and exciting programs.

As we look ahead, we are excited by the momentum generated during this past year. We look forward to ensuring that Los Altos History Museum remains the premier local center where the past shapes the future.

With gratitude,



Anna Toledano, PhD
Executive Director

Kuljeet Kalkat
President, Board of Directors

Our Mission

"Los Altos History Museum gathers and presents compelling artifacts and stories that bridge the past and the present by fostering the creative energy of volunteers and staff, challenging established narratives, and producing engaging educational programs and exhibits for the community."

Leadership Growth

We expanded our team to seven dedicated museum professionals, welcoming both new and returning staff members whose expertise enhances our exhibits, programs, community outreach, and mission impact.

"We are so fortunate to have our gem of a history museum."
— A Hawkins

Anna Toledano joined as Executive Director in September 2024. With a PhD in History of Science from Stanford and an MA in Museum Anthropology from Columbia, Anna brings a wealth of experience from nonprofits, museums, universities, and botanical gardens.

Amy Ellison returned to the Museum as Curator and Director of Exhibitions in December 2024. Formerly our Exhibition Curator, Amy brings additional experience from the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Museum of the American Revolution. She holds a PhD in History from Boston University and a BA in History from Fresno State.

Our Vision
We aspire to be the premier local center for intergenerational and intercultural connections.

Christina Zhao stepped into the role of Education and Volunteer Coordinator in April 2025. Christina served as a History Docent and volunteered with the Collections Committee before joining the staff. She draws on academic and professional experiences across Asia, the UK, and the US, enriching the Museum's education and volunteer programs.

Looking Ahead

Since bidding farewell to our long-time gardener, Faustino Carrillo, we are seeking to fill the vacancy with a **contracted landscape manager** who will continue maintaining the Museum's idyllic outdoor spaces.

The Year by the Numbers

7,880
visitors

9,153
hours volunteered

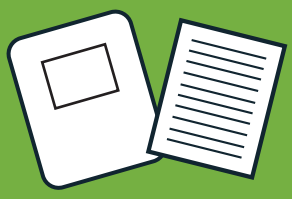
3
new hires

$306,387
donated

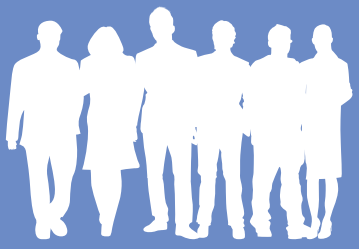
32
weddings and events held

20
new teen docents trained

38
items donated to the collection



623
members



3
exhibits opened

Heritage in the Hills

Rooted in Time *exhibit.*

Eric Flint of Hidden Villa presents at the Moody Road Block Party.

Rooted in Time: Journey through Hidden Villa
On display October 3, 2024 – March 9, 2025

The exhibition *Rooted in Time: Journey through Hidden Villa* celebrated more than the centennial of this local treasure. The show took visitors on a journey through the 1,600-acre property's history, highlighting the vision of founders Josephine and Frank Duveneck and the diverse stories that unfolded on the land. Through photographs, paintings, and objects, the exhibit explored the Duvenecks' commitment to social justice, touching on Japanese-American internment, World War II refugees, and farm workers' labor rights.

Community-focused programs, co-presented with Hidden Villa, included the sold-out **Moody Road Block Party**, inviting neighbors to share local memories, and a **Scavenger Hunt Adventure** designed to engage youth in exploring the exhibition.

Looking Ahead

The stories and values rooted in Hidden Villa's past continue to inspire our community. The Museum will keep exploring and sharing the stories of the people and places that have shaped our local landscape, fostering connections and a sense of shared heritage for generations to come.

"So many residents are already familiar with this local gem, but we wanted to dig deeper into the history of the property, the people, places, and stories that together have made this place special."

–Julie Bly DeVere, Guest Curator

Indigenous Histories

She Sang Me a Good Luck Song: The California Indian Photographs of Dugan Aguilar
On display March 20 – June 8, 2025

The Museum presented a rental exhibition from Exhibit Envoy featuring powerful photography by the late Dugan Aguilar (Mountain Maidu/ Pit River/Walker River Paiute). Through 28 compelling portraits and landscapes, Aguilar captured Native basket makers, dancers, military veterans, elders, and motorcyclists–showing the resilience, artistry and enduring connections of California Native communities to their ancestors and the land.

Museum staff developed a special installation on the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, highlighting their 2024 **Trail of Truth** journey to Washington, D.C., advocating for federal recognition. Related programs, including a talk by Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh and lectures on Bay Area Indigenous history and the **Chochenyo language**, offered visitors deeper context and engagement with the communities represented.

Bernadette Quiroz, Language Revitalization Chair of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, reveals the history of the Chochenyo language and recent Muwekma language revitalization efforts, along with giving us a language lesson!

Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh shares her experience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's Trail of Truth horseback journey from the Bay Area to Washington, D.C.

Looking Ahead

We are honored to have collaborated with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and grateful for their trust in sharing their important history. The Museum will continue presenting exhibitions and programs that amplify Indigenous voices, fostering connections and culture and deepening local understanding of their stories and heritage.

"This exhibition is vital because it presents contemporary California Indigenous peoples, countering the common tendency of history books and exhibits to focus only on Native American history before or around European contact."

–Amy Ellison, Curator and Director of Exhibitions

Meet the Smiths

J. Gilbert Smith and his wife, Margaret, in 1947.

Visitors to the historic J. Gilbert Smith House explored the stories behind the people who lived there and the orchard preserved beside it. The permanent exhibit, ***Meet the Smiths***, opened in August of 2024 in the Smith House gallery, offering photographs, paintings, and personal stories that brought the home and its history to life.

"Understanding who Gilbert Smith and his wife, Margaret, were can be difficult through a guided tour alone," said Interim Executive Director and Exhibit Curator Julie Bly DeVere. "Since people learn in different ways, the exhibit provides valuable context, making the house tour more meaningful. We also wanted to update information about Margaret and make her more of a shared lead."

Looking Ahead

The Museum will continue to enrich the Smith House experience with guided tours, educational programs, and special events that highlight the lives of the Smiths and the history of the Heritage Orchard.

J. Gilbert Smith House, circa 1905.

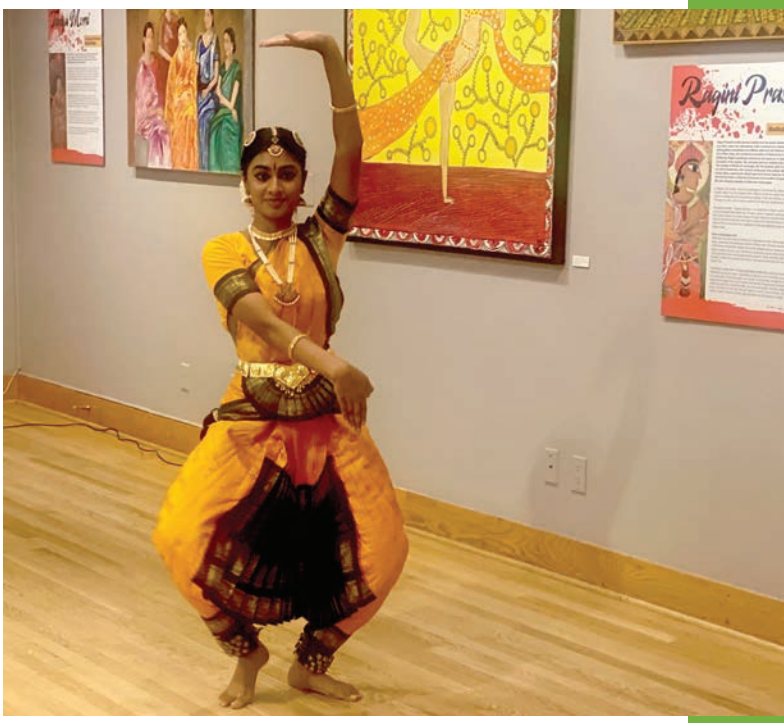
Cultural Experiences

The Museum brought global traditions to life with immersive cultural events that engaged and inspired the community.

For the first time, the Mid-Autumn Festival, presented with the Greater Los Altos Chinese Association, filled the courtyard with fan painting, lantern making, traditional sports, and performances of dance and music.

In the Main Gallery, **Harmony in Motion: The Vishwa Shanthi Dance Experience** showcased the beauty of Bharatanatyam, a classical Indian dance. Students from the Vishwa Shanthi Academy performed in vibrant traditional costumes, captivating the audience with intricate movement.

Sugar painting activity at Mid-Autumn Festival. Photo by S.M. Lieu.



Dancer from Vishwa Shanthi.

Looking Ahead

We will continue to build on our role as a gathering place where all generations and cultures come together to share, learn, and celebrate. Through meaningful programs and events, we will continue to bring to light the diverse stories, traditions, and voices that make our community thrive.

A young visitor delights in a model train. Photo by S.M. Lieu.

Domenica Maloney paints a family portrait of Train Day attendees. Photo by S.M. Lieu.

Christian Navarette demonstrates rope tricks. Photo by S.M. Lieu.

Adventures in Learning

Families discovered the world of model railroading, California ranchos, and Hidden Villa's history through hands-on activities and immersive experiences.

Over 1,000 train enthusiasts of all ages attended **Train Days**, enjoying detailed layouts shared by local model train clubs and learning about the history of railroading. New at the event, a family portrait artist created instant keepsakes for attendees.

Rancho Day offered a mix of education and entertainment, including hands-on activities, historical displays, rope tricks by Charro Christian Navarrete, and a Mexican Tin Art Workshop.

In partnership with Hidden Villa, the **Scavenger Hunt Adventure** invited youth to explore the exhibit *Rooted in Time: Journey through Hidden Villa* with a self-guided hunt. Younger visitors searched for familiar images, while older youth tackled text-based challenges, deepening their understanding of Hidden Villa's past.

Can you find a picture of a chicken on this map of Hidden Villa?

Looking Ahead

The Museum will celebrate apricots and science at the Apricot STEM Fair, introduce new activities at Train Day, and continue exploring the complex history of the Rancho era. We also look forward to developing additional kid-centered programs that inspire learning and discovery.

Evenings in the Courtyard

Wine, music, and history came together in the Museum's garden courtyard for both our annual fundraiser and a new concert series. The community gathered to dine, raise a glass, and celebrate connection while supporting the Museum's mission.

This year's fundraiser, **A Taste of History**, embraced a new approach. Instead of a tented affair, the evening of casual elegance unfolded under the open sky, complete with fire pits, live jazz, and guided tours of the exhibit, heritage orchard, and J. Gilbert Smith House. Guests enjoyed wine tastings from local wineries and curated food pairings by Heirloom Catering. Julie Bly DeVere offered a special presentation on the history of wine in the region.

Headliner Jamie Drake and opening act The Song Gardeners launched our summer **Concerts in the Courtyard** series, followed by the smooth, soulful sounds of Jonah Melvon and his band, Left University. The concert series drew in new audiences, particularly Millennials and Generation X-ers, helping foster a more diverse and welcoming community.

Dancing to the tunes of Jonah Melvon and Left University.

Looking Ahead

Our 2026 fundraiser will take place in May, with a new season of Concerts in the Courtyard following in the summer. Have a performer or band to recommend? Let us hear from you at *hello@losaltoshistory.org*.

Anna Toledano, Lisa Porter, and Jan Thomas sip and savor at A Taste of History. Photo by Toan Nguyen.

Julie Bly DeVere presents the local history of wine. Photo by Toan Nguyen.

Guests line up for a flight tasting at A Taste of History. Photo by Toan Nguyen.

Jamie Drake performs in concert.

History in Art and Word

Arts Los Altos presents the stories behind the downtown murals.

Robin Chapman explores Bay Area tales.

The Museum celebrated creativity and local history through programs that highlighted the power of art and literature to connect and inspire.

Arts Los Altos: Connecting Community with Public Art explored the murals, sculptures, and interactive installations that beautify downtown Los Altos, with video displays, student films, and maps highlighting the 13 public works.

Guests also gathered for a **Book Talk and Brunch** with historian Robin Chapman, who shared stories from her book, *The Valley of Heart's Delight: True Tales from Around the Bay*, revealing the Santa Clara Valley's colorful past—from orchards and railroads to poets and pioneers.

Looking Ahead

In conjunction with the exhibition *10,000 Memories: Partition, Independence, and WWII in South Asia*, the Museum will host a poetry and art night, as well as a talk on the creation of the book *10,000 Memories: A Lived History of Partition* by the 1947 Partition Archive.

Los Altos and Los Altos Hills aren't just places we work—they're where we grew up, built memories, and watched the community thrive. As a multi-generation real estate family team, we've had the privilege of seeing this incredible area evolve while keeping its small-town charm, strong community, and deep-rooted history. One of the best places to learn more and experience this history? The Los Altos History Museum!

– Campi Group

Intergenerational Connections

Since 2019, the **Teen Docent Program** has given young people hands-on experience in local history, leadership, and community engagement. Teens have led tours, worked with adult docents, and served as Youth Representatives to the Museum's Board, as Sophie Filer did in FY 2024-2025. This year we welcomed 20 teens to the program, coming from a range of local schools.

"The Teen Docent Program gave me a sense of belonging when I moved to Los Altos just before high school. Through it, I've gained invaluable professional development and experience in museum work and history while building lasting relationships across the community that I will forever treasure. I love how the Museum and the Teen Docent Program fosters intergenerational connections through a shared passion for history."

– Sophie Filer

Looking ahead

In March, we will begin accepting applications for the 2026 Teen Docent Program through our website.

Learn more about our Teen Docent Program *here*.

Sophie Filer with board members Jung Yoon, Jeanine Valadez, and Jennifer Springer.

Christina Zhao trains a group of teen docents.

Teen docents take a break from training for this photo opp.

Our History Preserved

Local clubs and organizations take center stage in the Community Corner.

John Howard's Tank House watercolor by Louise Canright.

A Toyon Dairy Farm milk bottle.

The Museum's Collections preserved and shared the history of Los Altos, capturing the stories, achievements, and everyday lives of our community across generations. Through artifacts, photographs, and archival materials, the Museum brought the city's past to life for visitors of all ages.

In December, the Museum debuted a new display in the **Community Corner**, a dedicated space within the Permanent Exhibition highlighting artifacts and photographs from the Collection. The display showcased Los Altos's civic, youth, and cultural organizations and clubs, past and present.

Volunteers and interns continued their important work **cataloging and inventorying** items within the Museum's Collection of over 20,000 artifacts. In the spring, volunteer Margie Alving launched a collaborative project with Foothill College students to update the **Florence Fava archeological archives**, ensuring these important resources remain accessible and well-documented.

Looking Ahead

The Oral History Committee will continue recording oral histories in preparation for Los Altos's 75th anniversary celebration, preserving firsthand accounts that capture the city's unique stories and heritage. A new Community Corner display opens December 18, 2025.

A Backdrop for Life's Celebrations

The Museum's grounds, with its spacious outdoor patio, beautifully maintained garden, and historic farmhouse, provided an ideal setting where people came together to celebrate life, community, and shared experiences. From **weddings and memorials** to **nonprofit gatherings** and **corporate functions**, each occasion was enriched by the sense of history that surrounded it.

The Museum's commitment to creating memorable experiences was recognized with *The Knot* Best of Weddings 2025 and *WeddingWire* Couples' Choice Awards 2025, highlighting how museum spaces can nurture meaningful connections.

"We recently hosted an event for our nonprofit at Los Altos History Museum. The space is excellent as are the staff and volunteers. It's always nice to have a very beautiful spot in your backyard." – Hank

"My wife and I stumbled upon this hidden gem for our big day. The venue is very beautiful and spacious. Lots of great spots for photos. A big shout out to Lisa, the events coordinator, for an amazing job. She went above and beyond in the overall process. Would highly recommend as a wedding venue and more!" - Kevin M.

Looking Ahead

We're excited to host several weddings and special events in 2026. We're leveling up our event space with a wide variety of new plants in the garden, brand new rental equipment, and offerings to enhance and personalize every celebration.

Ibrahim Zanghi, second from left, with his father, Jane Packard, and Amy Ellison.

GreenTown Los Altos interns pose with Jane Packard (on left).

Moises Diaz plants a baby apricot tree.

Apricots and Community

The 2025 apricot harvest in the Los Altos Heritage Orchard arrived early and yielded 922 lbs—more than double the previous year's 381 lbs. Prime fruit (49%) was sold at DeMartini Orchard, blemished apricots (34%) were distributed free to 36 residents, and the remaining salvaged fruit (16%) fed local backyard chickens. Minimal unsupervised picking occurred thanks to the guidance of 16 trained Orchard Ambassadors.

This summer, interns from GreenTown Los Altos used the Heritage Apricot Orchard as a **living classroom** for studying resilient, eco-friendly land use. As part of their exploration into sustainable landscaping and local climate action, the orchard served as both a case study and an inspiration—guided by the expertise of Jane Packard, chair of the Orchard Commons Committee.

For his **Eagle Scout project**, Ibrahim Zanghi revitalized the orchard's white posts with updated wording, new solar lights, and QR codes linking to the Museum's app for orchard tours. His work, completed under the guidance of Jane Packard and Curator and Director of Exhibitions Amy Ellison, transformed the posts into gateways for discovery and appreciation of the orchard's history and cultural importance.

Looking Ahead

With approximately 200 young trees beginning to produce, the harvest is expected to double again in 2026. The orchard, now at 70% capacity with trees aged 3 to over 50 years, is undergoing new soil treatments to address century-old monoculture pathogens. The orchard continues to demonstrate sustainable landscaping practices while supporting citywide Climate Action initiatives.

A Habitat Oasis

This past year, the **Garden Committee** welcomed seven new members, with Marci Hayden stepping in as Chair, each bringing unique skills to help keep this public legacy space thriving. A focus on habitat allowed visitors to explore nearly 100 newly labeled botanical species, surrounded by pollinators buzzing among flowering perennials and lizards darting across Sonoma fieldstone boulders. Though we lost a part-time garden staffer during the busy event season, volunteers stepped in to ensure rental groups enjoyed a beautiful outdoor experience.

Looking Ahead

A California native Palo Verde tree will soon flourish in the corner bed, surrounded by easy-care native plants, alongside a dry garden of drought-tolerant succulents—demonstrating the beauty of sustainable, water-wise landscaping.

Garden Committee Chair Caroline Landsbergen (right) officially hands over the shovel to incoming Chair Marci Hayden in a ceremony with garden volunteers.

Bright Red Salvia Greggii blooms amongst wildflowers.

Poppies and succulents thrive together.

The Heart of the Museum

Members enjoy each other's company at the Members' Summer Social & Volunteer Tribute.

Museum docents visit the Japanese American Museum.

A winning bid is placed at A Taste of History.

The Museum thrived thanks to our members, volunteers, and donors, whose dedication to preserving and sharing our local stories helped connect the community with history and culture.

Membership offered meaningful ways for the community to engage with exhibitions, programs, and special events while supporting the Museum's mission. Members enjoyed free or discounted admission to programs and events, invitations to exclusive gatherings such as the Members' Summer Social & Volunteer Tribute, and–at higher levels–early access to new exhibits and reciprocal admission to over 1,400 cultural institutions nationwide. In 2024, the Museum rolled out gift cards for membership.

Volunteers guided visitors, supported education programs, cared for the Collection, garden and facility, and organized special events. Through their service, they learned about local history while sharing knowledge and building lasting connections with fellow history enthusiasts. In October, docents visited the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, and their docents visited us.

Donors provided essential support for the Museum's programs, exhibits, and events, engaging visitors of all ages. Every contribution made an impact–helping preserve our local stories, artifacts, garden, and facilities, and support Museum staff.

Looking Ahead

The Membership Committee will explore ways to engage more businesses as members, and volunteers will receive continued development to further enrich the visitor experience.

Donors and Members Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025

*as of June 30, 2025

Grants and Business Support

Anne Wojcicki Foundation
Apple, Inc.
BK Collections
Cal Water
Capitol Wholesale Nursery, Inc.
Castello di Amorosa
City of Los Altos
Cloudinary
Cooper-Garrod Winery
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Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation
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Dennis Young

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Thank you for your generous support!

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*as of June 30, 2025

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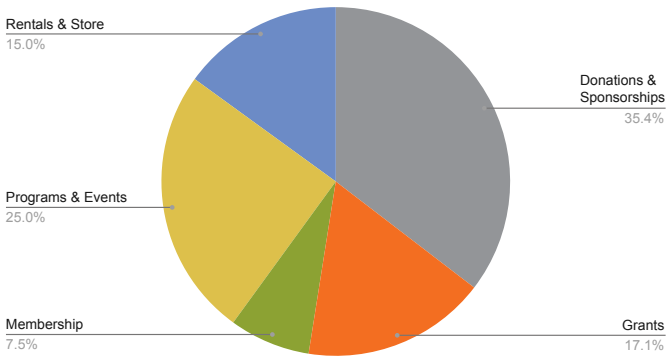
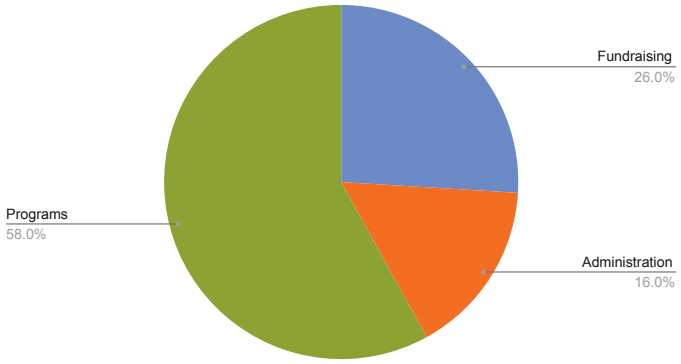
2024-2025 Revenue

Donations & Sponsorships	$306,387.35
Grants	$147,850.00
Membership	$65,015.00
Programs & Events	$216,187.45
Rentals & Store	$129,861.24
Total	**$865,301.04**



2024-2025 Expenses

Fundraising	$218,591.65
Administration	$134,775.14
Programs	$488,276.46
Total	**$841,643.25**



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