



**Los Altos Historical Commission and Los Altos History Museum
35th Annual Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest
3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Graders**

2019 Theme – “Inspired by Juana!”

Background:

The current exhibit at The Los Altos History Museum is “Inspired by Juana: La Dona de la Frontera (the Lady of the Frontier).” This exhibit tells the story of Juana Briones, a dynamic 19th century woman who owned several businesses, many parcels of land, and was a talented businesswoman. She was also a traditional healer and an advocate for the rights of her family and friends in what is now Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Palo Alto, San Jose and San Francisco. The story of Juana Briones is a tale of a resilient spirit, an inventive imagination, and business know-how - the hallmarks for Silicon Valley.

Visit the “Inspired by Juana” exhibit at the Los Altos History Museum or research on your own about the life of this important local historical figure. Think about Juana as a businessperson, a healer (herbalist), and an advocate for her personal rights, as well as those of her large family. Consider how Juana was able to have a relationship with people of all groups and nationalities, different religions, and customs.

Writing Prompt:

After reading and researching about Juana Briones, write a letter to an older adult in your family (grandparent, aunt, uncle, or parent) telling them about this inspiring woman and what she accomplished during a time of hardship and difficulty for many others.

In the first paragraph of your letter, describe what you most admired about Juana Briones. What did you find interesting or surprising about this 19th century figure?

Next, describe how Juana Briones inspires you to think about the future and how you might make a difference, like she did. You may want to use your own ideas or **choose one** of the following questions to guide you in writing your letter:

1. Is there something you can do to advocate/stand up for your own rights or the rights of your family?
2. Do you see yourself as a businessperson whose passion will lead to something that will enrich our world, our climate, or our lives?
3. Do you think about becoming a scientist or doctor who finds a cure for a world problem?

In your final paragraph, make a connection between Juana Briones and yourself to show that even when someone is no longer with us, they can inspire us to make the world a better place.

Use interesting vocabulary and communicate your ideas in a creative manner. Remember to sign your letter.

Win Prizes
1st Place - \$50 2nd Place - \$30 3rd Place - \$20
3 Winners Per Grade Level!