Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2011-12

Collections & Interpretation

Collections: The collections, in particular the photographs, are increasingly being accessed by members of the community at large, especially during this 60th anniversary year. Image requests have come from the general public, businesses, authors, journalists, and television producers.

Perhaps the most significant addition to the collection this year was the material accumulated during the research phase of the Touching Lives exhibit. The gift contains a large collection of Duveneck family letters, photographs, memorabilia, and artifacts; once cataloged this material will be invaluable to researchers. In addition, the groundwork was laid for the successful return of the Florence Fava Library Collection of Native American archaeological artifacts that had been on loan to Hidden Villa since 1989.

Interpretation & Education: The collections team worked closely with the 3rd grade education team, the permanent exhibit team, the Shaped by Water exhibit team, and the Faces exhibit team, researching questions, obtaining and scanning images, assisting with artifacts and helping install and de-install exhibits.

Our team: The collections are managed by staff member Lisa Robinson with assistance from long-time volunteers and collections committee co-chairs Sande Stuart and Judie Suelzle. Over the summer, Lisa was assisted by returning interns Jennifer Bakos (UCSB) and Natalie Rich (Cal Poly) who had both volunteered with the Museum while in high school. We also welcomed back Robert Mitchell to the collections team, and new volunteers Pauline and Glen Diestelhorst and Kari DeSaulnier. Foothill College history students continued to learn about and volunteer with the archives, and several students from Foothill’s Anthropology department volunteered to gain an understanding of the profession. In February, Stefanie Midlock came on board as a part-time assistant cataloguer, quickly grew in the position, and has taken on a variety of roles assisting in many aspects of the collections department.

Education

SCHOOL TOURS —Another great year! A new record 1,076 students came to the Museum for our curriculum tours. In April, we welcomed 541 third-grade students from all seven LASD schools, plus Heritage Academy, Miramonte and Los Altos Christian private schools. The fourth-grade tours held in May welcomed 535 students from all seven LASD elementary schools. Teacher evaluations, for both grade levels, were very positive.

ESSAY CONTEST—Coordinated annually with the City of Los Altos Historical Commission, the topic for the 2012 Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest celebrated the incorporation of the City of Los Altos on December 1, 1952. This year’s theme was “Los Altos: 60 Years from Now.” Grades 3-6, from public and private schools, as well as home-schooled students, submitted 600 essays. Four schools, with two winners each, tied for the trophy this year: Gardner Bullis, Loyola, Pinewood, and Santa Rita. On May 8, the essay winners (1st, 2nd, and 3rd places) were treated to an ice cream social on the Museum patio by the City of Los Altos, the Historical Commission, and the City of Los Altos. The mayor also recognized the winners at the City Council Meeting following the social. - Anne Roberts

Changing Exhibits: The subject and content of our changing exhibitions attract a diverse group of people to the Museum, and are enhanced with special tours, lectures and educational programs.

Hearts Delight: Past and Present Pictorial Impressions of Los Altos (July-September 2011) In a history-themed art exhibition, we displayed a juried collection of original paintings and photographs by local artists featuring historic homes, businesses or buildings; landscapes, local scenes, or flowers; and people and portraits.

Shaped by Water: Past, Present and Future (October 2011-April 2012) took a look at the significant role of water in the transformation of Santa Clara Valley and its use it will affect our future. Each period of history has been characterized by a changing relationship between humans and water. A group of talented volunteers under the direction of artist Linda Gass prepared and presented this significant exhibition. As curator, Linda took a subject of great personal interest and developed a storyline that proved to be very interesting to a large segment of our population. The exhibit was educational, hands-on, historical and inspiring. It proved such a success that other museums in the area were interested in bringing
Dear Museum Friends,

I would like to thank everyone who served on the board during the past two years for making my job as president a most enjoyable one. Along with working with terrific board members, it has been my pleasure to have worked with a wonderful staff, dedicated volunteers and supportive community members. Their time and talent moved the Los Altos History Museum to new heights of achievement.

Our members continue to show their generosity in sustaining the museum’s “crown jewel” status in the community. High profile exhibits, events and educational programs have kept the museum’s mission alive and well and have maintained its reputation for excellence. We can all be proud of our museum. Thanks again for all of your support.

- Patti Rose, Past President, 2010-2012

CHANGING EXHIBITS, continued

it to their own museums; the first time a Los Altos-curated exhibition has traveled beyond our borders. Hundreds of visitors came to the Museum during the seven-month exhibition, including 5th graders, for whom this topic is a curriculum requirement.

Faces of Los Altos (May-September 2012) recognized the 60th anniversary of Los Altos’ incorporation and was inspired by our own archives. Not intended to showcase anyone specific or award any special importance to anyone, it was a collage of community faces past and present. Busts by Annie Fitz were on display and media artist Lessa Bouchard created a video installation called Recognition that featured some of the faces we see every day. This added a wonderful exhibit opportunity to recognize and celebrate the people who work, play, and live in this community. Two history-oriented conversational programs added to this exhibition: one a panel of old timers remembering some of the characters that came before incorporation, with Don McDonald as master of ceremonies. Our second program focused on “Life in the 50s” with Mel Kahn as the MC and panelists Jimmy Furuichi, George Estill, Frank White, and Bud Chancellor sharing stories of growing up in Los Altos.

Permanent Exhibits

Crown of the Peninsula: Delayed for a couple of years due to economic concerns, work on the permanent exhibit in the upper gallery began in earnest in 2010 and continued this year. In celebration of the 10th anniversary, the board voted to upgrade and enhance the present displays. A professional exhibit designer and fabricator were hired to work with our volunteer and staff team. Phase I will soon be finished, including the accurately researched and designed Santa Clara mission model, an enhanced First People/Ohlone display with artifacts from the Florence Fava collection, and a new display in the rancho home setting. The second phase includes improving the displays from the 1950s forward and upgrading Family Tree.

J. Gilbert Smith House: our beloved History House enjoyed the many improvements made the previous year. Two major activities took place in addition to weekly tours: the Smith House and Store Committees teamed up to put on a tea and holiday boutique sale in fall, and a spring Fancy Tea was auctioned off at the Crab Feed. – Jane Reed

Facilities & Grounds

- SMITH HOUSE: The City installed a plaque (as outlined in our agreement with the county) on the J. Gilbert Smith House that states that the renovation of our porch roof and the demolition of the upstairs kitchen was matched by the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department’s Historical Heritage Grant Program. We also replaced the last two bad window shades in the Smith House.
- KITCHEN: In March, the City replaced subflooring in the Museum kitchen due to many years of leakage from an unbalanced refrigerator. We then paid to replace the linoleum. We installed new shelving in our kitchen cabinets (thank you, Wendell Lehr).
- OFFICE: We painted the downstairs meeting area, installed a new electrical outlet and had a new, quieter and stronger, fan installed in our server room.
- SPRINKLERS: The City repaired the leaking fire sprinkler in front of the elevator on the main floor of the Museum and replaced a section of pipe in the HVAC room on the upper level, a section in the main office area and another near the conference table.
- STORAGE CRUNCH: We rented a storage unit at Peninsula Storage Center in Mountain View to house a growing stock of exhibit panels and exhibit tables and cases.
- GALLERIES: We purchased a new projector and repaired the sounds in the main gallery. In May, we had our wood floors, stairs and landings sanded and refinished by Elegant

Volunteers: Promoting Museum volunteering via community and museum events and making contact with interested prospects, we initiate and process nominations and awards to outstanding museum volunteers for recognition by the museum and the community. We also plan and execute the Museum’s annual recognition event.

- OUTREACH: We participated in the new “50+ Expo” and the “Los Altos Business Fair” to promote the museum and promote volunteering. Five new prospects became active volunteers immediately. Our Shaped by Water exhibit committee included at least 15 volunteers who were new to the museum; several have indicated ongoing interest.
- RECOGNITION—Museum nominees received the following awards, here and in the broader community: Los Altos Community Foundation/John W. Gardner Award—Liz Nyberg, Los Altos & Los Altos Hills Joint Award—Diane Claypool. Museum Awards: Marie Backs, Diane Claypool, Carole Flores, Jan Fong, Linda Gass, Carol Kleyensteuber, Caroline Landsbergen, Alison Lindell, Denise Massone, Jan Masters, Barbara Mordo, Lara Pai, Jane Reed and Steve Sulack. Congrats to all! – Jan Masters
Finance & Development

Finance: The Finance Committee reviewed and approved the responsibilities of the group. In keeping with those, we also:

- Examined our investments placed with Los Altos Community Foundation and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.
- Worked with staff on formulating and reviewing both the operating budget and new capital expense budget.
- Wrote and presented to the board a formal Cash Reserve Policy and an Investment Policy; both were approved at the June board meeting. - Ginger Beman

Rental Events: Another fine year for event rentals—our net income was over twice that of last year! So many beautifully completed events and more scheduled in 2013; Mark Perry has done an outstanding job, far exceeding prior years. We can’t say enough about how he makes our Museum a primary choice for our guests. We continue to stay for hours longer than expected, talking and remembering and connecting with old and new friends. Incorporation was not an easy job on the garden, though we have irrigation woes to solve (in progress) and Caroline is seeking a successor to nurture the garden the way she has these past several years. – Marie Backs

INCOME & EXPENSE:

Income (greatest to least)                                   Total
Rental Events                                             $ 131,552.70
Special Events                                             124,009.50
City Grant                                                 65,000.00
Donations                                                  39,888.83
Membership Dues                                            30,519.50
Grants – Other (exhibits, education)                       26,513.08
Store Income                                               22,001.11
Investment Income/Expense                                   13,874.82
Miscellaneous Income                                       4,442.34
Interest Income (bank accounts)                            3,263.43
Sales of Product (book royalties)                          323.60
Total Income                                               $ 461,388.91

Gross Profit                                               $ 448,661.49

91% of budget attained

Expenses (greatest to least)                                Total
Salaries & Wages                                           $ 167,356.67
Professional Fees (incl. exhibit workers)                  133,634.84
Supplies (incl. exhibits)                                  62,551.12
Services (incl. printing/exhibit panels)                   25,481.86
Administrative Expense                                    17,868.89
Maintenance & Repairs                                      15,084.69
Equipment Expense                                          6,945.70
Marketing Expense                                          5,548.70
Rent or Lease of Buildings (storage)                       3,145.00
Insurance                                                  1,662.00
Miscellaneous                                             135.00
Payroll Expenses                                           138.80
Travel                                                     834.53
Total Expenses                                             $ 440,387.80

84% of budget spent

Net Income                                                 $ 8,273.69

SAVINGS UTILIZED:

Permanent Exhibit/10th Anniversary Fund:
10th Anniversary Fund (for Perm. Exhibit)                   $ 32,254.75
Marion Grimm Fund (for Smith House/collections)            450.32
Total Used from Savings                                    $ 32,705.07

INVESTMENTS: Value as of 6/30/12:                          $ 593,363.00

From the Executive Director:

The Los Altos History Museum connects us to the past in meaningful ways... and makes the present a tad bit more understandable. In the Shaped by Water, we learned that water once shot out of the ground like a new oil well... but a century later, land was sinking by the foot as we drained the aquifers under our orchards. This exhibit truly affected how our community views its resources, past, present, or future.

We spent significant hours assisting the Historical Commission as they reached the close of a monumental project—updating all the Historic Resource Inventory records. We helped answer questions about buildings and people, straightened out some “mysteries” and supported the importance of treasures like the SP Depot and the Shoup Building. Internally, our bylaws got a refreshing, and are marked for more change this coming year.

Celebrating 60 years of incorporation this year, we heard firsthand from long-timers who grew up here in the 1950s. The flood of memories sometimes overwhelmed; our Faces of Los Altos program guests stayed for hours longer than expected, talking and remembering and connecting with old and new friends. Incorporation was not an easy choice, but here we are today still a city, with probably the best little history museum complex any town could want... all because the community has wanted it to be this way.

Thank you, everyone, for another great year! - Laura Bajuk, E.D.
Thank you to all of our donors who have made possible the Los Altos History Museum in membership, donations, sponsorships and in-kind gifts. Thank you to those who took the step to contribute to the museum's operations—every gift makes a difference. Your support is greatly appreciated!