Recent photographs of the Smith House were exhibited in Gilbert’s former darkroom.

**Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2013-14**

**Our Highest Attendance Ever!**

We are delighted to announce a new record for attendance—over 22,000 people came to the Museum and Smith House this past year. What brought them? In addition to four high-quality changing and multiple permanent exhibits, our special events included the Fandango, Train Days, historic bike tour, Ohlone Day, Catch the Spirit, Holiday Fun Fest, a members tour of the Cantor and, of course, the Crab Feed. Community members came for special tours, curriculum tours and participated in the essay contest. Weddings, memorials and reunions brought many people here to remember and celebrate new beginnings—one wedding even had a horse!

**Exhibit, School & Tour Guests:** 10,051  
**Museum Programs & Special Events:** 4,647  
**Rental Events:** 7,471  
**Total:** 22,169

**Community collaborations are key...**

Using our archives, we helped the **Los Altos Historical Commission** find the most accurate dates possible for the commemorative plaques they placed on the 20 most historic buildings and homes in Los Altos, including the J. Gilbert Smith house and Heritage Orchard.

We regularly help peer institutions. While their own community museum plans lie dormant, the **Mountain View Historical Association** loaned us a number of agricultural items, including an old cutting table, a windmill and orchard ladders which are on display in our outdoor exhibits. We continue to advise the **Palo Alto History Museum** group as they develop the old Roth Building, hire staff, and create their plans for the future.

In addition to a stunning display of local artwork in our exhibit **Los Altos: Moving Art Forward**, we had the pleasure of working with artists in “Project Los Altos: SFMOMA in Silicon Valley.” Artist Mike Mills created an installation that looked at the past, present and future of Los Altos and its place in Silicon Valley, representing the “past” of Los Altos with old issues of the **Los Altos Town Crier**. Katerina Seda’s “Everything is Perfect: Los Altos World Records” asked the community to look inward and celebrate the things that make them unique—a “world record.” Not to be outdone, the Museum won for most prolific artist — Anna Knapp Fitz, most pre-WWII spice tins, oldest museum, and even largest outhouse. It was great to participate in a community event and it increased the museum’s profile with visitors to the SFMOMA exhibits downtown.

“Peek into the Past”—each week the **Los Altos Town Crier** publishes a photograph selected by our collections staff, with a caption written by our historian, Don McDonald. Often provoking further public inquiry, it’s a steady reminder of the museum’s connection to the community and serves to connect the present with the past.

As major milestones occur in local institutions, they often turn to the Museum. We helped the **Garden Club of Los Altos** prepare for its 85th anniversary; we house their archive which dates back to the late 1920s. The Los Altos and Los Altos Hills **Newcomers Club** donated their 1953-63 minutes book from their first 10 years. It gives insight into the social life the area leading up to incorporation into two cities and is a testament to the welcoming nature of Los Altos, as well as the changing role of women over time.

In the fundraising sector, we completed our third year in the Legacy Incubator program through the **Silicon Valley Planned Giving Council**, and now have a board-designated fund and policy for handling bequests and memorial gifts.

**Awards!**

The Los Altos History Museum was recognized as a **Top Museum** by **Silicon Valley Business Journal**, and **Best Museum in Silicon Valley** by **My Out & About Magazine**.
New to the Collections & Archives

This year we added almost 300 new records to the database, increasing our ability to answer inquiries from the public and for exhibit use. Cataloguing every item is mission-critical. Without a catalog record, the object, for all intents and purposes, doesn’t “exist”—we simply don’t know it is there. Our volunteers have been critical in achieving a total of 13,840 catalog records in our database: 3,787 objects, 3,950 archival items, 5,606 photographs and 497 books.

A gorgeous late 1800s portrait of Mary Byrne McKenzie was donated by her family. In its original ornate plaster frame, it’s a charcoal portrait—a photograph with a charcoal overlay. She married orchardist Michael McKenzie in San Rafael in 1896, and came to live in Los Altos. Over the years, they acquired 36 acres in Los Altos including what is now Heritage Oaks Park and McKenzie Park. There are still descendants of the McKenzie family living in Los Altos today.

Margaret Smith’s 17 volumes of Appleton’s Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year came back to her house here. Covering various years in the 1880s, Margaret gave the books to a friend, who left them behind when she moved. It’s wonderful to have objects belonging to the Smiths return to what is now their community’s Museum.

Education Programs Served 1,553 Students

- **3rd Grade Tours:** 483 students and 123 parent chaperones from 8 schools
- **4th Grade Tours:** 545 students and 209 chaperones from seven schools

“Los Altos Art Works Enrich Our Lives and Community” was the topic for the Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest, supporting our exhibit Los Altos: Moving Art Forward and the SFMOMA exhibit Project Los Altos: SFMOMA in Silicon Valley. Coordinated with the City of Los Altos and the Historical Commission, 525 essays were submitted from children in grades 3-6 from public and private schools as well as home-schooled students. The winners were treated to an ice cream social on the museum patio; Pinewood School was the recipient of the trophy given annually to the school with the most winners.

Volunteers Make it Work!

Lacking a microfilmed, searchable newspaper archive, Judie Suelzle is leading the creation of an index of key events in our history from the Los Altos News beginning in 1950. Searching out stories that show the growth of Los Altos from a small stop on the Southern Pacific to a bustling city, she has indexed 14 years so far. The index is already being used to answer research requests, and will provide the outline for a new Arcadia book covering 1950-2000.

Margie Alving continues cataloguing a collection of letters belonging to Frank and Josephine Duveneck; 38 are done, with many more to go. Each record requires her to read and summarize each letter and envelope and create high-resolution scans of each letter. Other known archives holding such letters are Stanford’s Hoover Institution and the Smithsonian.

We once again welcomed Foothill College history students to engage (for class credit) with the collections in a meaningful way, this year through a project centered on using the newspaper collection to research Los Altos during WWII. One wrote: “I really enjoyed the experience... it was a whole lot different than reading through books and gathering different sources of information to write a paper.”

June Voorsanger worked to create an index of early newspaper articles about the formation of the Los Altos Fire Department. The index, originally created for a researcher seeking locations of the volunteer fire department, was used to help a researcher seeking information about his great uncle, Charles Mohr, who served as the volunteer assistant fire chief during the 1930s and ‘40s. June’s index has also been used to research photographs that have been used in the Peek into the Past column in the Los Altos Town Crier.

Old homes are of frequent interest, so Pauline Diestelhorst created a binder containing information about our past home tours starting in the early 1990s. Having all this information in one place has been invaluable to researchers. Pauline also completed extensive research regarding the Murphy and Taaffe families, both with local ties. We found so much wonderful information we’re considering an exhibition centered around these families and their impact on California.
President’s Message

Our focus this past year has been to make your history museum come to life as a community-centered, active resource for all ages, recognizing our diverse populations and the multitude of issues that we share. As a non-profit, the only way that we are able to do the work of this museum is with people like you, who love our community and care about culture.

This past year we reached many of our board-set goals with active participation in exciting events, community-oriented exhibitions, a record increase in attendance, supportive volunteers, growing donor contributions, more members and new community partners.

Our supportive board of directors continues to ask, “who are we?” Although the answers vary, in general the board feels that we are:

- a community-centered cultural resource
- devoted to the preservation of local history
- guardians of stories and memories
- storytellers of current social issues
- a venue for creativity

With your support, we closed the year successfully, strove to keep a handle on our ambitious goals and to be a relevant, contributing part of our community.

Thank you! Jane Reed, President 2013-14

Finance & Development

INCOME & EXPENSE: Not including investment income or capital project expenses.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (greatest to least)</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Event Rentals</td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Special Events</td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Store</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
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<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Expenses (greatest to least)</th>
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<td><strong>Net</strong></td>
<td><strong>$181,020</strong></td>
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CAPITAL PROJECTS EXPENSES: $14,671

INVESTMENTS: as of 6/30/14 $740,563

Store:
Train Days in September, Catch the Spirit in November, and the Sale of the Decade in February all contributed to a very good year for the Museum Store. Our team of store workers and buyers, new and experienced, were a key factor in our success; thank you!
Thank you to our 2013-14 donors!
Over 600 individuals, organizations and businesses contributed to the Los Altos History Museum in membership, donations, sponsorships and in-kind gifts. Every gift made a difference — your support is essential, and is so appreciated!