The Los Altos History Museum sits at the center of a working apricot orchard. The founders of Los Altos made this decision intentionally. They had a vision that their city would be unique and building a civic center in this striking setting was part of that vision. J. Gilbert Smith planted the orchard in 1901 and it is one of the oldest in the region.

By the time Los Altos incorporated, in 1952, Smith had been producing luscious apricots on the land for half a century. City fathers asked architect Frank Lloyd Wright to help them choose a spot for their new city hall and Wright looked around and told them to buy the Smith place for “…its beauty and its history.” The city hammered out a deal that gave Smith a lifetime interest in the apricot trees, which city officials promised would be removed only as needed for their buildings. Upon Smith’s death, and the death of his wife Margaret, the Smith home and its acreage would also go to the city for use as a history center.

Preservation thus became a hallmark of city planning, according to Museum Board President Jane Reed, and in 1978 the City of Los Altos was honored with the county’s Award for Excellence for its preservation of the Los Altos History House and the surrounding orchard. In 1981, the city designated the orchard a Historical Landmark. The J. Gilbert Smith Heritage Orchard is now one of three in the Santa Clara Valley: Saratoga’s was purchased in 1984; Sunnyvale’s was designated just after the turn of the twenty-first century.

These living landmarks recall the time when the Santa Clara Valley was at the center of the largest commercial orchard in the world. The fruit of this valley fed the hungry during the Great Depression and filled the ration kits of Allied soldiers in two world wars. Small family farms here sent local orchard kids to schools like Stanford, Santa Clara, and Cal—schools that nurtured the origins of the technology revolution to come.

Today, in a valley increasingly covered in hardscape, the J. Gilbert Smith Heritage Orchard stands, not only as a symbol of our history, but as a legacy of green space and open space for future generations.

~ Robin Chapman, author of California Apricots: The Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley (History Press 2013)
President’s Pen

Dear Members and Friends,

I welcome you to the fall issue of the Los Altos History Museum’s newsletter. I hope that throughout the year, we will be able to feature interesting articles that reflect our mission and keep you informed of the activities that make this museum a local resource that is a part of, as well as enriching the community-wide happenings. You may note that some of the first activities are: the Antiques Show at Hillview Community Center (fun to see the old collectibles); the exciting opening of a contemporary art show in our changing gallery; and a boutique and tea to shine light on the J. Gilbert Smith house built in 1905 designed to get you in the mood for holiday shopping (our store buyers have been scouring the markets for interesting items).

Today’s museums can and are becoming much more integrated into their communities — serving not only as a receptacle for preservation of history in the many forms that it takes, but becoming a resource for educational activities, cultural experiences and act as a community gathering place. This is our future.

I encourage our members to think of the Los Altos History Museum as a place to visit often and to share with your friends. We are always looking to add new features, programs and fun activities. I welcome your ideas and support to make them happen: janebree@aol.com.

~ JANE REED, Board President

HOLIDAYS...CATCH the SPIRIT!

It is that time of year when the Los Altos History Museum invites all to be our guests at the anticipated event “Catch the Spirit.”

Please join us at the Museum on Wednesday, November 13th, from noon to four thirty. Enjoy refreshments, music, a visit to the holiday decorated J. Gilbert Smith House, shopping at the Museum stores and some new delights!

The upstairs gallery at the J. Gilbert Smith House will feature an exhibit of original “Santa Paintings” from Los Altos artist Emily Hollinger’s personal collection. The wonderful Schola Cantorum will fill the air with music and Los Altos author Robin Chapman will visit and sign her fast selling book, California Apricots: The Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley. The Christmas tree in the Museum will be decorated with unique Beanie Babies lent by Gayle Carter of the Chamber of Commerce.

Please come, enjoy and bring a friend.

~ DIANE SIMMONS, JEAN KENNY & PINKY WHELAN

HOLIDAY FAMILY FUN FEST

Sunday, December 8 - 2-4 pm

Join us for festive family fun at the Smith House and Museum, featuring a children’s chorus, holiday stories, “Beanie Baby” Christmas tree, display of holiday paintings, Smith House tours with a child’s perspective and refreshments on the porch. Free!

Board of Directors and Officers for 2013-14

Jane Reed, President
Kristen Fuller, 1st Vice President
Nomi Trappen, 2nd Vice President
Ed Taft, Treasurer
Marilyn Henderson, Secretary
Ginger Beman, Past President

Board members include:
Marie Backs
Phyllis Dorricott
Maureen Fraser
Dan Haley
Karen Purtich
Anne Roberts
Sande Stuart
Ginger Summit
Jim Thurber

Two active volunteers retire from the Board: Jan Fong and Patti Rose

During her years of service Jan Fong offered her financial expertise, served as Secretary to the Board as well as her thoughtful leadership with our volunteer program.

Patti Rose served two years as President of the Board in addition to providing multiple years of help with the Crab Feed and other events. Patti continues to be active as part of the store management.
**New Exhibition Opens November 2**

Los Altos Moving Art Forward, the new contemporary art exhibition featuring local artists in painting, photography, sculpture and mixed media, will open on November 2, 2013 and remain on exhibit until March 23, 2014. The exhibition was selected to complement the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art’s off-site exhibit, The Los Altos Project: SFMOMA in Silicon Valley. The MOMA artworks will be shown in locations throughout downtown Los Altos, sponsored by Passerelle Investment Company and the City of Los Altos.

“We are very excited that SFMOMA has chosen The Los Altos Project as part of their community outreach program during this construction phase of the new SFMOMA buildings,” says Jane Reed, Museum board president and chair of the exhibit committee.

The exhibit committee, including two representatives from the Los Altos Arts Commission, hopes that the exhibition will include that “wow” factor among the selected work. The committee includes: Pinky Whelan, Diane Simmons, Emily Hollinger, Bea Teer, Stevie Day, Nancy Ellickson and Laurel Iverson.

A public reception will be held on Saturday afternoon, November 2, from 4:00-6:30 pm at the Museum. Recognition ribbons will be awarded.

For more information, go to our website www.losaltoshistory.org.

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**Board Retreat Produces Goals for the Year**

The Board of Directors met in a retreat setting for an afternoon of goal setting and planning on Wednesday, September 4. Sally Hazard Bourgoin, management consultant and a friend of nonprofit groups, led the board as they worked on four large issues for the coming years – long range planning, fundraising, facility improvements, and community outreach.

Highlights of the Retreat include:
- Embrace more children’s activities in our programming
- Support the store as it reevaluates its overall structure
- Increase relationships with other community groups
- Update and enhance the information on our website
- Finalize plans for outdoor landscaping including protecting the oak trees, improving the garden, and increased lighting
- Consider how to reach more of the community with our programs and activities
- Increase marketing and communication efforts within the community of LA and LAH
- Increase the membership
- Finalize the planned giving program
- Pursue a major gift campaign to support the next phase of the permanent exhibits and the outdoor campaign

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**Welcome New Members!**

Mark Barchas, Ted Birbilis, Bryan Costello, Nancy Federman, Scott Hegedus, Paul Indaco, Dilip Kumar, Alan Limbach, Janet Lull, Mary Martin, Chris Mattos, Mary McWilliams, Mavis Mudge, Barbara Olsen, Richard Rinehart, Margaret Whitehorn

And thank you to 109 members who renewed this past quarter!

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**Help Needed!**

Crab Feed Committee seeks members who might offer a “get-a-way” vacation home for a few days or even a week at our February auction. Email janebree@aol.com.

Help at the Museum store. It’s easy and fun working side-by-side with museum docents. 2 and 4 hour shifts, Thursday-Sunday, 4 hr/month commitment preferred. Email Jean Kinney 53jck@comcast.net or Patti Rose pjjanetrose@sbcglobal.net.

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Record setting crowds of all ages attended this year’s Train Days.
Save the Dates

**Member Tours: Art, Lunch & Music**
Wednesday, December 4
Stanford

Carpool from the Museum to the Cantor Art Center for a tour, followed by lunch, then tour the new Bing Auditorium at 2 pm. To sign up, contact Virginia Farthing & Ann Oliver, via the Asst. to the E.D. at 650 948-9427 x14.

**Annual Crab Feed and Auction**
Saturday, February 1, 2014, 5:30 pm
Hillview Community Center

Order forms will be available in November, all active members will be sent an invitation.

Interested in a sponsorship or advertising in our booklet? Please contact Grace Perry at 650 948-9427 x 14

**Mission Statement**
History inspires imagination, stimulates thought and transforms society. The Los Altos History Museum preserves and shares our local history to enrich our community and to shape a more informed future.

**Address Correction Requested**

Museum and Store Hours
Thursday to Sunday, Noon–4:00 pm
We are closed New Year’s Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries
(650) 948-9427 x14

Collections Research
(650) 948-9427 x11

Event Rentals
(650) 948-9427 x12

www.losaltoshistory.org