



Los Altos
HISTORY MUSEUM

UNDER THE OAKS

Published by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum, founded 1978

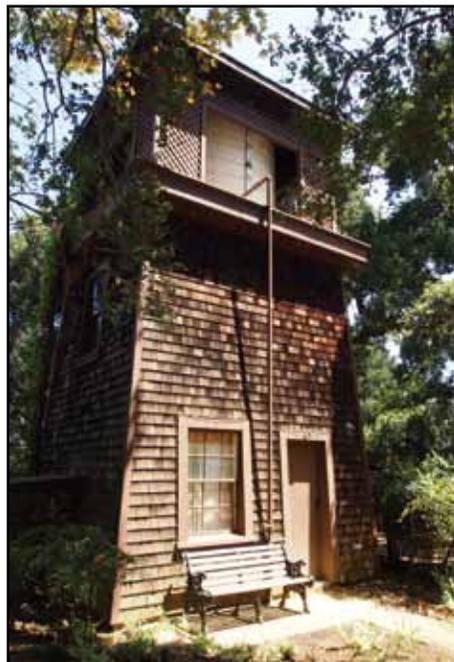
Fall 2015

Our Tank House Needs Your Help

The historic tank house on the grounds of the Los Altos History Museum is a century old this year. During its lifetime, it has endured everything from the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989 to a move across town. This past winter, the old tank house—designed for water storage—was challenged by Pacific storms dumping a deluge of water on the aging building and drenching the exhibits inside that have long delighted schoolchildren. The drought that is browning lawns all over Los Altos this summer *did* give it a nice long stretch to dry out.

Though almost none remain today, tank houses were once part of the landscape of Santa Clara Valley. Until the 1950s, growers could rarely connect to municipal water systems, but the valley had plentiful ground water. Like most growers, J. Gilbert Smith, who owned the orchard that surrounds the History Museum, had his own well. Pumps brought the water up and tanks stored it above ground for everything from irrigation to the Saturday night bath. The tanks were built on poles to make them taller than a two-story building. That gave the pressure to push the water to its destination. Families discovered the space below the tank could be enclosed and used to house seasonal workers, set up an office or store sacks of seed and tools. The tank house was born.

Smith, who planted his orchard in 1901, used well water for more than half a century. It is almost certain he had a tank house, though no one today remembers it. He did



Tank House, 100 years old this year.

tell a local historian in the 1950s that he built a windmill on the land—often associated with a tank house—but that it was knocked down in the 1906 earthquake. In any case, there was no tank house when the city took possession of the property.

That changed in 1993. Pilgrim Haven Retirement Community—now called The Terraces—purchased land near Pine Lane and Los Altos Avenue and found itself with an aging tank house on its hands. It had belonged to the Spagnoli family and they used it to water the family's apricot orchard. Museum leaders Bob and Marion Grimm stepped forward. "When we learned that the tank house might be demolished, we decided it would be a good idea to save it," Marion Grimm told the *Los Altos Town Crier*

on May 5, 1993. The couple backed that up by underwriting the cost of the preservation project, listed in museum records at \$43,226.

Fred Wilcox with BCS Construction Company in Watsonville and the Kelly Brothers House Movers in San Jose turned the tank house on its side and set it on a flatbed truck for the one-mile trip from Pine Lane to its new home. The tank house was rebuilt, the Museum's board created exhibits to put it into context, and the building designed to store water became an excellent tool to inspire discussions about water use—once again, a hot topic in the region.

Despite a new roof and generous window caulking, the tank house was water logged this past winter and needs to be saved once again. More than \$5,000 was raised for the project at the annual Crab Feed and funds are expected from the annual appeal, which featured the tank house and its role in school programs. The museum has also applied for \$30,000 in funding from the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Grant Program according to E.D. Laura Bajuk.

After a long life in a Los Altos orchard, the tank house found a second home at the History Museum. As it heads into its second century, it now needs a tune-up so it can get back to work.

***Help save the Tank House!
Send your tax-deductible donation
to the Museum today or donate
through our website. Be sure to
note its designation. Thank you!***

President's Pen



In early July, the museum held a benefit event at Semeria Castle, a historic private home in Los Altos. The owners have done an amazing restoration of the house and the grounds; they were very gracious to open their home to the museum. The guests enjoyed house tours, food, wine, and each other's company in the elegant surroundings.

Your support of this and other events helps our programs.

When you visit the museum, you will see some of those in action – the permanent exhibit upstairs, the changing exhibits in the main gallery, the historic J. Gilbert Smith house, and the agricultural displays outdoors in the museum's beautiful garden.

But the Museum has other programs that many visitors never see. We maintain a large and growing collection of historical artifacts—publications, photographs, and other objects documenting the history of the Los Altos area. Our staff answer many queries from community members doing historical research and you've probably seen some of our old photos published in the *Town Crier*. There is an ongoing program to collect oral histories from long-time local residents, our education programs are part of the Los Altos school curriculum and there are special community events throughout the year, such as lectures, workshops, and tours.

All of these community benefits are made possible by your generous donations. Fundraising remains a major priority; your giving enables us to operate and enhance the Museum's programs and exhibits.

We look forward to seeing you soon. Thank you.

~ ED TAFT, BOARD PRESIDENT

Staff

Laura Bajuk, *Executive Director*

Grace Perry, *Assistant to the Executive Director*

Johanna Fassbender, *Collections & Exhibitions Manager*

Stefanie Midlock, *Assistant Collections Manager*

Kristin Morris, *Collections Specialist*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carillo, *Gardener*

LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM "UNDER THE OAKS"

Gary Hedden, *Editor*

Judi Eichler, *Graphic Design*

A publication of interest to citizens of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, and neighboring communities, produced by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum. A special thanks to the newsletter mailing team!

A Fond Farewell

Col. G. Dean Morgan was in Laos in the early 1960s working for the State Dept. and on a visit to nearby Thailand saw the exotic, colorful silks that became his inspiration. He started an import business in his garage in Los Altos with silks, temple rubbings and brass objects. He opened his first store on Main St. in 1970 in the building now occupied by Maria's Antiques, and a few years later he moved to State St. to the building that looks much as it does today. Earlier occupants included a telephone company, and old switching equipment is still stored in the attic, according to Jeanne-Michele Salander, an employee of 37 years.



Exotic Silks, now closed.

Salander has worked with many notable customers, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Ballet West in Utah. Making tutus has been a fun challenge. It involves many layers of silk folded in just the right way to give it body and strength.



Assistant store manager Rosi Valqui, with colorful silks.

According to Salander, walk-in store traffic has been declining, so the pragmatic business decision was made to go entirely to Internet and telephone sales. The company has used the Internet

since the 1990s and will now work from a wholesale office near Costco in Mountain View. It will still be possible to get samples to help judge color and texture, but a 2x2 inch square is not as dramatic or exciting as seeing and touching a whole roll of cloth.

Still a family business, Col. Morgan's daughter Deanne Morgan Shute lives in Palo Alto and keeps an eye on things, and his granddaughter lives in Portland, Oregon, and manages the company's web site.

The store's many loyal customers all feel terrible that it had to go, but Salander prefers to remember "all of the good will that flowed over the years."

~ GARY HEDDEN

Reflect + Create Continues

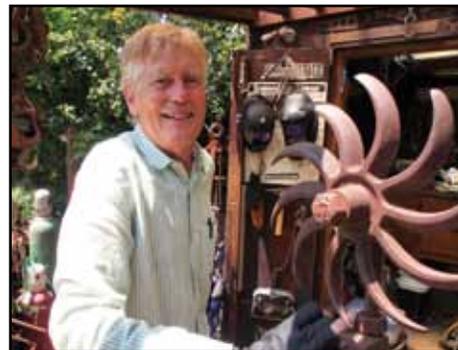
Reflect + Create: Where Art and History Intersect continues until October 4. The exhibition connects art and history, and one artist who responded to the challenge was Dr. Hardy Jones. Jones scours old farmyards, loves the history of the metal pieces he collects, and welds them into unique and even inspirational artwork. You can see his work around town and at all of the local schools.

He will be part of a panel discussion September 24, led by Jessica Hough, California Historical Society. Don't miss it, you will also meet artist/historians Lessa Bouchard, Kate Gibson, Leslie Morgan and Ben Wood and learn some truly fascinating details. \$5 for LAHM and CHS members, \$10 for non-members; register by calling 650 948-9427 x14.

In another connection of art and history, Emmy Award-winning instructor Russell Brown, Creative Director at Adobe, taught a sold-out

workshop on Vintage Tintype Photography. Students transferred pigment inkjet emulsion to aged metal, creating portraits reminiscent of the tintype process of the late 1800s. The results are on display in the Smith House through the end of the year.

~ JOHANNA FASSBENDER,
COLLECTIONS & EXHIBITIONS MANAGER



Dr. Hardy Jones in his studio.



Final weeks, don't miss it!



Preparing a photo shoot.

Spirits Return: Cultural Traditions Keeping Memories Alive

An original exhibition opening Oct. 29 will explore traditions and rituals from around the world that honor the deceased. Many cultures share ways to remember those who have passed away. Families may visit the graves of loved ones, bring food and drink, erect altars to honor the departed or invite them to come back to visit and offer advice. And we tell stories, so that those who never knew them are connected to their heritage, and those who did continue to remember.

All of us are part of family chains reaching across millennia and around the world; remembering our forebears helps us cultivate values of family loyalty and pride. *Spirits Return* is a thoughtful cross-cultural exhibition that will touch the heart and soul of every guest. It shares our traditions and stimulates awareness that we are often more alike than different.

In preparation for this exhibit, we would love to hear from you! How do you honor, celebrate and remember your ancestors? Do you follow specific traditions? Have you created your own traditions? If you would care to contribute your stories or photos, please contact Johanna Fassbender at jfassbender@losaltoshistory.org or 650-948-9427 x16 by September 30, 2015.

A big thank you to the Los Altos Community Foundation for their support of this community building exhibition.



Spotlight on the Oral History Project

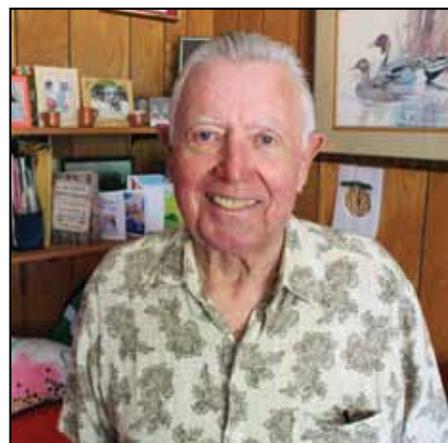
The name Liddicoat is familiar to many area residents: Liddicoat Circle is the neighborhood near popular Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto. Liddicoat Market on University Ave. in Palo Alto was synonymous with wonderful meats and the freshest vegetables. But not many are aware that Los Altos Ken Liddicoat's family was the namesake for these familiar landmarks.

Ken's father, Walter, was born in Cornwall, England, and came to this country in 1922. Although he had worked in the mines, he was also trained as a butcher, working his way across the country and eventually coming to Pescadero, where he raised cattle and delivered meat by horse and buggy. He realized there was a larger market in the emerging communities over the hill: Mayfield and early Stanford

University. Coming over the gravel trail of Page Mill Road, the family bought 80 acres at the corner of what is now Page Mill Road and Arastradero, and established a feed lot and slaughterhouse. As a young boy, cowboy Ken would ride a horse to round up the cattle. The family established five markets in Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Los Altos and Mountain View. The Los Altos store at the corner of 1st and Main became Gordon's Market.

When not helping on the ranch, Ken attended school in Palo Alto, and while still in high school became the Stanford Indian mascot. He fondly remembers cheering on the home team!

Eventually, with the coming of 280, the family land was sold, the feed lot and slaughterhouse closed,



Ken Liddicoat, our favorite cowboy.

and the land developed. Ken had a successful career with the city of Palo Alto, now lives in Los Altos and keeps busy with hunting, fishing, and community groups. His family legacy lives on in the history of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills.

~ GINGER SUMMIT

Finishing the Story

Oral history interviews are a wonderful way to capture our community stories and obtain insight and information from the people who are part of our local history. The Los Altos History Museum is very fortunate to have a team of volunteers to do this.

But there is more to the story. How do we know who was interviewed, what people and subjects were talked about, and which interviews are relevant to a particular subject of interest? That is the rest of the story - the efforts of the volunteers who catalog and describe the content of each interview, index by key words, names and topics and enter the information into our data management system, making search and retrieval possible. Without this essential work, our oral history collection is unusable.



Doreen and Kristin, cataloging oral histories.

The Museum always needs volunteers to help with all aspects of oral history, from interviewing to cataloging and indexing. It is very gratifying to help preserve our community stories. To learn more, contact Collections Specialist Kristin Morris at kmorris@losaltoshistory.org or call her at 948-9427 x11.

~ DOREEN COHEN

New Members

Welcome to 15 new members and thank you to 199 renewing members—you're part of a membership now 801 strong. Membership shows the community is investing in the Museum, and is critical to our success—thank you!

Arya Behzad & Maryam Eshghipour
Mike Cassidy
James Davidson
Peggy Davis
Barbara Glynn
Vivien & Maurice Hamilton
Alan Hills
John Lee & Sandra Laskowski
Kathleen Merilo
Penelope Midlock
Susan Pierce
Pamela Ryalls-Boyd
Cyndy Sandor
Parisa Tabriz
Gina Wong

Director's Corner

Water remains on our minds... whether we don't have enough, or if El Niño comes, maybe too much! I'm betting on the latter, only because right now we have two places we *don't* want water to be—in the collections storage vault and in the tank house.

Pending some decisions to make, the Spagnoli Tank House (1915) repair project has passed the first of several marks for county funding. Their timeframe is such that the winter rains will surely come before work begins. We are working with the City to protect it, and they've been very supportive. Plus, the Historical Commission unanimously added the tank house to its Historic Resource Index.

The answer to the vault leak continues to elude us. Trenches were dug. New waterproofing was installed. Drains were cleared. Faulty sprinklers were removed. And STILL water seeps through the wall into our collections storage. Some good news—we finally have drip systems in the garden everywhere we can which should reduce our water use dramatically.

There are many people behind just these few tales of what's happening at (or to) the Museum... I thank them all for their role in making this place the best it can be. We do need volunteer project managers for a few key facility issues like these... so if you need to get engaged with something worthwhile, come talk to us!

~ LAURA BAJUK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Photo Gallery

July 2nd Board Social



Pinky Whelan, in the mood for the fourth of July.



Don McDonald and Kristen Fuller.

“Murder at the Museum”



Paul and Karen Van Buren with Duffy Price, enjoying “Murder at the Museum,” a fun dinner event auctioned at the Crab Feed. Photo by Nomi and Fritz Trapnell



Board members Marilyn Henderson, Marie Backs, Linda Eckols, Ed Taft, Nomi Trapnell.

History in the News

The Historical Commission awarded 16 plaques to recognize landmark properties in Los Altos, and the best part, according to Walter Chapman, Chair of the Commission, was the homeowners sharing stories. "Next year we will invite all previous recipients," said Chapman, looking forward to the possibility of a Los Altos historical homeowners' society.

There is good news on the Halsey House project. According to Val Carpenter with the Friends of Historic Redwood Grove, the required \$25,000 was raised, and M. Sandoval Architects completed a conceptual design for the renovation of the former Nature Center. A review of the final report by the Historical Commission is next, then it goes to City Council. Carpenter thinks we could have a decision by the end of the year. For more information, please visit friendsofhistoricredwoodgrove.org

The fascinating renovation of the 1911 farmhouse at 10 Yerba Buena is on track. The house is being completely renovated, lifted, moved and turned 90 degrees to face the street. Work started last year, and included the renovation of the tank house and barn. The family expects to be in their new home late next year.



Happy family at Yerba Buena. Still smiling halfway into their big project.

Eichler owners are a proud and passionate group as the Historical Commission learned in July. Tracy Gibbons and Nate Johnson reported that a majority of the homeowners of 37 Eichlers in South Los Altos are interested in forming a Historic District, the first in Los Altos. This designation will protect the character of the district and help preserve the legacy of Joe Eichler. These homes, built in the late '60s, are largely untouched, and the district will be a wonderful tribute to mid-century modern architecture.

~ GARY HEDDEN

The Historical Commission opened the Museum in 1977 and continues to work closely with the Museum Association.

Our Hidden Gems

The current exhibition asked artists to reflect on objects from the Museum's collection. We liked the idea and are pleased to introduce a new feature, Our Hidden Gems, to shine a light on some intriguing pieces - editor.

An interesting thing about working at the Museum is that we often come across unique treasures in the collection. Johanna and I recently opened a box and found a surprise, to me anyway, a beautiful old glass fire extinguisher, circa 1905, donated by John and Stevie Day in 1997. They found it (with its original chemicals) in the attic of 500 University Avenue, the Paul and Rose Shoup House.

The object is extremely fragile, so we decided to rehouse the extinguisher in a custom box and used Ethafoam, an archival material, to make bumpers separating the heavy, metal arms from the glass. The fire extinguisher is now safely protected against earthquakes and carefully stored in the Museum's archival vault.

~ STEFANIE MIDLOCK, ASSISTANT COLLECTIONS MANAGER

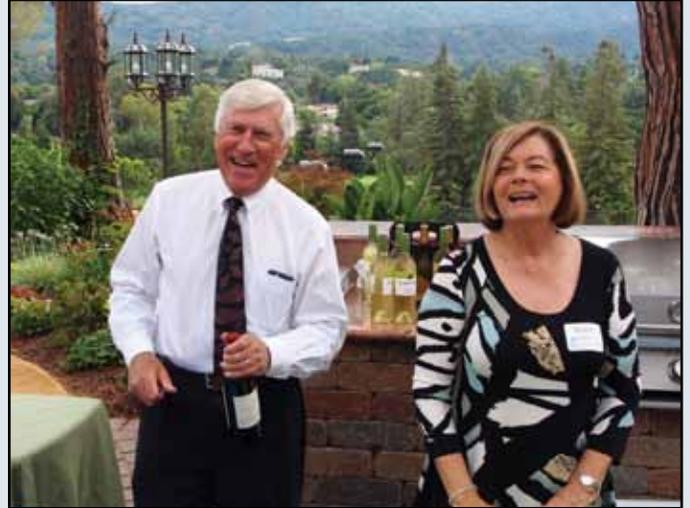


Stefanie carefully holding the extinguisher.

Photo Gallery — Gala at Semeria Castle



Hostess Maryam Eshghipour with volunteer Crysta Krames.



Dave and Marie Backs: Let the fun begin.



Food judges - Jan Pepper, Belinda Chung, Liz Nyberg and Judy Hoff.



Linda Eckols: Raffle tickets anyone?



Nancy and Bob Jacobsen with their 1934 Pierce-Arrow Roadster.



Nice spot for a party!



UNDER THE OAKS

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Los Altos, CA

Assn. of the Los Altos Historical Museum, 51 So. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022

www.losaltoshistory.org

Museum and Store Hours

Thursday to Sunday, Noon–4 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 x16

Event Rentals

(650) 948-9427 x12

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

ON THE CALENDAR

Train Days! Saturday and Sunday, September 19-20, 10 am-4 pm, age 5 and up \$5, under 5 free

Panel Discussion with California Artists, a partnership with the California Historical Society, Thursday, September 24, 7 pm, \$5 LAHM and CHS members, \$10 non-members, light refreshments provided

Historic Bike Tour of Los Altos, co-hosted with GreenTown Los Altos, Saturday, September 26, 9:30 am-12:30 pm, register at greentownlosaltos.org

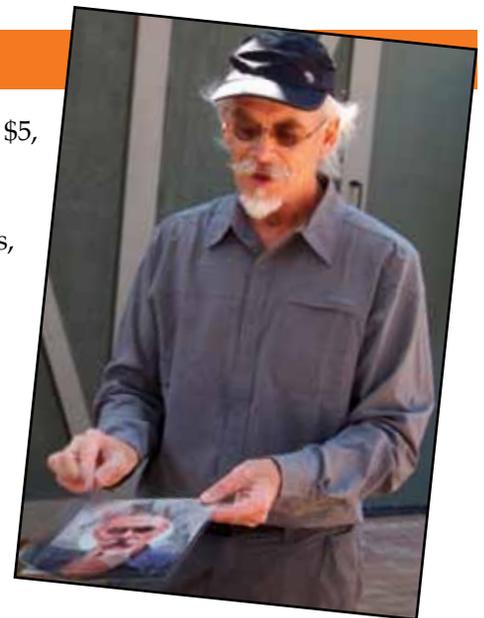
MoonFest Workshop, Sunday, September 27, 10 am-1 pm. Make a lantern and learn how to celebrate this multi-country festive holiday in your family—and how to watch the eclipse that night! Storytelling, moon cakes, crafts, music and more! Materials fee

Ohlone Day! Sunday, October 4, 10 am-noon, kids (gr 2-4) & parents learn through games, crafts, acorn and food tasting with experienced teachers; free

Reflect + Create: Where Art and History Intersect, Closing Day, Sunday, October 4, noon-4 pm

Spirits Return: Cultural Traditions Keeping Memories Alive, Opening Reception, Sunday, Nov. 1, 4 pm

Catch the Spirit! Wednesday, November 18, noon-4 pm, holiday boutique, local authors, CSA toy drive, and historic house tours



Russell Brown, our tintype man.

More events are in the works – watch for your monthly member email updates!

Board Meetings, First Wednesday each month, 4 pm, everyone welcome
Smith House Tours, Every Sunday, 2 pm