



Los Altos
HISTORY MUSEUM

UNDER THE OAKS

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

Summer 2015

Tribute to Bob and Marion

The recent death of Bob Grimm marked the end of a long era of community involvement and support, not only from Bob, but also from his late wife Marion.

Marion Grimm was the inspiration and driving force behind the building of the Los Altos History Museum. A longtime volunteer and supporter of the History House, Marion saw the need for a permanent place in which our archival collection could be used and viewed by the community, as well as a resource for conducting research, a location for the display of changing exhibits, a small retail store, and fundraising facilities. Marion had a great eye for detail and a commitment to high standards. She possessed a keen sense of humor and a quick wit. Her friend Pinky Whelan recalled that she and Marion used to jitterbug at Museum parties.

Bob Grimm involved himself with the History Museum vision from the beginning and began the arduous task of fundraising (he and Marion personally pledged a matching funds incentive), hired the contractor and then acting as the Project Manager with Nan Geschke throughout the entire building process. After the museum was completed, Bob served two consecutive terms as Museum President. In the many years since, Bob went about supporting all aspects of the Museum. He had a hand in the construction of every exhibit. Bob called the 3-man team



Marion and Bob in 1952, the early days. Photo courtesy of Grimm Family Photos.

consisting of himself, his friends Lou Brossard and Dave Backs the "Miracle Construction Company." He quipped "It's a miracle if it works!" Bob's last big project was the oversight management of the Storage Barn and his gift of the beautiful hand-made weathervane on the top of the barn cupola.

Bob and Marion Grimm were "can do" people, and the things that they did will long live on.

~ JANE REED

"Bob Grimm was the most 'can do' person I ever met," said Donald Sibbett, exhibit designer of many of the Museum's exhibits, including the permanent exhibit. He said this after I told him of Bob's passing. I couldn't agree more.

I first worked with Bob on the campaign to raise funds for the museum's building. Bob's wife Marion was among the first in Los Altos to champion a history center at the Civic Center. Marion's passion was to build a history museum to complement the J. Gilbert Smith house. Of course Bob became involved. Bob was instrumental in finding Goody Steinberg to design the building and Paul Conrado to build it. He personally went up to the Packard home to solicit David Packard to contribute to the campaign. While we were working on the design for the permanent exhibit, Bob built a 22 ft. high prototype of the family tree structure so the committee could see how big it would be. After the funds were raised, Bob and I co-managed the building of the museum.

Bob served on the committee of every exhibit I chaired including the Stegner exhibit, the Packard exhibit, the Duveneck exhibit and the last one, the Silicon Valley exhibit. He was tireless in providing help with every aspect of an exhibit. For this last exhibit, I asked Bob if he and Lou Brossard could build a sign post. Two days later I received a call

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Tribute to Bob and Marion

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from Bob letting me know that the signpost was finished and was stored in the barn. That's what people came to expect from Bob.

The Museum has lost a wonderful supporter and benefactor. I have lost a dear friend and I will miss his generosity of spirit. He was one of kind.

~ NAN GESCHKE



Marion and Bob, 1983, 30th Anniversary



Bob and Marion, 2004 LACF John W. Gardner Award Honorees.

Staff

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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!

President's Pen

Dear Friends,

Several focus areas were defined by the Museum Board this year:

Strengthening our partnerships with other organizations.

- May was Historic Preservation and Museum Month and we partnered with the Historical Commission to recognize the second set of recipients of historical plaques to foster the preservation of Los Altos historical buildings and sites.
- We partnered with Hidden Villa for Japanese Cultural Day and the opportunity to honor Frank and Josephine Duveneck.

Expanding the Museum's role as a community resource.

- We hosted our first "Lean In Circle" targeted to help active female professionals improve their career prospects.

Expanding our funding sources.

- A Board Designated Fund was established to provide a permanent source of funding for the Museum. All gifts from bequests, life insurance, charitable remainder or lead trusts, pooled income funds, retirement accounts, or other planned giving vehicles will be placed into the Board Designated Fund, unless otherwise specified by the donor.

We are making great progress in these areas and continue with our good work in the core areas of historical resource management, community engagement and exhibitions.

~ NOMI TRAPNELL, BOARD PRESIDENT



Nomi with the "Kitchen Chef" in the new exhibition.

New Members

Welcome to 7 new members and thank you to 64 renewing members—you're part of a membership now 824 strong. Membership shows the community is investing in the Museum, and is critical to our success—thank you!

Ross & Pamela Adler

Martha Berry Dannis

Sandy Decker

Shahin & Brian Engleman

Patty Home

Tim Proschold

Tom Vertel

Reflect + Create: Where Art and History Intersect

Creating things is uniquely human. It connects us to the world around us and is a form of storytelling. Objects in museum collections also inspire storytelling and can help us draw unexpected connections to contemporary issues and perspectives.

We chose several objects and oral histories from the Museum collection as the starting point for this exhibit and shared them with local artists, makers and creators. They were inspired by these old things to create something new and original that explores the connections between past and present.

You'll see that these connections are all based on different premises—

memory, shape, an abstract concept, or a story. The variety shows the breadth of human thinking which comes into play in art and history alike.

The works of 32 local artists and fascinating pieces from the Museum collection are featured in the exhibition which continues through October 4. Come enjoy the show, and join us for one of the unique programs associated with this exhibition.

~ JOHANNA FASSBENDER,
COLLECTIONS & EXHIBITIONS MANAGER



Jan Davis, Diane Simmons and Johanna Fassbender during the installation of the new show.



President Trapnell introduces Johanna Fassbender



Gala at "The Castle"

The Museum's July 10 gala fund raiser will be at Semeria Castle. Built in the 1920s, the beautiful two story stucco clad house features a steeply pitched tile roof and a three story tower, giving it a look reminiscent of a Norman chateau. The house was built for Henry Semeria, a San Francisco wholesale clothing merchant, and his wife Rose, and was known by the neighbors as simply "The Castle." According to William Kostura, who researched the historical records, Semeria served in France in World War I,

recalled the Norman farmhouses and based the design of his new home on that look. A few other homes in the area were built in that style, however the preferred trend at the time was Mediterranean or Spanish Colonial Revival. The house is equally beautiful inside, with well maintained, original paneling, doors, tile and hardware, both brass and iron. The Museum is delighted to be hosting our big summer event at this very special property. Tickets are \$150/person; capped at 200 people.



Semeria Castle, May 2015

Spotlight on the Oral History Project

Many of us drive on Taaffe Road in Los Altos Hills, but probably don't remember the story of this family that was pivotal in the settlement and development of the entire region.

From mid 1800s, when Elizabeth Yuba Murphy married William Taaffe, through to the present day, the Taaffe family has lived in and been an active part of the community. Their stories chronicle all the changes this area has gone through, from early farming and orchards, emergence of the transportation system from trails, to trains, to freeways, and the evolution of the towns throughout the peninsula.

The Museum is planning an exhibit to present this fascinating story, and will be collecting oral histories and memorabilia to bring it all alive. Volunteers welcome!

The History Committee of Los Altos Hills will also host a conversation with several Taaffe family members in the fall. This is a part of our living history that touches all our lives today.

~ GINGER SUMMIT



Elizabeth Taaffe, circa 1864. Courtesy of the Sunnyvale Historical Society and Museum Association.

Dealing with the Drought

Gardens need water, so how is the Museum dealing with the drought? We deep water just once a week with the automatic system and use the hose for a little spot watering for the shallower rooted plants. We fix leaks and we're adding new drip and water wise sprinkler heads. We're piling on the compost (free from the city) and bark chips (free from tree companies) to keep moisture in the soil. We don't have a lawn to remove but some thirsty plants will

be replaced. A "dry shade" garden is planned under the oak trees and California natives are planted whenever possible. We hope to become a teaching garden to educate the community about surviving the drought. Fall is the best planting time but we have added a few "romantic flowers" to the courtyard for a splash of color to go with the summer events

and weddings. We have some hardy bloomers that go all summer—dependable Shasta daisies, pretty pink yarrow, and cheery gazanias. If the drought worsens, we may lose some flowers, but we must save the oaks, so they will get a mid-summer deep soak.

~ CAROLINE LANDSBERGEN



Flower Expert Susan Moss



Gardener Don Durr



The Thursday morning garden team welcomes new volunteers.

Director's Corner

With the loss of the Grimms, I revisit how important they are to our past, and think about our future without them. Having worked and lived in other communities, I believe that without the Grimms and a few others like them, Los Altos would be virtually indistinguishable from any other in the valley. No parade of lights, no small town with a cool hi-tech vibe—and certainly no history museum that consistently outperforms its peers.

But they've led the way. I am grateful to many other Museum members for their gifts of time *and* treasure, like the Geschkes for supporting our educational programs, which are second only to much-larger History San Jose, and the dozens of retired teachers who educate hundreds of children every spring thanks to their support. The anonymous donor who added his gift to the list for *Lure & Legends* (if not his name), and the dedicated team of volunteers who created that phenomenal exhibit. Another anonymous donor whose gifts have allowed our Collections Department to function at the highest level, and our talented staff who use those tools every day.

I ask myself, "what would Bob do?" and the answer becomes clear—I will step up to help fill the void Bob and Marion left. I will do my part, in every way I can, from making as large a gift each year as I can manage to valuing and nurturing the people who make this place what it is. I will preserve our history, and like Bob, I will try to be unfailingly cheerful. It won't be easy, but the path toward true accomplishment never is. I encourage you to do the same—your support is essential—thank you!

~ LAURA BAJUK, E.D.

Photo Gallery



Drones flying over the Museum on Family Day



Japanese Cultural Day at Hidden Villa, co-sponsored by the Museum marked a traditional Spring ceremony honoring children



Marilyn Henderson watches as Liz Nyberg trains new docents Nancy Humpal, Peggy Davis and Kathy Mahucke



Japanese Cultural Day at Hidden Villa

History in the News

By unanimous vote, Bob Grimm was selected as the 2015 recipient of the Historic Preservation Award at the Historical Commission meeting April 27. Our one regret is that it came five weeks too late to honor him in person. Bob quietly did so much, and public recognition was not his style, but at his memorial service May 2, his good deeds were on full display. He was essential to the success of the San Jose Tech Museum. Asked by Peter Giles, founding President, to help in the creation of the Tech Museum, Bob asked, "Where is a good example of one?" Peter replied, "Toronto." A few days later, in typical Bob fashion, he told Peter he had flown to Toronto, talked to everyone involved, and could now say, "I'll help."



Bob Grimm, February 2015

Same with the Los Altos History Museum. Married in 1953, he and his wife Marion settled in Los Altos in 1962. Marion became interested in the local history but was dismayed at the lack of resources and a facility. "Bob was not one for dismay," according to Al Bagley, HP alum and friend, and with that Bob and Marion launched the effort that eventually led to the History Museum.

Marion Grimm received the Historic Preservation Award in 2013, and we owe Bob and Marion our deepest and most sincere appreciation and gratitude.

~ GARY HEDDEN

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

News Flash

Halsey House renovation is one step closer! The \$25,000 to fund a feasibility study has been raised by the Friends of Historic Redwood Grove, according to committee chair Val Carpenter. Now architect and former Historical Commissioner Mark Sandoval can begin the evaluation. Learn more at www.FriendsofHistoricRedwoodGrove.org

Historical Essay Contest

There were thirteen winners this year because one tie just couldn't be broken, according to Historical Commissioner Denise Welsh. For 31 years, the Los Altos History Museum and the Los Altos Historical Commission have held the Margaret Thompson Essay Contest, and Thompson, the Historical Commissioner who started it all, still participates.

The 2015 topic, chosen to support the recent exhibition, *Silicon Valley: The Lure and The Legends*, was "Inventors and Risk-Takers Help Make Our Community a Better Place." The contest is open to all Los Altos students in grades 3-6, and they came up with many winning ideas, ranging from the "Controlled Movement Glove," a glove that steadies shaky hands, to the "Kinadapters," a machine that captures otherwise wasted kinetic energy, to the "Memory Hat," a hat or headband that shoots your thoughts and notes back into your brain just when needed. Wouldn't that be nice!

The winner's certificates were presented at the May Ice Cream Social, and Education Committee Chair Anne Roberts presented the Essay Contest trophy to Gardner Bullis School, the school with the most awards, with four.

~ ANNE ROBERTS



Anne Roberts with Margaret Thompson



Winning Gardner Bullis students Ritik, Mia, Morgan and Laura

Family Day at the Museum

The Museum was the place to be last March for Family Day, featuring tech toys and a tech talk, as part of the exhibition, *Silicon Valley: The Lure and the Legends*.

The drones with their four engines, whirling blades and angry-bee buzz really drew the crowds. Around town they are not to go higher than 400 feet, but they can fly in designated areas at Baylands. Do they frighten the birds? "Not particularly," answered Paul Sterbentz. "In fact, near nesting areas, crows will attack them."

RAFT (Resource Area for Teachers) brought hands-on projects for kids to build fizzy rockets, magic tumbling toys and balancing birds. The Tech Museum brought two social robots that can be built up with interchangeable arms, legs, lights and more—great for young engineers. The Los Altos Library's 3D printer was on display. Nicholas Clayton explained, "It's a high tech printer, but you need a low tech chisel to separate the finished piece from its base."

The highlight was a talk by 10 year old Jamie Kurtzig, a serial entrepreneur following in the footsteps of other Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Jamie started at the age of eight with Wet Pad, a plastic cover to protect her iPad while at the beach. She uses her own artwork to give it a personal touch and half of the proceeds go to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. Her second enterprise, organic eggs, takes advantage of the family chickens. She collects the eggs and sells them to friends and neighbors. There have been challenges. A bobcat ate four hens, and winter weather slowed the rest to one or two eggs a day. Asked what she has learned so far, she didn't hesitate. "Keep trying, do your best, and have fun." Thank you Jamie, great advice for all of us.

~ GARY HEDDEN



Playing with a Social "Bot" from the Tech Museum



Jamie Kurtzig, serial entrepreneur



Nicholas Clayton from the library, with the 3D printer



Linda Eckols helping with RAFT projects



UNDER THE OAKS

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Permit No. 12
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

Annual Meeting & Volunteer Recognition Party, Monday, June 15, 4-7 pm

Chamber Mixer, co-hosted with Rotary & Kiwanis, Thursday, June 18, 5:30-7 pm

Gala at Semeria Castle, Friday, July 10, 5:30-8 pm, location disclosed to ticket holders, ticket sales limited to 200

Vintage Tintype Photography Class, Saturday, July 11, 10 am-2 pm, reservations required

Conversation with an Artist - Marianne Lettieri, Thursday, August 27, 7-8 pm, Mountain View Library

Train Days! Saturday and Sunday, September 19-20, 10 am-4 pm

Panel Discussion with California Artists, a partnership with the California Historical Society, Thursday, September 24, 7-8 pm

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

MoonFest, Sunday, September 27, Museum Courtyard

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

Catch the Spirit! Wednesday, November 18, noon-4 pm, J. Gilbert Smith History House

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



Stefanie Midlock with the Los Altos World Records book which won 1st prize as the most beautiful Czech book

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