You bet! Remember the museums of long ago? They were usually locked up whenever you went to visit. They were dark, often cold, and there were no docents to teach you about the collections. Today, museums are welcoming, full of light and color, and there are docents to show you around. Behind the scenes, activities are planned by professional staff and experienced volunteers.

In California, nearly 22 million guests per year of all ages, ethnicities, and a wide variety of interests visit museums. Children’s activities bring in families and many museums are developing children’s programs, including preschool programs. Living as we do in a multicultural society and in this fast-paced age, we need to offer many different kinds of exhibits and experiences. Thinking back to several of our past exhibits, the Shaped by Water exhibit stands out in my mind with activities for all ages, and the Pedal Power exhibit with its hands-on activities—and who could forget the big black bear in a cave several years ago? These kinds of experiences are what the museum-goer expects in the modern age.

Museums that have grown with their communities are the ones that survive. These museums know their communities and are deeply involved with them. These museums are not schools, yet they educate; not theaters, yet they stage events; not libraries, yet they provide information; not sports arenas, yet they provide activities for all.

Museums show off their collections and become partners in travel and tourism. At the Los Altos History Museum, we meet people on holiday continued on page 2

Modern Museums - Something for Everyone
President’s Pen

As we celebrate our 40th year, we can proudly look at all that has been accomplished and we thank our ‘founding families’ who have inspired those of us who followed. It is with excitement that I look ahead to things yet to be accomplished. We will push to increase our membership by introducing the History Museum to our full community, all ages, all ethnicities. We will increase our activities, both in the community and at the museum. We will build new programs and add educational facets to make us more visible in the community. I was excited by the ‘splash painting’ class for children during the Hau Beiren@100 exhibition. The quality of that exhibition was stellar – it doubled our visitor numbers!

We will be turning our attention to several important projects - improved patio lighting, refurbishments to both the upstairs gallery as well as our lovely J. Gilbert Smith House. These facility improvements help us build our programs and reach out to our audience.

The other important piece of business is finding a new Executive Director. It has been an exciting project to find that special person who will take us into the future and she will be here soon.

Thank you for your membership, your donations, your time and your talent. Stop by to tell us what you would like to see happen in this new improved environment we are building.

~ Marilyn Henderson

Are Museums Changing?

continued from page 1

seeking to learn about our local history and find out what else there is in Silicon Valley. We have young people who come in recalling their third or fourth grade tours, wanting to reconnect. That is so wonderful, it tells us that they appreciate that a museum can be a fun and friendly place.

Museums are stewards of our cultural and natural heritage. In our current exhibition, *Seaweed, Salmon and Manzanita Cider*, we can see the site of a dig in LOS ALTOS! Who knew? We can learn so much from a local museum. Museums are evolving into a new world of education and excitement, and into community centers where we can learn, share, and interact with each other.

~ Marilyn Henderson

Newsflash

Elisabeth Ida Ward will be the new Executive Director for the History Museum, coming to us from Kent, Washington where she is Director of the Scandinavian Cultural Center for Pacific Lutheran University. She will be arriving in March at about the same time as this newsletter!

New Members

Welcome to our new members:

- Aiko Hill
- Anthony Lima
- Wanda Ching

And thank you to all 804 active members!

Los Altos History Museum

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!
Seaweed, Salmon, and Manzanita Cider

The current exhibition featuring foods important in the lives of Native Californians is a delicious look at Native foods based on the publication *Seaweed, Salmon, and Manzanita Cider: A California Indian Feast* by Margaret Dubin and Sara-Larus Tolley. It explores traditional California Indian food sources, their extensive and sophisticated system of environmental knowledge underlying the use of food resources, the importance and continuing use of native foods in contemporary California Indian communities. In this way it examines contemporary issues of food localization, sustainability, nutrition and environmental health through an alternative, older lens.

You will learn about acorns, nuts, seeds, berries, and more, and that it was possible to survive before the introduction of the now ubiquitous fry bread and tortilla.

It’s also about the people and the joy, pride and good flavor that traditional food can bring. Be sure to look at the recipes and peel one from the pads to try at home—breaded abalone, acorn venison, pine nut soup, and more.

Lucy Lozinto Smith of the Dry Creek Pomo tribe offers thoughtful insight when she speaks of our many relatives. As a child she was told of the need to learn to get along, not just with each other, but with the plants, animals and birds - with everything on this earth. Earth Day is April 22, but the native Americans have been there all along.

The exhibition closes April 16. Don’t miss it.

~ Gary Hedden

A Long, Long Time Ago

Businesses come and go, and recently we lost one that had been around a long time, Mohr’s Clocks, started by Horst Mohr in 1965. Curious minds wonder, what is the longest running business establishment in Los Altos?

One of the oldest is the Village Pantry at 184 Second St. This coffee and sandwich shop opened in the late 1940s, says Julie Ogilvie, the current shop owner. She took over 14 years ago from Candy Gehrke shortly after arriving from Taiwan with her family, and it is a labor of love. She works seven days a week, shops at farmers’ markets because she only wants the freshest organic produce, greets her customers when they arrive, often by name, and waits on the tables.

Julie has many regular customers who love her. One couple, John and Miriam (Hoppe) Mathrusse met at the restaurant - with a little help from Julie who played the role of match-maker. They have now been happily married for nine years.

The Village Pantry is full of pictures, knick-knacks, mementos and notes, but charm aside, people come back for the food. John says, “The biscuits and gravy are my favorite.” Miriam likes the soups. It’s more than food of course, and Miriam summed it up nicely, “I come here because of Julie, she’s so sweet.”

~ Gary Hedden

Vickie Holman reads a storybook at the children’s workshop on plants used by Native Americans.

Julie, John and Miriam at the Village Pantry.
Spotlight on the Oral History Project

Liz Nyberg recalls in her 2016 oral history that when she first became a volunteer docent, “We did not have any building.” This was about 1990 and the Museum was simply the History House. It was “a dry museum with racks in the living room of photographs and pamphlets and books. …We would sit on the front porch, … and pray for somebody to come by so we could show them the building.”

The Museum started in 1977 with just the 1905 J. Gilbert Smith House and this year we proudly celebrate its 40th anniversary. The Smith House was renovated beginning in 1992, and when it reopened two years later, Liz recalls that Pinky Whelan and others “in their wisdom, decided to make it look like [the] 1930’s farm house” we all enjoy today.

Liz was Board President of the History Museum from 1996 to 2000 when the planning and construction started for a new building. Marion Grimm, a passionate leader in making the new building a reality, strongly encouraged Liz to serve as Board President and Liz was the only President to serve for four years “because dear Marion kept saying, ‘Liz, you’ve got to stay on another year, we need continuity.’ You know, you can’t say no to Marion, or to Bob Grimm. … I worked closely with Bob who got the city to donate the land because the building was not paid for with any City money; it was all private donations.” Through the efforts of Liz, and many other volunteers over many years, we have an impressive three-level, 8,200-square-foot building that opened March 2, 2001.

Ever since she moved to Los Altos in 1972, Liz has actively served her community - she volunteered with the Santa Rita PTA, served as AAUW President, and tutored students through the Rotary Club program and the Mentor Tutor Connection to name a few. Today many people know Liz and Paul Nyberg as co-owners of the Los Altos Town Crier newspaper. We at the Museum are especially grateful to Liz for her significant role as a History Museum volunteer and Board President during the crucial time in its transition from the History House to the special museum it is today, and for her continuing efforts with training Smith House docents, leading school tours, and much more.

~ Marcia Adams

The Education Committee

The many volunteers with the History Museum Education Committee are deeply committed to working with our school children. Two important and delightful activities are the Margaret Thompson Essay Contest and the third and fourth grade school tours.

This is the 33rd year of the contest Margaret Thompson established when she was a historical commissioner in the 1980’s. The contest for students in Grades 3-6 is held from January to March, and the winning recipients at each grade level are awarded certificates and cash prizes by the City of Los Altos and the Historical Commission at an ice cream social held at the Museum. This year the social will be on May 9, and all students participating in the contest are invited. The theme this year is Native Californians: Food Lessons Learned from the Past and Applications for Today, and it was chosen to coincide with the exhibit, Salmon, Seaweed, and Manzanita Cider.

The Education Committee will present their educational tours to third graders, from both public and private schools, in April, and to fourth grade students in May. We welcome over 1,000 students annually. Tour information is emailed to LASD and private school teachers in August and by September, our tour calendar is complete. The members of the committee always look forward to our student tours!

~ Anne Roberts, Chair, Education Committee

Liz and Paul Nyberg at this year’s Crab Feed.

Anne Roberts and Margaret Thompson, 2015.
The Manzanar Project

Sixteen residents of The Forum at Rancho San Antonio recently completed work on 10 tables and 28 chairs for a classroom exhibit at Manzanar National Historic Site near Lone Pine, California.

“What’s Manzanar?” you ask. Manzanar is the site of one of the ten “relocation centers” to which persons of Japanese ancestry were shipped from the Pacific coast in the early months of World War II. None of the more than 110,000 persons shipped to the relocation centers was accused of espionage or sabotage, and no element of “due process of law” was involved. The only determinant was Japanese ancestry and the stated rationale was “military necessity.”

These sites were to be isolated from civilian population centers, military installations and “strategically important areas” and Manzanar certainly qualifies—it is east of the Sierra Nevada just 100 miles from Death Valley. Between 1910 and 1941, apples were grown commercially in the area and the Spanish word for apple orchard is manzanar, hence the name for the relocation center. Most of the people detained at Manzanar were from the Los Angeles area, while those from Santa Clara County were detained at the Heart Mountain site near Cody, Wyoming.

Since 1992 the National Park Service has maintained and developed the Manzanar site to “stimulate and provoke a greater understanding of, and dialogue on civil rights, democracy, and freedom.” During the war Manzanar set up its own schools for the children detained there. The National Park Service intends its classroom exhibit to illustrate the history of the schools at Manzanar. It contacted The Forum’s woodworkers through Forum residents Ellie and Dick Mansfield.

A group of Forum residents led by Ray Fenn developed The Forum’s well-equipped woodworking shop shortly after The Forum opened in 1991. Fred Nichols is the chair of The Forum’s woodworking committee.

The Forum delivered the last of the furniture to the national historic site’s superintendent Bernadette Johnson in September 2016, and the National Park Service hopes to have the classroom ready for visitors by the time of the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage on April 29, 2017.

~ Dick Mansfield

Volunteers Ellie Mansfield, Fred Nichols, and John Nash working on chairs in the shop.

The tables and chairs at the Manzanar Site, 2017. Ranger Patricia Biggs is in the background.

Ray Fenn working on a chair in the workshop at The Forum, 2016
Eichler Homes: Modernism for the Masses

California architect and historian Alan Hess has said “... architectural modernism that followed World War II... had an appeal to middle-class buyers, and it was produced affordably.”

It was in this environment that Joseph Eichler, a man with a dream as well as being a Bay area financially savvy merchant builder, created modernist style homes on a large scale for the middle class who were hungry for affordable contemporary places to raise their families.

Determined to create integrated communities of homeowners, Eichler worked closely with several imaginative innovative architects starting with Robert Anshen and Steve Allen, Claude Oakland and A. Quincy Jones. Eichler Homes, as the company was known, existed from 1949 to 1966 and built more than 10,000 homes in the San Francisco area and about 900 in Southern California. Sixty-five years later the distinctive contemporary homes remain unique, desirable and celebrated!

The Los Altos History Museum will honor Eichler Homes and the Eichler dream with an exhibition curated by grandson Steven Eichler, with graphic design by his wife Judi.

Los Altos Eichlers are located off Fremont Avenue as well as an eight home court off San Antonio Road. Palo Alto has several tracts of Eichlers, two of which have been placed on the National Registry of Historic Places. The city of Sunnyvale is home to the very first Eichler tract.

When it comes to Eichler homeowners, not only are they very protective of their neighborhoods, there is a passion for the layout design, mid-century modern style, and originality that they represent. They also value the sense of community that Joe Eichler worked to create.

The exhibition of photos, 50s furniture, and stories begins Saturday, April 29. A series of programs will be part of the exhibition.

~ Jane Reed

History in the News

The Los Altos City Council designated two new Historic Landmark properties in January. This honor goes to properties that exhibit historical integrity in “design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling.”

One property is the barn associated with the 1890s farmhouse at 210 Alta Vista Ave. The barn was owned by W. R. and Harriet Ames from the 1910s into the mid-century, and then owned by their oldest daughter, Helen, and her husband, Edward Landels into the 1960s. The barn was built in the 1930s at a time when the property was surrounded by orchards and it is a good, although uncommon example of a gambrel-roofed barn. The barn is relatively small, indicating equestrian use and is the type associated with “gentlemen farmers.” W. R. Ames had been a miner living in San Francisco, then he started a manufacturing company that became a major irrigation and piping company. Landels, born in 1899 in England, graduated from Stanford Law School, started a law firm, was a bank lobbyist and a member of the California Assembly. Landels supported coastal preservation and the Landels-Hill Big Creek Preserve in Big Sur is named for him. The current owners enjoy the rural look offered by the barn and intend to begin a careful rehabilitation soon.

The other property is the Craftsman era house at 1365 Grant Ave. Although there are gaps in the historical records, Ronald Holt reported that his grandfather, Oliver Holt, built the house in 1913, and the Holt family owned it until the current owners bought it in 2015. It is located on agricultural and orchard property that had been subdivided in 1893. Oliver Holt and his family lived in Mountain View and he had a business providing mail service to the Southern Pacific Company. Oliver’s son Donald managed the Grant property for many years as a rental. The house reflects the Craftsman style of the early 20th century with a gable roof, exposed rafters and eaves, wood shingles and brick and river rock foundation. The current owners are rehabilitating the home and will retain the character and to some extent enhance it by replacing non-historic alterations with more visually compatible features.

There are 82 properties listed on the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory, and 22 are recognized as Historic Landmark properties. The owners of these properties are to be commended for stepping up to protect our historical heritage. We and generations to come benefit from such thoughtful, generous people.

~ Gary Hedden
Saucy ladies - Jan, Linda, Brigitte, Carol and Kathy working on the top-secret spicy red sauce.

Linda Eckols with her wonderful team of servers.

Katherine and Andrew Stephens had the high bid for the hottest item of the night, a basketball autographed by Stephen Curry.

Judy Doty - that’s my winning raffle number!
Museum and Store Hours
Thursday to Sunday, Noon–4 pm
We are closed New Year’s Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries
(650) 948-9427 x14 or hello@losaltoshistory.org

Collections/Research
(650) 948-9427 x16

Event Rentals
(650) 948-9427 x12

On The Calendar


Eichler Homes: Modernism for the Masses, an exhibition on the iconic homes of Joseph Eichler, opens April 29.

School Tours, Grades 3-4, weekdays, 9 am–noon, April & May.

Essay Contest Winners Ice Cream Social, Tuesday, May 9, Museum Courtyard, 6 pm.

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

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.

Salmon on a stick. Hmmm, says volunteer docent Norm Kordsmeier at the thought of that recipe.