

## Standing Close To History

Can you think of a letter that you've kept for many years? Does it have a story? Visit the exhibition *Inspired By Juana: La Doña de la Frontera* and see a 155 year-old letter that belonged to Rose Briones, a great-niece of Juana Briones. The actual artifact is on display.

A panel explains the remarkable journey of this letter from when it was written in 1863 at Juana's historic *rancho* house in present day Palo Alto/Los Altos Hills to Bolinas where her nephew Pablo Briones received it. It gives a peek into Juana the businesswoman and 19th century *ranchera* advising her nephew about investments in copper mines. This letter might have been discarded or burned in a fire, and in fact, it survived both of those fates.

The exhibit invites visitors to consider how museum collections inform our understanding of the past and in this case, the great odds that a woman who was not known to read or write could succeed in business. Throughout the exhibit, there are more primary source documents detailing Juana's life as healer, entrepreneur, advocate, and matriarch. These are images of the original documents from the collections at the California Historical Society and the Bancroft Library.



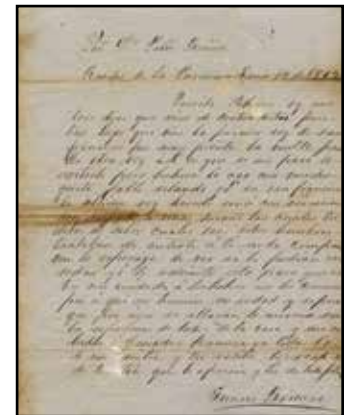
William Leidesdorff. Courtesy Bolinas Museum.



Pablo Briones, nephew of Juana Briones. Courtesy Bolinas Museum.

Juana's savvy in building relationships amidst changing political and economic currents is evidenced in another letter, written by William Leidesdorff. It reveals Juana requesting grain delivery and lining up sewing jobs for an elite Californiana, Rosalia Vallejo de Leese. These seemingly small details resonate with every businessperson who knows the importance of juggling multiple income streams and identifying customers. The Leidesdorff letter, a facsimile, has been incorporated into an engaging panel by exhibit designer Alexander Atkins.

Leidesdorff was a merchant and ship master who arrived in Juana's neighborhood in Yerba Buena in 1841 from the United States, and stayed on to build warehouses for the lucrative hide and tallow trade. His mixed race Caribbean Afro Danish lineage did not prevent him from becoming a Mexican citizen, getting a 35,000 acre land grant, and later serving on the first American town council and school board of San Francisco.



Letter dictated by Juana Briones, June 13, 1863. Found by Robert Beck inside the burn box in the schoolhouse owned by Rose Briones. Courtesy Bolinas Museum.



Rose Briones, daughter of Pablo Briones. The schoolhouse is the one-room schoolhouse in Dogtown (near Bolinas). Courtesy Bolinas Museum.

Come and enjoy all of the documents and artifacts that make a fascinating trail to elucidate Juana's life and the people around her, and our shared California history.

~ Halimah Van Tuyl

## Co-Presidents' Pen

Hats off to volunteers and staff who enabled our Los Altos History Museum to achieve such heights of success in 2018. Looking back, we can be proud of the community benefit we were able to provide through our outstanding exhibits, speaker series, cultural enrichment activities, and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade student tours. We enjoyed festive fellowship and fundraising at our 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Crab Feed in February and toe-tapping fun at our Membership BBQ in July.



Family events continued to attract visitors to the Museum this past year. Congratulations to Kristen Fuller and her Train Days team who celebrated the event's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with thousands of train lovers young and old. New this year, our Apricot STEM Fair provided a unique opportunity for families to explore intriguing hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math challenges, as well as celebrate our community's agricultural roots with orchard-themed games and favorite apricot-recipe tastings.

The secret of the Museum's success is our volunteers. This month we'd like to acknowledge our Garden Committee members, many from the Garden Club of Los Alto, who tend the grounds all year, but especially during the May-October wedding season. Caroline Landsbergen heads the Committee and she works closely with our gardener, Faustino Carrillo, at keeping the garden looking so inviting.

Born and raised in Los Altos, Caroline has always been interested in gardening. She took classes from local landscapers Allan Reed and Bernice Kilpatrick, and then joined the staff at Patt's Greenhouse in downtown Los Altos. There she met Pinky Whelan who recruited her to the Museum. That was over 25 years ago!

We take pride in the work of the Garden Committee and in the work of all of our wonderful volunteers. Please visit our website to read about all of the year's activities in our Annual Report.

With appreciation,

~ Linda Eckols and Eleanor Watanabe, Co-Presidents



## The Lion in Me

~ Tulu Tofavaha

Scream and shout but nothing comes out  
Lost voices and numb bodies  
Listening to the very own voices  
That took ours away  
Blinded by the truth  
Distracted by the pain  
We are told to stay

**STOP**

I scream but this time I give out a roar  
I crave for freedom  
I pounce on opportunity  
With bruises and scratches,  
I still fight  
Eyes focused on the prize  
I wait

I roar one more time and the echoes of my voice break the  
Chains that locked my freedom away



*Tulu Tofavaha was inspired by the struggles of Juana Briones to survive an abusive relationship and succeed. Her poem is a tribute to that long-ago effort.*

### 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!

*Grace Tsang, Don Durr, Caroline Landsbergen, Susan Moss and Faustino Carrillo. Members not present - Jeri Goodman, Nancy Kosinski, Dena Madsen, Claudia Pallus, Joyce Phillips, Daphne Smith, Joan Tenkersley and Moira Whyte-Shearer. Nov. 2018.*

## A New Direction

“Yes, we are closing the Costume Bank,” said Adele Hennig, “but we are not going away.”

Hennig, Board President of the local chapter of the Assistance League, went on to explain that retail has changed - think Amazon - and it's harder than ever to find the volunteer help needed to run the operation. The local chapter was chartered by the National Assistance League in 1961 and has a long history. In 1964 the members voted to buy 300 costumes from the Peninsula Frolics, a group of businessmen who put on productions to benefit charitable organizations. That led to the Costume Bank and in 1968 the League bought the old firehouse at 169 State Street. The main room that once held three fire trucks was soon filled with costumes. The sleeping quarters became the sewing room.

In 1983, the League received a Flora Hewlett Foundation grant to build a 42-unit apartment complex near Stanford Hospital to provide temporary housing for people going through a medical emergency. Proceeds from the Costume Bank funded the management and maintenance of the apartments for many years, but in a recent development the apartments have now been turned over to Stanford University.

Going forward the League will focus on two important programs, baby bundles and youth services. Baby bundles provides bundles of blankets, clothing, toys and more to nurses who visit the babies of low-income parents. The bundles give the nurses access to the families and that allows them to provide important and helpful lessons to the parents. That is the lasting significance of the program. The youth services program is a partnership with the county to help at-risk teens who have been taken from their homes due to abuse or neglect. These kids show up at local shelters with everything they own in a plastic garbage bag. The Assistance League provides duffel bags and backpacks, hygiene kits and some clothing. The kids especially like the old jeans collected at used jeans drives. Hennig added an important point, “We own the property on State Street and we are now exploring options to use it to fund these programs.” Secure funding will also allow the League to expand into other areas of service.



Closing sale with Dianne Chambliss, Barbara Wade, Adele Hennig and Rose Rambo. Oct. 2018.



Fire station ~ 1950. That's Adele's brother Tom in the bottom row, third from the right, with his Hillview School kindergarten class. Hennig Family Collection.

When asked about the Vintage Fashion Shows, she mentioned that the League still hosts these events at convalescent and retirement homes, and they plan to continue that tradition. Some of the old costumes are getting pretty fragile though, and she observed, people were much smaller 100 years ago, not as tall and not as large. Now she relies on high school kids because they can still fit in the outfits!

Our heartfelt thanks to the Costume Bank for so many fond memories.

~ Gary Hedden

## Staff

Elisabeth Ida Ward, *Executive Director*

Heather Farquhar, *Deputy Director and Head of Collections*

Diane Holcomb, *Outreach Coordinator*

Deepti Devanagondi, *Bookkeeper*

Luis Ambriz, *Exhibition Coordinator*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carrillo, *Gardener*

## Meet the New Commissioner

The Historical Commission has a new commissioner, Pastor David Moore with the Union Presbyterian Church on University Ave. David has been pastor for six years at UPC and his interest in history comes in part from the history of the Church. Services began in the Shoup Building at Second and Main in 1909. The Church was officially incorporated in 1914 and "The Little Brown Church" was built at the corner of Third and San Antonio Road. The University Ave. site was developed in the 1950s, when trains still traveled on the nearby tracks.

David joined the Commission to be of service to the community and he also considered the Public Art Commission and the Environmental Commission. Although not an artist, he loves to collect art and when it comes to the environment, he says, "We should protect God's planet." He and his wife Kaidi have a two-year old daughter, and they want to protect it for her sake as well.

David shares the goals of his fellow Commissioners, Sepideh Zoufonoun, Nomi Trapnell, Qing Bai, Russ Bartlett, Margo Horn and Larry Lang, to protect and preserve our history. The highest priorities this year are stabilizing the Halsey House from further degradation and installing signage that tells the story of our Historic Apricot Orchard.

We thank them and recently retired Commissioners Janis Ahmadjian-Baer and Walter Chapman for their important and much appreciated work.

~ Gary Hedden



Pastor Moore standing at the playful structure where children listen to bible stories. Oct. 2018.

## Membership

### Welcome to our new members:

Jennifer Blanco  
Helen and Dennis Chan  
Cliff and Sandra Coolidge  
Joshua Damonte and Nadine Tadeo  
Bill Fanning  
Sharon Fingold and Antonio Martinez  
Mark and Nancy Franich  
Laurence Hardie and Dayna Bartkowiak  
Jessica Lok & Salvador Ibe  
Sam Joda and Jill Cleveland  
Joanna and Armann Kojic  
Patrick Kong and Sheng Xu

Andrew Kritzer and Sharon Morad  
Brandon Lin Ma and Kimmy Kuo  
Theo Malabey and Alexandra Masloff  
Christopher Ngo and Bich Trinh  
Duc Nguyen and Ly Dang  
Patricia Penton  
Dan Pham and Amy Le  
Rebeca and John Stanton  
Jean Struthers  
Freddy Van-Hove and Krista Grote  
Matthew Vander-Wilt and Caroline Pan  
Shannon Wayne  
Gui Von Zuben and Sydney Fogel

### Business Members

We have launched a new program to allow the business community to show their much appreciated support for the Museum.

#### New business members

##### Partner Sponsorship

Epicurean Group

##### Business Sponsorship

Heising-Simmons Foundation  
Los Altos Town Crier

#### Continuing business members

##### Corporate Sponsorship

Los Altos Community  
Investments

##### Business Sponsorship

Young, Craig & Co., Accountants

## Two New Volunteers!

We have a fantastic team of volunteers working in Collections, but it's never enough and it's not an easy job. It takes attention to detail, a willingness to work alone and spend long hours in front of a computer. Happily, Suzanne Maguire-Negus and Connie Brookner are fine with that. Suzanne comes with a background in conservation of objects and Connie is familiar with Past Perfect, our database. They will be working on inventory and cataloging - Suzanne with the art collection and Connie with maps. Working with our other volunteers, Margie Alving, Sande Stuart and Doreen Cohen, we are well on our way to improving access to our collections through better documentation and images.

~ Heather Farquhar



Connie, Suzanne and Heather standing by our beautiful holiday tree.

## Spotlight on the Oral History Project

Dr. Richard Henning was recently honored for his 50 years of having founded, organized and run the internationally renowned Celebrity Forum Speaker Series, voted the best speaker series in the country. It was a pleasure to interview him recently and record his stories for the History Museum's Oral History Project.



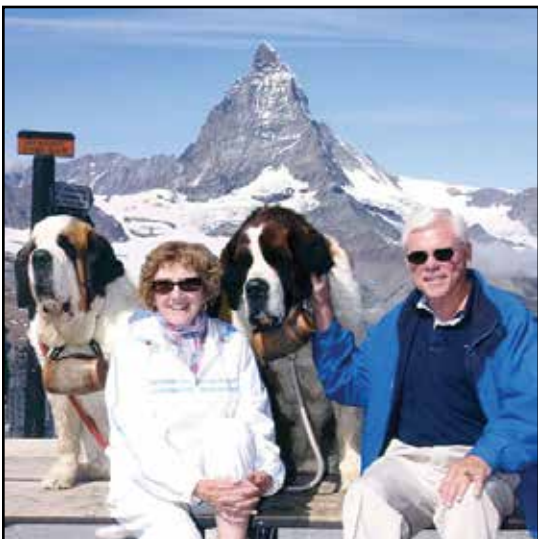
*Dr. Richard Henning, circa 2008. Henning Family Collection.*

Dick joined the Rotary Club of Los Altos in 1968, and distinguished himself by starting the annual Rotary Speech Contest for high school students, founding Camp RYLA, which helps students develop leadership skills while having fun, and co-founding PETS, leadership training for Rotary President-Elects throughout California and Nevada.

Dick received the Avenidas Lifetime of Achievement Award in 2011, in part for raising funds through Rotary International for over 1,100 wheelchairs. Since Dick loves to travel, he personally delivered them to South Africa, Nicaragua, Rwanda, and China. Dick was a founding member of the Los Altos Rotary AIDS project, and helped develop the film, *The Los Altos Story*, a documentary on three local residents suffering from AIDS that was shown at many Rotary clubs around the world. In 1997 he was named Los Altan of the Year by The Los Altos Town Crier.

Dick has traveled widely, and since 1978 has led many African safaris, especially to Botswana. However his most frequent travel destination is France where his charming wife Paulette was born and raised.

*~ Judy William*



*Paulette and Dick Henning at the Matterhorn in 2010 with two Brandy Dogs, and no, "unless you are seriously injured you won't get a taste. Not even a sniff," says Dick. Henning Family Collection.*

## Director's Corner

Well 2018 has sped by in a whirl-wind. Nan Geschke asked me the other day if I am having fun in my job, to which I enthusiastically replied, "Indeed!" It is wonderful to be part of a conscientious, hard-working association of people in such a beautiful facility surrounded by an outstanding community. And I am grateful to have the support of the Board, Staff, Volunteers, and Members like you to make things happen around here.



*Elisabeth Ward with her son Palmer at the opening of the exhibition 'I Want the Wide American Earth: An Asian Pacific American Story.' Oct. 2017.*

Our Annual Report is now out, covering the period July 2017 to June 2018, and is posted online as part of our commitment to transparency in how the organization is run. Putting that report together was certainly fun and it is nice to report good news! The organization grew in all key indicators, from attendance to fund-raising to membership and programmatic offerings.

You might have noticed some other changes—the gates removed from the store, new agricultural signage in the outside display, more frequent exhibits—and changes behind the scenes too, with new staff and lots of work in the collection area. I know it is important to manage change in a reasonable way, and to make sure everyone knows what is in the pipeline and feels involved in the decision-making process. After all, this is a community-driven organization.

That is why we have organized a series of focus groups to give us feedback on the strategic plan. Any strategic plan is just a piece of paper, if it isn't paired with lots of heartfelt conversations. We need to really know what it is we want to accomplish, and how we can ensure the History Museum remains an asset to the community. We have strengths in many areas, and growth in many areas, but we have to all know, and agree, on what truly makes the Museum unique and important. That is how we grow and change together.

Please let me know if you'd like to contribute to this process. We've been soliciting input through the Membership survey and Volunteer survey, but informal communication is often the most valuable. Now is a great time to offer suggestions and ideas, so we can keep making this a fun organization to be a part of for years to come. Feel free to email, call, or come by. You'll find me in the corner!

*~ Elisabeth Ward, Executive Director*

## Photo Gallery



*Perlita Dicochea, Alex Atkins and Halimah Van Tuyl, the three creators of Inspired by Juana: La Doña de la Frontera.*



*Grupo Folklorico Los Laureles put on a lovely dance performance at the Opening Fiesta.*



*Midori Oxford with her parents, Dustin Oxford and Michelle Lodwick. Midori built the furniture for the adobe replica of Juana Briones' home.*



*YongQi Mu and her son Andrew, who created the book on display depicting the medicinal herbs used by Juana Briones.*



*Kristen Fuller with Train Days raffle prize winner Liana in the middle and her friend Kennedy. The basket of treats included six tickets to ride the Niles Canyon train, a treat Liana is happy to share.*



*Pinky Whelan and Diane Simmons at the Smith House with some of the toys from days gone by. See the Smith House decorated in 1930's holiday splendor and see the toys before the exhibit closes Jan. 6.*

## Photo Gallery



*Dotti Cichon with her People's Choice Winner, "Phoenix Rising."*



*Stephanie MacLean and Lawrence Chu standing by her painting of the popular Los Altos restaurant, Chef Chu's.*



*Maria Krupina, one of the younger artists in the show. Asked how she developed her talent, she answered with one word, "Practice." Wise beyond her years.*



*Barbara and Marvin Emerling standing by the picture of their home by nine-year old Ashley Avidan. Learning of their interest in the picture, she gave it to them! In return, the Emerlings made a nice donation to the Museum in Ashley's name.*



*Some of the participants who decorated the Dia de los Muertos Juana Briones Shrine with paper butterflies. Luis Ambriz is in the back, with Carole Flores and Perlita Dicochea to his left.*



*A spooky gathering at the Smith House, Oct. 27. Heather Farquhar put on quite a show with interesting J. Gilbert Smith family history and amusing and intriguing paranormal phenomena.*



# UNDER THE OAKS

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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](http://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, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

## General Inquiries

(650) 948-9427 x14 or  
[hello@losaltoshistory.org](mailto:hello@losaltoshistory.org)

## Collections/Research

(650) 948-9427 x11  
[research@losaltoshistory.org](mailto:research@losaltoshistory.org)

## Event Rentals

(650) 948-9427 x12  
[mperry@losaltoshistory.org](mailto:mperry@losaltoshistory.org)

## Mission Statement

The Los Altos History Museum gathers and presents compelling stories and artifacts that bridge the past and the present by fostering the creative energy of staff and volunteers to challenge established narratives and produce engaging educational programs and exhibits for the community.

**Address Correction Requested**

## On The Calendar

**King's Day Celebration**, Sunday, Jan. 6, noon-4 pm, at the Museum.

**Presents from the Past**, a Smith House exhibit, closes January 6.

**Traditional Healing Workshop**, Saturday, Jan. 26, 10 am-1 pm, at the Museum, \$20 with lunch provided.

**32nd and Last Annual Crab Feed & Auction**, Saturday, February 2, St. William Parish Hall, 6-10 pm.

**Women Entrepreneurs Panel**, Thursday, Feb. 7, 7 pm, Los Altos Library.

**International Language Day**, Thursday, Feb. 21, 6-8 pm.

**Essay Contest**, Grades 2-6. March, check the website for details.

**Negotiating Boundaries: Women of Color in Northern California History**, Foothill College, Saturday, March 2, 10 am-4 pm.

**Rancho Day**, Saturday, March 16, 10 am-2 pm.

**Inspired by Juana: La Doña de la Frontera**, closes March 31.

**School Tours**, Grades 3-4, weekdays, 9 am-noon, April & May. Teachers and homeschoolers, contact the Museum as soon as possible to sign up.

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



*Our intrepid installation team of Trevor Thiessen, Brian Boggs and Mike Schlansker getting things lined up perfectly.*

Please use the donation envelope provided to help the Museum with an end-of-the-year donation. Always needed, always appreciated.

**Board Meetings**, First Wednesday each month, 4 pm, everyone welcome

**Smith House Tours**, Every Sunday, 2 pm