

## Tom's Depot – Old Business, New Ideas

The Gonzalez family has been running Tom's Depot at Loyola Corners for 18 years. That makes it an old business by most standards, but Maria Gonzalez is open to new ideas. Approached by GreenTown Los Altos about the Skip the Straw campaign, she agreed to begin handing out straws only on request and switch from plastic to paper. Asked why, she said "It's good for the environment."

Her little cafe is good for Loyola Corners. She has regular customers and when she says, "I love what I do," she has them in mind. Some go back to the days when she prepared school lunches for Loyola, Blach, Springer and Covington. Once a week she delivered fresh hamburgers, a treat the kids enjoyed. She watched them grow up and now many come back with their families. Tom's Depot is open for breakfast and lunch, and Cafe Vitale next door complements them nicely with lunch and dinner service. These two restaurants and the Bicycle Outfitter, open since 1976, anchor Loyola Corners Shopping District. Another long-time anchor is JP Liquors and Deli. Greg Rivera has been running his little place since 1974.

Loyola Corners started as a train stop when the Southern Pacific line was built. The historic district was intended as the site of Santa Clara University, and was named after St. Ignatius of Loyola, but the 1906 earthquake put a stop to that development. Instead, it became a shopping district, and even after the new shopping centers opened at Rancho and Stanford, it was doing well with over 30 businesses in the 1960s. Foothill Expressway opened in 1964 and the underpass that diverted traffic cut into business, and the



*The train between Loyola Corners and Springer Road, 1949. History Museum Collection.*

loss of Safeway in 1986 led to a drop in customers that is felt to this day.

Tom's Depot was started in 1996 by Tom Andrews when he bought Mom's Ice Creamery and Grill. The mural outside, painted by Jan Meyers, shows four generations: Tom, his father, his son and grandson and Pupsie, the little dog.

Tom's Depot, now owned by Antonio and Maria Gonzalez, is doing fine and Maria, who came to this area in 1969 from Guadalajara, Mexico, shows up almost every day. It is a family-run business with daughters and nieces and in the summer when school is out, even a granddaughter helping out. Plan a visit. You can step back in time with a 1950s-

style lunch with ice cream for dessert, and be sure to check out the mural on the back wall. Painted by artist Everett Regua in 2008, the mural shows a dramatic view of a train billowing smoke and steam as it heads down the tracks.

Me, I think I'll head to Tom's for some good food and good company.

~ Gary Hedden



*Maria Gonzalez.*



*The mural outside Tom's Depot with Tom, his father, son, grandson and their little dog Pupsie.*

## Co-Presidents' Pen

The *final* Crab Feed was a huge success thanks to the over 200 guests who came together to greet old and new friends, enjoy crab, bid on auction items, and honor our very own Pinky Whelan! Three of Pinky's six children were present to enjoy dinner with their mother. Pinky's role has always been planning the Crab Feed and helping in the kitchen, but this time she was able to participate in the festivities! She sat with her family, received a crab cake made exclusively for her by 16-year-old Paul Cauchi, visited with friends and felt the "glow" of love from those of us who have enjoyed 32 years of Museum Crab Feeds.



Our thanks to Amy and Benny Madsen, owners of the Los Altos Tasting Room who, along with Byington wines, provided all of the wine that was consumed at the event. The Tasting Room supported the Byington Tasting Flights, bottles of premium wine for sale and all of the wines served at the Museum Bar. Our sincere thanks to the Madsens and Byington Vineyard & Winery for their generosity and support! Another proud sponsor for the past 32 years has been Dan Brunello, CEO of Le Boulanger. Dan has provided the freshest and tastiest sourdough French bread for each and every Crab Feed since 1987. We hope you will remember these generous donors the next time you visit the Los Altos Tasting Room or one of the many Le Boulanger sites!

Mark your calendars for the next two exhibitions: *April in Bloom* opening in April and *Silicon Valley Eats: A Taste for Innovation* opening May 2. Come find out about things we all enjoy, Flowers and Food.

Our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation is Wednesday, May 29. Join us as we say thank you to the many wonderful and dedicated volunteers who help put the History Museum on the map!

Plans are underway for a Gala at the historic Winchester-Merriman home, considered to be the oldest home in Los Altos. Purchased recently by the Warren Yang family, they have graciously agreed to host our next Gala on Friday, June 14. The second Annual Apricot STEM Fair will be on Sunday, June 30. June is always a busy month, so make plans now to be sure you are present for these wonderful offerings!

See you soon at the Museum!

~ Linda Eckols and Eleanor Watanabe, Co-Presidents

### 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!

## The Garden Club at 90!

Los Altos is home to one of the oldest garden clubs in California. It is celebrating 90 years and continues to thrive and play a vital role in the community. Please join us at our meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month (except July, November and December) at the Los Altos Lutheran Church, 460 S. El Monte Ave. The meetings include presentations, member floral arrangements and horticulture tips.

Established by the Los Altos Men's Club in 1929, the Club sponsored the "First Annual County Flower Show" under the oaks on University Avenue. It was a three-day event with plays, music, food and floral displays. Flower shows continued annually, and in 1933, a special event for children was added: the Pet Parade. Mrs. J. Gilbert (Margaret) Smith was a member of the Club during those early years. In the 1950s, the Club's annual Flower Show at the Pink Horse Ranch in Los Altos Hills reached an attendance record of 10,000 visitors for the three-day period.

Over the years the Club's civic beautification projects have included sowing wildflower seeds, landscaping projects, bulb plantings and plant exchanges. In 1955 the Club courageously created the Peninsula's first public Japanese Garden. Located in Shoup Park it was dedicated in 1956. Albert Wilson, renowned botanist, landscape architect, and producer for 40 years of the radio show "Dig it with Albert," was the master of ceremonies.

The History Museum archives the Club's original documents and photographs, and in return Club members help tend the grounds and in 2004, they contributed the brick patio and arbor in the Museum courtyard.

Come enjoy exhibits at the Smith House (March-April) and in the Gallery (April 11-April 20) to discover how the Garden Club has stimulated interest in plants and gardening, furthered horticultural knowledge, and promoted civic beauty in our community. Everyone is welcome!

~ Betty Ward



The first Flower Show, in 1929. Courtesy of the Garden Club of Los Altos.

## History in the News

Is it time for a change? The Eschenbreucher House, the first house in what is now downtown Los Altos, was moved to Los Altos Hills to become the Heritage House. Do the citizens in Los Altos Hills still want it? Some say it's not very useful, demolish it. Others say it's part of our history, save it. The Los Altos Hills Planning Committee heard all of that at a lively meeting in January during a discussion of changes to the Town Hall. The changes include new office and meeting space, and a new Town Green that may require the loss of the Native Plant Garden, relocation of old farm equipment and removal of the Heritage House.



*William Eschenbreucher, the first Los Altos Postmaster. History Museum collection*

The Eschenbreucher House was built in 1908 on Second Street by William Eschenbreucher. He owned the hardware store on Main Street, also built in 1908, and he was the area's first postmaster. Several owners later, the house was sold in 1985. At risk of demolition, a group called the Apricot Alliance raised money and helped save it. According to Frank Lloyd, who along with Abby Ahrens donated the house and got it moved, the solid redwood home didn't suffer a crack or even a single pane of broken glass. That's better than the experience during WWI when a wayward shell from nearby Camp Fremont tore through the roof!

So what's next? Some wonder if a move back to Los Altos is possible. According to Mayor Roger Spreen, the renewed interest is at least getting people to think more creatively about how to use the house.

In other news, a professional evaluation of the historical significance of the Halsey House and a plan to restore it should be ready by October and the restoration of the History Museum's tank house will be underway this Spring.

~ Gary Hedden



*The Eschenbreucher House on the move, 1985. History Museum collection.*

## Silicon Valley Eats: A Taste for Innovation

Silicon Valley has a unique history that has been shaped by food in many ways—from apricots and canneries, to the traditional dishes brought here from all over the world, to smart ovens and plant-based meat. We will be exploring the history (and future) of food in our area in a new exhibition, *Silicon Valley Eats: A Taste for Innovation*, opening May 2.

Come gather 'round the table with us as we celebrate our agricultural heritage, diverse cuisines, and innovative spirit!

~ Amy Ellison



*Walnut harvest, ~1943*

## Staff

Dr. Elisabeth Ward, *Executive Director*

Heather Farquhar, *Deputy Director and Head of Collections*

Dr. Amy Noel Ellison, *Exhibition Curator*

Diane Holcomb, *Outreach Coordinator*

Deepti Devanagondi, *Bookkeeper*

Luis Ambriz, *Exhibition Coordinator*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carrillo, *Gardener*

## Spotlight on the Oral History Project

To learn the story of how the 1905 J. Gilbert Smith House became a museum, you need to talk to Pinky Whelan. She is a “doer” who was there from the beginning when Los Altos’ first woman mayor and long-time City Council member Audrey Fisher spearheaded forming the Historical Commission in 1975.

Born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts, Pinky moved to Los Altos in 1965 with four children when her husband Chuck got a new job. She had two more children and promptly got involved with PTA and Scouts. As a New Englander, she was surprised that Los Altos seemed to think its history began with its 1952 incorporation. Pinky joined the new Historical Commission serving until 1985. She was President of the History House Auxiliary which proudly opened the historic home to the public on December 1, 1977, the 25th anniversary of the city’s founding. Pinky



*Pinky at home with Marcia Adams, seated, conducting the interview. Pilar Parducci, newest member of the Oral History Team, is observing and completely in awe of all that Pinky accomplished.*

has worked since to see that the Smith House is maintained and open for all to enjoy. In addition to conceiving and implementing the Crab Feed as a fundraiser for the past 31 years, she has curated many Smith House exhibits, including the most recent one, *Presents from the Past*, with Christmas gifts from yesteryear. In 2017 the Historical Commission recognized Pinky with its Los Altos Historic Preservation Award for her pioneering efforts in historic preservation and impact on the City of Los Altos.

One of the delights in interviewing Pinky for her oral history was learning about unexpected encounters with famous people. When her daughter Lucy’s Girl Scout troop presented a quilt they’d made to Josephine Duveneck for the 1976 Bicentennial, she overheard Mrs. Duveneck say to her husband, Frank, “If you’re good, I’ll let you sleep with me under the quilt tonight.” Pinky danced with John F. Kennedy at her sister’s wedding, was at Shoup Park when Joan Baez sang at a 1960s protest, and heard Jerry Garcia play guitar at a Los Altos bar before he became famous with the Grateful Dead.

Amazingly, in addition to raising six children and her leadership at the History House, Pinky opened an antique shop on First Street called The Yankee Peddler and for 20 years handled food and activities for the California Country Antique Show, a Museum fundraiser started in 1986 by two friends, Bea Teer and Lori Moore. When asked about her many contributions, Pinky replied, “I just did it. It was fun!”

Thank you, Pinky, for having so much fun while making Los Altos and the History Museum the special place it is today.

~ Marcia Adams

### Membership

#### Welcome to our new members:

Nancy Fernbach	Bindu Mohan
Susana Krulevitch	Doris Hawks Torbeck
Paul Lanning	Ann Wolff
Kitty Lee	

#### Business Members

We have one new member in our business membership program that allows the business community to show their much appreciated support for the Museum.

#### Corporate Sponsorship

Los Altos Community Investments

#### Partner Sponsorship

Epicurean Group

#### Business Sponsorship

Heising-Simmons Foundation  
Los Altos Town Crier  
Young, Craig & Co., Accountants

#### New business member

University of Santa Barbara,  
Dept. of History

## Meet Amy Ellison

We have a new exhibition curator!

Dr. Amy Noel Ellison started in January. She recently moved here from Philadelphia with her husband Tim, and is looking forward to the challenge of quickly getting the next two exhibitions ready. She has a Ph.D. from Boston University in American History and worked at the American Philosophical Society Museum in Philadelphia. She enjoys the curator’s challenge of researching and interpreting objects that can inspire visitors and cultivate a better understanding of both local and national history. Born and raised in California, she is happy to be back.



Please join us in welcoming Amy!

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## Lessons from Paradise

Utter devastation. The flames raced through Paradise and surrounding communities at the speed of a football field per second, faster than anyone could run. Lives lost, homes lost, towns destroyed. I have four cousins and an uncle who lived in Paradise and Butte Creek Canyon. They survived, but everything they had is gone.

Paradise's history museum, the Gold Nugget, is gone. It burned to the ground leaving only charred remains. The Museum's archival collections and all of their records are gone. Records were kept on servers in the building but copies were not stored off-site and the removable drive had been left behind on a desk.



*The Gold Nugget Museum - gone. Only the donkey survived.  
Photo credit Heather Farquhar.*

There is a lesson in this awful tragedy. To protect our Museum, we have prepared a detailed Disaster Plan. Our digital records will be kept off-site, our most valuable records and collections marked for quick removal and we will have evacuation procedures in place. Fire could come down from the Santa Cruz mountains but we will have a plan, begin training soon and hope we never need it.

*~ Heather Farquhar*



*Luis Ambriz with the Museum staff. Reflecting on his time at the Museum, he felt incredibly fortunate to have worked on the Juana Briones exhibition and with the motivated and hardworking team that allowed him to see what true passion looks like. Our thanks and appreciation go out to Luis as he completes his degree at San Jose State.*

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## Director's Corner

Museums are special educational institutions where people come to learn, not through memorization or practice, but through delight. Synaptic connections are made and the brain expands when the imagination is excited. That is when new information gets integrated into our thoughts. At the History Museum, we use that capacity to transform an individual's understanding of their life in Los Altos to encompass the decades before they were even born and include people they have never met. When they discover something about the past that is delightful, it becomes a part of themselves.



In our recent focus groups, we heard from teens who had come to the Museum for our educational tours, and who had peeked into the Museum grounds to watch the brides dancing at their weddings. At a young age, they had been delighted by what the Museum offered but as high school students, nothing was inviting them back.

At this year's Crab Feed Fund-a-Need, I asked our supporters to give generously to an effort to give teens and other tech savvy residents a new way to interact with the Train Diorama. It is called Augmented Reality, and it is fast becoming the most engaging, interactive, and intuitive way to bring layers of information into a specific context. Imagine pulling out your phone, pointing it at something and what you see with the camera is not just the picture of what is before you, but bits of information superimposed over specific buildings, roads, trees, etc. Click on it, zoom in, and explore, point the camera all around. Be delighted by what you discover.

Now I know many of us are sick of seeing teenagers glued to their phones. As the mother of a 13-year old, I certainly am! By presenting them with information in a comfortable format, we make them feel invited. The opportunity to learn in a delightful, intuitive way will bring the stories of Los Altos back to life for the next generation.

Nothing is more central to the origin of Los Altos than the train, with its stops at Loyola Corners and downtown Los Altos. Our model of the downtown in 1932 is a star attraction drawing in a loyal crowd of young visitors. Marilyn Henderson has assembled a new Train Committee, and with Fund-a-Need donations, we will have not just new motors and repairs, but we will be able to design an Augmented Reality experience. I invite you to come All Aboard! as we upgrade our beloved Train Diorama.

*~ Elisabeth Ward, Executive Director*

# Photo Gallery



Eleanor Watanabe, Jan Fenwick and her granddaughter Nicole, and Gisela Zebroski at a tamale making class as part of the Juana Briones exhibition.



Los Altos of the Year, Dennis Young, with former mayor Mary Prochnow and Shirley Bailey at the Crab Feed.



Itziar and Penelope enjoying the crowns they made as part of the Three Kings' Day events.



Perlita Dicochea with her son Cruzes and the little book she wrote about his adventure with a shoe, "Mi Zapato."



Hilary King and Monica Waldman, Los Altos Public Art Commissioners, who got paintings from Paint the Town II displayed at the Los Altos City Hall Council Chambers.



Latina entrepreneurs Sarahi Espinoza-Salamanca, Anna Dapelo-Garcia, Guisselle Nunez, and Rosanna Alvarez who shared their heartfelt stories at a panel discussion in February.

## Photo Gallery



*Gunilla Follett and Lenny Broberg presenting Pinky Whelan, the guest of honor, with a baked crab cake.*



*A happy family decked out with their bibs and ready to eat some crab. Thank you Armond for the shout out to support our record-breaking fund-a-need!*



*Dinner is served for Jerre Hitz, and Peter and Carrie Castro.*



*A busy wine bar with servers Richard Moll and Dan Haley.*



*Armond King mixing the raffle tickets trying to get a winner as Duane and Anne Roberts look on.*



*GaeAnn Spence and Kathy Lera enjoying the last Crab Feed.*



# UNDER THE OAKS

NonProfit 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](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  
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## 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

**90 Years of Flowers: Celebrating the Garden Club of Los Altos**, an exhibition at the Smith House, through April 28.

**Rancho Day**, with live demonstrations of life on a ranch, Saturday, March 16, noon-3 pm, Museum Courtyard.

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

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

**Heritage Orchard Walks**, every Saturday in April, 11 am to noon, meet at the back door of the library.

**April in Bloom: Floral Artistry Through the Years**, a special exhibition at the Museum with the **Ikebana Flower Show**, displays and workshops, April 6 to April 20.

**Silicon Valley Eats: A Taste for Innovation**, May 2 - Sept. 8. **Opening reception**, Sunday, May 5, 2-5 pm, at the Museum.

**Historic Bay Area Visionaries**, a book talk by Robin Chapman, Thursday, May 9, 7 pm at the Museum.

**Essay Contest Winners Ice Cream Social**, Tuesday, May 14, Museum Courtyard, 6 pm.

**Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation**, Wednesday, May 29, 4-7 pm, at the Museum.

**Spring Gala**, Winchester-Merriman House, Friday, June 14, 5-8 pm.

**Apricot STEM Fair**, Sunday, June 30, at the Museum.



Jane Reed happily handing off exhibition responsibilities to Amy Ellison. Thank you Jane for many years of wonderful, exciting exhibits.

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

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