

## Four Views of our Heritage Orchard

The newly formed Orchard Commons Committee seeks to attract attention and interest in the heritage of our Civic Center apricot orchard. Designated a City Landmark and State Point of Interest, the heritage orchard has been in continuous production for almost 115 years. To share diverse perspectives and stimulate dialogue, four Saturday morning walks were jointly hosted with the Los Altos Library during April. Each walk highlighted a unique view of our orchard: entrepreneurs, stewards, heritage and discovery. Taken together, we gained a better appreciation of why this green space is protected and linked to the J. Gilbert Smith house.

Deftly mingling personal experiences with fun facts and stories from her book, Robin Chapman led the first walk. Robin stimulated us to think about the stepwise growth of markets and technology. Orchards would not have expanded from the mission gardens without the markets provided first by the Gold Rush and later by the Union Army during the Civil War. Expansion of the railroads after the Civil War provided a bold technological advance that transported more trees into the region and exported more crops. Once the technical advances were mastered, what were the social innovations that followed? Robin guided us through the multiple challenges faced by 25,000 growers and 30-40 canneries in the valley. Many of the growers started as immigrants who bought a little land, worked hard and expanded.



Naturalist and Museum volunteer Jane Packard leading one of the walks.

Love of the orchard as well as concern for a healthy environment shone through the dialogue with orchardist Phil Doetsch. Drawing on personal experience working in his dad's orchard, Phil helped us better understand the adjustments in agricultural practices needed to care for fruit trees in a city. So much care goes into keeping these



The J. Gilbert Smith orchard in its glory years, looking at the view now occupied by the library and City hall. Museum collection.

Blenheim trees healthy. Phil cultivates the soil this time of year, to reduce compaction and improve water availability for the roots. He ordered 100 new bare-root trees that will arrive for planting next February. The topics of pruning and spraying stimulated lively exchange. Committed to keeping both the public and the trees safe, Phil prefers organic treatments provided by certified applicators. He also plans to install drip irrigation to conserve water and improve healthy tree resistance to disease.

Connecting our landmark orchard to the heritage of the J. Gilbert Smith house, Heather Farquhar highlighted what life was like for the Smith family who had the foresight to protect this green space for the enjoyment of future generations. Heather encouraged us to use our imaginations to visualize the courtyard of the J. Gilbert Smith house at the height of orchard activities. The rhythm of the seasons set the pace for the family. If winter rains did not come, Smith irrigated with well water. In the early days, Smith plowed with a horse to turn the green carpet of spring weeds into the soil. Picking season was around the fourth of July. Smith employed friends and transient laborers to handle his

## Co-Presidents' Pen

As Linda and I prepare to conclude our term as Co-Presidents, we look back over the past two years both with pride in what the Museum has accomplished and great appreciation for our dedicated Board, staff, and volunteers. Thanks to our strong Museum team, our community has continued to benefit from engaging exhibits and knowledgeable docents, thoughtful programs, and spirited fundraising events.



We especially appreciate having been able to lead the Museum's 40th anniversary celebration, applaud ten years of Train Days, and salute Pinky Whelan at our last Crab Feed. Our Garden Party Gala at the Winchester-Merriman home on June 14 promises to be a spectacular conclusion to our term.

Volunteers, of course, are at the heart of the Museum's success. We are pleased to acknowledge our 2019 *Volunteers of the Year* who were nominated by their committees:

Collections: Alecia Thomas

Docents: Armond King and Jan Thomas

Education: Carole Flores

Exhibits: Lori Tuttle

Facilities: Mike Schlansker

Garden: Susan Moss

Marketing: Margaret Whitehorn

Oral History: Pilar Parducci

Store: Sue Pierce and Lynn Farrell

Volunteers Extraordinaire: Kristen Fuller, Jane Reed, and Halimah Van Tuyl

Our best wishes for the coming year,

~ Eleanor Watanabe and Linda Eckols, Co-Presidents,  
2017-2019

## 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*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carrillo, *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!

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*continued from page 1*

crop gently. Local school kids earned their first wages cutting cots for drying.

On the last walk with naturalist Jane Packard, the orchard was placed on the map in the world-wide City Nature Challenge associated with Earth Day. Our project *Apricot Orchard, Los Altos*

*History Museum* is hosted by iNaturalist.org, a global network of citizen scientists who share the joy of discovery, asking questions and seeking answers. Most of the 40 species on the growing list for our orchard are travelers from other lands, each with a fascinating story to tell. Like a treasure hunt, folks on the walk were encouraged to look for one species and share a fun fact about it from a page in our species guidebook. Each species is like a book in a living library.

Discovery of the biodiversity associated with the orchard and Museum gardens will continue. At the upcoming Apricot STEM Fair, naturalists will be searching for species and sharing their knowledge with folks of all ages. Our orchard is a "stepping stone" for pollinators seeking food and shelter in this urban environment. Love of nature brings us together and we look forward to creating pollinator-friendly plots in the orchard and hope to encourage folks to restore habitat in their own backyards. Our orchard is a green space where we can share stories of the cultural and biological diversity that has shaped our community. Our lives are enriched by viewing our orchard through the diverse viewpoints of entrepreneurs, stewardship, heritage and discovery of biodiversity. We look forward to continuing this dialogue with walks, talks and hands-on activities inspired by our orchard.

~ Jane Packard



*Flood irrigation—the farming practice when water was readily available. Museum collection.*

## Our Community Prepares: Acts of Nature, Then and Now

October 17, 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake rocked the Bay Area. 30 years later, we look back at this and other natural disasters that have affected Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. The Museum's next exhibition, opening Sept. 19, asks—are we ready? We look at our emergency preparedness efforts and learn from the individuals leading the way. Co-produced with the City of Los Altos, the exhibition will feature historic photographs, video stories from residents, action-oriented displays, special events, and workshops on preparedness for your home, family, and pets.

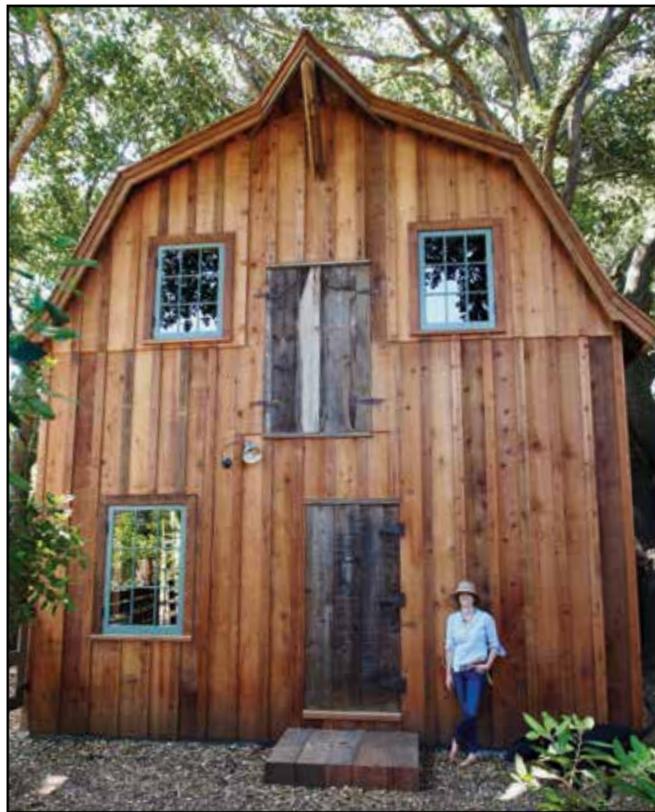
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## History in the News

Two steps forward and two steps back. The historic 1930s Ames/Landels Barn at 210 Alta Vista was completely renovated, a 3+ year project that wrapped up in April. Led by local architect Greg Evard, the renovation included careful preservation of much of the original wood. Another 3+ year project is nearing completion, the historic Oliver Holt House at 1365 Grant Road. The owner says they hope to finish in June. These two projects took determination and patience, and needless to say, came at considerable expense. We are grateful to the people who love historic properties and are willing take on the challenge of saving them.

Sadly, the charming 1920s Bungalow at 67 Lyell was recently removed from the Historic Resource Inventory at the owners request. The owner claimed “loss of historical integrity” and the Historical Commission consented. The home went on the market the very next week. In another setback, the request for Historic Landmark designation for the 1905 Emerson House at 980 Covington was denied by the City Council, against staff recommendation, due to some recent exterior changes. This will block Mills Act protection for the property, an important consideration for homeowners seeking relief from the expense of renovation and maintenance of historic properties. This relief encourages homeowners and developers to preserve our very limited stock of historic properties. These properties are the visual representation of our history and important to the charm of Los Altos. We must fiercely guard and protect each and every one.

~ Gary Hedden



*The renovated barn and the happy owner, especially happy now that the construction work is done.*

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## Remembering Margaret Thompson

The Museum’s Education Committee is really going to miss our dear friend Margaret Thompson who passed away February 24 at the age of 98. We worked closely with Margaret for many years on the essay contest that bears her name.

Margaret initiated the contest while on the Los Altos Historical Commission. Her granddaughter, Mariko, recalled “Grandmother decided to start the essay contest after I won several writing awards in high school. She thought a writing contest with cash prizes was a great way to encourage kids to write. She enjoyed writing and in another era might have pursued a writing career. In the early 1940’s she turned down a newspaper job writing the society page. I got the sense she always wondered what might have happened if she’d said yes.”

Margaret’s daughter, Susan, recalled, “I left for college early in the contest history, and all I really remember is having to hop over all the stacks of essays in the living room once a year!”

For the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the contest, Margaret introduced a trophy to be engraved and given to the school with the most winning essays. Each year, a school “wins” the trophy and keeps it at their school for a year. The trophy is awarded in May at an ice cream social which recognizes the winners. She often commented that attending the social and meeting the winning students was a special highlight in her life. She truly loved children and enjoyed meeting them and their families.

As Chair of the Education Committee, it was my privilege to develop a wonderful friendship with Margaret. We would often meet for lunch, talk about the books she was reading, the news, and what was being taught in the elementary schools. She was very sharp and interested in so many things that I often forgot I was visiting a woman in her 90’s. It was a privilege to count Margaret as a dear friend!

~ Anne Roberts



*Anne Roberts and Margaret Thompson with the trophy. May, 2015.*

## Spotlight on the Oral History Project

Paul and Liz Nyberg have been so important to this community and the Museum. They were honored at a Weathervane Society fundraising event with a generous gift to the Museum in their names by Ed and Pamela Taft. Paul and Liz have each done an oral history for the History Museum's collection and Liz was featured in the Spring 2017 issue of *Under the Oaks*. Paul's fascinating career as a journalist and publisher of the *Los Altos Town Crier* are described in his oral history.

Paul Nyberg grew up on a farm near Hinkley, Minnesota, chopping wood for heating and cooking (no electricity!) and attending grade school in a one-room schoolhouse. The *Hinkley News* meant a lot to him and his family, "It was the only access of information we had to the outside world because we lived four miles out of town on a country road. ... That paper was important to all the farmers and everybody else. Every week they waited for it to show up because it may not have been about them, but it was about somebody they knew." He was editor of his high school paper and graduated from Wheaton College in 1958 as a journalism major. In 1968, he received a Masters in journalism from U.C. Berkeley where seeing the motto on a cement mixer truck "Find a need and fill it" gave him the idea to create the magazine, *Letterman*. "It hit me like that. There is no national high school sports magazine." This led to Paul being interviewed on *The Today Show*, meeting President Nixon at the White House, and being a contestant on the TV show *To Tell the Truth*.

In 1975 Paul moved to Los Altos. He became co-owner of *Homes and Land* magazine expanding its reach via a dozen franchises for local magazines on the West Coast. In 1993,



Paul and Liz Nyberg with Ed and Pamela Taft. Photo credit Julie Rose.

when the *Chicago Tribune* was about to shut down the *Town Crier*, the Nybergs bought the paper and have owned it ever since. Two of their innovations are now meaningful Los Altos traditions. To raise money for small, productive non-profit organizations on the Peninsula, the Nybergs started the Town Crier Holiday Fund and they created Los Altos of the Year to recognize those whose deeds promote goodwill and contribute to making Los Altos a better community. A group of community leaders gave Paul and Liz a taste of their own medicine by working to name them as the 2017 Los Altos of the Year, a well-deserved honor, as is the Taft's Weathervane Society gift in appreciation for all the Nybergs have done for the History Museum.

~ Marcia Adams

### Membership

#### Welcome to our new members:

Nancy Ahlgren	Ghazala Mian
Nicole Andrews	Emily Reichelt
Helen Armer	Erin Sobota
Lisa Chi	Norelle North Tavrow
Phil Doetsch	Brett Tucker
Michael Fallon	Judith Webster
Hilary King	Daniel Wozniak
Tingting Li	

#### 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.

#### New business member:

BK Collections

#### Business Sponsorship

Heising-Simmons Foundation  
Los Altos Town Crier  
University of Santa Barbara,  
Dept. of History  
Young, Craig & Co., Accountants

#### Continuing business members:

#### Corporate Sponsorship

Los Altos Community Investments

#### Partner Sponsorship

Epicurean Group



Hi, I'm Jocelyn Lambert, a Humanities Mellon Scholar at Foothill College, continuing my internship at the History Museum. I'm so excited to be part of a brand new Teen Docent Program for high school students. We will recruit motivated, passionate and curious local students to take part in a week-long summer workshop and then become volunteer docents. As a student myself, it's such a great learning experience to see how a nonprofit organization builds a program like this from the ground up, and very inspiring.

## Our Hidden Gems

Dorothy Formway Haskell remembers her father, William Formway, inventing the Wizard Walnut Huller in her grandfather's garage in the late 1920s. She helped make the brush on top by putting wires into holes that her dad then hammered into place. He created it for his own use, but quickly came to realize that there was a market for his invention.

The original model was made of wood and William used it for years, but he knew it would need to be more durable if he wanted to sell it. He developed a metal model in 1932, applied for a patent and attached a small plaque with the label #1 to the original wood model. Today, Old #1 and a later production model are both part of the Museum's permanent collection and on view in our outdoor agricultural area.



*Dave Mulqueeney inspecting Wizard Walnut Huller #1.*

William Formway started as a machinist working on cars in his home garage, but as his business grew, he needed more space and founded the Formway Machine Shop on Almond Avenue in Los Altos. Production of the walnut huller shifted during WWII to making submarine parts. After the war production of the huller picked up and the company grew. Now Wizard Manufacturing, Inc., based in Chico, it is doing well, and the popular huller is exported worldwide.

Wizard employee Dave Mulqueeney visited recently and was excited to see Old #1. We showed Dave how the walnut hullers fit with our school tours and the new signage that highlights the company's roots in Los Altos. Old #1 is in need of some attention, so we are working with a conservator to see what we can do to stabilize it and we hope Wizard Manufacturing will help.

The new outdoor agricultural signage covers our orchard heritage and many agricultural innovations. Together with repairs to the Tank House, now scheduled for Fall 2019, the outdoor exhibit area is getting some good upgrades, including conserving Old #1, so we can educate our visitors for years to come about this area's agricultural roots.

*~ Heather Farquhar*

## Director's Corner

Events, events, programs, and more events.

In the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, there is an important life lesson: finding the middle ground and what is "just right" is tricky business. After all, some people like their beds firmer or their porridge hotter. Our visitors and members of the Museum are a bit like Goldilocks chancing upon that cabin in the woods: coming to the Museum is an adventure and a special treat, and we entice people with our exhibits and events to come snoop around, just like Goldilocks.



Our exhibit spaces have been set for a long time—the J. Gilbert Smith House, the Permanent Exhibition upstairs, and the changing gallery on the main floor. We recently beefed up the outdoor agricultural exhibition with new signage, making that a more formal exhibit area for our visitors to "sample." And of course I have ideas of other spaces within the Museum that could become exhibition space, to add variety and intrigue, but that is a long way off.

For now, we are focused on four different types of events:

- Family-friendly festivals like the Apricot STEM Fair taking place June 30, Rancho Day / Moon Fest / Ohlone Day we have sometimes held, and our Train Days, which has taken place for 10 years but is on hiatus this year.
- Ticketed fundraisers like the Crab Feed and the Merriman-Winchester Garden Gala, which invite both members and non-members to special, memorable, social off-site events.
- Donor engagement events like the Weathervane Society gatherings, where we honor the legacy of Bob and Marion Grimm and challenge donors to match their generosity.
- Exhibition related programs and events, including opening receptions and lectures, talks, panel discussions or classes that dig into the ideas and topics explored in a changing exhibition theme.

We also have a few annual events just for members, like the Annual Meeting, Volunteer Appreciation, and the Membership Barbeque (July 28), and we have annual events for the public, like our new May is Membership Month offerings and International Language Day. We are also making a bigger PR push to make sure the people wandering through the Civic Center know to come peek into the Museum.

All that adds up to busy staff and volunteers. So what do you think? Are there too many things happening at the Museum, not enough, or just right?

*~ Elisabeth Ward, Executive Director*

## Photo Gallery



*Betty Ward and Jean Gillette, Secretary and President of the Garden Club of Los Altos, were key players in bringing us "April in Bloom."*



*Edna Pear demonstrating the art of flower arranging.*



*Judy Hecht demonstrated planting succulents in a pot. They are a very forgiving plant—needing minimal water and even less fertilizer.*



*Liz Calhoon, Susan Moss, Ellie Moll and Betty Ward enjoying the exhibit at the Smith House, "90 Years of Flowers."*



*Diane Claypool and new docent Emily Reichelt preparing quick and tasty appetizers at a volunteer appreciation event in February.*



*Carding freshly sheared wool at Rancho Day in March.*

## Photo Gallery



Jan Davis and Amy Ellison, the graphic designer and the curator of "Silicon Valley Eats." A toast to a job well done!



Enjoying the kids' section of "Silicon Valley Eats."



Al Holstein riding the GreenTown Los Altos blender bike.



Gloria Hom telling stories about her grandfather Thomas Foon Chew, owner of Bayside Cannery.



Brenda and Raul with the really tasty food from Handheld Catering.



Kayla, Lindsay and Sophia with the Brava oven. The efficient infra-red heating cooks in 'half the time.'



# UNDER THE OAKS

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[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.*

## On The Calendar

*Silicon Valley Eats: A Taste for Innovation*, now through Sept. 8.

*Garden Party Evening of Memories & Mysteries*, Winchester-Merriman House, Friday, June 14, 5:30 pm.

**Apricot STEM Fair**, Sunday, June 30, 10 am - 3 pm.

**Kid's Cooking Classes** with local chefs, July 6, 13, 20 and 27, 9:30-11:30 am.  
\$20/class, registration required.

**Slow Food Cooking Classes**, with award-winning chef Joni Sare, July 8, 16 and 24, 6-8 pm. \$75/class, registration required.

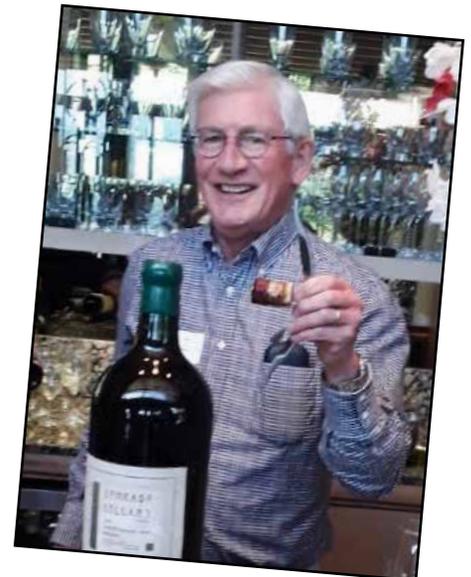
**Membership Barbeque**, Sunday, July 28, 5-8 pm, with popular band MaCaJo, ticket required.

**Movie Night** with *Ratatouille*, Tuesday, Aug. 14, Museum Courtyard, 8:30 pm, free.

*Eating Your Values*, a panel discussion on food that cares for the Earth, ourselves, and one another, Thursday, Aug. 15, Los Altos Library, 7-8:30 pm.

*Food for the Future*, a panel discussion on exciting local food innovations, Thursday, Aug. 22, Los Altos Library, 7-8:30 pm.

*Our Community Prepares: Acts of Nature, Then and Now*, opens Thursday, Sept. 19.



*Ed Taft opening a jeroboam of Conrado Cellars Zinfandel at a Weathercane Society event. Paul Conrado's company built the Museum and he gave us this bottle, celled since 2001. The Museum has aged well over the years, just like a fine wine.*

*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