

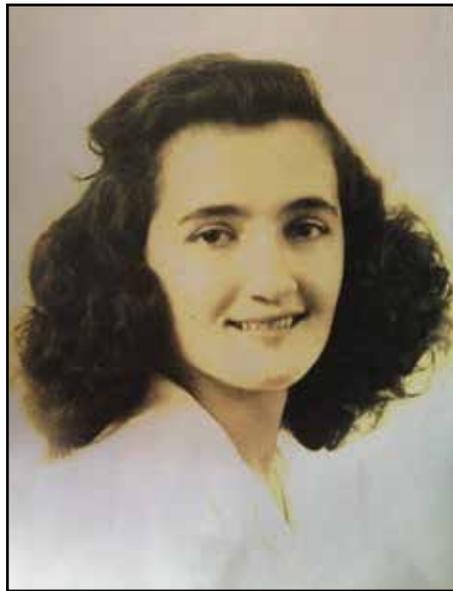
Finding Home in the Valley of Heart's Delight

The History Museum is embarking on a significant renovation of the upstairs gallery organized around easily recognizable themes—creeks and hills, valleys and neighborhoods, towns and trains. This is a story about the valleys.

A few years ago, I fulfilled a lifelong dream to travel with my mother, aunts, and cousins to the Azores, where our ancestors had lived for many generations before immigrating to America. Part of a wave of Azorean emigration in the early 20th century, they built a life for themselves in the fertile soil of California's Central Valley. That trip to my family's homeland was transformative for me. It was easy to imagine the difficult lives they must have led there. Yet how difficult it must nevertheless have been to leave behind family and friends, to abandon the land they had worked for generations, to break the bonds that tied them to a place they had always called home. How much more difficult must it have been to travel across the world with little more than their names and to settle in unfamiliar lands amongst strangers they could not understand. Yet over time, they learned new ways while keeping the old, they bought homes and dairy farms and once again worked their own land, they joined new communities and built their own.

Since leaving as exhibition curator, I have taken a deep dive into one area of the new permanent exhibition, the valley section and the people and stories of our area. I felt drawn to many of the stories of immigrants to the "Valley of Heart's Delight" because they reminded me of my own family's history. Take the Giaya Family, for example, who emigrated from Croatia around the same time my great-grandparents left Portugal in the early 20th century. We know the Giayas' story thanks to the oral history of Ann Giaya, born in 1923, which has been recorded and preserved in the Museum's Oral History Collection.

Ann's father, John, immigrated to Santa Clara County in 1913 when he was 21 years old, joining his brother who was already in the Bay Area. He escaped a dangerous political climate in Yugoslavia, as tensions were escalating throughout Southeastern Europe on the eve of World War I. Ann recalled later that she didn't know "how he had the nerve at 21 to do



Ann Giaya, date unknown. Courtesy, Denise Sacks.

what he did. To leave the village and go down to the Adriatic and grab some kind of a little boat and cross the Adriatic and get into Italy and come out of Naples to come here. On an Italian ship and not speaking Italian or English."

John and his brother worked hard to earn money by doing a variety of odd jobs throughout the Bay Area. In 1918, they had saved enough to buy land in 1918 on Springer Road, near Rancho, between Rosita and Covington. Ann's mother joined them in 1921, and Ann and her two sisters were born soon after. On their ten acres they grew prunes and apricots. The family picked the fruit, dried them, cut them, doing all the work themselves. Ann herself earned the nickname "Prune Picker."

When she was 16, Ann began working for a cannery in Palo Alto near the Stanford Research Park. She worked ten hours a day, for 42 ½ cents an hour. Everyone in the family had to work hard to make ends meet. "What tough times those were," Ann remembered. To save money, they never bought anything except what they could not grow themselves. They had chickens, goats for milk and cheese, rabbits, veggies from the garden, apples, and of course canned and dried fruit. Sometimes her family would go up to orchards in the hills that were not being tended. Her parents thought it was a waste to let the apricots fall and go uneaten, so they gathered them up to cut and dry with their own harvest. "It was such a tough life," she remembered, especially for her parents. "But they didn't seem to mind it. They were happy."

The Giayas knew many other Croatian families in Santa Clara County and helped to welcome fellow immigrants to the area. They joined a local Croatian group in Mountain View, the Napredak Club, which met regularly and sometimes organized outings like picnics. Although they had lost many connections by leaving their homeland, the Giayas forged new bonds and created new communities within the greater Los Altos area.

continued on page 2

Finding Home in the Valley of Heart's Delight

continued from page 1

After high school Ann worked in San Francisco at Associated Oil Company, and for Southern Pacific during World War II. Ann also worked at the State Department in Washington, D.C. for five years before returning to Los Altos, realizing she could never call anywhere else home. “[My parents] were so happy here. They just loved it. So, for me to leave it, I could just never leave it.”

Like the Giayas and my own ancestors, many immigrants to California—whether they settled here in 1918 or 2018—took a risk so their children and grandchildren had a greater chance to thrive. Their stories are often ones of heart break and hard work, but also of resourcefulness, devotion, creativity, and optimism. In building new lives for themselves here, they have helped to shape the landscape, culture, and character of the Santa Clara Valley. Their stories illuminate not just their own journeys, but the spirit and values foundational to the Los Altos community we are part of today.

~ Dr. Amy Ellison

Meet Georgianna



Georgianna Shea taught for over 20 years, primarily at Palo Alto's Castilleja School as Founder and Artistic Director of Arts with a Heart. She owned and operated a successful hiking tour company which focused on hikes to historic sites in Northern California, and taught Jazzercise for many years. She joined the History Museum in January as Museum

Educator and will be inspiring our teen docents, history docents, Education and Exhibit Committees, as well as developing educational and enriching programs for the public.

Staff

Dr. Elisabeth Ward, *Executive Director*
Georgianna Shea, *Museum Educator*
Diane Holcomb, *Director of Communications*
Jacqui Marchessini, *Events Manager*
Farshad Fallah, *Bookkeeper and Office Administrator*
Faustino Carrillo, *Gardener*

President's Pen



Big changes are coming to the Museum. The renovation of the Permanent Exhibit is underway, and yes, permanent doesn't mean forever in the Museum world. Updates and refreshes are important and the new technology will allow intriguing new approaches to deliver stories and keep them fresh. It will be exciting, fascinating and we think give people

a reason to keep coming back.

Last issue you met Mr. Bear, our new outdoor feature of a grizzly bear, but one painted with local flora and fauna. It makes the bear pretty cute, but in real life they are big, impressive animals and a bit frightening. I recall fishing in Alaska from a small boat on the upper Kenai. A mother bear and two cubs came along, walking by the side of the river. Then she got in the water and started walking in my direction. I quickly realized that I really didn't belong in her world; fortunately she kept on walking. In this issue we have a story about a bear-claw necklace and the Ohlone who once hunted bears. I am in awe of any people willing and able to do that!

The omicron surge seems to have peaked and hopefully we will soon be back to normal. We are open during the construction upstairs so be sure to see *Every Wrinkle Tells a Story*. You will learn about 35 of our local residents and their stories dating back to the 1950s. The changing exhibits gallery closes after that, but we have a nice line up of programs coming this summer and the docents and the store volunteers will be on duty at the Smith House. Please come by and say hi.

~ Gary Hedden

Welcome to our new members:

Pamela Baird	Bill and Nancy Grove	Birgit and Bernard
Margaret Brooks	Edward John Khouri	Shay
Don Durr	Jan Martin	Shirley Thomson
Catherine Greenberg	Julie McPherson	Jeanine Valadez

Business Members

Business Sponsorship
Janis Ahmadian-Baer,
Ph.D., Sereno
Epicurean Group
HomeLight Inc.
Los Altos Town Crier
The Garden Club of Los Altos
Young, Craig and Co., LLP CPAs

Corporate Sponsorship
Nicole Frelier Andrews
Fine Art, LLC
Kiwanis Club of Los Altos
Rainmaker Real Estate

Our Hidden Gems

The Museum's Florence Fava collection includes many artifacts from the Ohlone site she helped excavate near O'Keefe Lane, as well as material that was once used at Hidden Villa and the Nature Center at Halsey House to help teach people about the Native Ohlone Peoples. One piece that really caught my attention, labeled a bear-claw necklace, shows the special relationship the Ohlone had with the bears that once roamed the Santa Cruz Mountains. The California grizzly bear was an incredible animal that could weigh over 1000 pounds and stand upwards of 10 feet tall. They once roamed here and were sacred to the Native People who also called this place home.

Our necklace has one claw on a strand with Olivella shells and glass beads. Bears were important to many Native American tribes; the bear-claw necklaces of the Plains tribes contain up to fifty claws. The grizzly was held in high esteem for its courage and supernatural power. Grizzly bears were also feared; it was believed that there were people who could turn into grizzly bears. It was thought of as both a warrior and a healer, and a bear-



Our "bear-claw" necklace.

claw necklace was worn with pride by distinguished tribal leaders.

The Ohlone put in a lot of time and effort to hunt grizzly. This task might take days or even weeks to accomplish. They would begin following tracks, broken foliage, scat and prey bones. Eventually a single bear was chosen – usually a male, never a mother with cubs – and the group would surround it. Armed with spears and stone arrow points, it was brought down. The men would drag the carcasses back home on a travois frame structure. They were expert hunters, but it was an arduous and dangerous process.

It is no wonder that a bear-claw necklace is a very treasured possession. Our necklace has not been thoroughly examined, but it was restrung with glass beads that likely date to the 18th Century. Recently, to our surprise, we learned that our claw is actually a deer dew claw! It has been exciting to get a chance to learn more about the Ohlone, and it is so interesting that the more carefully we study the artifacts in our collection, the more we discover.

~ Alecia Thomas

Water-Wise Orchard Walk

Cheery yellow mustard flowers greeted participants in a January walk in the Los Altos Heritage Apricot Orchard as they learned about orchard irrigation, garden tree irrigation, and drought-resilient plantings.

Orchardist Phil Doetsch explained how the current inefficient irrigation system in the orchard will be transformed to drip lines, giving water savings of 30-50%. Starting in one section of the orchard, durable PVC pipes will be buried to protect them from tractor cultivation and rodents and two parallel driplines will be installed along each row of trees. Landscape fabric mulched with 3-4 inches of wood chips will control weeds and a cover crop will be tilled in the lanes between irrigated rows. This work is supported by a mini-grant from Valley Water

For water-wise irrigation of fruit trees in home gardens, create a basin extending to the dripline covered with 3-4 inches of mulch. Watering options include (1) two half-circle fan micro-sprinklers, (2) a loop of drip irrigation line, or (3) hand-watering when a moisture meter reads low.

Planting native species is another way to conserve water according to Jean Struthers with the California Native Plant Society. She recommends the resources listed on www.cnps.org/gardening.



Jane Packard describing the orchard irrigation project.

In this period of severe drought, we can all pitch in to conserve water and keep trees healthy using precision irrigation approaches. Valley Water offers rebates for water conservation in outdoor landscapes and we hope our orchard make-over will inspire local residents.

~ Jane Packard

Spotlight on the Oral History Project

One of the pleasures of interviewing people for the History Museum's Oral History Project is getting to know interesting people and some of their life stories. After doing some research, and then having a free-ranging conversation with your subject(s) about their lives—especially as it relates to Los Altos / Los Altos Hills—you record on another day a more structured conversation



Judy William at her home in the hills.

with a series of questions you ask. Their responses give you insights into their lives, the changes they have noticed in this area, their contributions to Los Altos, perhaps the difficulties they have encountered along the way, and their philosophy of life, among other subjects.

I have interviewed Dr. Dick Henning from Celebrity Forum; Robert

Kelley, recently retired director from TheatreWorks Silicon Valley; Ralph and Carol Kuiper; artist Karen Druker; and the owners of Los Altos True Value Hardware, among others. Getting to know them has considerably enriched my life.

After the interviews are over the recording is sent out to be transcribed, lightly edited by both you and your subject, and then submitted to the Museum's archives, where it will be available for their family and future researchers to read. In the process you have gotten to talk to remarkable people, and feel satisfaction in knowing that you have contributed in no small measure to documenting the history of people from this area.

If this brief scenario has piqued your interest, the Oral History Committee would be pleased to talk with you about joining us for future interview trainings—and to hear your suggestions about people to be interviewed—and why.

~ Judy William

Volunteer Highlights & Activities

In the past, the Museum's Fundraising Committee planned events such as Oktoberfest, the Winchester-Merriman Garden Party, *If Cars Could Talk* at Auto Vino, the online Art Auction, and, of course, the annual Crab Feed, a favorite among our members and donors. This year, the committee is starting a new tradition: an annual Signature Fundraiser focusing on different decades each year. Themed *Dancing through the Decades*, this year's debut event on April 2 focuses on the 1920s. Specifically, entertainment of the 20s.

From the first talkie motion pictures, to radio, jazz, and the Charleston, *Dancing through the Decades: Entertaining the 20s* will feature the sights and sounds of the era in our tented courtyard, as well as champagne and a supper-club, with seated guests selecting dishes served by student volunteers. A silent and live auction is a highlight of the evening, including a Fund-a-Need ask for the new Permanent Exhibition. We'll round out the festivities by throwing open the doors to the gallery as dancers from Areté Dance Center give quick lessons on how to dance the Charleston, and Top Shelf Big Band blows some tunes.

"We wanted to be able to offer a signature event that would serve as a springboard to focus on different decades," said Fundraising Chair Kelly Davis. Joining her in the preparations are Linda Eckols, Judy Hooper, Liz Nyberg, Pilar Parducci, Julie Rose, Jan Thomas, Eleanor Watanabe, and Jung Yoon. The committee has been busy making decorations, scouring our collections for artifacts, booking caterers and the band, and securing auction items.



Elisabeth, Maria Crowder and Pilar Parducci dressed up with 1920s hats from the Costume Bank.

The Fundraising Committee is looking for more members who want to help raise funds and develop strategies for engaging our community in the Museum, while having fun with fellow volunteers. To join the committee, or to lend a hand at the fundraiser on April 2, contact Diane at dholcomb@losaltoshistory.org, or by phone at (650) 948-9427, x14.

Last chance to purchase tickets for *Dancing through the Decades* is March 21, visit our website.

~ Diane Holcomb

History in the News

The American Legion Hall at 347 First Street may be saved. In their January meeting, the Los Altos Historical Commission listened to pleas by Ken and Cindy Newman and Post Commander Bill Bassett, representing Post 558, and voted to send a recommendation to the City Council to designate the Legion Hall as a Historic Landmark.

The structure, built in 1940 by WWI army veterans and dedicated in 1941, immediately became a meeting place for political, civic and social events. In 1949, residents of the area concerned with possible annexation by Palo Alto and Mountain View met there to plan for an independent city. The effort succeeded, and on December 1, 1952, Los Altos was incorporated as the eleventh city of Santa Clara County.



Cindy and Ken Newman at the American Legion Hall.

The Legion Hall was the primary meeting place in town until the late 1950s with the opening of the Hillview Community Center. According to Ken Newman, a 40-year member of the Post, activities also included movie nights, card games, dances and a crab feed that started in 1969 and continues to this day. Cindy Newman added, "The crab feed is to get the Vets to come out of their homes and socialize." It is still busy today according to Bill Bassett with jazzercise, dog training classes, dance lessons and more.

Architecturally, the building represents the Minimal Tradition style with a one-story rectangular plan, front-gabled roof, horizontal wood siding and a lack of ornamentation. Alterations have diminished the integrity of the appearance, but the structure still takes us back to an earlier, simpler time of life in Los Altos.

~ Gary Hedden

Director's Corner

Chugging Along!

After three years of planning, the project to reimagine the Permanent Exhibition turned the corner in February, and is now picking up speed! We officially closed the exhibition, *Crown of the Peninsula*, which had graced the upper floor of the Museum since 2001. What a workhorse that exhibition was; after 20 years, the sound effects of birds chirping and horses running and bats flying were still functioning! This gives me great confidence that the high-tech new exhibit techniques planned for the as-of-yet-unnamed replacement exhibition will be equally robust. The Sibbett Group, who designed the original exhibition and are designing the new Permanent Exhibition, build with heavy usage in mind.



This switching of tracks from the old line to the new required careful execution. First, we had to remove the 40 or so artifacts in *Crown of the Peninsula* and return them to the Museum's collection storage vault, or in some cases, back to the institutions and people that lent them to us (thank you History San Jose and Sande Stuart!). Then the Train Committee packed up the train engines and some of the moving parts of the diorama. While the upstairs permanent exhibition is closed, they will repair some of the elements of the model.

The train diorama is the only thing that will be returning with the new exhibition, but it will have improved lighting, a new reader rail, and a digital interactive feature that will help explain what people see in the diorama.

But before we hear "all aboard" again, we have a lot of work ahead of us. Julie Rose, who has been serving as project manager for this ambitious undertaking, has offered to distribute the shadow boxes taken down from the Family Tree to the organizations represented in that display.

So if you are part of Art Docents, Hidden Villa, AAUW, Kiwanis, or many of the other vital organizations that make this area so vibrant and connected, please let us know. We've got a piece of history for you!

And although the Permanent Exhibition is closed, we have a wonderful local photography show to share with everyone in the Changing Exhibition gallery. We hope you'll come by to see *Every Wrinkle Tells a Story: Intertwining Lives*, and maybe catch a glimpse of the project steaming along upstairs.

~ Dr. Elisabeth Ward

Photo Gallery



Daughters of the American Revolution Chapter Regent Donna Santistevan with Mary Wallace, author of *Early Settlers of Old Los Altos/Mountain View*. The Museum was presented with a copy in January.



At the farewell to Maria Crowder (center) in February, with Board members Kelly Davis (left) and Vicki Holman (right).



Joanie Adams (center) serving tasty French treats at the opening reception of *Every Wrinkle Tells a Story*, with Board member Janet Klinke at her side.



Teen docents with charming French berets photographing Sam and Janet Harding at the opening reception.



Neil and Karen Bonke enjoying the opening reception.



Maud Daujean, the amazing photographer of *Every Wrinkle Tells a Story*. Photo credit Lyn Healy with *Spotlight Moments Photography*.

Photo Gallery



Alecia Thomas and Elisabeth Ward carefully removing artifacts from Crown of the Peninsula in January.



Carol Commendatore and Bob Poulos, among the last visitors to see Crown of the Peninsula, snapping a picture of the train's last stop until it comes back with the new permanent exhibit.



Train committee team members Steve Houtchens, Cliff Olsen and Marilyn Henderson wrapping things up. Not pictured, long-time member Armond King.



Board President Gary Hedden getting in the last ride. Yippie Yi Yo. Photo credit Harry Guy.



Elisabeth Ward thanking Nan Geschke for her deeply appreciated role in both Crown of the Peninsula and the new exhibition now underway. Ed Taft was also recognized for his very significant support. We couldn't have done it without them!



A Gizmo Art Production worker taking down one of our "not so permanent" exhibit walls. There's no turning back now!



UNDER THE OAKS

NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 12
Los Altos, CA

Assn. of the Los Altos Historical Museum, 51 So. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022

Address Correction Requested

www.losaltoshistory.org

Museum and Store Hours

Thursday to Sunday, Noon-4pm.

*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 x11
research@losaltoshistory.org*

Event Rentals

*(650) 948-9427 x12
weddings@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

Every Wrinkle Tells a Story, Intertwining Lives, open through May 8, Museum gallery.

Radio Revolution of the 1920s, open through May 1, J. Gilbert Smith House.

Dancing Through the Decades: Entertaining the 20s, Sat., April 2, 5:30-10:30pm.

Everything Old is New Again: Teen Docents Talk to Town Elders, Sat., April 9, 10:30-11:30am.

60 is the New 40: Changes to Us and the Workplace, Thurs., April 28, 5:30pm.

75th Anniversary of the Kiwanis Pet Parade!, opens May 5, J. Gilbert Smith House.

Hidden Asian Histories of San Jose: Japantown by Tom Izu and Susan Hayase, online, Thurs., May 12, 7pm.

Rancho Day: Horsemanship in the Hills, Sat., May 28, 10am-3pm, Museum courtyard.

Annual Members Meeting, online, Thurs., June 16.



Georgianna Shea with her sweet companion Mikey.

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!