
Heritage

El Cajon Historical Society Quarterly News

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January Meeting Speaker to Focus on 2002 as Banner Year for Downtown Rebirth

The new Home & Soul and Starbucks Coffee retail stores are open, the Weinstock building and its neighbor across the street are being remodeled for new tenants, diagonal parking is in place on Main Street, and Mr. Knox's neighborhood is experiencing a level of excitement and attention not seen for several years. The next few months will find a number of other major projects initiated.

Historical Society members and guests will have an opportunity this month to learn the latest about plans for 2002 from Eldonna Lay, our former President and a member of the Board of Directors of the downtown management district. Please plan to attend our quarterly luncheon on Thursday, the 17th, at 11:30, at DiLeone Italian Restaurant on Jamacha Road — a registration form is included in this newsletter.

Downtown El Cajon, Inc., the management district in place for a little more than five years, has taken the leadership role under the guidance of a Board of Directors composed of property owners and tenants within the district. A series of committees devoted to organizational

structure, economic development, promotions, design, housing, and other aspects of revitalization involve dozens of other people. Staff members from public works, engineering, redevelopment, and a number of other offices in City Hall are active participants on several of the committees.

Claire Carpenter, Executive Director of the management district, and her small staff have also published a preliminary calendar of events for 2002. Some of the highlights are:

- 2nd Annual Downtown El Cajon Bicycle Grand Prix — Sunday, February 3rd
- Cajon Classic Cruise Car Show — Wednesdays, April 3rd through October 30th
- Wine Tasting Fund Raiser (to support Concerts on the Green) — Sunday, April 21st
- Concerts on the Green — Fridays, May 3rd through September 27th
- Lend a Hand Day — Saturday, October 26th

- Hometown Holidays —
Sat., December 7th

A challenge for us in the Historical Society this next year will be to explore ways of becoming more involved in the district programs and of attracting visitors interested in the past, present, and future history of downtown El Cajon. And, if we find ways to create partnerships with the Wiegborst Museum, the library, the East County Performing Arts Center, and other facilities here in our expanding arts and entertainment district, the possibilities for all of us are limitless!

Weinstock Renovation Yields Bit of History from 1940s

A tattered piece of paper tucked behind wall board in the Weinstock building and found recently by one of the contractors involved with the renovation project is a reprint of a series of reasons to be thankful to OPA, the Office of Price Administration created by the Roosevelt administration in 1941 "to prevent profiteering and undue price rises." The typewritten sign reads:

YOU MIGHT BE THANKFUL TO OPA
BECAUSE:

YOUR THANKSGIVING TURKEY PRICE HAS NOT
GONE UP. 51¢ a lb. dressed is the retail top price.

YOUR COST OF LIVING HAS HELD LEVEL FOR
MANY MONTHS. Food has gone up 45% in
Mexico in the last 5 months.

YOUR SUGAR COSTS YOU 7¢ A LB. The last
war brought it up to 27¢ a lb.

YOUR GROCER POSTS DOLLAR-AND-CENT
CEILING PRICE LISTS. You never need pay
over-the-ceiling prices.

YOUR CAR IS STILL RUNNING. Without tire
rationing tires would have been used up months
ago.

YOUR SHIPS, YOUR PLANES, YOUR TANKS
ROLL ON. Without gasoline rationing either
civilian or military wheels would be still.

OPA BROADCASTS

KFSD: 10:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays.

KFMB: 10:00 ---- Saturdays.

Members Respond Quickly to Renewal Request Letters

Our thanks to all of our members who responded so quickly to the renewal letters mailed in October. We're pleased to have your continuing support for the organization and its programs. This holiday season, we encouraged gift memberships and we're happy to say Barbara Jackson has joined us, thanks to a friend. Welcome!

Museums a Top Attraction for Cultural Tourists

A recent study by the San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau concluded that the area benefits significantly from the growing worldwide trend toward cultural tourism, the desire to see and learn about new things as part of an enjoyable vacation. Not surprisingly, visits to historic sites and museums was at the top of the list of activities identified by survey respondents. General sightseeing, theater and musical events, and festivals also ranked very high.

Former Resident Ham Judy Remembers Childhood in Valley's Bostonia Area

Former El Cajon Mayor Hamilton Judy, now a resident of Wickenburg, Arizona, shared his memories of a childhood in Bostonia in a letter he sent to the Society last year. He noted that in Heritage articles "about the early days in El Cajon Valley, there is never a mention of the

Bostonia area," and he provided us with his reminiscences.

"My folks moved from Imperial Valley to Bostonia in 1926 and purchased the Sunshine Cafe and Dance Pavilion. Complete home-style chicken dinners were then 75¢ and since the cafe was on the only highway from the East, it was a very busy place. At that time there was only one other business in Bostonia, at the northwest corner of Broadway and Second Street, which was the Post Office and general store, with a meat market. This was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Murray Wright, he was the Postmaster.

"In 1927, my Dad, Mr. Walter H. Judy, started the Bostonia Chamber of Commerce, which included ranchers and the Vowles Poultry Company.

"The Sunshine Cafe and Dance Pavilion, and our adjoining home, burned down in March of 1932. The Bostonia Ballroom was then built and opened in September to a crowd of 800 people,

"To me, this information is an important part of the early history of all of El Cajon Valley. Bostonia was later annexed into the City of El Cajon.

"To keep everything in perspective, I was born the same year it became a City, 1911. My Mother, Harriet Judy, later became President of the El Cajon Woman's Club, and the Bostonia Ballroom still stands today."

We're delighted to add his letter to our files. Do you, your friends, or your family members have memories you'd like to share with us? They become valuable resources for our third grade essay contest participants and others

looking for research materials, and we would be honored to have you help increase our collection.

International Organization Promotes Preservation of Cultural Heritage

The International Council of Museums, formed in 1946 in Paris, now boasts a membership of 17,000 in 140 countries. A brainchild of the President of the Trustees of the Science Museum in Buffalo, New York, the motto of the non-profit organization is "Museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, co-operation and peace among peoples."

Dedicated to the development of museums and the museum profession, ICOM sponsors workshops, publications, training, cooperative programs, and the promotion of museums on International Museum Day, held annually on May 18th. The 2002 Museum Day theme, "Museums and Globalization," will support the organization's definition of museums as "institutions in the service of society and of its development." Previous themes have included "Museums and Environment," "Collecting Today for Tomorrow," "Pleasures of Discovery," and "Museums: Building Community," and "Collecting Today for Tomorrow."

A Look Back

"A woman's time of opportunity is short, and if she doesn't seize it, no one wants to marry her, and she sits watching for omens."

Lysistrata. Aristophanes, 411 B.C.

Library of Congress Collects Reactions to 9/11 Tragedy

(Source: the American Folklife Center)

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress has called upon folklorists across the nation to document on audio tape the thoughts and feelings expressed by average citizens following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. These recordings and supporting documentary materials will become part of the Center's Archive of Folk Culture, the largest and most important archive devoted to the folklore and traditional culture of Americans and of the many cultural groups from around the world that have enriched American life. Founded in 1928, the Archive is now repository to over 2 million items.

With the SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, DOCUMENTARY PROJECT, the American Folklife Center is building upon a unique precedent. On December 9, 1941, renowned

folklorist Alan Lomax, serving as the head of the Folk Archive, sent an urgent message to folklorists around the United States to collect "person on the street" reactions to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war by the United States. Recordings were made in all parts of the country in which people expressed their immediate reactions to this cataclysmic event. Interviews were conducted with shoemakers, electricians, janitors, oilmen, cab drivers, housewives, students, soldiers, and physicians. People of many ethnic groups and ages are represented in these interviews expressing their opinions on the political, social, financial, and military aspects of the Pearl Harbor attack.

These field recordings were sent to the Library of Congress where they were used to create a series of radio programs and distributed to schools and radio stations. This unique documentary collection is still housed at the American Folklife Center where they comprise an invaluable aural resource and are part of our American legacy.

Sixty years later, in this time of national crisis and mourning, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress has issued a call to the folklore community to provide such a service to the nation today through the SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, DOCUMENTARY PROJECT. The Center will collect and preserve the audio-taped interviews and supporting materials that present the personal experience stories of average Americans in the wake of the terrorist attack and to what many have called "an act of war." What

were they doing when they heard? How have their lives been changed?

On the Reading List

New Books Help us Compile Family Histories

Authorship of a family history, of knowing how to start and what to include, can be a daunting task and one easily postponed. The concept continues to be a popular one, though, and several authors have recently published books which can help ease our way through the process.

TO OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN: PRESERVING FAMILY HISTORIES FOR GENERATIONS TO COME, written by sister and brother Bob Greene and D.G. Fulford in 1993, provides a

The Inside Back Page

Of Pens and Paper, of Minds and Memories

by Judy Garrett, Editor

Personal letters, diaries, political and business correspondence are some of the richest sources of material available to students of history. Samuel Pepys' fascinating, often ribald, diaries of seventeenth century London. Abigail Adams' keen observations of life in Boston and Washington, of war, of slavery and of women's rights during our country's first few presidential terms. Letters to families and friends from students and soldiers in locations far from home. Scurrilous charges and countercharges carried on the opinion pages of respected newspapers.

A personal favorite, a delightful entertainment on a gloomy day, is the series of Henry Root letters authored some twenty years ago by British author William Donaldson which had Henry, a semi-retired wet fish merchant in a London suburb, sending invitations to the Queen, crime control suggestions to the head of Scotland Yard, wonderfully lunatic advice to political candidates, and requests for assistance or endorsement to some of Britain's most prominent individuals, often liberally sprinkling the correspondence with some of his craziest philosophies and enclosing a few pounds for postage to ensure a response. In the best genteel British tradition, Henry received return correspondence from dozens of the people he contacted, and those responses, most on official letterhead, are paired with his original letters in the Complete Henry Root Letters.

As historians, will we and future generations continue to have letters, diaries, and those other priceless resources available to us? Do our attics still contain the ribbon tied bundles of love letters from one grandparent to another? Do our basements still house the boxes of Mother's Day and Father's Day cards made by tiny hands with crayons and dull scissors? Where's the college diary which

was a best friend during the first semester away from home? All of those things, when the family no longer wants them, will be important additions to an historical society's collection, helping to paint a picture of people's lives and thoughts at a particular moment in time. Are we taking steps to pass them along to become part of collections future generations to enjoy? Are we encouraging others to do the same?

Or, with e-mail, fax machines, cell phones, and other easy forms of communication readily available to us, are fewer letters being written? Fewer diaries being composed? With shredders affordable to every home and office, are there fewer pieces of business and political correspondence being retained?

As a former English teacher, I lament the fact that young people who do take pen in hand today often cannot spell, are ignorant of the most basic grammar, and are not taught to treasure words as communication tools. Their memories, should they choose to record them, will pale in comparison to those of Pepys, Adams, and others who loved the written language. An Oscar Wilde character told his companion "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train."

The appalling events of September 11th robbed us not only of people and of buildings, they cheated us of history and of memories yet to be created. Not the history of investments, of business agreements, or of legal transactions — many of those records had duplicate copies on other computers or in other filing cabinets, often in other buildings or in other cities. What we lost on September 11th was the collective wisdom and spirit of more than 6,000 people in New York City, in Pennsylvania, and in Arlington, Virginia, who represented the American experience at its best. People of all ages, from dozens of ethnic groups and nationalities, newcomers and long-time residents, parents and children, friends and strangers.

We will never again have the opportunity to know any of them except through indirect sources and through other people's stories. Their children and grandchildren will never again have the opportunity to interview them for school reports or to hear those "when I was your age" tales. Their family histories will remain unwritten. The family antiques passed to new owners will be missing some of the accompanying memories age and time should have provided.

Among the people who died that day may have been the next Albert Einstein, the next Jonas Salk, the next Winston Churchill, or the next Bob Hope. Among the people who died that day were good friends, good neighbors, good parents, good children, and good employees.

As historians, we will record the events of the day as part of life's continuum. As individuals, we will remember personal stories of courage and strength, of love and loss, of grief and comfort. Will we also remember to record those stories for future generations? Will we honor Shakespeare's observation that "there is a history in all men's lives?" Shall we now renew our efforts to collect the memories of relatives, friends, neighbors, and strangers in our own communities whose reflections can teach us about the past, about the present, and about ourselves?

Shall we now emphasize the role of museums and historical societies as repositories of the knowledge and experience of hundreds of generations, as focal points for a continuing dialogue, and as centers for opportunities to increase our awareness and our understanding of contemporary society?

*History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time;
it illumines reality, vitalizes memory,
provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.*

Cicero, 106-43 B.C.

On the Calendar

Wednesday, October 24 – El Cajon Historical Society Annual Meeting and Election. 6:00 p.m., Community Center, 195 E. Douglas Avenue. (Registration information in this newsletter.)

Saturday, October 27 – Antiques and Collectibles Extravaganza. St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 490 Farragut Circle. Appraisals 12 - 4, show and sale 12 - 4, auction 5 - 9. (See article in this newsletter.)

Sunday, October 28 – First Annual "Fall Back Festival" Historic Children's Street Fair. 11 - 4, Gaslamp Quarter, Fifth and Island Avenues. A celebration of life in late 1800s San Diego. Entertainment, pumpkin patch, food, tours, hay rides, demonstrations, and more.

Knox House Museum hours:

12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Thursdays and Saturdays

Heritage is published quarterly for members and friends of the El Cajon Historical Society. Send comments and materials for publication to the El Cajon Historical Society, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973.

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If you are not now a member and would like to join, please stop by the museum for an application or leave a message for us at 444-3800 and we will be happy to send one to you.

El Cajon Historical Society
P.O. Box 1973
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