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# Heritage

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*El Cajon Historical Society Quarterly News*

*Volume 23, Issue 4 October  
2002*

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## *American Folk Music to be Enjoyed at October 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Membership Dinner*

The El Cajon Community Center will ring with the sounds of banjo, guitar, harmonica, and mountain dulcimer Wednesday evening, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, as Historical Society members and guests gather for our 2002 Annual Meeting and election of officers. Entertainers Elaine Harper and Richard Wilkie promise to involve audience members in their enthusiastic performance, getting our toes tapping and our voices raised in the chorus of original American folk songs.

Cupid's Catering, a favorite of Historical Society members, will provide a dinner of honey baked ham, teriyaki chicken, red potatoes, green

beans almondine, as assortment of salads, rolls and butter, cake, and coffee. The cost will be \$16.00 per person.

Members and guests are encouraged to arrive at the Community Center, located at 195 E. Douglas Avenue in downtown El Cajon, by 5:30 to enjoy wine, beer, and a social period before the 5:45 business meeting and election of officers for the 2003 program year. Dinner will be served at 6:00.

Please use the registration form included in this newsletter and mail your reservations early for this enjoyable evening!

## *Familiar Faces to Return as 2003 Board Members, Officers*

Current Historical Society officers Janie Bender and Meredith Hattrup have been nominated for reelection as the organization's 2003 President and Vice President. Carla Nowak, Recording Secretary for the 2000 and 2001 Boards, has been recommended to the membership as candidate for return to that office. Bob Hattrup has been nominated to replace long-time Treasurer Christy Klock who told the Board a year ago she wanted to be replaced after several busy years as overseer of the organization's financial affairs. Ellen

Andersen has been nominated to another term as Corresponding Secretary.

The nominating committee also recommends the election of Art Ballantyne, Bob Hattrup, Carla Nowak, and Teresa Yeakey to new three-year terms on the Board of Directors.

They will join current Board members Ellen Andersen, Christy Klock, and Eldonna Lay whose terms end in 2003 and Janie Bender, Rick Hall, Meredith Hattrup, and Fran Hill whose terms end in 2004.

Jim Graves, a former Society President, has been nominated to fill a vacancy on the Board for a term ending in 2003.

Ellen Andersen, Rick Hall, Fran Hill, Christy Klock, and Eldonna Lay have been nominated as the 2003 Nominating Committee.

## *Annual Drawing to Award Stay at Colorful 1920s Lake Arrowhead Resort Hotel*

Elegant parties, dapper gentlemen, gangsters and gamblers, ladies of the evening, prohibitionists and bootleggers – Bracken Fern Manor in the San Bernardino Mountains has a fascinating history as one of the three main buildings at Club Arrowhead of the Pines, Lake Arrowhead's first private membership resort. Built in 1929 by Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel as a gambling resort, the hotel was restored in 1993 and is now the Bracken Fern Manor Country Inn, a House of Fine Repute and a California State Historic Landmark.

This year's Historical Society opportunity drawing fund raiser will award some lucky individual a two-night stay in one of the ten beautiful guest rooms at the restored English Tudor manor. Guests will enjoy a daily breakfast and all the conveniences of the modern country inn while exploring the secret tunnels, the wine cellar, and the grounds carefully tended by the current owners.

Two tickets – priced at just \$10 each – were mailed to all of our members on September 1<sup>st</sup>. If you need more or want additional tickets to share with friends, please call the Historical Society office at 444-3800 and leave a message with your request.

The two-night stay for two will be available Mondays through Thursdays during January, March, April, and May of next year. The lucky winner will be chosen at our Annual Meeting on Wednesday evening, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## *Historical Society Celebrates New Additions to the Knox*

by Eldonna Lay  
Knox House Museum Curator

Two beautiful new glass-fronted cabinets have been installed at the Knox House, one on either side of the kitchen window. The design and construction of the ceiling-height cabinets was based on considerable research of period kitchens, and first-time visitors will be surprised

to learn they were not always part of Mrs. Knox's home. Exhibited within is part of the museum's collection of sturdy tea pots, crockery, tin implements, and metal food containers. Regrettably, we have only one piece of yellow ware, a bowl, but we've left room for more and are actively looking for donations.

Each cabinet is locked, allowing us to safely exhibit private collections of antique kitchenware (defined as items through the 1950s). Please call the museum at 444-3800 if you have a collection you'd like to put on view for our visitors. A member of the Curators Committee — Meredith Hattrup, Nona Litchfield, Fran Hill, Ellen Andersen, Christy Klock, Rick Hall, and Eldonna Lay — will call you back to arrange the loan.

And, who are those handsome people in the living room window? The first of several murals to be painted on window shades at the Knox was recently completed and installed by local artist Robert Kelsch, current President of the East County Art Association and owner of Sign Crafters. Additional windows will soon contain other scenes of life in the house at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The project was created by Judy Garrett, former Society President, and paid for, in part, by an earlier grant from Friends of East County Arts.

The first mural has drawn stares, chuckles, and inquiries from drivers and pedestrians alike, helping to focus new attention on the Knox House museum and its important role in our community.

## *A Look Back . . . . .*

El Cajon celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday this year! What else happened in 1912?

- # New Mexico and Arizona became states.
- # The first electric iron was introduced.
- # George Gershwin began taking music lessons.
- # The Spreckles Theater opened.
- # A gallon of gas cost 11¢.
- # Boston won the World Series.
- # Woodrow Wilson was President.
- # Julia Child and Perry Como were born.
- # La Mesa was known as the "Film Capital of the West"
- # The Titanic sank on her maiden voyage.

## *October 19<sup>th</sup> Home Tour to Feature Four Local Houses, Beautiful Gardens*

Mark your calendars now for our Annual Home Tour --- four fabulous El Cajon homes available for viewing Saturday afternoon, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Tickets for all four are \$10 and proceeds will benefit our Historical Society.

The custom built Mt. Helix home at 11735 Shadow Glen, neglected for years, has been lovingly transformed into an Italian style villa by owners Bob and Joanie Sundstrom. Visitors will see the grounds featuring much rock, stone, tile, and charming terraced landscaping.

Veronica McGowan's home at 1635 Penasco Way was a Craftsman farm house built

by the Saunders family just before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is listed in El Cajon's 1985 Historic Preservation Inventory.

Also included on the tour will be the two-story home with an attic at 1571 Granite Hills Drive, thought to be the oldest occupied house in El Cajon. Constructed by Joseph Caldwell in 1894, its architecture remains unchanged since it was built 108 years ago. The house, now owned by Lucille Colson, has its original three fireplaces, a spiral staircase, redwood floors, an attic, and many other original features.

The fourth property on the tour is located at 1796 Naranca and owned by Sharon Vowles. Guests will be enchanted with the charming front yard and will follow a meandering path through her extensive array of flower beds to the whimsical fairyland garden in the rear. Refreshments will be served at the Vowles home.

Tickets are \$10 each for this self-directed tour. Please use the ticket purchase form enclosed in this issue of *Heritage* and order yours soon — we expect this to be a very popular tour!

NOTE: WALKING SHOES ARE A MUST — participants will find some stairs, some inclines, no wheelchair access.

In case of rain, your ticket purchase will become a donation to the El Cajon Historical Society.

## *“Koi - Koi: Living Jewels”*

*by Morgan Gallo*

First Place Winner, 2002 Essay Contest

“We have driven past Koi-Koi many times. I have always wondered what was inside the olive green building with the white picket fence and the brightly colored Koi signs. When Mrs. Pear told our class that we could write an essay on El Cajon's past, I started to look for something to write for my essay.

“One day we drove past Koi-Koi and decided to stop in and look around. I met a lady who breeds and sells Koi fish. Her name is Donita Blalock. She is the owner of Koi-Koi Living Jewels which is located at 1975 Jamacha Rd., El Cajon, CA. She told me many interesting things. When she was a teenager, she went to Granite Hills High School and participated in the 4-H program.

“Donita dreamed of being a fowl judge in the 4-H program. In her backyard pond she raised ducks and geese. One night a pack of wild dogs came and killed all of her water birds. That was the end of her fowl raising days. The big pond sat empty until Donita had an idea to add fish. Her interest in fish kept growing. First, she started with a few fish and then expanded into expensive Koi. She developed Koi-Koi in 1988 as a place to breed, sell, and share her passion with the public.

“She became a charter member of the San Diego Koi Club and advertises her Japanese Koi in a National Trade Magazine. She ships her fish in chilled plastic bags all over the world. Sometimes she has to sedate the fish for travel. Her business is open seven days a week. She is on call 24 hours a day to help other owners with their Koi and pond emergencies.

"The San Diego Koi Club has an annual show where the Koi can be judged. The fish are judged on shape, color, and even how they swim. Only hobbyists show their Koi. Donita is a dealer and does not show her Koi because this is considered "bad form."

"Ms. Blalock calls Koi "Living Jewels." She considers breeding Koi a living art form. "The pond is her canvas and the Koi are her paints," said Donita. The fish come in various mixtures of white, red, orange, yellow, and black. Very much like diamonds, they come in a variety of grades, colors, breeds, and values. No two Koi are alike.

"The best Koi come from Japan and can cost anywhere from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000. The Koi that she sells at her store are bred from Japanese fish stock. She has been buying from the same breeder for over 30 years.

"Ms. Blalock has over eight Koi ponds to maintain. Some of these ponds are at her home. This is where she keeps her favorite fish. She is an orange and white Harewaki (a breed of Koi). It is a big female that is 28 inches long and weighs over 15 pounds. Donita did not name her fish because she does not want to become attached to it. This would make it harder to sell. Her fish is smart. She has trained it to eat from her hand. It likes to have its skin touched. Her fish can also tell by the sound of footsteps, amplified by water, who is approaching the pond. Koi are to be viewed from above, not in an aquarium.

"Ms. Blalock also told me about her childhood. She was born in Chula Vista, CA and grew up in El Cajon near Valhalla High

School. Her father worked for the Western Lumber Company in National City. He milled the lumber used to construct the Koi-Koi building. The original building was a vegetable shed for Mr. Lamp's farm. Mr. Lamp had an airstrip along Jamacha Road where his crop dusting plane would take off and land. This was next to the packing shed.

"When Donita was a teenager she worked for Farmer Lamp packing vegetables in the same olive green building her business now occupies. Instead of vegetables, inside the cooler, she keeps her fish food and other supplies. In 1995, when the old vegetable packing shed became available for lease, Donita relocated her business to the new location for "old times sake."

"About Koi: It is considered good luck to own one and relaxing to watch them swim in a pond. Donita says "A Koi pond will give you a much better outlook on life."

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*(When this essay was written last Spring,  
 Morgan was a student in Mrs. Pear's third grade  
 class  
 at Vista Grande Elementary School.)*

## *Local Appraisers to Share Expertise at October 5<sup>th</sup> Appraisal and Auction*

Gather those family treasures and collectibles and join your friends at St. Alban's

Episcopal Church Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, for the Second Annual Antique Appraisal and Auction sponsored by the El Cajon Historical Society and the Ladies Auxiliary of St. Alban's Episcopal Church.

For a fee of \$5 per item, several local appraisers will share their expertise and advice from 9:00 in the morning until 2:00 in the afternoon. An auction will begin at 3:00. Participants in last year's event were able to select from a wide array of items, large and small, expensive and affordable, nostalgic and whimsical, which had been donated for the auction.

St. Alban's is located at 490 Farragut Circle. Parking is close and convenient.

Questions? Lou Toth (442-0191), Fran Hill (444-7564) and Ellen Andersen (442-3059) are among the members of the planning committee.

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## *Library Exhibits Honor "California History Month"*

by Eldonna Lay

Knox House Museum Curator

Museum members installed three large exhibits in our local library to honor September as "California History Month." Most items relate directly to El Cajon's part in the settling of Southern California. Specifically, the exhibit on Prohibition, for El Cajon went 'dry' decades before the nation chose that route. In fact, El Cajon was the only city in San Diego County to close down neighborhood saloons, hotel saloons, and to remove alcoholic beverages from restaurants. Exhibit creators used a report to the city by the archaeological firm hired to excavate the land around the old Corona Hotel prior to the building of today's Albertson's shopping center at the northwest corner of Main and Magnolia.

Early local prohibition began in the late 1890s and continued into the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Temperance and the prohibition of alcohol was the number one national social issue of the period. Locally, it was championed by El Cajon members of the Anti-Saloon League, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the El Cajon Social and Improvement Club, Christian Endeavor, the Ancient Order of United Workers, the Woman's Club, and the Presbyterian Church. It was these groups which petitioned the Board of Supervisors for a total ban on alcohol.

Later, when the state went dry, new laws called for the removal of all vineyards. Although El Cajon's vast vineyards were planted in raisin grapes, they fell under the new laws. It killed local

raisin ranchers production of that world-famous fruit, thereby ending the valley's phenomenal agricultural success throughout America and abroad.

## *Membership Chair Encourages Early Renewals, Welcomes New Members*

It's October again . . .

Membership chair Dorothy Baber will mail renewal letters later this month asking current members to renew for 2003. Please remember that your support not only keeps you on the mailing list for *Heritage* and special activities throughout the year, but gives you a discount on the purchase of our Knox House Museum tour video, a terrific Christmas present for friends and family. And . . . please remember that a membership in the Society is also a terrific present for anyone interested in El Cajon's past.

The Society also welcomes new individual members Jean Wallace and Robert Ballantyne, new family members Steve and Laurie Perry, and new business member the Santee Historical Society.

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*The Inside Back Page*  
will return in the January issue of *Heritage*.

Wiegborst Museum Project



### *Continues to Move Ahead*

The museum dedicated to the memory of Olaf Wieghorst, El Cajon's most famous Western artist, has seen considerable progress since July with the removal and replacement of exterior siding, the installation of a fire sprinkler system, renovation of interior rooms, and reconstruction of windows and doors. The Museum Foundation is now awaiting the delivery of replacement roofing materials.

A perimeter wall and fence, construction of a stable, and the installation of landscaping will be completed before the house is refurnished and opened to the public.

*12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Thursdays and Saturdays  
or by appointment.*

*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. Phone: (619) 444-3800.

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| Vice President       | Meredith Hattrup |
| Recording Secretary  | Tammy Goodwater  |
| Corresponding Secty. | Ellen Andersen   |
| Treasurer            | Christy Klock    |
| Editor               | Judy Garrett     |

### *Knox House Museum hours:*

— for membership information, please visit the museum or call us at (619) 444-3800 —

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P.O. Box 1973  
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www.elcajonhistory.org

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Annual Meeting and Election  
Wednesday, October 23, 2002  
-- details inside --