



## Annual Meeting Oct. 29

# Railroad buff shares 'bucket list' adventure

All aboard for this year's Annual Dinner Meeting to be held at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 29, at Coco's Family Restaurant, 1025 Fletcher Parkway, El Cajon.

Last year's annual meeting was a hit featuring planes, so you won't want to miss this year's program highlighting trains.

There will be a brief meeting for the election of officers and approval of the budget followed by a special presentation by Richard Pennick, a working locomotive engineer and conductor on the weekend trains operated by the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association at its Campo Living-History and Train-Operation Center. (Read about the railway museum on page 7.)

A lifelong railroad buff, Pennick is also a former Board member of the El Cajon Historical Society.

In his presentation of "Soot and Cinders," Pennick will describe his exploits hand-firing ancient coal-burning steam locomotives in the high country of northern New Mexico. You won't want to miss this true-life "bucket list" adventure on a historic mountain narrow-gauge railroad.

Seating is limited so get your reservations in early. See page 10 of



**RICHARD PENNICK**

this newsletter for dinner selections and the meeting reservation form. The deadline for reservations is Monday, October 27.

# Government agencies honor ECHS for volunteer service

The El Cajon Historical Society was honored for contributing more than 100 hours of volunteer service during the El Cajon Centennial Celebration with the following:

- California State Senate Certificate of Recognition by Senator Joel Anderson.
- California State Assembly Certificate of Recognition by Assemblyman Brian W. Jones.
- Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition by Congressman Duncan Hunter and another by Congresswoman Susan A. Davis .
- City of El Cajon Certificate of Achievement by Mayor Bill Wells.

Thank you to all ECHS members who volunteered their time to make El Cajon's Centennial Celebration a huge success.

## Knox House closes due to severe heat

Due to continuing problems with the air conditioning system at the Knox House, the museum will remain closed until the problem can be resolved. Last month temperatures inside the Knox House reached more than 100 degrees.

At this time, it is unknown when the museum will reopen. If you need something from inside the museum (research, photographs, etc.), please call (619) 444-3800 and a Board member will get back to you.

## Welcome New Members

Shane Bailey  
 Jerry Butsko  
 Austin Criscenti  
 Roman DeLucia  
 Sharon Greiner  
 Phoebe Marrall  
 Gayle Tinnerman  
 Stephen R. Van Wormer  
 & Susan D. Walter

## President's Message

# Society Committees at Work

by G. Carroll Rice

The enthusiasm and collaboration among members and committees of our Historical Society never cease to amaze me. Although the Knox House is 'dark' during the month of August, the Board of Directors and the appointed committees continued to seek additions to our collections, plan for events, preserve records, and undertake a host of administrative tasks.

Fran Hill and the Nominating Committee prepared slates of officers and directors to be presented for the vote of the membership at the Annual Meeting. Becky Taylor and Alice Rodriguez arranged for the use of the Greenfield school auditorium for the presentation of the Essay Contest awards and are preparing for school tours and docent activity.

The By-Laws and Standing Rules Study Committee has been extremely busy. Chairwoman Mary Saxton, supported by Christy Klock and Carroll Rice, has devoted many hours of studying and exploring revisions that bring the governing rules up-to-date. The input from the Directors, committees, and individual members has been outstanding, particularly from Mike Kaszuba, who contributed numerous thought-provoking questions and suggestions. The goal, of course, is to make our By-Laws and Standing Rules cogent, workable documents that ensure cooperation among the officers, the membership, the public and the city for years to come.

The list of men and women whose significant contributions to the advancement of the El Cajon Historical Society could be continued to include a dozen more – Anita Tinsley, publishing the Heritage, and Rick Hall, acting as a maintenance committee by himself, are examples.

This Society depends on dedicated volunteers to sustain, maintain, and expand our resources and services. In this letter of gratitude and tribute, I haven't even mentioned the docents, the services provided by the Curator and the Archivist, and our membership acting as a 'committee of the whole.'

To all I say a heartfelt "Thank you!" Your spirit makes our Society great!

## ECHS bids farewell to two faithful friends

This summer ECHS lost two long-time members – Florence Case and Betty Christensen.

Elizabeth Mary (Betty) Christensen, 85, passed away June 25. Originally from Canada, she and husband Chris lived in El Cajon for many years. She worked as a secretary for several businesses. When her husband died, Betty moved to Alpine to live with her daughter.



Betty joined ECHS in April 2000 and served as a docent for the Knox House. She was also active in the Larks and attended church in Ramona where her son serves as a deacon.

Florence Case, 90, died peacefully on August 31 at Sungarden Terrace, Lemon Grove. She was born Florence Elizabeth Woolford in 1924 and married Warren C. Case in 1946.

As an Army officer's wife, Florence traveled the world. With her engaging personality and steadfast belief in her husband, she promoted herself as the example of a proper officer's wife, a role she maintained throughout her life. Florence resided in Alaska, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and a dozen locations in the U.S. Florence joined ECHS in January 1994.



Both Betty and Florence enjoyed people and caused many a smile at our quarterly meetings. They will both be deeply missed.



*This bare field on east Greenfield Drive in the Granite Hills area was once a flourishing orange grove. It has remained bare for many years. On this occasion, a few families were selling home-made goodies to raise money to help pay for a local man in need of cancer surgery available only in Germany. Although the groves are long since gone, active concern for others remains typical of El Cajon residents.*



Al Vildibill, left, and Larry Fletcher point out bore drillings in the blocks in Grossmont High School's front wall.

## Two former students find high school's granite source

On a spontaneous search for historical confirmation, cement contractor Al Vildibill and realtor Larry Fletcher (grandson of Colonel Ed Fletcher) went looking for the source of the granite facing used to cover Grossmont High School's front wall. Comparing the hand-drilled bore holes on the large wall blocks to those in Colonel Ed Fletcher's local granite quarry, the two graduates of the class of 1955 are confident they've found the right place.

Recently, they provided Rick Hall and the Society's long-time curator Eldonna Lay with an information-crammed replication of that hunt. One tidbit was a mention of the Colonel's role while a California Guardsman in the nation's new National Guard. He earned that rank after maintaining law and order in San Francisco after the devastating earthquake of 1906. Later, it was his quarry that provided the small granite blocks to repave that city's streets.

### 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President ..... G. Carroll Rice  
 Vice President..... Fran Parsons Hill  
 Treasurer ..... George Dall  
 Recording Secretary ..... Gloria Chadwick  
 Corresponding Secretary ..... Sharon Jarboe  
 Curators ..... Mike Kaszuba, Eldonna Lay  
 Archivist ..... Mike Kaszuba  
 Office Manager ..... Mary Saxton  
 Maintenance ..... Rick Hall  
 Membership ..... Christy Klock  
 Essay Contest ..... Becky Taylor  
 Heritage Editor ..... Anita Tinsley  
 Webmaster ..... Jonna Waite  
 Members at Large ..... Jack Dickens, Joe Klock,  
 Richard Lay and Carla Nowak

Telephone Messages 619-444-3800

## ECHS Proposed Officers and Board Members

*This proposed slate of officers and board members will be nominated and voted upon at the annual meeting October 29.*

The following officers are proposed for one-year terms starting January 1, 2015:

- President ..... George Carroll Rice
- Vice President ..... Joseph Klock
- Recording Secretary ..... Colleen White
- Corresponding Secretary ..... Sharon Jarboe
- Treasurer ..... George B. Dall, C.P.A

The following persons are appointed for a one-year term as director beginning January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015: Gloria Chadwick, Jack Dickens, Richard Hall, Sharon Jarboe, and Mike Kaszuba.

The following persons are nominated for election to the Board of Directors for a three-year term that will end December 31, 2017:

- Christy Klock
- Joseph Klock
- Dick Lay
- Carla Nowak

The following Directors will continue to serve with terms ending December 31, 2016:

- Frances Hill
- George Carroll Rice
- Anita Tinsley
- Colleen White

The following Directors will continue to serve with terms ending December 31, 2015:

- George B. Dall, CPA
- Eldonna Lay
- Mary Saxton
- Rebecca Taylor

The following persons are recommended to serve on the Nominating Committee for the year 2015:

- Jack Dickens
- Frances Hill
- Joseph Klock
- Rebecca Taylor
- Anita Tinsley

*Respectfully submitted by the 2014 Nominating Committee:*

Jack Dickens, Frances Hill, Joseph Klock, Rebecca Taylor, and Anita Tinsley



# New at the Knox

by Mike Kaszuba, Curator

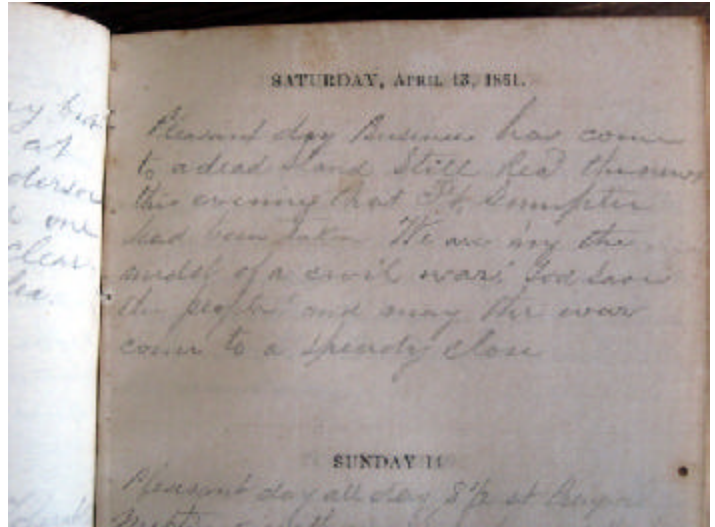
*This past quarter has been a great one for the ECHS archives. We have received several wonderful donations ranging from brand new electronic media to a hand-written diary from 1861!*

## DOCUMENTS, DEEDS, DIARIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS RELATED TO THE ASHER-VACHER FAMILY LINE, EARLY EL CAJON INHABITANTS

**Donated by:** Gayle Tinnerman, “The Paper Lady”

**Description:** When Gayle first acquired this sizable grouping, it was with intent for quick turnaround sale on eBay. However, the more she researched the items, the more aware she became of their historical significance, and ultimately Gayle became convinced that the best steward for these little treasures would be our Historical Society. Included with the lot are the personal diaries of Josephus M. Asher from 1861 and 1863 (while working a gold mine in northern California), and the 1939 diary of Robert Haley Asher, a well-versed local naturalist and plein air artist better known by his moniker, the Hermit of Palomar.

The early pioneer family of Josephus Asher and Sarah H. Clark came to San Diego in 1869, where Josephus established the first commercial nursery of the region, and also served as County Assessor. They settled in El Cajon in the 1890s. A good deal of time will be required to see how these items tie in with the existing archives. We can't thank Gayle enough for this donation, which will join our growing Asher-Vacher collection.



*When I read this poignant diary entry for April 13, 1861, the hair stood on the back of my neck! For those of you no longer taught cursive, it says “Pleasant day. Business has come to a dead Stand Still. Rec'd the news this evening that Ft Sumpter (sic) had been taken. We are in the midst of a civil war! God save the people! and may the war come to a speedy close.” Of course, it would be four horrendous years before that happened!*



*Have an eye for faces? We don't know who most of these individuals are yet. Perhaps you would like to volunteer to attempt a match-up with identified photos in our archives.*



*A sampling of the many Asher documents.*

*(continued on page 6)*

# Heritage launches 'stories' column

It is never boring at the Knox, even when no one comes in but the docents, for that's when personal stories are told – sometimes of their own growing up years, or memories of homecomings or reunions, silly pranks, or historic moments involving others. Talk about learning experiences!

G. Carroll Rice has written about his experiences to considerable acclaim from readers of this Heritage. Others have identified places – like Fran Parsons Hill's father's gold mines on east Chase Avenue and the mine and huge stamping mill beside a stream that used to run between today's Fuerte and Fuerte Farms Road. Jim Graves' has written about himself and his brother roller skating in the basement of their childhood home on property now owned by St. Kieran's Church off Greenfield.

Other times, docents hear of experiences told by drop-ins who aren't interested in touring the house ... just want someone to listen and maybe pass on their stories.

In this column, we'll tell some of those stories that have been verified ... or that need verification.



*Docent Jonna Waite points out a historical photograph to museum visitors.*



## How to become a museum volunteer

Docents are the public face of our museum, and the ones who hear life experiences first-hand from many of our guests.

You don't have to be an "expert" on El Cajon history to docent. A short guide provides a quick course on what you need to know, and informational wall signs are located throughout the museum.

Docents serve in teams of at least two, and new docents start off "shadowing" more experienced volunteers. Historical attire is optional.

A few hours a month is all that's required. The museum is only open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays (except the 5th Saturday of the month). Docents usually serve one Saturday a month.

If desired, docents can also volunteer to lead school and special tours of the museum.

If you'd like to know more about becoming a docent, contact Becky Taylor at (619) 440-3069 or by e-mail at [cruznbecky@cox.net](mailto:cruznbecky@cox.net).

Some months back, the Society received a phone call from the great, great granddaughters of F. MacDonald Barton, the founder of an El Cajon boys' boarding school back in 1922.

Surprise: no one on the Board had ever heard of him, but the resume in a 1972 San Diego Union-Tribune paper brought in by the two young relatives to our current ECHS president G. Carroll Rice was impressive!

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Barton had been a 1903 graduate of Harvard University, a member of the Harvard Alumni Association, and a San Diego County resident for more than three decades. The final 30 of them was spent at 821 San Luis Rey Place – presumably also the address of the school, because we've not yet found a mention of the local – and probably private – Overlook Ranch School for Boys.

Survivors in 1972 were a son, Blake M. Barton of San Diego, and a daughter, Mrs. Nancy Hackenger. The granddaughters brought a number of photos that were helpful, and some more information – and if any of you members would like to join the fun of pursuing information on this person and the school, Society archivists (and readers) will be forever grateful. E-mail your name, phone number and findings to [ech0997@att.net](mailto:ech0997@att.net) or leave a message on the Knox House answering machine at (619) 444-3800, and you will be contacted.



# New at the Knox (continued from page 4)

## CD – HELIX WATER DISTRICT CENTENNIAL

**Donated by: Helix Water District**

**Description:** This compilation celebrates 100 years of the Helix Water District. It contains over 130 historic images covering the history of supplying water to the El Cajon valley. Included are photos dating back to the 1880s of the Cuyamaca flume line, early reservoirs and pumping stations, flume walkers and workers, dams and dam keepers and pumping stations.

## DVD – OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY

**Donated by: Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation**

*(Presented to Board member Becky Taylor for the ECHS during our "America on Main Street" celebration)*

**Description:** A 48-minute eye-opening documentary that traces the history of the Kumeyaay people from their early beginnings 12,000 years ago to the present-day reservation and culture. This film explores "the exploitation and near extermination of the Kumeyaay people" and has won a 2014 Emmy award for outstanding achievement in television. I would encourage everyone to watch this film and experience a fresh point of view on the history of Native Americans endemic to San Diego County. Viewing is available to ECHS members on the office computer.

## 3 ISSUES – 1940 CAJON VALLEY UNION SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

**Donated by: Keana Lovelace, Grossmont High class of 2014**

*(On behalf of Patricia Archard, Grossmont High class of 1944)*

**Description:** If you were one of those attending El Cajon School in 1940, you will surely enjoy stopping by the Knox House to see what memories these newsletters may elicit. For the rest of us, it's a step back in time to see what school life was like before WWII ... actually, not so very different from today!

## A FIVE VOLUME BOOK SET – THE TINGLEY FAMILY, REVISED

**Donated by: Marilyn Summers Wojdak**

**Description:** This genealogical resource traces back the Tingley family line several hundred years. Marilyn's maternal grandparents, Myrtie Adell Tingley and Dwight Carroll Higbee, came to the valley from Michigan around 1907, and her mother, Eva Higbee Summers, was born in Bostonia in 1910. If you are doing any genealogy research and think you might have a connection to the Tingley-Summers-Ward-Wojdak-Smith-Walston-Wheaton-Higbee tree, then this resource might prove a real treasure find for you.



*How much DNA might you share with these folks?*

# ECHS Profit & Loss Budget Overview

January through December 2015

### Income

Miscellaneous Sales	\$ 400.00
Book Sales	150.00
Copy/Photo Sales	1,000.00
Donations	1,300.00
Dues	2,400.00
Investment Income	20.00
Opportunity Drawings	500.00
Quarterly Meetings	2,000.00
Funds to be Raised	865.00

**Total Income \$8,635.00**

### Expense

Books for Sale	\$ 100.00
Building Maintenance	500.00
Insurance	1,300.00
Miscellaneous Expense	175.00
Newsletter-Publications	290.00
Office Expense	900.00
P. O. Box Rental	90.00
Postage	270.00
Quarterly Meetings	2,000.00
Safe Deposit Box Rental	135.00
Sales Tax	75.00
Security	250.00
Storage	675.00
Telephone/Internet	1,475.00
Third Grade Essay	400.00

**Total Expenses \$8,635.00**

Net Income 0.00

## Great Gift Idea

Looking for something to give that friend or relative who has everything? Why not give a membership in the El Cajon Historical Society? Individual memberships are only \$12. You can also pay your 2014 membership dues at the same time.



## THE PACIFIC SOUTHWEST RAILWAY MUSEUM ASSOCIATION:

# PRESERVING AND INTERPRETING THE RICH HISTORY OF OUR RAILROADS IN THE PACIFIC SOUTHWEST

by Dick Pennick, Media Coordinator, PSRMA, Inc.

Looking back to that auspicious day in the spring of 1961— when 13 local historians, railroad buffs, businessmen, musicians, educators and college students met in the tiny office of Balboa Park’s Spreckels Organ Pavilion to create a “living-history” tribute to railroading — I find it difficult to believe that the large and successful heritage organization that we now know as the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association is more than 53 years old!

Who could have envisioned then that the museum would someday have a 40-acre railway heritage museum



in rural Campo with more than 80 historic rolling artifacts representing more than 100 years of American railroad technology, and actually operate authentic vintage trains on 14 winding, scenic miles of a historic mountain railroad!

Today, the museum owns and operates two public venues: the restored 1894 La Mesa Depot Museum in downtown La Mesa and the large Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Living-History & Train-Operation Center in beautiful Campo, 50 miles east of downtown San Diego on State Route 94.

To navigate us to this point, a continuous parade of bright, intelligent, enterprising and hard-working volunteers, young and old, have passed through our portals. Surprising to some observers, many of these folks are not “railroad fans” in the classic sense, but rather ordinary community members from as far away as Los Angeles, Orange County and Yuma, Arizona, who take great pride in making their individual contribution to our success.

Typical of the many volunteer activities available at one or both of our venues includes serving as a crew member on our weekend vintage train journeys. Since we operate our trains on a public common-carrier rail line, crew volunteers are trained by the museum under the guidelines of the Federal Railroad Administration, just like the train crews on Amtrak and the thousands of commercial freight railroads throughout the U.S. Our crews are some of the best volunteer railroaders anywhere, and take great pride and satisfaction in doing their job to the best of their ability. All positions — speeder operator, Brakeman, Conductor and Locomotive Engineer — are available to any adult member, regardless of gender.



*Engine No. 3873 crosses SR 94, five miles west of Campo, with museum's weekend train, the Golden State.*

Coming up in October is the Pumpkin Express, a three-weekend series of special trains to the Pumpkin Patch beginning October 11th and concluding on Sunday, October 26th. Reservations are required.

Beginning Friday, November 28th, our festive four-weekend series of North Pole Limited Santa Trains will journey to the “North Pole” each Friday and Saturday evening through December 20th to pick up Santa. These trains sell out quickly.

Information, fares, and seats for both events are available now on our website at [www.PSRM.org](http://www.PSRM.org) or call (619) 465-PSRM for recorded information

On most weekends (except North Pole trains), opportunities are available on a first-come, first-served basis to ride up on the locomotive with the engineer. Called a “Cab Ride”, two seats are available on each train and must be reserved online in advance. This option makes a great gift. Participants are allowed to blow the engine’s horn for the road crossings.

The museum also provides opportunities for individuals and groups to rent certain vintage cars in our heritage collection and hook them onto one of our weekend Golden State passenger trains for their exclusive use.

Last but not least, the Association maintains a significant collection of archival materials related to the railroads of San Diego and elsewhere. The Southwest Railway Library is said to be the second-largest library of its kind in California and is available for research by appointment.

The Auto Club’s Westways Magazine has called us one of the “eight great” railroad museums in California. Let us show you why. All aboard!

## 2014 Third Grade Essay Contest

# Winning Essays Spotlight Varied Subjects

Students from 15 elementary schools submitted essays covering various aspects of El Cajon's history in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Third Grade Essay Contest. The winning essays are posted at [www.elcajonhistory.org](http://www.elcajonhistory.org) (under "Education") and are included in this newsletter as space permits. The first place winner was published in the July 2014 Heritage. The following are four more winning essays.

### 2nd Place

## CAJON SPEEDWAY

by Austin Criscenti, W.D. Hall School

The El Cajon history is very important to me. I choose to write about Cajon Speedway because my family has a lot of history with racing. I grew up with racing my whole life. My dad, John, used to race quads for a living. I have grown up going to the desert and riding quads. I enjoy watching races at the desert and at Qualcomm stadium.

My parents and grandparents used to go to Cajon Speedway on Saturday nights to watch cars race. From what my Pop told me, "Cajon Speedway was the hit on Saturday nights in El Cajon".

Cajon Speedway was known as "the fastest 3/8-mile paved oval in the West". The land was originally supposed to be a training facility for the



Detroit Tigers baseball team, but Earle Brucker, Sr. earned a 50-year lease for 70 acres of land, that was just south of Gillespie Field Airport back in 1955. The track was opened as a 1/4-mile dirt oval on July 15, 1961. It ran as a dirt track until October of 1963. Since 1961, more than 3,965,000 fans have come to the races at Cajon Speedway. It was one of the most successful and longest running race tracks on the West Coast. It was changed to a 3/8-mile dirt oval on April 17, 1964 and stayed that way until 1965. In April 1966, the track re-opened as a 3/8-mile paved race track. The race track closed for cars at the end of 2004.

At the end of the night, at the Cajon Speedway, there was a Demolition Derby. The Demolition Derby was where old cars would ram into each other until they broke down. My parents told me it was fun to watch. Sometimes they had two to three cars that were attached to each other. The cars would go until only one car was left running.

This place sounded like a dream. I wish I could of seen this in real life. Racing has always been something I love to watch. I hope to one day become a racer and join in the fun like my hero, Dale Earnhardt, Jr.

### Virginia Stead Award

## GOPHER SNAKES IN EL CAJON

by Patrick Reynolds, Blossom Valley School

One day when I was walking through my yard in El Cajon I saw a San Diego Gopher Snake! I was excited when I saw it. It flickered its tongue rapidly. The snake didn't know where it was. It moved a little bit, but not a lot. We didn't know what it was going to do next.

I got interested in this snake. I learned that they eat small mammals, bird eggs, small rodents, lizards, and birds. They kill their prey by squeezing them really hard. This is called constriction.

They protect themselves by camouflage. Their colors are black, brown, a little bit of yellow, and white. I think it is good camouflage. They also slither away, hiss, and then they try to bite you.



They also make animals confused thinking they're a Rattle Snake.

I think these are amazing animals, so we should protect them. You should never put netting around your garden. You should not put netting because snakes can get caught. You should also not kill a Gopher Snake. In my opinion you should never kill a snake.



## 3rd Place

# W. D. HALL

by Roman De Lucia, Vista Grande School



Jesse Phillip Rexford Hall and his wife, Charlotte, left Michigan in 1883 and arrived in the area of El Cajon in 1886. The Hall family decided to buy 40 acres of land for \$60.00 an acre for their farm and soon to be build home. Wheat and hay was planted. George A. Cowles taught Jesse Hall and his son Wilson Dana Hall, known as W.D., about raisin grapes. They planted 32 acres of grapes for raisins.

W.D., the eldest son, went off to earn his living and begin a new life. He went to Coronado and helped build the Hotel Del Coronado. He also helped build the old Drug Store and Shoe shop in El Cajon. W.D. saved up his money from his jobs and bought about 29 acres in El Cajon. W.D. decided to travel. He ended up in New York and found a girl named Florence Eliza Grant. They were married. She was the niece of General and former President of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant.

A few years later W.D. brought his family back to the west. He decided to build a home out of wood from the Russ Lumber Company. He built his home on his land and about a year later he bought the Russ Lumber Company. He wanted to move it closer to his land. That is when W.D. and Charles Kessler formed a partnership. This was about 1897. The partners bought more land in El Cajon for the new location of their Lumber Yard. In 1905 he bought the other half of the company from Kessler, this became the W.D. Hall Lumber Company.

The Lumber Company now not only dealt with lumber, but with building materials, metal, machine shop, and worked with gasoline engines. The businesses grew and grew. His business was very important to the building of the town because his business was the “Home Depot,” of the day. If someone wanted to build something in El Cajon, they would go to W.D. Hall Lumber Company.

W.D. wanted to be closer to it, so he built another house on Main Street. He and Florence had eight children and lived a wonderful life building El Cajon. W.D. passed away in 1951. His eldest son Rex ran the Lumber company until 1971.

The land where the Lumber Yard was is now the East County Performing Arts Center.

## Fred & Nettie Kersten Award

# LEVI CHASE IN EL CAJON

by Ryan Haigh, Fuerte School



In 1868, Isaac Lankershim purchased the El Cajon Rancho from the Pedrorena family. He hired a lawyer named Major Levi Chase to clear the titles and boundaries for the property. This took a ton of legal skill and several years. It made him a very important civil lawyer in San Diego.

Mr. Lankershim paid Levi Chase with 7,624 acres of land. The Chase Ranch was in the rocky southern part of El Cajon Valley. His land went from Avocado Avenue, east down Chase Avenue and into the southern foothills. This area is now called Calavo Gardens, Shadow hills and Horizon Hills.

Levi Chase sold a lot of his land in the 1880's and became rich. With all his work in El Cajon, he developed an interest in agriculture.

He lived in the city of San Diego, but he spent a ton of time on his El Cajon Valley property. He built a small house on what is now the corner of Chase Avenue and South Anza Street and made 105 acres into the Cajon Villa and Fruit Farm. His farm included

homes for the people who worked on the farm. It was probably most famous for its orange trees but he planted lots of other fruits, nuts and vegetables.

He grew lots of wheat and became rich. This let him experiment with new ways to grow crops. He worked on deep plowing and fertilization methods that worked really well. He also created new machines.

His success got him lots of attention. Other growers learned from him. Agriculture experts came to El Cajon to see his modern techniques.

In the 1890s, he sold fresh fruit and vegetables to the Hotel Del Coronado. Major Levi Chase died of cancer in 1906 but the Cajon Villa and Fruit Farm grew food for lots of years to come.

Major Levi Chase was an excellent lawyer, but it was his farming work that was most important to El Cajon. His success helped other farmers and his farming techniques were used long after his death. The El Cajon Valley became important to California agriculture for over a century.

### Editor's Note

Since the third graders conduct their own research, ECHS cannot guarantee that all of the information is historically correct.



Comparing watches...yes, it's time for ECHS's annual meeting

## All aboard for annual dinner

ECHS's 2014 Annual Dinner will be held at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 29, at Coco's Restaurant, 1025 Fletcher Parkway, El Cajon (near Parkway Plaza). Dinner will be served at 6 p.m.

There will be a brief meeting for the election of officers and approval of the budget for next year followed by the presentation "Soot & Cinders – firing coal-burning steam locomotives by hand in the high mountains of Northern New Mexico" by Richard Pennick, a railroad historian with the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum.

Three dinner options are available:

- Chopped steak – seasoned ground beef topped with caramelized onions and mushrooms served with fresh vegetables and mashed potatoes.

- Herb chicken – tender, natural herb chicken served with rice pilaf and fresh seasonal vegetables.

- Mushroom veggie burger – a gourmet veggie burger with sautéed mushrooms and all natural pickles served with fresh fruit.

All meals also include your choice of pumpkin or apple pie and soda, ice tea, or hot coffee. The cost for the meeting remains \$15.

Reservations are mandatory and must be received by Monday, October 27.

**From:** El Cajon Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1973  
El Cajon, CA 92022

**To:**

### October 29 Meeting Reservation Form

Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_ (\$15 each)

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

*Reservations not kept  
become a donation*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner Choice:

*(if more than one person, indicate number of each)*

Chopped Steak \_\_\_\_\_ Herb Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie Burger \_\_\_\_\_

**RESERVATION DEADLINE  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2014**

Mail reservations and checks to:

ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973