



EL CAJON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HERITAGE

Volume 37, Issue 2

[www.elcajonhistory.org](http://www.elcajonhistory.org)

APRIL 2016



*Father Junipero Serra arrived in 1769 and set up a crude camp overlooking San Diego Bay. On Christmas eve of that year, a monstrous storm buffeted Father Serra's encampment. What did Father Serra do that likely kept San Diego from becoming a Russian city? Come find out at our next quarterly meeting April 27!*

## Essay contest awards to be given June 13

The 35th Annual Third Grade Essay Contest awards ceremony will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday, June 13, at the Greenfield Middle School Theatre, 1495 Greenfield Drive, El Cajon. All are welcome to attend.

This year's contest featured new guidelines for the essay participants. The choice of topics was limited to the following: Olaf Wieghorst, Plants and Animals Native to the El Cajon Valley, Historic Ranches of the El Cajon Valley, Kumeyaay Culture, and My Family's Journey to El Cajon.

A trophy and monetary prize will be awarded to the writer of the award-winning essay in each category.

The Rexford Hall Perpetual Trophy will be awarded to the student whose essay is determined to be the best of the five above winners. The trophy will be on display in the student's school for one year.

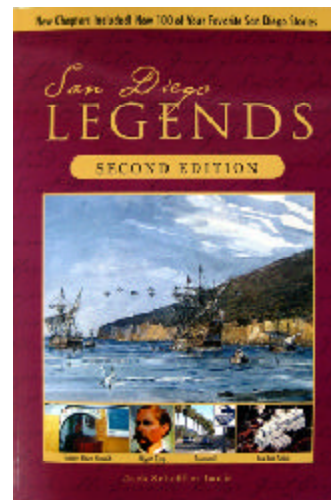
As in past years, ECHS needs volunteers to help with the contest. If you can help, please contact Becky Taylor at (619) 440-3069 or by e-mail at [cruznbecky@cox.net](mailto:cruznbecky@cox.net).

## Legends and lunch team up at next quarterly meeting

*Legends* author Jack Innis will be the guest speaker at our next quarterly meeting, which will be held at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, April 27, at DiLeone's Italian Restaurant, 1480 Jamacha Road, El Cajon.

Jack Innis began freelance writing in 1990 and has since published more than 1,200 stories in national and local newspapers and magazines. His career as San Diego's Legend Hunter began in 1999 when a magazine publisher gave him free rein — and every column inch in one entire publication — to tell history his way.

Eschewing convention, Jack opted to hunt the annals of history to uncover legends, stories, and myths that were simply too fascinating to find in typical history books. That small magazine sold 10,000 copies and spawned subsequent books and articles containing stories once heard only around campfires — stories that entertain us and help us connect with our cultural heritage.



Since the first copy of *San Diego Legends* hit the bookstores in 2004, Jack has made more than 100 speaking appearances and is a frequent guest on XETV Channel 6 morning show, "San Diego Living." His recently released new book, *San Diego Legends, Second Edition*, has been greatly expanded to include more than 100 stories and illustrations.

See page 8 of this newsletter for more meeting information and the reservation form. Reservations must be received by Monday, April 25.

## President's Message

# We need your help

by **Carla Nowak**

Dear Friends,

Since our last newsletter, 280 children, their teachers, and parent volunteers have toured the Knox House Settler Museum. What a blessing Becky Taylor, our Docent Coordinator, is! Her enthusiasm for El Cajon history is transferred by osmosis to the children and to the stalwart band of docents who join her.



Unfortunately, sometimes Becky's asthma gets the best of her, or her fellow docents are sick, on vacation, or bound by other commitments. Because of this, our pool of docents needs to be much larger.

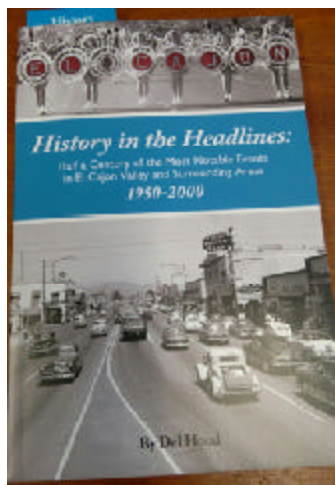
I docent whenever my schedule allows and can attest that if I can do it, anyone can do it! So don't let feelings of inadequacy keep you from at least exploring the possibility. Shadow a docent for a day and find out what it's like. It's actually quite enjoyable.

Ideally, there are seven rooms to explore, so seven docents would be great for each tour day. Most often, however, Becky has to be content with the two or three docents who are available. Also, there is no substitute pool for last-minute occurrences. Please consider adding your name to her list. You can reach her at 619-440-3069 or [cruzbecky@cox.net](mailto:cruzbecky@cox.net) to find out more.

I am also pleased to announce that Michelle Braun has agreed to be our Webmaster for one year. She has asked us to find a volunteer to be trained by her, who will take over the following year. So, if you're computer savvy and willing to be trained, leave Michelle a message at 619-444-3800.

Help us keep history alive in El Cajon!

**Carla**



*An ECHS member since 1980 and the former editor of the Daily Californian newspaper, Del Hood introduced his book to the press on April 1 at the Knox House Museum. His new book "History in the Headlines" covers the most notable events that occurred in the El Cajon Valley and surrounding areas from 1950 to 2000.*



*Two ECHS members were reunited at January's quarterly meeting. Ellen Anderson, left, was one of Jean Landis' gym class students in 1942. And Jean was one of Ellen's favorite teachers. So she called Jean, who – of course – couldn't place her, but the two arranged to meet again after all these years at the ECHS meeting.*

# NEW AT THE KNOX

by Mike Kaszuba, Archivist

During the first quarter of 2016 we again encountered a paucity of donations, but we were fortunate to add at least the following item to our collection. A similar artifact in the upstairs Knox bedroom has recently lost its spring during one of numerous demonstrations, and this donation couldn't have come at a better time. As April 15th approaches, remember that all donations to the Knox Museum are tax-deductible, be they vintage items, photographs, period documents, local historical books, or even good old greenbacks, which will be happily accepted in any condition!

## WOOD HANDLED CURLING IRON

**Donated by:** Kathy Fiedor

**Description:** This common turn-of-the-century item is one which our docents are frequently questioned about during the annual third grade school tours. I especially enjoyed the young student who inquired "But how do you plug it in?"

The concept of curling hair through the application of a heated metal rod is not a new one, and in fact the practice



extends back at least 6,000 years to the time of ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek and Persian cultures. In her well-read *Little House On The Prairie* series, Laura Ingalls Wilder describes using a slate pencil heated on the stove to curl her bangs, but she failed to "patent" this inspiration. The first American patent for this type of device is generally thought to have been filed by Hiram Stevens Maxim in 1866, at the ripe old age of 26.

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, this was Hiram's first patent, and he became quite the prolific inventor, having since been granted hundreds of patents in both the United States and the United Kingdom. His inventions included a locomotive headlight, an asthma inhaler, a steam-powered flying machine, the first automatic fire sprinkler, devices to prevent the rolling of ships, a variety of steam, oil and gas engines, and even a "better mousetrap." He also invented quite a range of military weaponry, perhaps the most famous of which was the Maxim machine gun, the first fully automatic weapon of the type, as well as smokeless cordite powder. Hiram was also credited with developing and installing the first electric lights in a building in the late 1870s in New York City, and he engaged in lengthy patent battles with Thomas Edison over rights to the electric light bulb.

This particular curling iron has a spring in the handle which serves to keep the iron's tongs closed snug to the hair once grasped, so the user can easily wrap and hold a length of hair tightly for maximum effect. Of course, the iron needs to be heated, either over open flame, or upon a wood burning stove hotplate, and one can imagine that the temperature of the curling iron rarely approached any degree of uniformity from one usage to the next. Obviously, burnt, singed hair and frequent scalp and finger burns were only some of the many pains and indignities to which women of the day subjected themselves while engaged in their pursuit of, or retention of, the opposite sex. Some things never change. Thank you, Kathy!

## 2016

### EL CAJON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President .....	Carla Nowak
Vice President .....	Colleen White
Recording Secretary .....	Linda Garity
Corresponding Secretary .....	Sharon Jarboe
Treasurer .....	George Dall
Curator .....	Eldonna Lay
Archivist .....	Mike Kaszuba
Maintenance .....	Rick Hall
Membership .....	Christy Klock
Essay Contest .....	Rebecca Taylor
Heritage Editor .....	Anita Tinsley
Website Manager .....	Michelle Braun
Members at Large .....	Jack Dickens, Fran Hill Joe Klock, Dick Lay, G. Carroll Rice

Telephone Messages (619) 444-3800

## MUSEUM HOURS

As of January 16, 2016, the Knox House Museum is open on the first and third Saturday of each month between the hours of 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

# ECHS seeks help to staff booth at patriotic event

ECHS will again participate in the City of El Cajon's "America on Main Street" to be held May 21

This patriotic event celebrates the many diverse ethnic and historical groups in the community and runs from 10 a.m to 10 p.m. on East Main Street and Rea Avenue.

ECHS will sponsor a double booth showcasing the history of our region. A big thank you to ECHS member Fran Hill for donating the event fees.

Volunteers are needed to represent ECHS at the event. If you'd like to volunteer, please call 619-444-3800 and leave your name and number and a Board member will get back to you as soon as possible.



*A group from St. Kieran St. Vincent de Paul Pantry toured the Knox Museum in February. (The only guy in the group is taking the photo.) Everyone said they enjoyed learning about El Cajon's history and touring the museum.*

## THE RON PENNOCK COLLECTION

### Union Gas Station near Magnolia & Broadway, 1930

*Note the unusual stop sign, what looks to be a 1928 Ford Model A Sport Coupe, and a great visible gas pump with the bottom resembling a barber pole. "It took 10 gallons, Sir ... That will be \$1.00 ... Check your oil?"*



# No MELLO-ROOS! No MELLO-ROOS!

by Jack Dickens

In the late 1800s “developers” were normally people that brought water to a parched area and profited from the increased value through the land sales. Developer George Chaffey came upon an area known as the California Desert. To bring water to the area he dug the Imperial Canal from the Colorado River and re-named the area Imperial Valley.

About that time developers were doing the same thing in south San Diego County. The Lower Otay Reservoir was completed in 1883, and the Sweetwater Reservoir was completed in 1888.

In 1890 George Chaffey found an area called South San Diego Beach that was similar to the area he developed in Imperial Valley. Ever the developer, now that there was water available from the Sweetwater and Otay reservoirs, Chaffey renamed it Imperial Beach to attract the rich buyers from Imperial Valley.

The Hotel del Coronado was built about this time for developers to bring in clients: “Come on down and stay with us. And while you’re here we have some choice property you might be interested in...” Notice that the Hotel Del wasn’t using up any of the valuable new land – it was on a long peninsula adjacent to it. And North Island was an island at this time. Another developer at this time was the El Cajon Land Company who built the Lakeside Inn near San Diego County’s only natural-occurring body of water, Lindo Lake.

Now fast forward to the 1960s. San Diego had just built its largest operations yard, Chollas, on the east edge of the city in the College Grove area. Why did San Diego build its largest operations yard way over there on the east edge of the city? Conventional wisdom of the time was that Chollas would be centrally



located when San Diego completed its annexation plans. So this meant that San Diego was thinking of incorporating Lemon Grove, La Mesa, and possibly El Cajon into its realm. And so it began...

First, go get Imperial Beach. How do you do this when the laws of the land were that annexations of areas only could be done if there was a contiguous common border? Easy! Annex a strip of land maybe two feet wide from San Diego down the middle of San Diego Bay and bring it ashore in Imperial Beach. Shazam! It’s done!

Next, do the same thing with Rancho Bernardo. Annex a strip of land from San Diego along the side of Highway 395 to the rancho. Now the City of San Diego nearly reached from the Mexican border up to Escondido and Lake Hodges. And there was still a lot of unincorporated area between San Diego and Rancho Bernardo.

Well, what happened? How did all of this come to a screeching halt? Howard Jarvis and Proposition 13 stopped it dead in its tracks.

Suppose at that time you had purchased property in Imperial Beach because it was affordable and the living was easy. You got along fine with a limited income and affordable housing. The annexation to San Diego promised all things of a modern city: curbs, gutters and sidewalks on the

streets, parks, libraries, and schools. Who could say no?

Well, nobody mentioned that to have all of these things you were going to pay for them through increased property taxes. This wasn’t limited to San Diego County; it was going on all over the state. People were being taxed out of the homes that they now could not afford. “Property tax limitation! Property tax limitation!” That was the hue and cry that carried Proposition 13 to a 63 percent landslide victory June 6, 1978. The annexation strategy for cities evaporated after this.

Well, back then what do you do if you wanted curbs, gutters, and sidewalks and the other stuff without the financial heft of the big guys? Of course! Form a special district and sell bonds to pay for these things. Legislation in 1982 allowed for the creation of these special assessment districts. The costs for the improvements were still there, only now they were a separate assessment from the Mello-Roos district. Surprise! It was like having two mortgages on the same house.

Well, what did El Cajon do to avoid the need for Mello-Roos districts? It closed its borders. City Manager Bob Applegate convinced the city council to close its borders to further annexation. This was as large as the city could be and still fund its infrastructure was the strategy. An area that could have been part of El Cajon soon became its own city – Santee was incorporated in 1982.

So... going to the top of this story, many realtors of that era in areas of no Mello-Roos advertised it that way to attract buyers – “No Mello-Roos! No Mello-Roos!”

PS: Mello-Roos districts can still be formed with two-thirds approval of the property owners.

## Third Grade Essay Contest

# Student essays spotlight varied subjects

Students from 13 elementary schools submitted essays covering various aspects of El Cajon's history in the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Third Grade Essay Contest held last June. The winning essays are posted at [www.elcajonhistory.org](http://www.elcajonhistory.org) (under the tab "Education") and have been included in this newsletter as space permits. The following are two more prize-winning essays.

### OLAF WIEGHORST AWARD

## THE ARTIST OLAF WIEGHORST

by Emily Olson, Vista Grande Elementary School

Olaf Wieghorst is a famous artist who lived in El Cajon. He painted pictures of horses, the Wild West, and even Cowboys and Indians. There is a museum named after him, the Olaf Wieghorst Museum, where you can go see his paintings, his home, and his cactus garden. He is his story:

Olaf Wieghorst was born in Viborg, Denmark in 1899. He loved to ride horses and at the age of nine he was a skilled horseback acrobat and even performed for the Danish Circus as a stunt rider. The circus traveled all over Europe. When he wasn't performing stunts for the circus, he worked on a farm and got to ride horses. He later went to work as a cabin boy on a steamship, which brought him to the United States of America in 1918.

Once he was here he served in the military's U.S. Cavalry on the Mexican border. While he was in El Paso, Texas, he broke his ankle when his horse fell on top of him. Not wanting to be left behind, he continued to ride to Arizona, and, sadly, his horse died on their way there. When Olaf got out of the cavalry he traveled a lot and worked as a cowboy in New Mexico and Arizona. Then he became a mounted policeman in Central Park, New York City, riding a horse name Rhombo. He would help save many people from being hurt by runaway horses in the park.

Olaf taught himself how to paint during his time off from work. He was so good that the Grand Central Art Galleries at the Baltimore Hotel decided to represent him as an artist. After a while he knew how to paint with oil paints and watercolor paints.

Winning essays are posted at [www.elcajonhistory.org](http://www.elcajonhistory.org) and are included in this newsletter as space permits. Since the 3rd-graders conduct their own research, the El Cajon Historical Society cannot guarantee that the information is historically correct.

In 1924 he got married to Mabel Walters from Brooklyn. They and their son moved to El Cajon, California, in 1944, and they lived there for more than 44 years. They lived in a rancho house, and he built himself a studio, which he filled with western things. He also had two horses, which he used as models for his artwork. He began to focus on his artwork, painting the things that he loved: horses, cowboys, and Indians. He even painted some famous horses, too, from the old cowboy shows. Olaf died at the age of 88 years old, but lived an exciting life doing the things he enjoyed.

If you go to [www. Wieghorstmuseum.org](http://www.Wieghorstmuseum.org), you can read about Olaf, see his artwork, his home, and his cactus garden. You can also visit the museum. It is located at 131 Rea Avenue, El Cajon, CA 92020 to see everything in person. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There is even a street named after him.



*Olaf Wieghorst, his wife, and his son built a stable which had a cantina inside. The adobe brick wall was built by the family from bricks they hauled themselves from Jamul to El Cajon.*

# MY MAGNIFICENT EL CAJON ADVENTURE

by William McCann, Fuerte Elementary School

One sunny day in my back yard, I started to do a really, really big project. I was building a time machine and it was going to be made of titanium, admanatite, chloraphyte, and mythril, the main ingredient to make time travel possible. The reason why I built the time machine was so I could travel back and forward in time to see what El Cajon was like throughout history.



Someone once told me about a man, and his name was Amariah Lord Knox. He was around when El Cajon was new. I decided to go back in time to the year 1876 to meet him, so I turned the dials,

pressed the buttons, and clicked, "GO," and then all the lights started flashing wildly and a few incredible minutes later, I was there, the Knox House on Magnolia and Main Street. I couldn't believe how different everything looked! I decided to get some dinner at the lovely Knox Hotel, and I saw Mr. Knox sitting across from me and asked him, "What are you doing here in the middle of nowhere?"

Mr. Knox said, "I've built this hotel for people traveling on their way to Julian in search of gold. I like El Cajon, and someday I think it will be a really popular place."

I wanted to do some more exploring, so I said goodbye to Mr. Knox and hopped back into my awesome time machine and decided to go back before mankind set foot on El Cajon. I turned seven out of hundreds of dials and pressed a bunch of buttons on the titanium board and WHOOSH! POOF! I was off. When I arrived and went out the door, I saw a flat swampy lagoon. I couldn't believe 100,000 years ago El Cajon was a lagoon! I saw off in the far distance mammoths, saber tooth tigers, and bison. I explored a little bit more and remembered that I was missing out on all the cool Indian tribes that were some of the first men to live and built huts in this region. Then I went back to the time machine and went back before Columbus discovered America, when the Kumeyaay Indians ruled what is now El Cajon and Southern California. After hiding my machine, I hid myself in a group of shrubs and watched the Kumeyaay make pots, painting, blankets, and



instruments. They seemed like basic people who were happy and creative. I was sad to leave the Indians because of how peaceful and content they were before the white man came.

In planning my next adventure I remembered my sister had done a report on Olaf Wieghorst when I didn't have a time machine, so I went back in time to 1950 to actually see him in person. I found him in an old beat up art studio painting cowboys, the old west, and nature scenes. I asked to buy a painting and he said, "5 bucks" because everything back then was cheaper than nowadays (even without him being famous, of course). Before I left I whispered in his ear, "Someday everyone in El Cajon will admire your paintings and know your name, trust me." He just smiled.



After my visit with Olaf I thought to go back in time to see the first ever school in El Cajon, so I whizzed back in time to 1898 and in a flash, I was there. I looked up and saw a small two-story building that could only fit 20 students. I was amazed how tiny it was; I mean, look at Fuerte! I took out a small map to see where this building was, and it turns out Longs Drugs sits where the first school in El Cajon used to be. I went in after a few minutes and inside, sitting on a chair, there was a pretty teacher. I asked her what her name was, and she said, "Miss Bishop."

Then I asked her what she taught, and she said, "All grades and all subjects because I'm the only teacher in El Cajon." Then she said, "Someday I think there will be more teachers in El Cajon." I agreed, said, "Bye," and nimbly ran off to my time machine to get back home. I had had enough exploring.

The beauty of a time machine is that nobody misses you, so you have unlimited time to explore! Some other interesting things I learned was how the first Mother Goose Parade was in 1947, two years after the El Cajon Theater burned to the ground. I even saw President Kennedy drive down El Cajon Boulevard in 1963.

All of this time traveling was keeping me from spending time with my family, so I decided to end the journey there. I was looking forward to telling my family and friends about my great El Cajon adventure. Who says nothing interesting happens in El Cajon?

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

## **Welcome New Members**

Erin Bass  
Donald L. Ney  
Steve & Kris Six Family

### **New Enhanced Life Members**

Wini Daniel  
Al Vildibill  
Pat Potter & son Durbin

**To:**

## **Meeting to boast Italian buffet and local legends**

ECCHS's next quarterly meeting will be held at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, April 27, at Di Leone's Italian Restaurant, 1480 Jamacha Road, El Cajon (near the corner of Chase and Jamacha).

Lunch will be served at noon followed by an outstanding presentation by Jack Innis, a local history buff and author of *San Diego Legends*. Known as the "San Diego Legend Hunter," Innis has captivated audiences with his tales from all over the county. At our meeting, he will reveal how a 1769 winter storm nearly made San Diego a Russian city.

Lunch will feature an Italian buffet of both meat and vegetarian pasta dishes and salad. Ice tea and coffee is also included.

The cost for the meeting is \$15. Reservations are required and must be received by Monday, April 25.

## **Reservation Form for April 27th Meeting**

Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_ (\$15 each) *Reservations not kept  
become a donation*

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

### **RESERVATION DEADLINE MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2016**

Mail reservations and checks to:  
ECCHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973