



# EL CAJON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HERITAGE



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

July 2023

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hello to all,

Lots of exciting news! We were excited to host our 50th Anniversary. It was held June 24, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Light refreshments were served. We hope you were able to attend our celebration. This event counted as our Quarterly meeting for July.

I wanted to let you all know we have set up a new small display with Bottles from the Corona Hotel that existed in the early El Cajon times. The City of El Cajon donated a large amount of history from the Corona Hotel to the

El Cajon Historical Society many years ago so we are happy we can finally display some of it.

We have been open the 1st and 3rd Saturdays from 11:00 a.m - 2:00 p.m. and have had some visitors. We still are in need of Docents as I would love to be open every Saturday. If you have some free time please let us know. We also have 2 board positions open, Curator and Docent Coordinator, that we need to fill. I have to say we have an amazing group of people! If you have an interest, please let us know.

You can find us online at:

[Elcajonhistory.org](http://Elcajonhistory.org)

On Twitter: [Twitter.com/ElCajonHistory](https://twitter.com/ElCajonHistory)

On Facebook: [ECHS Knox House Museum](https://www.facebook.com/ECHS-Knox-House-Museum)

Email: [echs0997@att.net](mailto:echs0997@att.net)

Phone: 619-444-3800

Thank you all for the support everyone has given to the Historical Society throughout the years! It is so appreciated. I am so proud and honored to be a part of this great group!

As a reminder, we will be dark in August!

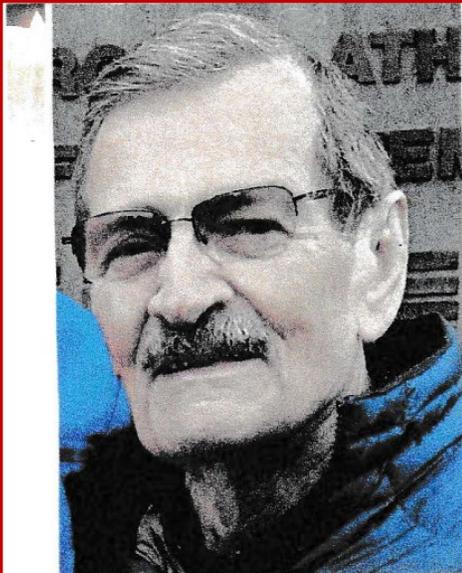
Thank you,  
Linda Garity

President of the El Cajon Historical Society

## OPPORTUNITY DRAWING WINNER

The Board of Directors would like to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who participated in and supported our "Day Trip to your own backyard" Opportunity Drawing fundraiser. We are very pleased to announce that we raised \$800.00 and the winner of our "Day Trip" drawing was Helen Ofield, a respected and dedicated historian. She is not only a member of our Society, but she is also a valued member of the Lemon Grove Historical Society. Congratulations Helen!

## IN MEMORIAM



### JOE KLOCK

*It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of one of our longtime and valued members, Joe Klock. He will be greatly missed. We would like to share with you an article written by Bill Chapin, about a side of Joe that many of us in the society did not know. We hope that you will find it uplifting.*

A bigger-than-life icon of my young life passed away on April 13. This Friday will be his service at the El Cajon Cemetery on Dehesa Road. I have known Joseph F. Klock for more than 60 years, first and foremost as the past Executive Director of The Boys' Club of El Cajon in Wells Park.

There, he was the singular man who made it possible to open the doors of manhood to tens of thousands of boys over the years. Yes, it was tens of thousands, because I was one of them. A boy who had lost his father just six months prior and found a place where men were the role models and taught us to be the same.

They taught me and so many others that the values of manhood would serve us well when we finally grew into them; not perfection, but a greater good because of our experience

there. That is where I found several father figures to learn how to survive the rigors of life in an uncaring, unloving, and challenging world where you were on your own.

Joe was my mentor when I began to work for him at the club. He modeled for me the importance of relationships and loyalty. Over the years I developed that loyalty into an attitude where I would be willing to die on the toughest of hills for that man...some of which we climbed together; for the good of the boys who came through those doors.

There used to be some sayings when it came to the Boys' Club; they had "The Widest Doors In Town" or "A Place To Go And Way To Grow." He was instrumental for 30 years in keeping those doors open and hiring men who would pour such impacts into the lives of 8-18 year olds as he had, and other great staff men had into mine.

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When I had the opportunity to repay that investment I did it through the club and into the lives of those coming up behind me. Now, when I meet some of those men, they have children who have children of their own...and I could not have a bigger smile on my face when I see what has so wonderfully bloomed in their lives because of my privilege to till the fertile soil of their young lives in that clubhouse over the years.

All of the "boys" I grew up with and invested in are old(er) now most in their 50's and 70's...and even more. We are the elders of society who had the chance to grow up in both turbulent and challenging times. The one place, besides home for some, where stability and manly values were both expected and passed on to us was the old Boys' Club. And this was, and still is, the Legacy of Joe Klock, my mentor and my friend.

I am not alone in calling him this, for he had an impact on many far beyond me. But the impact, the ripple of his guidance in my life continues to reach the shores of the lives of thousands yet even today. "Thanks" is too small a word to express my gratitude to this humble man who provided a foundation of manhood for so many.

It is more the sentiment, the emotion behind it, to recognize how this man and his investment in me at such a very young age has been magnified in the lives of so many more, and thousands of men besides.

So to that graveside in El Cajon's hallowed ground for receiving its own I will go on Friday. And there I will meet with other men who will, in a final act of respect and thanks, gather to honor one who made a real difference in lives. And we will tell stories of days gone by of a place where boys became men...helped along by Joe Klock...a great man among men indeed!

I thank you and the family for "loaning" Joe to us all those years.

Bill Chapin

## **THIRD GRADE ESSAY CONTEST**

This year's Third Grade Essay Contest theme was "History of El Cajon". We received 7 very good essays from 4 schools in the Cajon Valley Union School District. The Board of Directors would like to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to the District, Principals and Teachers for their efforts and cooperation, and to the students for their participation.

This year's 1<sup>st</sup> place winner (\$100 award) went to KeMari Williams, from Mrs. Parker's class at Jamacha Elementary. The 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner (\$75 award) was Sophia Robertson, from Mrs. Munguia's class at Fuerte Elementary. The 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner (\$50 award) was Willa Schmidtman from Mrs. Audette's class at Vista Grande Elementary.

Congratulations to these well deserved students! Their winning essays follow on the next three pages.

# THIRD GRADE ESSAY CONTEST

KeMari Williams

Jamacha Elementary School

Mrs. Parker

El Cajon has been home to my family and I since I was 4 years old. We lived in the area called Rancho San Diego and now we moved to Bostonia. We love going out to eat and going to the movies at Parkway Plaza and going to Hilton Head Park. Did you know that El Cajon really means “the box”. The name comes from all the mountains that surrounded the area. A long, long, long time ago the city of El Cajon started because of a man named Issac Lankersheim who purchased a lot of land. In the 1870’s the Gold Rush in Julian brought a lot of people from all over. A man by the name of Amaziah Knox built the first hotel in 1876 to give people a place to rest. The hotel was first placed at the corner of Main St & Magnolia. The first locomotive to travel to El Cajon and Lakeside in 1889 also brought more people. By the 1900s, “Knox’s Corner” became the center of El Cajon. There was a post office, two hotels, a general store, and a few other businesses.

There are over 100,000 people living in El Cajon today, but back when it first started there were only about 12 families and less than 1,000 by 1912. That’s when James A Harris became the first Mayor. When we visited the Knox Museum we saw the kids room and some toys they played with. It was cool to see that we still have some things from back in the day. The cool part was the kitchen and learning how they cooked. El Cajon has so much history, I would have loved to be there for the Gold Rush! There were only horse carriages and dirt roads. Most of the land looked like a farm. Everything that happened in the past helps El Cajon become the best city San Diego has to offer.

Sources used:

The Knox Museum

[www.elcajon.gov](http://www.elcajon.gov)

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

# THIRD GRADE ESSAY CONTEST

El Cajon

By: Sophia Robertson

Mrs. Munguia, Fuerte Elementary

How would you like to live in a box? Well I love it. El Cajon means “the big box” in Spanish and that’s the name of the city I have lived in for all my life. El Cajon got its name because it’s shaped like a rectangle with foothills on all four sides. I love El Cajon because it’s not too busy and there’s a school near me. I also enjoy living here because it’s cold in winter and hot in summer.

Early in the 1800’s Spanish missionaries discovered the fertile lands of soon to be El Cajon. They began farming and grazing their cattle in the area. Soon the settlers were driven out and a businessman from San Francisco, named Jassc Lankershim bought the land to start farming things such as grapes and wheat. This was so successful that others soon joined him and the whole area was full of farms.

El Cajon had a population of 563 people in 1900 compared to 105,000 people today. When people started arriving back then 59% were males and 41% females making El Cajon have more males than the rest of California. There are many reasons for this. One of them is that men came to mine for gold but women were less likely to mine so there were more men and less women.

The first commercial building in El cajon was Knox’s Corner. It was a 7 room hotel so it was quite small. Knox’s Corner for the next 70 years was the focus of the El Cajon business district.

1912, El Cajon’s first official day into the world. Their city leader was called the President of the Board of Trustees and the first one was named J.A. Harris. The first official Mayor was William Stell in 1932. The current mayor of El Cajon is Bill Wells.

As you can see, El Cajon has been thriving since the 1800s till now and will I believe forever. Even more, I am grateful to learn about the history of this this box of a city.

## THIRD GRADE ESSAY CONTEST

Willa Schmidtman

Vista Grande Elementary, 3rd Grade

Mrs. Audette & Miss Moyer

If I lived in El Cajon in the early 1900's, I'd either live on a farm or I'd work in a store or hotel on Main Street. I might have been a descendant of the early Spanish Mission Padres, who founded the San Diego Mission and discovered El Cajon, the Big Box Valley. El Cajon means "the Box" in Spanish and is surrounded by beautiful granite hills, which makes it different from La Mesa and Santee. I would have lived among the 563 people who made up El Cajon. Mr. James A. Harris was our first mayor after we became a city on November 12th 1912. Our city is 1 1/4 square miles centered on Magnolia and Main Street.

My family and I have lived in El Cajon for four years. But I was born in Yuma, Arizona. I like Menchie's frozen yogurt, Vista Grande Elementary, and the Heritage of the Americas museum by Cuyamaca College.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERSHIP!

- Len Blottin, Enhanced Life membership.
- Daniel Rios, Family membership.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

Our Membership Chairperson is very sad to inform us that there are still 41 members of the El Cajon Historical Society who have not yet paid their 2023 dues. We suspect this is just an oversight and the “check is in the mail”. If not, we would be so very grateful to have your dues payment sent in to the address below.

The membership categories/costs are below and you are welcome to call and leave us a message if you have any questions regarding your membership...or if you have questions about anything else. Thank you for supporting the ECHS!

The categories are: Individual \$15, Family \$25, Organization \$45, Business \$45, and Enhanced Life \$500.

Please make checks payable to ECHS and send to:  
P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973.  
Telephone Messages: 619-444-3800.



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

**To:**

## 50th Anniversary at the Knox

The El Cajon Historical Society's quarterly meeting was replaced with the 50th Anniversary celebration at the Knox on June 24th.

We hope you were able to stop by and visit the museum, meet "Amaziah and Illa Knox" and sample some of the yummy treats we had.

Thank you for celebrating with us and supporting the ECHS and our amazing El Cajon history!



*Amaziah and Illa Knox, aka Bob and Carla Nowak.*