



La Mesa Historical Society

# LOOKOUT AVENUE

Volume 40, Issue 1

Winter 2015

## President's Address

By Jim Newland  
President, La Mesa Historical Society

By the time you read this, I hope you are enjoying this happy new year of 2015. We are in the process of planning out another great year of events as well as continuing our work to collect, preserve, and interpret the wonderful and fascinating history of Greater La Mesa.

Hopefully you had as successful and rewarding a holiday season as the La Mesa Historical Society (LMHS) did. We kicked off the season on November 1 with another outstanding Home Tour. The tour featured the wonderful community of Grossmont and five architectural and design jewels. Thanks again to our generous Home Tour participating homeowners and committee co-chairs Linda Rankin and Pat Stromberg for a memorable event. We can't wait to see what gems are in store for the next tour, scheduled for Saturday, November 7, 2015.

The Society held another well-attended and warm Christmas Open House at the McKinney House in December. Thanks to coordinator Kathy Tinsley and the "usual crew." This year's event featured a record-setting fresh-baked cookie relay. (See more on page 2.)

We also were part of a new community event—the La Mesa Craft Beer and Wine Winter Festival. This exciting event, held December 6, showcased our two new in-town breweries, Bolt Brewery and Helix Brewery Co., along with some of our other long-time sponsor-friends, such as San Pasqual Winery. LMHS was the fiscal nonprofit partner

and received revenue from ticket sales and a raffle. Thanks to our volunteers (George Fahouris, Suda House, Kathy Tinsley, Kari Dodson, Wade Douglas, Natalie Ford, and Courtney McClair) for making us look good.

The Beer and Wine Festival was a great success for a first-time community event and provided us a chance to expose the Society to more of our local business colleagues and hundreds of local residents and visitors. Subsequently, the event coordinators have asked us to continue with our partnership. Plans are underway for another event, perhaps this summer, as well as another in

"President's Address" continues on page 2



*Above: Helix Theater (Craig Collection). You may be able to stream your Oscar-nominated films now, but back in the day, you likely went down to our local movie house to see the latest films. Both of the films shown in the photo got nominations. Can you guess the year of this photo? (Answer on page 4.)*

## President's Address (continued from page 1)

December. We will keep you all informed about these plans as they move forward.

One of the new relationships formed as a result of the festival is already bearing fruit. The owners of The Hills restaurant approached us and offered a fundraising opportunity. On Wednesday March 11, 2015, from 5 to 9 p.m., the Society will receive 10 percent of the proceeds from the sales that evening. If you like burgers, brews, and other great casual cuisine, please try and stop by The Hills at 8758 La Mesa Boulevard (just west of Jackson Drive) that evening, and help us and our local business community partners.

With a new college semester starting up, we will partner with Grossmont Community College to hold another Historic Photo Day this spring. Keep an eye on our newly revamped website for the exact date ([lamesahistoricalsociety.com](http://lamesahistoricalsociety.com)). Please feel free to stop by for the great tintype photo demonstration, and see some of the Society's unique photographic collections displayed to help the students learn about how we preserve our local history through images, some even created using that old technology called film!

We also hope to have one or two new San Diego State University history department interns for the spring semester. This is another relationship that continues to provide us with new young energy and talents to help with our archives. New donations continue to come in to the archives, including a wonderful collection of scrapbooks and photos of Grossmont Center's original management company. Thanks to long-time manager Denise Stefan of the Denele Company.

Speaking of Grossmont, thanks to the generosity of Jim Guy, the Society has been able to obtain 20 copies of the 1993 book (now out of print) written by Jim's father, Herbert, titled *Grossmont Isn't Just a Shopping Center*. Please stop by the Society or check our website to purchase one of these rare masterpieces of our local history.

And please do check out our website, which, again, is [lamesahistoricalsociety.com](http://lamesahistoricalsociety.com). By the time you read this, if all goes as planned, you should have the ability to renew your membership, make a donation, purchase event tickets, and order

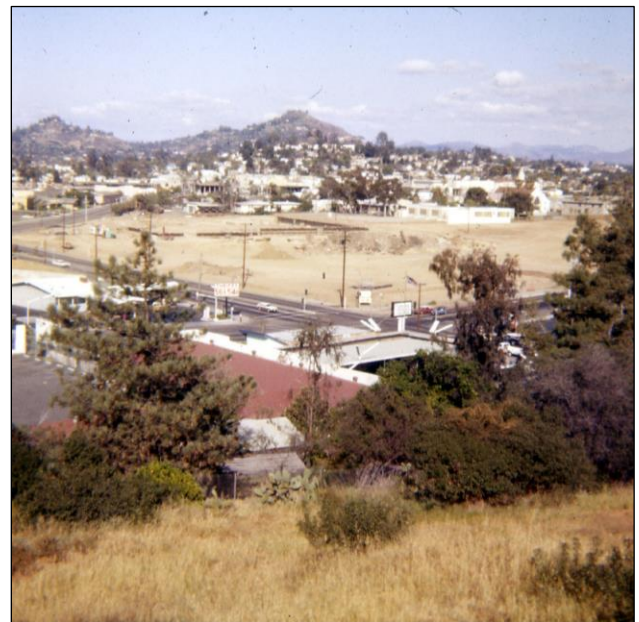
publications directly from the website. Also, make sure to "friend" us on Facebook if you are social media-savvy. You'll find a link to our Facebook page from the website home page.

Feel free to contact me directly ([admin@lamesahistory.sdcoxmail.com](mailto:admin@lamesahistory.sdcoxmail.com)) to discuss any ideas you have to help us continue our invaluable mission of preserving La Mesa's history.

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## Another Successful Christmas Open House

The annual Christmas Open House was held on Sunday, December 14, 2014. Attendees enjoyed homemade refreshments, hot apple cider, and entertainment by harpist Karrie Dodson. The Christmas Open House is one of the longest running events the Society holds for members and guests.



Above: La Mesa Springs Shopping Center Under Construction (Craig Collection). This major downtown redevelopment project, including the former site of the Helix Theater shown on page 1, is now home to a Vons Supermarket and various businesses. Do you remember the original anchor tenant and when the shopping center opened? (Answer on page 4.)

## Sunny Days for 9th Annual Home Tour

Despite the threat of rain, Saturday, November 1, turned out to be a beautiful, sunny day to host our 9th Annual Home Tour. More than 300 visitors were transported by the Old Town Trolley to five unique homes tucked away in the rocky Grossmont hillside of La Mesa.

Once again, the La Mesa Historical Society was able to feature a variety of homes built from the late 1920s to the mid-century modern period. One of the home sites featured the Ed and Mary Fletcher memorial boulders, which frame an amazing 360-degree view. All of the home sites were beautifully landscaped, maintained, and decorated by the homeowners.

We would like to thank the many people who helped make this home tour another great success, including the La Mesa Woman's Club, our many sponsors, the Old Town Trolley drivers, the classic car owners, and our many loyal docents. Most of all, we thank the homeowners, without whose generous participation there would be no home tour.

Be on the lookout for details about the 10th Annual Home Tour coming in fall 2015. If you are interested in opening your home for the next tour, or know of a La Mesa homeowner who might be interested, please let us know. We are always looking for homes that have significance to La Mesa.

### Welcome, New LMHS Members!

#### New Individual Members:

Pat and Bill Allen  
Ken and Donna D'Angelo  
Jolene and Dillard Harwell  
Alo Munizza  
Budd and Vicki Willis

#### New Corporate Members:

BO-beau kitchen + garden  
Bolt Brewery  
College Copy Center  
La Mesa Lumber & Hardware  
La Mesa Woman's Club  
The Consignment Shack



*Above photo of Ernie is from his 1986 campaign brochure.*

## In the Spotlight

### Ernie Ewin: Earnest & Sound

Ernie Ewin stepped down in December after 18 years as a La Mesa City Councilmember. He was on the council in two stints, the first in the 1980s and the second from 2002 to 2014. Initially appointed to the council for two years starting

in 1984, he then won and served a full, four-year term from 1986 to 1990. He was a logical choice for an appointee, having served on the Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission since 1982. In 1990, at the end of his term, Ernie's children were in their teens, and he was making a good living at the Bank of Southern California, so he decided not to run for another term.

After 30-plus years in banking, Ernie decided to make a career transition, and he began selling real estate with Leonard Smith. At the same time, his heart never wavered from his passion for community service. Whatever one thinks about elected politicians overall, there *are* those like Ernie: elected officials who are truly serving their communities. Thus, Ernie decided to run again for a La Mesa City Council seat in 2002. He won that year, as well as in 2006 and 2010. Ernie decided in 2010 that his third term on the council would be his last.

Ernie moved back to La Mesa in 1980. His education spanned from Murray Manor Elementary through a degree in economics with a minor in finance from San Diego State University. The stops in between were Our Lady of Grace; University High; and Grossmont College, where he was student body president. Ernie started law school with his wife but decided his calling was banking and all things fiscal.

Ernie also opted for deeper involvement in community service. He joined Kiwanis. In the 1990s, he was a Scoutmaster and a little league coach. He worked on committees for County Supervisor Dianne Jacob as well as the San Diego

## Ernie (continued from page 3)

County Finance Review Committee, chaired by Sol Price. Ernie also chaired the Boys and Girls Club of East County Foundation.

Ernie served on the board of the San Diego Trolley (now the Metropolitan Transit System, or MTS) in the 1980s. He rejoined that board in 2004 and remained on it through 2014. He started and chaired the MTS Audit Oversight Committee. He became an officer on the Grossmont College Foundation Board in 2003 and served as its executive director in 2006; in all, he was on that foundation board for almost six years. Ernie was the organizing chair and board member of the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca College District's Proposition R, a \$200 million bond program. Never one to be accused of slacking or having too much free time, Ernie was asked in 2008 to be the organizing chair of the Independent Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee of the Grossmont Healthcare District's Proposition G \$270 million bond program. He held that position for five years. In 2012, La Mesa's centennial, Ernie jumped in as fundraising chair and helped raise \$100,000. Also, he is involved in fundraising for the privately funded Flag Day Parade.

Ernie has been married to Nancy Kaupp Ewin for 44 years. She is a Certified Estate Planner and attorney practicing in La Mesa. The Ewins have four children—Chessa, Shuyler, Arden, and J. Corban—and 11 grandchildren. The Ewins are longstanding members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Aztec Drive in La Mesa. Nancy has supported her husband in all his endeavors, from his work as an elected official to his extensive community service involvement.

Ernie is most proud of his actions on behalf of citizens as a public official and a private community member. In 2002, he encouraged adoption of the "Golden Rule" ethics policy for councilmembers, board members, city commission members, and city employees.

Ernie's commitment to all members of the La Mesa community, which extends for him beyond the city limits and encompasses all of East County, is

sincere, heartfelt, continuous, and unwavering. Ernie is a true man of integrity. He has a knack for getting the "biggest bang for the buck." He strives for fiscal soundness with a social focus. At the same time, Ernie demands that ethics take a front-row seat in all of these endeavors. You couldn't ask for more from a public servant who is also a great human being.

### Ernie's Top Ten

**Book:** Anything by Clive Cussler

**Movie:** *Lawrence of Arabia*

**Food:** Swordfish

**Hobby:** His grandkids

**Travel destination:** London

**Music:** Late-'60s and '70s pop

**Famous person he would have loved to meet:** Abraham Lincoln

**Pet peeve:** The idiots who do not pull over when they hear an emergency siren coming toward them

**TV show:** *Top Gear* on BBC America

**Automobile:** 1966 Plymouth GTX Hemi in black

## Upcoming Events

### Historic Photo Demonstration Day

TBA, 2–4 p.m.

*8369 University Avenue, La Mesa (southeast corner of Pine Street)*

Tintype photo demonstrations, open house, and exhibit of Society photo collections.

### We Care Wednesdays at The Hills

Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 5–9 p.m.

*8758 La Mesa Boulevard, La Mesa (west of Jackson Drive)*

Ten percent of the proceeds during this time will be donated to the La Mesa Historical Society. Join us and bring your friends!

*Check [lamesahistoricalsociety.com](http://lamesahistoricalsociety.com) for the latest updates on Society events.*

### Historic Photo Answers:

Page 1: 1975

Page 2: Gemco, December 1977



## La Mesa Through the Years

In 1916 and early 1917, there was a columnist in the *La Mesa Scout* with the byline “Elsie.” I did not check to see in which year her column began and when it ended. Her column did not appear every week, even though she referred to herself as a weekly columnist (more likely a “weakly” columnist). Her column was titled “Not Much of Anything.” As you will see, the title was not a misnomer.

Perhaps a harbinger of her column’s last days, the entry below is reprinted from the December 8, 1916, *La Mesa Scout*. Bracketed comments in italics are by Aaron Landau, past president of the LMHS.

### NOT MUCH OF ANYTHING By Elsie

**Oh, why did we ever aspire to be a columnist and write a column of columnities and such like every seven days?** *[Cute play on words. No such word as “columnities.” She really means calumnies: misrepresentations intended to blacken another’s reputation.]*

**For here it is Thursday, and we can’t think of a dashed thing to write.**

**But the boss says there’s still a small hole in this week’s issue, and it must be filled, no matter what or how?**

**Therefore, he called on us and you see we’re doing it to the best of our ability.**

**That is why we’re cutting this up into small paragraphs. It takes up more space that way.**

**And between you and us and the lamp post that is why most paragraphs do that same stunt. We doubt whether it is the least bit funny at that (lots of thats in that).**

**There. Having gotten all that (another that) off our chest, we now pause to ask, “Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?”**

**We have a treed toad in our yard right next to our bedroom window and every time he sings we have bad weather and bad dreams. Hope he chokes.**

**Always when we hang up our Christmas stocking we can’t help wishing that we were William H. Taft for circumference and Charles Fairbanks\* for length.** *[\*Theodore Roosevelt’s notably tall Vice-President.]*

**The pestiferous grip [sic] bug is again in our midst. Well, maybe the docs need the money for the holidays. It’s an ill wind, you know. . . .**

*[Five more paragraphs follow. She talks about local personalities and characters unknown to us at the Historical Society. Since I’m guessing you have had enough by now, we will wrap up with her last paragraph, below.]*

**There, that’ll be about enough to fill the space, we guess.**



## ArtiFACTS

### Anniversary Clock

The anniversary clock that sits on the dresser in the upstairs master bedroom of the McKinney House was made in Germany around

1920. Anniversary clocks were often given as wedding gifts and proudly displayed for years. The clocks, intended for tabletops, were enclosed in glass or crystal cases that revealed their inner workings.

This anniversary clock is an old-fashioned spring-driven clock with a spinning pendulum. Made of brass, the clock has a rotating pendulum with four balls that move beneath the hand-painted face.

Anniversary clocks were the first mechanical clocks that did not need daily winding. The clock’s name comes from the fact that the slow-torsion pendulum only needed to be wound once a year, and couples could do this on their wedding anniversary.



## Landmarked Homes of La Mesa

### The Frank Oliver House (1907)

The Frank Oliver House is a fine example of an architectural style sometimes called “homestead house.” The style is unique and represents the pre-1910 ranch houses built by La Mesa’s earliest settlers. It is a one-and-a-half-story “L”-shaped home sheltered by a medium-pitch, cross-gable roof with shed dormers and green hexagonal composition shingles. The open porch mirrors the “L” shape of the house. The house also has an exterior early-addition brick chimney. At the street level, there is a cut-stone retaining wall five to six feet high from the sidewalk, where a block wall serves to retain the front-yard soil.

The house’s original owner and namesake, Frank Oliver was born in Iowa in 1858. He moved to Colorado at age 12. As an adult, he was a cowboy in Colorado. He married and then settled in Spring Valley, and later became a widower. Frank remarried and bought 24 lots in the Park’s Addition of 1906. (Park’s refers to C.C. Park of Park-Grable Investment Company.) Frank and his second wife, Anna, mortgaged Lots 5 and 6 and built the house that still sits at 4657 4th Street on the outskirts of downtown La Mesa. The Olivers lived there with their three children and Frank’s son from his first marriage until the summer of 1912, when they sold it to Dr. John Mallery and his wife, Lena.

Dr. Mallery served as La Mesa’s third mayor. He served less than three months in 1918, when he

resigned to enter the Army during World War I. He served in the medical corps until 1920. In 1924, Dr. Mallery and his family left La Mesa for Oregon. The Mallery family continued to own the house, which they rented out from 1924 to 1943. In 1943, John and France Dodson bought the house from Dr. Mallery.

The Frank Oliver House’s current owner is Kathy Tinsley, who bought the house in 1987. Kathy is the director of the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center and is also a cherished long-time board member of the LMHS.

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## Lookout Avenue’s New Editor

As of this issue, Robert B. “Ben” Abel has assumed the role of editor for *Lookout Avenue*. A fourth-generation La Mesan, Ben was born in San Diego and moved to La Mesa in 1987 at age 6. He attended Helix High School and earned his B.A. in social science from San Diego State University in 2002. After meeting his wife-to-be, who is from Atlanta, Georgia, he moved east in 2003. In 2008, he earned his M.A. in history from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, where he worked as an editor for *The William and Mary Quarterly* journal. He now works as an editor for the Department of Defense in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Ben still considers La Mesa home and retains a deep interest in the history of the town, where his parents still live and he visits as often as he can. He is thrilled to serve as editor of this newsletter and welcomes your input and ideas.

Share story ideas, comments and suggestions with the editor of this newsletter, Ben Abel, at [abelrober@gmail.com](mailto:abelrober@gmail.com).

## Collection Connection

We thank all of the following donors individually and collectively.

Donor	Donated Item(s)
Judy Jo Beardslee	16 photos of early La Mesa (1908–1914)
Rotary Club of La Mesa (Keith Dimdinger)	La Mesa city 70-year-anniversary button 1974 Mt. Helix Easter Service bulletin 1976 Mt. Helix Easter Service bulletin
Kathy Tinsley	110-year Methodist Church history booklet
Jocelyn Zimmerman	Collection of 15 magazines (1899–1938)
John Schmitz	1964 aerial photo of Lake Murray and vicinity
Denise Rhoads	Copies of photos from the La Mesa Vietnam Memorial scrapbooks
Denise Stefan	5 boxes of pictures, 19 scrapbooks, and the anniversary display board from the Grossmont Center archives (1960–2014)
Venus Smith	Sheet music for “La Mesa: Jewel of the Hills” and “It’s Fiesta Time in San Diego”
Mt. Helix Park Foundation	Copies of Mt. Helix Park Foundation files

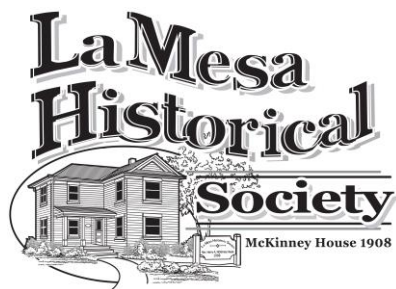


*Above: Photos from the newly donated archives from Denise Stefan. Top: Grossmont Center event, June 15, 1963, featuring San Diego Chargers players John Hadl and Bobby Jackson (left), with Miss La Mesa Cindy Null and Mayor Ray Fellows (right). Bottom: Grossmont Center, ca. 1963.*

### La Mesa Historical Society Board of Directors

President	Jim Newland
1st Vice-President	Wade Douglas
2nd Vice-President	George Fahouris
Secretary	Sharon Crockett
Treasurer	Rod Whitlow
Directors-at-Large	Ed Blackman
	Suda House
	Linda Rankin
	Pat Stromberg
	Kathy Tinsley
	Donna Niemeier
Past President	Aaron Landau

**Board meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.**



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(619) 466-0197  
www.lamesahistoricalsociety.com

## Change Service Requested

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Cut along line and mail the section below with your check.

### AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Membership Application

The Society depends on membership dues, bequests, and fundraising activities to support the restoration and preservation of local history.

The La Mesa Historical Society operates the Rev. Henry A. McKinney House, a 1908 house/museum located at 8369 University Avenue (at the corner of Pine Street) in La Mesa. Open 1–4 p.m. every second and fourth Saturday of the month or by appointment. Group tours are available. Call (619) 466-0197 for further information. *Lookout Avenue* is the official quarterly publication of the La Mesa Historical Society. Our address is:

La Mesa Historical Society  
P.O. Box 882  
La Mesa, CA 91944

Lookout Avenue was the original name of La Mesa Boulevard from the 1890s until the City Council voted to change the name in 1940. Lookout Avenue was La Mesa's main street.

- ☐ \$500 Benefactor
- ☐ \$250 Patron
- ☐ \$100 Sponsor/Organization
- ☐ \$50 Sustaining
- ☐ \$25 Family
- ☐ \$20 Individual
- ☐ \$10 Student

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be a volunteer in the following areas:

- |                                           |                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Docent/Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Events           | <input type="checkbox"/> Archives/House   |