



La Mesa Historical Society

LOOKOUT AVENUE

Volume 39, Issue 2

Spring 2014

President's Address

Jim Newland, LMHS President

Winter past quickly (and warmly), springtime is here and the Historical Society is marching forward.

The Society is continuing with new, and successful, programs such as our 2nd Historic Photography Demonstration Event we held in February with our partners at the Grossmont College Photography Program. Well over 100 college students ventured to the McKinney House and Archives to learn about the history of photography—and their local communities.

Once again, our Silent Movie Night on January 11th proved to be a great success. The partnership with the Theater Organ Society of San Diego, and featuring nationally renowned San Diego organist Russ Peck, provided another wonderful evening of historically associated entertainment.

We have also had the pleasure of the energy and exuberance of our second SDSU History Department intern, Melody Andrews, helping us out the last few months. Melody is helping enter our object collections into a cataloging database as well as researching the history behind some of our museum pieces. This relationship with SDSU history professor Sarah Elkind's students is proving to be a great benefit for both us, and the interns.

Don't forget to come see our newest exhibit at the McKinney House, "La Mesa's Postal History," featuring the long-standing exhibit board created by

former postman Thomas Cox that used to be on display at the Post Office—and the Palermo Building.

The Society also has a busy May coming up. Our Annual Meeting and Rose Garden Ceremony will be held on Saturday May 3 from 2-4pm. The following Saturday we will join with the La Mesa Friends of the Library with a booth at their annual Authors & Artists event from 9 to 2 at the Library. We will be out again participating in the La Mesa Antique Street Fair downtown on Sunday May 18th as well as with our usual presence in the City Parks' Flag Day Parade on Saturday May 31st.

Stop on by and say hello, and support us, and our La Mesa community events.

In addition, with our updated membership categories we will have our new membership brochure out soon—thanks to our secretary Sharon Crockett who has been revising the layout. You can find the new membership levels and sponsor opportunities at our website <http://lamesahistoricalsociety.com/contacts>

Another exciting program moving forward is our partnership with the La Mesa Rotary Club to fund additional "historic photo plaques" for key prominent historic sites in the historic downtown core. Negotiations with property owners and preliminary designs for the plaques are underway. Look for more on this exciting public interpretation program in the near future.

Don't forget to check our website to keep up with all our activities. <http://lamesahistoricalsociety.com>

As always, thanks again for all your support. If you are interested in helping out as a docent for the McKinney House or in the Archives, please contact us.

Feel free to contact me directly to discuss any ideas you might have to help us continue our invaluable mission for preserving La Mesa's history.

A Special Welcome for the Society's New Members

Christine Stockham
Frank Dittmer
William Hohnhorst
Susan & Dennis Young
John & Susie Schmit
Tammy Whatley
Debbie & Mike Wilmers
Virginia Howard Mullan
Christine & Greg Trigeiro
Michael Radell
Don Dodson
Paul Jarvis

Newest Display at the McKinney House

In the more than two centuries since Benjamin Franklin was appointed first Postmaster General in 1775, the Postal Service has grown and changed with America, boldly embracing new technologies to better serve a growing population. Through the 19th and 20th centuries, mail was sent via many methods, including horseback, stage coaches, steam ships, trains, hot air balloons, and finally airplanes. The history of the postal system is closely linked to the history of our country, states and cities. How much do you know about the history of La Mesa's Post Office?

Where was La Mesa's first Post Office? Is the building still standing? How many locations has the La Mesa Post Offices had? What is the name of the

most famous United States stamp? Find the answers to these and many more questions by visiting the new postal display at the McKinney House Museum.

A beautifully handcrafted display board made by Thomas Cox is the center of the new exhibit. The display board gives a detailed history of La Mesa's postal history using postcards, letters, stamps and pictures. Cox made the display board before his retirement from the Post Office in 1991. The board was on display in the Post Office at the Nebo and Allison location for many years before it was given to the La Mesa Historical Society.

Come by the McKinney House Museum on any 2nd or 4th Saturday, starting March 22, 2014 for a tour of the house museum and a firsthand look at our newest exhibit.



Marcy Cox, wife of Thomas Cox, showing display items she donated for the postal display.



In the Spotlight

Laura Lothian:

A Work in Progress and Progressing Through Work

Rambling Rose

Our curly haired moppet was born just outside New Orleans to James and Maria Vance. Her dad was a physicist for NASA. He was the esteemed recipient of NASA's Achievement Award for his work programming Apollo 11's reentry into the earth's atmosphere. Her mother, a retired nurse and realtor, lives in nearby Del Cerro. Maria was a beauty queen in her native Guatemala.

Laura moved often while growing up. From first grade in Alabama to her graduation from Milford High School in New Hampshire, Laura was the new kid nine out of the twelve years.

She attributes her adaptability and outgoing personality to these moves. "You can be that shy kid hiding in the back of the classroom or look at strangers as friends you haven't met yet. I chose the latter."

Laura went to college in Boston. She received a degree in Computer Science Engineering. "I couldn't have picked a worse major," she recollects. "My dad loved the idea of a daughter scientist. I love words, not numbers. It took me 15 years to go back to school and get the degree I really wanted."

Laura went on to obtain a BA in Journalism from Long Beach State University. She served as Editor-in-Chief of the university's daily paper.

Laura has lived in the San Diego area since 1998. Realizing a career in journalism was not her ticket to financial security, she decided upon a career that was both creative and lucrative—realtor. Laura started working in real estate in La Mesa in 2002. Her office has been in La Mesa Village since January 2007.

She has a son and two daughters. Mack is 24, a graduate of UCSB, Lainey, age 22, is a senior at SDSU. Milly, who is 20, is a sophomore at Grossmont College. She is getting ready to transfer to a four-year university.



Laura and her longtime partner, Simon, who hails from Manchester, England, graciously opened their historic Spanish Revival home to members of the society and the general community last November for the 8th Annual LMHS Home Tour. Their home, the "Flax House" was built in 1929. Laura says it is the newest home she has ever owned.

The Essence of a Woman

I have gotten to know the many aspects of Laura over the year. I see her at the gym working out strenuously. She works out daily. Laura is not boasting when she says daily is literally daily since April 1, 1982, a period of almost 32 years. It is not an April Fool's joke.

When you come to know Laura, you realize that she is not self-aggrandizing. She is vivacious, high energy, zany, upbeat, abhors negativity, is a workaholic, a perfectionist for her craft, and humorous. No wallflower here.

Community Member

Laura has been a member of the LMHS for several years. She has been a financial supporter of our Home Tour for two years running.

She is on the Board of Directors of the La Mesa Village Merchants Association. Laura is also on the Board of Directors of the Pacific Southwest Association of Realtors.

Laura Off the Top of Her Curls

If she could have one wish: To have her kids always remain happy and healthy.

Words of Wisdom: Dream big and go for it! Don't just survive, thrive! Positive expectations yield positive results.

Person you would love to cook for and have over for dinner: Margaret Thatcher. What a powerful woman. She broke through two barriers: as a female in the male dominated world of politics and as a "commoner" in the blue-blooded world of the British aristocracy. A woman of conviction who did not dither or wither when opposed.

Laura's Top Ten

Sunday supper with my family
Watching "chick flicks" with my daughters
Riding my old Schwinn Beach Cruiser around town
Hiking in beautiful neighborhoods with my sister Deb.
Cooking as a way to decompress from work
Reading "fat," engrossing novels
Wine with Simon or girlfriends
Closing escrows
Photographing homes
Politics

Share story ideas, comments and suggestions with Editor Erin Ben-Judah at erin.benjudah@hotmail.com

Do you know what year this photo was taken?



These are Ben Aktins fleet of "auto stages" based here in La Mesa.
Hint: SDGE had brought electric power to La Mesa Springs in September 1910.
(Answer on page 8.)

On Board

Jim Newland in Black and White

This article is going to be short and sweet as our current president gave us a brief autobiography in our July 2013 issue of The Lookout. We'll start this time with the list of Jim's favorites, some of Jim's responses may surprise you.

Favorites:

Movie: The Lady Eve (1941) Barbara Stanwyck and Henry Fonda. Great, underrated screwball comedy. Also anything by Lon Chaney Sr., greatest film actor ever.

TV show: Book/American History TV (CSPN 2 & 3)

Book: Too many to name, right now Richard Orsi's "Sunset Limited: History of the Southern Pacific Railroad," Mark Fiege's "The Republic of Nature" and



Lisa Brady's "War on the Land" as I'm studying Lincoln and the Yosemite Grant of 1864 (the 150th Anniversary of the State and National Park idea).

Color: No thanks, black and white provides better contrast.

Time Period: Now, the past is a dangerous place—I've studied it.

Food: Just about everything and anything, but all in moderation

Sport: American Football as a spectator, although I was better in track and basketball.

Music/Song: A bit eclectic: Neo-Scottish folk/rock, classic power and progressive metal, but a good aria is appreciated as well.

Vacation spot: What's a vacation?

The origins of an historian

Jim has always been interested in history, when he was a kid he would order English toy soldiers from a catalog from a company in England and read all the books in the school library – non-fiction, of course. But it wasn't until graduate school that Jim became interested in local history. His advisor got him interested after he did an internship in Old Town conducting site-specific research. After Jim and his wife bought their first home in the Rolando area, he researched the land permit. Soon, he was researching the neighbor's houses and his research expanded from there. Today, you can still catch Jim doing lectures about the Rolando area and he will be participating in the Rolando Street Fair.

The hopes of a LMHS president

Jim is honored to be the president of our society and is even more excited to be backed by a good, solid group of board members. Although Jim is involved with the society in addition to working full-time for the California state parks, he has great aspirations for the society. He is especially excited about the internship opportunities with his alma mater, SDSU; about the updates that have happened on the McKinney house, and our new website. His great hope is to update the Historic Preservation Survey in La Mesa. He believes that it would help with some of the questions that arise on new projects, to understand what other properties are out there, and what other resources do we have in La Mesa that need to be recognized.

Jim Newland is passionate about history, our local history – which is a great trait for the President of La Mesa Historical Society.

La Mesa Through the Years:

100 Plus Years Ago

La Mesa Springs Scout

In case you had any doubts about the efficacy and desirability of having your home or office electrified, the La Mesa Scout published an ad in the January 13,

1911 issue placed by San Diego Consolidated Gas and Electric Co. enticing you to “go electric”.

Thirty Reasons FOR USING ELECTRIC LIGHT IT IS

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Safe | 16. Signifies Success |
| 2. Clean | 17. White Light |
| 3. Bright | 18. Steady Light |
| 4. Odorless | 19. Always Ready |
| 5. Dirtless | 20. Makes Home Attractive |
| 6. Greaseless | 21. Welcomes Friends |
| 7. Sootless | 22. Frightens Thieves |
| 8. Fumeless | 23. Brightens Everything |
| 9. Flameless | 24. Can Be Used Anywhere |
| 10. Matchless | 25. Saves Labor |
| 11. Healthful | 26. Consumes No Oxygen |
| 12. Convenient | 27. Permits Better Work |
| 13. Explosionless | 28. Is a Cheap Luxury |
| 14. No dirty chimneys | 29. Is Better Than Ever |
| 15. No burnt fingers | 30. Is Cheaper Than Ever |

**San Diego Consolidated
Gas and Electric Co.**

Upcoming Events

- Annual Meeting & Rose Garden Ceremony** – May 3rd, 2 – 4pm
- Friends of the Library: Authors and Artists** – May 10th, 9 – 2pm at the La Mesa Library
- La Mesa Street Faire** – May 18th, 9 – 4pm
- Flag Day Parade** – May 31st, 10am
- Archives** – Open Saturday 1 – 4pm
- McKinney House** – Open 2nd & 4th Saturday 1 – 4pm

Check our website www.lamesahistory.com for the latest on Society events.

ArtiFACTS!

Edison Amberola Phonograph



The Edison Amberola Phonograph sits in the corner of the dining room at the McKinney house with its original Edison decal, showing a first patent date of November 17, 1903. The Amberola hit the mainstream market in 1909. It has an oak veneer finish, metal horn grille covered with cloth, and nickel-plated hardware. Behind the grille sits the phonograph horn, encased by the oak cabinet.



Also in the collection are several Edison Blue Amberol records. The Blue Amberols were first introduced in 1912. They are made of celluloid with a plaster of paris core and would play for 4 minutes – outperforming previous 2 minute cylinders.

Collection Connection

We thank all of these donors individually and collectively.

Donor	Donated Items
Marlene Campbell	Photo of the Lemon Avenue School, 1943
Norm Applebaum	August 1949 San Diego Magazine
Mountain Empire Historical Society	-47 pictures of Historical La Mesa -4 official July 4, 1911 Programs -February 10, 1911 La Mesa Scout -Letter about New Opera House -8 negatives of La Mesa Aerials
Charlene Craig	-La Mesa Junior High Annual, 1958 -12 pictures of 4663 Spring Street, Home of Morris and Hazel Porter. c. 1969-72
Duane Dubke	Loan of picture of Harry Truman, September 29, 1948 at La Mesa Depot



Board of Directors

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	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 PM.

In Memorium: Carol Anne Jones (1946-2014)

It is with great sadness that we received word just prior to publication of the passing of long-time Society member Carol Jones. Carol was a dedicated volunteer for the Society, not only in support of her husband, past president Gordon Jones, but for all of our events and projects over the years.

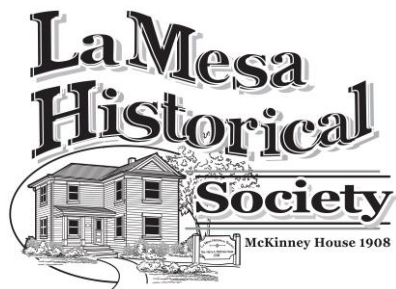
Carol's smiling face and helpful exuberance as a volunteer at the Society's events—most notably her support for the annual home tours—was a constant that the Society could always count on. Carol's strength in overcoming her mobility challenges due to health issues was an inspiration to all.

She will be missed greatly, not only at the Society but by the La Mesa community with whom she engaged.



Answer to photo on page 4: The photo was taken c. 1912.

Don't miss the Annual Meeting and Rose Garden Ceremony on May 3rd from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at the McKinney House.



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www.lamesahistory.com

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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 fund-raising 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 1-4pm 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

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