

Fall 2024

lookout avenue

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LA MESA
History Center

The NEWSLETTER of the LA MESA HISTORY CENTER

VOLUME 49, #3

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Home Tour activities in full gear

It seems like we just wrapped up our 2023 Home Tour, yet the La Mesa History Center finds itself in full swing preparing for the upcoming 18th Annual Home Tour. Our Tour Committee has been busy finding houses, planning the routes, gathering sponsors and docents, and getting the word out that ticket sales are open. The variety and uniqueness of the architecture in La Mesa never ceases to amaze me and from what I've seen of the houses that are currently lined up, this year's tour will not disappoint.

Members brave the heat to attend Annual Meeting

Thank you to everyone who attended the Annual Meeting at the McKinney House on Sunday, June 25th.

Around 45 members attended the event which featured the opening of the Thelma "Gourd Lady of La Mesa" Kusche exhibit. To help beat the heat, attendees snacked on tasty fruit and charcuterie cups assembled by Board Members Donna Bloomer and Dianne McCann, as well as a variety of petit fours. These were paired with lemonade, water or a variety of wines generously donated by Mike and Linda McWilliams of San Pasqual Winery. We thank them for their continued generosity to our organization.

In addition to catching up with fellow members, I had the opportunity to address the assembled group and present the slate of new and returning Board members for approval. It was truly humbling to present the list of the LMHC's accomplishments over the course of the past year. In addition to the Home Tour, LMHC was represented at multiple community events such as the La Mesa Farmers' Market, Halloween in the Village, the Earth Day Celebrations, and the Flag Day Parade. The LMHC Board is excited to

welcome two new Board members, Emily Alessio and Ann Marie "Ammy" Provancha. Emily has been helping the LMHC with our newsletter for the past few issues and she will be continuing to assist with that project. Ammy brings to the Board tremendous event experience including work with Mt. Helix and participation in the LMHC Home Tour. We welcome them and thank them, and all our volunteers, for the time and talents they are willing to share.



LMHC Table at the Mt. Helix Good and Wine Fest

Community Outreach

The LMHC was pleased to again participate in the Mt Helix Food and Wine Fest on Saturday, August 17th. Board member Sharon Smith and I staffed the table and were able to show information about the upcoming Home Tour with attendees.

We will also be staffing a table at the La Mesa Farmers' Market on Friday, September 20th. Stop by and say "hi"!

***Veronica Martzahl, President
La Mesa History Center***

MEMBER RECOGNITION

As announced in our last quarterly newsletter, the La Mesa History Center (LMHC) has decided to revise our membership plans to better serve our mission and community needs. One of the many new membership benefits includes the recognition of our generous Benefactor and Jewel members in our quarterly newsletters.

As a volunteer-run organization, we rely on your contributions to support our events and preservation efforts, celebrating La Mesa's rich and colorful history. Your high dollar membership dues have helped LMHC connect the community to its unique heritage through various events and services. Additionally, your dues have allowed LMHC to purchase the archival supplies needed to preserve our collections, maintain our site, and enhance access to local history. If you're interested in becoming a new Benefactor or Jewel member, more information can be found here: <https://lamesahistory.com/membership/>

On behalf of the La Mesa History Center Board of Directors, we thank you for your generosity and continued support in helping us preserve and celebrate the rich heritage of our community!

Jewel Members

Ed Blackman	Ron and Vickie Cady	Peter Camana
Sheryl Castro	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Duggan	Andrea Flint-Gogek
John and Rita Folsom	Norm Hapke	Linda Lee Hill
Dave Kesner	Brenda Leek	Jeremy and Katie Martinson
Vince and Kay McGrath	Jonathan and Mary Parker Ernest	Pamala Rader
Jeff Raybould	Eldon and Darlene Vogt	Leslie Witherspoon
La Mesa Womans' Club	The Rotary Club of La Mesa	La Mesa Police Officers Association

Benefactor Members

Melanie Estes	Lisa and Dan Kincaid	Larry Liebenmensch
Ester Drew Long	Donna Niemeier	John and Valeria Richardson
Jim Stieringer	Gina Vattuone	

SITE AND LANDSCAPE RENOVATIONS CONTINUE

The multi-year site renovation project, which started before COVID, is inching toward the finish line. We have just received permit approval from the City of La Mesa to build the display building and shade trellis which will provide more opportunities for outdoor interaction with the public and allow us to interpret local history to a wider audience.

Thanks to the help of generous supporters, the overall renovation project included a complete change of the landscape to make it more user-friendly for programming as well as bringing it back to our interpretive period when the McKinney House was part of a larger ranch parcel. We still need additional funds to finish the project (which will also include interpretive signage for the site.) **An anonymous donor has generously issued a \$10,000 matching gift which we have been working toward.** If you would like to help us cross the finish line please consider making a gift to the landscape campaign. You can mail in a check to our PO Box 882, La Mesa, CA. 91944 or donate with this website link https://lamesahistory.com/product/variable_donation/. All variable donations will count toward the campaign.

Thank you for your support. We are almost there!

FALL EVENTS

Table at the La Mesa Farmer's Market

Friday, September 20, 2024
3:00pm to 7:00pm

Halloween in the Village

Thursday, October 31, 2024
4:00pm to 6:00pm

Home Tour Roundtable

Saturday, September 28, 2024
10:00am to Noon
Grossmont Healthcare
Conference Center

18th Annual Home Tour

Saturday, November 2, 2024
9:00am to 3:00pm
Start at Grossmont High School

LA MESA
History Center

**welcome to our new board
members**



Emily Alessio

Born and raised in La Mesa, Emily Alessio is a 2017 graduate of Grossmont High School. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in History from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. Emily currently serves as Education & Visitor Experience Manager at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum, where she develops and leads adult and student learning opportunities, cultural programming and events, exhibition curation, and community outreach initiatives. She currently volunteers with the La Mesa History Center as its newsletter designer.



*Anne-Marie
"Ammy" Provancha*

Currently a resident of Mt. Helix and a local realtor, Ammy has had a long history of working in our community. She has served as a docent for the History Center's home tour and was a member on the Mt. Helix Park gala committee. She also has held many roles with the local and state court reporting boards during her earlier career. She will be helping with events and as she said, "anything you need!"

18TH ANNUAL LA MESA HISTORY CENTER 2024 HOME TOUR “PEAKS OF PRESERVATION” Featuring Mid-Century Gems of Grossmont/Mt. Helix

The La Mesa History Center's last tour in Grossmont/Mt. Helix in 2022 was an overwhelming success. This year promises to be another outstanding event highlighting these wonderful communities and the heights of their Mid-Century architectural and artistic heritage.

Area's Mid-Century Architectural Heritage Crests in 2024 Home Tour

This year's tour retrains its focus to the view towards, and from, the rocky hills and peaks of the Grossmont/Mt. Helix community.

From Grossmont's early 20th Century plans for creating rustic bohemian artist colonies of arts & crafts influenced organic residences through the popular "revival" styles homes of the 1920s-30s, into the Post-WWII boom times, these rural suburban enclaves have been the center of outstanding architectural, artistic, and landscape designs.

Especially in the exponential growth of the region's Post-WWII Mid-Century era of the 1950s and 1960s, Grossmont/Mt Helix offered many the perfect opportunity to fulfill their visions of "nuclear family" nirvana.

For these 20th century home makers and builders, the rocky, hillside view lots provided a natural canvas for California's legendary indoor-outdoor lifestyle. Tapping into that intersection

of organic architecture, Arts and Crafts aesthetic and future-focused Modernist ideals, many designers and home builders made a logical link in fulfilling the rural suburban dreams of community development here.

This year's tour provides an invitation into the local architectural heritage of the Post-WWII Era of Grossmont/Mt Helix, featuring some of the area's most noted custom builders, designers, artists, and architects.

The spectacular tour homes, with their Mid-Century design pedigrees, present home tour ticket holders the opportunity for experiencing the area's distinctive role in the San Diego region's Post-WWII Modern design legacy.

Grossmont/Mt Helix and the Peaks of Post-War Design

The History Center has arranged for tour guests to experience a high-quality sampling of captivating and breath-taking residential homes, artisanship, décor, and landscapes.

The tour features a series of unique and significant properties including an iconic 1964 Mid-Century home from master architect **Sim Bruce Richards** with **sculpter/painter/craftsman James Hubbell** work throughout, a master builder **Mabie and Mintz** 1958 restored custom Mid-Century showpiece with legendary

San Diego designer **Gerald Jerome** interior and “Palm Springs” vibe, a pristine 1959 custom Modern Ranch landmark home from noted local designer/builders **George Eckel** and **Leonard Smith** with original Catalina Pool, a tastefully upgraded and preserved master builder **John Mortenson** custom 1960 classic, and an architect **Richard George Wheeler** designed 1960 home with **Dilliard Harwell** (local artist and onetime Gerald Jerome associate) artwork and authentic Mid-Century décor amidst a period-style landscape.

Origins of Grossmont and its Colony

The Grossmont and Mt Helix communities share a similar and interlinked history. San Diego merchant, promoter and entrepreneurial developer Ed Fletcher provided the two rural-suburban developments with their initial suburban visions. In 1906 Fletcher partnered with former New York actor and agent William Gross to subdivide the lands south of the Alta (now Grossmont) Pass into hillside lots of the tract they named Grossmont. Fletcher and Gross began their marketing in earnest as a burgeoning Bohemian artist colony in 1910.

With Gross’ entertainment connections notable artists and entertainers of the day such as John Vance Chaney, Teresa Careno and Carrie Jacobs Bond had purchased lots and promised to build homes and reside in the new colony. In 1912 world famous opera singer Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink constructed her home in the tract and took up residence at Grossmont. Schumann-Heink’s commitment was soon buoyed with the announcement of author Owen Wister’s purchase and construction of a home. Author of the best-selling novel *The Virginian*, Wister and his quintessential Western novel inspired several street names in Grossmont’s westernmost subdivision. (The untimely death of Wister’s wife shortly before their new rustic home was completed resulted in his not ever living in Grossmont).

The Grossmont Colony reflected the interest in the Arts & Crafts and “Back to Nature” movements reacting to the Country’s rapid

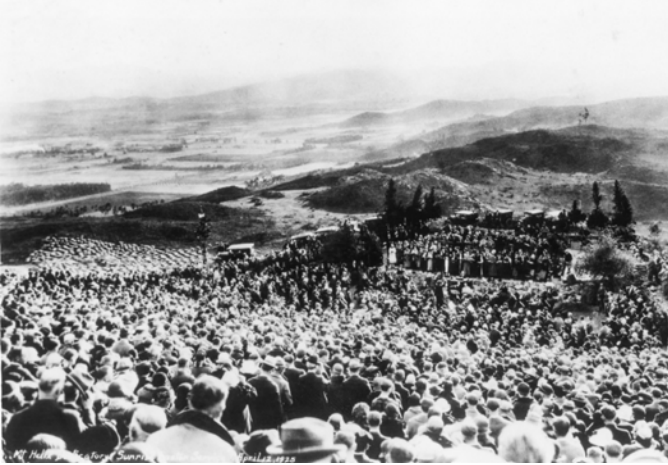
urbanization and industrialization. Although architects and designers such as Del Harris included the latest in Prairie School influence (the Modern styles of the time) into Schumann-Heink’s quarried native-stone walled home, the Arts & Crafts influence resulted in a variety of rustic-style cottages and homes for Grossmont. These early homes set the standard for high-quality architecture and artistry to match the picturesque landscape of Grossmont.



Schumann-Heink House, 1912. Del Harris architect.

Opening Mt. Helix and its “Green Gold”

In 1916 Ed Fletcher partnered with several other investors (including lumberman Fred White and his wife Mary Yawkey White) to purchase much of the undeveloped property including, and surrounding, the higher Mt. Helix south of Grossmont Peak. One year later Fletcher would allow the San Diego Advertising Company to use Mt. Helix for its version of Easter Sunrise services that had started several years earlier on La Mesa’s Mt. Nebo. This would lead to the annual event that inspired Mary Yawkey White and her brother lumber magnate Cyrus Yawkey to fund construction of the landmark Richard Requa-designed Mt. Helix Nature Theater and park in their mother’s honor that continues to hold that event to this day. The Nature Theater opened for Easter 1925. This tradition continues into today. (The theater property is operated as a unique private-operated public park by the Mt. Helix Park Foundation).



First Sunrise Service at Mt Helix Theater, April 12, 1925.

It was not until after World War I, in the 1920s and 1930s that the Mt. Helix area began to see significant development. A key supporter and catalyst for this was Fred Hansen. A Danish immigrant, Hansen had made a fortune in the cyclone (chain-link) fence business before moving to San Diego County in 1924. He chose this area as he noted there was “no spot so exactly suited for a country estate more than Mt. Helix.” Part of his inspiration for converting the area into gentlemen’s ranch estates was avocados. Starting in the late 1920s Hansen moved to make the once-mocked “alligator pear” into Mt. Helix’s “green gold.” His Avocado Villas and Calavo Gardens tracts (with its avocado variety street names) set the stage for development of 1920s and 1930s Mediterranean style home sites with their own avocado groves that dominated the Inter-War Mt Helix landscape.



Typical Mt Helix landscape of Revival Style home surrounded by Avocado groves, c1930

Grossmont/Mt Helix: Mid-Century Modern Home Community

World War II transformed San Diego County, including Grossmont/Mt. Helix, with exponential suburban growth that continued throughout the Post-WWII era. Both areas promised an amazing and unique version of the American Dream. Those dreaming of the perfect home for raising a baby-booming nuclear family in the California suburbs, the indoor-outdoor lifestyle inspired by the intersection of organic architecture, regional historical character, and Arts & Crafts sensibilities, made sense amongst the granite-filled lots of the Grossmont and Mt. Helix subdivisions. Available lots and a young generation of professionals and home seekers found the semirural landscape perfect for their suburban dreams.

Visionary architects such as Lloyd Ruocco, Homer Delawie, John Mock, Henry Hester, Richard George Wheeler, Sim Bruce Richards and other practitioners of San Diego’s Modernist design community found palettes and willing clients. Soon hundreds of Mid-Century Ranch, Contemporary and Modern homes were filling empty lots and former orchard plots.



Lloyd and Ilse Ruocco at Il Cavo, their La Mesa Knolls Home (demolished).

For more on Lloyd Ruocco, and his wife Ilse Hamann Ruocco’s role as leaders, mentors and inspiration for Post-WWII San Diego’s

Modernist artists and architects, and their La Mesa connections, see our 2022 Tour Roundtable presentation on the History Center YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYINj62wcBg>

In addition to the bevy of notable architects who had projects in the Grossmont/Mt Helix area, the list of stellar practitioners included a number of local and regional master builder/contractors and architectural designers. Such custom builders/developers as Mabie and Mintz, John Mortenson, George Eckel, Stanley Scott Co., Homer Morehouse/Weir Brothers, Ed Heacock, and notable architectural designers such as James Hurley and William Teer's work can be found throughout the area.

Featured 2024 Tour Homes

This year's tour exclusively features exquisite examples of the area's Mid-Century architecture in a focused period of classic and iconic building for Grossmont/Mt. Helix—the "Peak" you might say for this architectural and artistic heritage--(1958-1964).

Kansas native George Eckel was of those custom builders practicing here. Our tour features one of his custom houses built with his off-times design partner, brother-in-law Leonard Smith (married to sister Grace Eckel). Smith came to La Mesa in 1946, George Eckel in 1947, after both served in the Navy during WWII. Smith would establish one of the most successful real estate companies in San Diego County. He also partnered many times with brother-in-law builders George & Wayne Eckel to design and build custom Modern and Contemporary ranch houses such as the featured tour home. Their partnership of Smith design and Eckel construction being well known for area homebuilders and home seekers. Eckel also built homes for other designers, but he is best known for his work with Leonard Smith. It is estimated that Eckel/Smith built and designed perhaps as many as 75 to 100 homes in the Grossmont/Mt Helix area from the 1950s into the 1970s.

**OPEN FOR INSPECTION during
NATIONAL HOME WEEK**

George Eckel invites you to see his latest quality home—3 bedrooms & den, 2½ baths, 3-car garage, stone fireplace, beamed ceilings in living room and keeping room. Wonderful panoramic view and of course a complete Westinghouse Kitchen and Laundry.

SEE THESE FEATURES
KITCHEN AND LAUNDRY COMPLETELY EQUIPPED WITH
Westinghouse APPLIANCES

SEE THIS LOVELY HOME AT 10550 FUERTE DRIVE, MT. HELIX.

GEORGE ECKEL
Builder PHONE HO 6-2703

BUILDING SITES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR FUTURE HOME





FEATURES of luxury living keynote this ranch-styled rambler built on a boulder strewn site at 10448 Fuerte Dr. on Mt. Helix. The appearance is deceiving. The dwelling has five bedrooms, plus a family room, in a wing that extends to the rear. It is open for public display during annual Parade of Homes, continuing through weekend of Oct. 9.

George Eckel Ad, 1955 and one of the Eckel Residences, 1960.

This gorgeous 1958 Modern Ranch home is a Eckel/Smith classic. It is sited on a wonderful view lot that provides direct site of Mt Helix as well as to the west. The Catter House, named for its second and most notable owners Richard and Marjorie Catter (early leaders of San Diego's California Western School of Law), is perhaps one of the most pristine and original homes we have had on the Tour. The single-story, horizontal footprint captures several spaces for maximizing the indoor/outdoor lifestyle. The house includes most of its original period

style features such as wood shingle roofing, wood siding with brick and stone elements. Do not miss the myriad original details in built-in custom features, original hardware, windows, and patios.

In addition, the house features an original 1961 Catalina Pool.

HEADQUARTERS for
*swimming pool construction, pool maintenance,
 service, supplies, accessories . . .*



CONVENIENTLY located on El Cajon Boulevard in La Mesa—with handy parking space—is **CATALINA POOLS'** new home. Here you'll enjoy inspecting the model pools, talking with experts who have built more custom-designed quality pools for more San Diego County families and institutions than all other pool builders combined.



**SWIMMING POOL MAINTENANCE,
 CHEMICALS, SUPPLIES.**

*Catalina Pools Headquarters, 8200 El Cajon Blvd
 (demolished).*

La Mesa businessman H. Vance Baker's Catalina Pools was a La Mesa-based company of national renown. Baker, who also served many years as a Chamber of Commerce officer and City Councilman, grew the local company into one known for its high-end custom built-in pools throughout California. A Catalina Pool being a mark of high-end suburban lifestyle in our period of focus. (Many recall the Catalina Pools neon sign that was visible from US 80/ Interstate 8 in La Mesa for many decades).

Of course, what would our Grossmont/Mt Helix based home tours be without at least one John Mortensen custom masterpiece. WWII veteran John Mortensen settled in San Diego, eventually obtaining a position as a carpenter with La Mesa-based builder/developers Jackson & Scott. In 1958 John started his own custom construction company often designing the homes himself. Over the years Mortensen would build an estimated 200 custom homes throughout the County, with a large majority in the Grossmont/Mt Helix and Horizon Hills areas.

This year's Mortensen designed and built home is also one of his earlier projects. Mortensen started construction on this home in 1959, finishing in early 1960. It was a relatively expensive home for the time being marketed at \$60,000 and featured several luxury features that are hallmarks of his designs. These included a large master bathroom with sunken tile tub/shower and floor to ceiling glass wall to experience the adjacent outdoor garden space, along with dual-room fireplace bearing wall and multiple built-ins.

F-10 THE SAN DIEGO UNION Sunday, February 16, 1969



GARDEN BATHROOMS also are a popular item in today's custom homes. Plate glass separates the walled garden from the bath area at the **John Mortenson** place. Note the tiled sunken tub. Shower stall is at floor level at right.

Distinctive Mortensen sunken tile tub and glass wall, 1969

The current owners have recently given the home a re-fresh that keeps the original style of many features with newer retro elements. Their tasteful update and Mortenson's siting of the home, to take advantage of the great western views, and a newly updated landscape make this another gem of a tour home.

San Diego contractors Mabie and Mintz were perhaps one of the largest and most prolific general contractors of the period. Partners Richard Mabie and Ted Mintz formed their company in the mid-1950s. Within a few years they were working with some of the most talented architects, designers and developers on some of the most iconic projects in San Diego. Over their 30 plus year career they built projects with noted architects such as William Krisel, Deems-Martin, Leonard Veitzer, C.J. Paderewski, Tucker-Sadler & Bennett and Henry Hester.

Most of their projects were apartments and commercial projects but they did do some notable private residences. We have one of those on this year's tour. It is stunning executive style home with a "Palm Springs" vibe, perfect for the entertainment needs of a prominent businessman resident. Owner Isadore Teacher was indeed a prominent businessman and real estate developer, and he hired Mabie & Mintz to build this classic Mid-Century home in 1956. (They already were working on building an apartment complex for Teacher at 28th & Broadway in Golden Hill).

Per County building records the original permit for Teacher's showplace home was pulled in late 1956, but Mabie & Mintz did not complete the home until 1958. Records for this project are limited but a contractor's lien in Summer 1958 confirmed Mabie & Mintz being the general contractor. Around twenty years ago previous owners spoke with Dick Mabie. Mabie recalled that although they were working with prominent local architects at the time, that no architect was part of the Teacher project (this was typical of the period where local builders did not always require an architect). But Mabie did note that he had San Diego interior designer Gerald Jerome assist in the project. (Mabie & Mintz worked

with Gerald Jerome and architect Henry Hester on many projects including the Award-Winning Solomon Apartments during that period).



CECILE ABBEY

THE MOST DISTINGUISHED PLACE TO LIVE

Every comfort and convenience of a luxury home has been planned for these 30 distinctive contemporary apartments in **Cecile Abbey**, which will be centrally located facing the beautiful green panorama of Balboa Park at Sixth and Spruce Street. Especially created for families with grown children who seek to be free from the cares and responsibilities of a large home. **One bedroom — one bath, two bedroom — two bath, and three bedroom — three bath apartments** averaging around 1225 square feet. Substantial size rooms with the **finest complete modern kitchens, ample closet space, dressing rooms, separate showers and tub baths, and radiant heat** with individual room controls. There will be two electronically controlled **elevators** and parking in the subterranean garage for at least two cars for each apartment if desired. Some apartments will have attractive **masonry fireplaces** and others will have **large balconies** which will overlook Balboa Park. Some will have sliding glass doors to the patio garden with its heated **swimming pool**, although tenants can also enjoy the sun and relax on the **tropically-planted roof garden**. LIVE IN DISTINGUISHED LUXURY AT CECILE ABBEY AND YET FREE YOURSELF FROM THE SERVANT PROBLEM AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A HOME. Rentals are from \$260.00 to \$500.00 per month,—less than the taxes, insurance, maintenance, and interest on your investment in a home. As there are only 30 apartments, three-year leases are desired, especially as tenant has choice of color for carpeting, walls, woodwork, curtain partitioning, etc. Architect, Henry H. Hester. General Contractor, **Mabie and Mintz**.

Interior Decorator, Gerald Jerome, A.I.D.

Previous page: Ad for Solomon Apartments (original name Cecile Abbey). Lists Mabie & Mintz, architect Henry Hester and designer Gerald Jerome, 1958.

For those unaware, there is likely no more prolific or notable interior designer in Mid-Century San Diego. Gerald Jerome was the “go-to” interior designer in San Diego for over three decades. He had both prominent private and commercial clients locally and throughout the country. Gerald Jerome was another WWII Navy veteran who settled in San Diego. While attending San Diego State University, he studied design with Ilse Hamann Ruocco and John Dirks. He also met Jacqueline Harwell, sister of aspiring artist and fellow student Dilliard Harwell. Gerald married Jacqueline and brother-in-law Dilliard joined him in his interior design practice during the 1950s and early 1960s. Sister-in-law Jolene Harwell recalls Dilliard mentioning his and Gerald’s work on this house. A recent visit with Jolene identified several typical Jerome interior design details.

Thanks to those previous owners and the current owners, the Teacher House has been restored and tastefully upgraded. Tour guests will be able to experience this classic Mid-Century executive home in all its glory. Designed around a built-in swimming pool with a notable landscape that wraps around the boulder-filled lot, it is a period gem. From the built-in cocktail bar, sunken living room, executive suite with oval shaped wardrobe/dressing room, one can only expect Mid-Century San Diego “movers and shakers” to be hanging out there in the day.

Speaking of Dilliard Harwell, our next home features some of our dearly departed friend Dilliard’s personal artwork and craftsmanship. San Diego architect Richard George Wheeler designed this house for Minnesota natives and local business owners George and Alice Alvig in 1960. During the Alvig’s ownership they only used the home for their winter sojourns to San Diego.

Wheeler was one of the most prolific architects in San Diego. Son of William Wheeler, Australian native who came to San Diego to begin his

practice in 1912, Richard built many significant commercial buildings, tract homes, and private residences such as this one. This Modern style home features classic Mid-Century details including local stone fireplace, wood siding, high open beam ceilings and turquoise-colored rock roof.

When the Harwells, who had known and worked for Wheeler on projects (The Jeromes were friends as well, being married at Wheeler’s House), purchased the home years later, they didn’t know initially that it was one of his homes.



CHECKING OUT—Dilliard Harwell, owner of Design Place, checks out one of the chairs

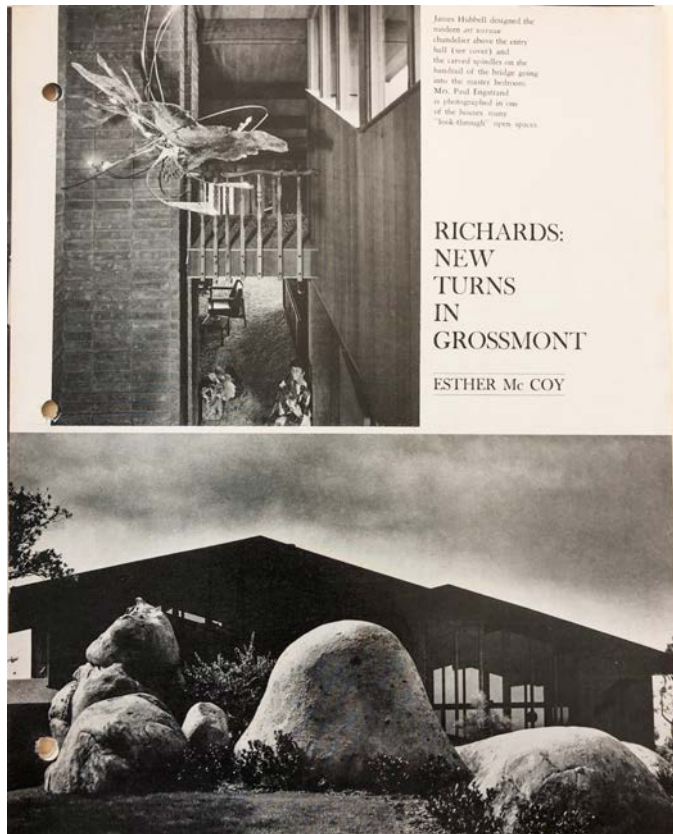
produced in his El Cajon plant.—Evening Tribune Staff Photos by Roger Wrenn

Dilliard Harwell at his El Cajon furniture plant, 1973.

They subsequently took the part-time “snowbird” residence and successfully updated and restored original features while tastefully replacing the worn flooring, replacing fixed windows, upgrading the kitchen and enhancing the house with their own artwork, craftsmanship and décor. They also worked to revitalize the back yard and provide new patio and deck spaces for enjoying the amazing views.

Last, but not least, we are also featuring a home that is an outstanding example of the dynamic duo of master architect Sim Bruce Richards and artist/craftsman James Hubbell. As Keith York, biographer of Sim Bruce Richards notes, Richards developed his own design language. Combining his Cherokee heritage, time studying with Frank Lloyd Wright, interest in California's architectural heritage, all wound with Modern design ideals helped him create some of the most iconic and reflective work in Mid-Century San Diego architecture. Multi-discipline artist/craftsman James Hubbell, a graduate of Cranbrook Academy, began collaborating in the 1950s. Their synergetic work inspired enhanced creativity for both—and some of the most amazing melding of art and architecture in dozens of projects. La Mesans are familiar with Hubbell's creative work in the Briercrest Park landscape as just one example.

Our Tour features one of Richards and Hubbell's noted collaborations from 1964.



Esther McCoy article on Engstrand House, San Diego Magazine, 1965

Constructed for attorney Paul Engstrand and his concert pianist wife Parthie, it is considered one of his most outstanding and unique works with Hubbell. As legendary California architectural historian Esther McCoy wrote about the home shortly after its completion, it was possibly one of Richards' most "cunningly devised" homes. It contained many of Richards' spontaneous details, yet "none of them attention-demanding or detracting from the overall pleasant dignity."

McCoy noted that Hubbell's fantastic, yet fitting features such as the modern art nouveau chandelier, or other details such as lathe turned balustrades, and stained glass windows were perfectly matching the design. She also remarked on Richards' intentional breaking up of the horizontal and vertical spaces to provide owner Parthie and her musician friends the best piano tones possible—to create what Mrs. Engstrand noted was "a pleasant-sounding house."

The new owners have graciously offered up this Modern organic masterpiece of Richards and Hubbell design for our visitors to experience. The spaces and views are one of a kind and will be a fitting home to explain Grossmont/Mt Helix's important place as a Peak of "Mid-Century" Preservation.

Home Tour Roundtable Presentation September 28

*To learn more about these amazing homes, designers, and owners be sure to attend the 2024 Home Tour Roundtable Presentation on Saturday September 28th at the Grossmont Healthcare District Auditorium from 10am to 12 noon.

Historian Jim Newland will be joined by Keith York, author of *The Sensuous Environment: Sim Bruce Richards, Architect*. Jim will relate the history of the Grossmont/Mt Helix area and the Tour houses. Keith will provide his presentation on the work of Sim Bruce Richards and James Hubbell.

For more information check lamesahistory.com

or our Facebook and Instagram pages.

Partnering Again with Grossmont High School and Museum

In addition, the History Center once again partners with Grossmont High School--for Tour Check-In, tour parking, and Shuttle station (the Grossmont High School Museum also will be open during the tour for those looking for Foothiller history!).

Check In and Shuttle Center:

Grossmont High School, 1100 Murray Drive, El Cajon 92020

Hope to See You On the Tour!

Don't miss the chance to see these amazing Homes. Although well-preserved examples of these distinctive periods and styles, they are illustrative of how such well-designed and constructed houses continue to serve as homes today. They continue to provide the current owners, several with children, the same functions and assets that the original owners experienced for these many decades. In each participating home tour guests will experience these exemplary "Peaks of Preservation."

Once again, we thank our generous homeowners for opening these Greater La Mesa area gems to tour guests. This year's tour looks to be another memorable event. Don't miss it! Get Your Tickets Now at jamesahistory.com

James D. Newland, La Mesa History Center



Engstrand Home



*Top: Herbert House
Left: Teacher Home*



LA MESA
History Center

November 2, 2024

18th ANNUAL HOME TOUR

The La Mesa History Center is proud to present our 18th Annual Home Tour, "Peaks of Preservation," featuring awe-inspiring homes in Grossmont/Mt Helix with breathtaking views, period decor, inspiring architecture, artistic gems, and beautiful landscapes. Don't miss the stunning designs of these fantastic Greater La Mesa area homes!

Scan for Tickets



**TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE OR BY MAIL ONLY
THROUGH THE LA MESA HISTORY CENTER
lamesahistory.com**

Pre-Sale Members: \$30
Pre-Sale Non-Members: \$40

Day of Event Members: \$35
Day of Event Non-Members: \$45

**WANT TWO FREE
TICKETS? BECOME A
PATRON MEMBER TODAY.**



**WOULD YOU LIKE
TO SPONSOR THE
HOME TOUR?**



**INTERESTED IN
VOLUNTEERING?**



To purchase by mail, please fill out this form and send it, along with payment, to:
La Mesa History Center, PO Box 882, La Mesa, CA 91944

For questions, please contact: 619-466-0197 or information@lamesahistory.com

Name _____ Member: Yes _____ No _____

Phone Number _____

Address _____

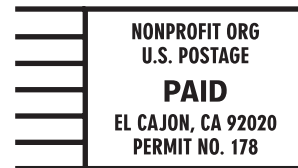
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The La Mesa History Center is an all-volunteer non-profit 501c3 corporation charged with preserving the history of the greater La Mesa area. The La Mesa History Center operates the Rev. Henry A. McKinney House, a 1908 House Museum and the History Center Archives Research Facility located at 8369 University Avenue in La Mesa, California.

The **Lookout Avenue** is the official quarterly publication of the La Mesa History Center. Closing dates for submitting contributions are the 1st of every March, June, September, and December. Word document and jpeg image files preferred.

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