

Winter 2026

lookout avenue

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LA MESA
History Center

The NEWSLETTER of the LA MESA HISTORY CENTER

VOLUME 50, #1

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

2025 wrapped up with a flurry of activity and 2026 is off to a busy and productive start!

On December 14th, between 40 and 50 La Mesa History Center members and guests gathered at the McKinney House for our annual Holiday Party. This event dates back to the earliest days of the organization and is a great opportunity for the membership to gather, share stories, fill up on tasty treats and build community. Thanks to the Center's Board members who decorated the House and yard and provided the refreshments for the party, and thank you to everyone who attended!



On December 29th, we wrapped up our "50 Facts about the La Mesa History Center" social media series. Our continuing series of "Where/What is it Wednesday?" continues to draw tremendous interest. The "Where is it?" posts in particular have been a great way for the broader community to engage with our photograph collection. Recent posts about Grossmont Center have brought in engagements with over 14,000 people and "likes/reactions" from over 200 people across Facebook and Instagram. Be on the look-out for a new series about the "Matriarchs of La Mesa" that will highlight the lives and contributions of some of our city's founding women!



2026 kicked up with the Grossmont Mt Helix Improvement Association's annual Walk to the



If you happen to stop by the McKinney House on an upcoming Saturday (open 1pm to 4pm), be sure to check out the new pull-down shades throughout the house and the new lace curtains in the downstairs rooms. The old shades were wearing thin and were difficult to open and close while the downstairs curtains were starting to tear and show their age. The new shades are much easier to operate and the new curtains lighten up the room while retaining the appropriate feel of our interpretation era of 1902 to 1920.

And finally, I would like to welcome our new cohort of interns from San Diego State. Undergrad Sarita Tello is working on various projects to catalog several oversized artifacts, maps and photographs in our collections. Grad Student Kylie Palmer is working on a project to document the La Mesa Vietnam Veterans Memorial, including working to catalog a related scrapbook and conducting an oral history with Denise Evers Rhoads who was instrumental in the creation of the memorial. Graduate student Andrea Tarabay Ceballas is working on updating two of our collections focused on women's groups in La Mesa and will be assisting in research for the "Matriarchs of La Mesa" social media series.



Left to right: Interns Sarita Tello, Kylie Palmer, and Andrea Tarabay Ceballas.

Additionally, the LMHC is partnering with Dr. Isaac Ullah on a small SDSU funded digitization project that is focused on the scrapbooks of the local chapter of the American Association of University Women. That project will culminate in an online exhibit and presentation at SDSU's Digital Humanities Showcase in May.

Veronica Martzahl, President La Mesa History Center



April 12, 2026
10:00 am to 6:00 pm
Rolando Blvd



SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, June 14th

2PM-4PM

MCKINNEY HOUSE YARD
8369 UNIVERSITY DRIVE

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR THE LA MESA
HISTORY CENTER'S ANNUAL MEETING !
JOIN US FOR FOOD, FUN AND FESTIVITIES!

EYES ON THE STREET: LA MESA'S STAMPED SIDEWALKS TELL A CENTURY-OLD STORY OF SAFETY, COMMUNITY AND HIDDEN HISTORY

By Kristine Alessio

La Mesa loves to walk, whether it's heading over to a park or going to your favorite coffee shops. Looking down instead of up with your eyes on the street, you will find clues to our history under your feet. Often sidewalks can provide such clues.

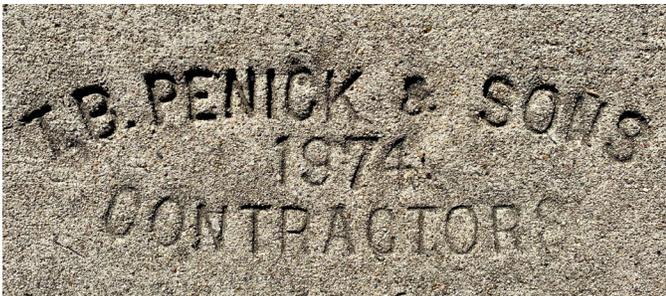
Municipalities established these requirements for concrete contractors doing public works projects in the early 1900s to ensure accountability of their work. For history explorers they let us know documentation when a neighborhood or street was originally paved or improved. For example the WPA (Works Progress Administration) sidewalk stamps near today's Adult Enrichment Center and along Lemon Avenue date back to the New Deal program of the 1930s.



Strolling down the street you can see marks dating back as the City's incorporation in 1912 up into the 1920's when our population was approximately 2000 and the Model T was in production.



Later stamps show the geographic and population expansion of the City during its growth over the years. Driven by the post-World War II suburban boom, for example, La Mesa added just under 20,000 people between 1960 and 1980. Stamps from the 1960's and 1970's are a common feature of La Mesa sidewalks well outside downtown, especially in North City.



Some more recent stamps reflect important changes for safety such as the sidewalk down Glen Avenue's steep slope as it travels from its hilltop Boulder Heights origins toward Lemon Avenue School.



Other recent stamps also reflect La Mesa's desire to commemorate its own history, such as construction of the "Lookout" park at La Mesa Blvd. and Allison Avenue, completed to celebrate the City's Centennial in 2012.



Want to find out more about La Mesa's history and see some of the older stamps that are on display at the History Center? Please come see us. We're open Saturdays between 1 and 4 pm. Meanwhile, keep your eyes on the street and see what you can learn!

*Photography by Steven Churchill and
Kristine Alessio*

HISTORY ROUNDTABLE PREVIEWS GOLDEN GEMS OF LA MESA HOME TOUR FEATURING HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LA MESA

Thanks to all who attended our Roundtable Lecture on historic downtown La Mesa's classic architectural heritage featured on the History Center's 2025 Home Tour "Golden Gems of La Mesa." This year the Roundtable was held October 11, 2025 at the La Mesa First United Methodist Church sanctuary.

Historian Jim Newland presented on the early suburban history of La Mesa previewing the featured tour homes designed by noted architects and builders including Irving J. Gill, William Wheeler, Arthur G. Lindley, Frank D. Harrington, J.B. Davis, Henry Russell, David Marker, the Dennstedt Company and Riha Construction. Also included were the stories of the owners and residents (and assumed residents) of the tour homes and town builders including significant individuals such as Henry McKinney, Chester Herritt and Sherman Grable. A feature was the explanation of the recent research that finally confirmed that renown San Diego architect Irving J. Gill was indeed the designer of the City Landmark Grable House that would be a highlight of the upcoming tour.

In addition, the story of the two featured institutional tour participants, both celebrating anniversaries, the La Mesa First United Methodist Church (130th) and our own La Mesa History Center (50th) were also detailed.

*Left: Jim Newland presenting at the October 11, 2025 Home Tour Roundtable lecture.
Photos courtesy Steven Churchill*

If you were not one of the Roundtable Lecture attendees, do not worry.

The video is now posted on the History Center's YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zMHpZ9Fkcg&t=109s>

Keep an eye out for our next History Center Roundtable presentations.



SITE RENOVATIONS UPDATE

2026 should be the year we finish the site updates and move on to McKinney House maintenance issues (you will hear more about our electric needs in the future.) Currently we are working on the art for the interpretive signs which will be located throughout the property. We will be telling the story of the History Center and the McKinney house, the history of La Mesa, the history of citrus ranches in our area and more. Thank you to a generous matching gift from Ripples 4 Ever Fund of \$7500 we are on our way to fully funding the project. Roughly \$1600 has come in toward the matching gift and we are still collecting donations. (Gifts made prior to the matching gift, such as the \$1000 from La Mesa Rotary, are also helping us wrap up the project.)

If you would like to contribute to help us finish, consider making a donation of any size. You can mail in a check to PO Box 882, La Mesa, CA. 91944 or donate with this website link givebutter.com/lmhcgivingtuesday

All donations will count toward the campaign. Thank you to those who have made recent gifts. Every dollar helps!

SUPPORT THE LA MESA HISTORY CENTER BY DONATING YOUR RMD OR MAKING A PLANNED GIFT

If you are old enough to know what a RMD is we need you! The year you turn 73 (or maybe older depending on the year you were born) you must take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from your tax-deferred investment accounts, such as an IRA. If you don't need the money, and don't want to pay taxes on the distribution, consider donating it to a charity directly from your account. Known as a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), this is a win/win for both you and the charity.

Another way to support charitable organizations like the History Center is by making a planned gift in your will or trust. We have been the beneficiary of planned gifts in the past which have been tremendously helpful with larger expenses.

Talk to your financial advisor for more information on both these options. If you appreciate the work we do to keep history alive in La Mesa these are great ways to support our mission.

GROSSMONT CENTER'S HISTORY DRAWS RENEWED ATTENTION

By James D. Newland

The recent announcement that the Grossmont Center's long-standing anchor department store would be closing, along with the plans for the center's future, has signaled a great interest in the history of La Mesa's regional mall. Including many questions on that store, originally the first branch store of San Diego's iconic Marston's that opened in November 1961. Purchased by Los Angeles based Broadway Company in 1964, it continued under that company name until purchased by Federated Stores and converted into one of its Macy's stores in 1996.

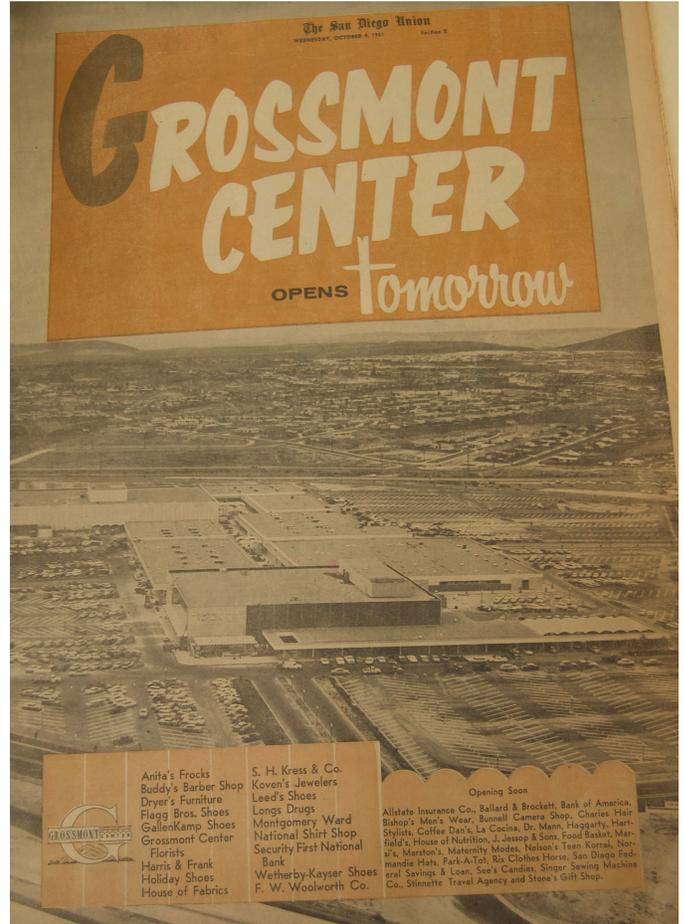
As such we are reprinting my article (with small updates) that was originally published in September 2011 in the La Mesa Patch.

Grossmont Center Cements La Mesa as Regional Retail Leader

Some sixty-four years ago on October 5th 1961 the first stores in San Diego's newest regional retail center opened to great fanfare and a proud City host. Grossmont Center, only the third such cutting-edge regional mall in the county, would become the nearly fifty year old City's economic engine for the next half-century plus.

Kicking Off La Mesa's Modern Shopping Attraction

On Thursday October 5, 1961 50,000 people, far more than La Mesa's population of 30,000, converged onto the newest, and largest retail shopping facility yet built in the rapidly growing county.



Grossmont Center 1961 Open Caption: Special section San Diego Union for Grossmont Center initial opening October 4, 1961. (Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

The new 110-acre Grossmont Center regional shopping mall represented a reported \$20 million investment and by far the largest project ever undertaken in the forty-nine year old city.

The celebration started with a ceremonial flag raising at 9:45am in the mall's multiple-arch canopy covered plaza outside the still under construction Marston's Department store. Roy

Drachman a partner and leasing manager of the project developers and contractors, the Del E. Webb Company, along with Marston's president Hamilton Marston, and the mall's new manager Harold Logan oversaw the official raising in front of television cameras, a live band and a packed crowd.



Roy Drachman at opening ceremony, October 6, 1961.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

Just a few minutes later at the ready-to-open, secondary anchor Montgomery Ward's store on the east end of the mall, the company's regional manager Eldon Peterson, assisted by Miss La Mesa Geraldine Miller, placekicked a football through the ceremonial ribbons into the awaiting crowd of shoppers.



Crowd entering Montgomery Wards store, October 6, 1961.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)



Miss La Mesa Geraldine Miller and court, October 6, 1961.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

Mrs. Myrtle Cooper of Lakeside, who had squeezed into the front row, caught the ball, signed by many of the new "San Diego" Chargers professional players. (Mrs. Cooper also received two season tickets for the rest of the team's inaugural 1961 San Diego season).



Myrtle Cooper with her prize catch.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

Arguably the October 5th event that caused the most attention, for the gentlemen in the crowd anyway, was the opening of the Harris & Frank's men's store. The Los Angeles-based, 105 year

old high-end clothier garnered quite a bit of attention with its special guest ribbon-cutter it brought down from Hollywood.

That ribbon-cutter was British actress and Playboy magazine model June Wilkinson. Known as England's answer to Jane Mansfield, the buxom and platinum blond actress reportedly caused a queue of young men to form at the new store to "catch a glimpse"—at the store, of course.



SHORT CUT—Movie star June Wilkinson had admirable help when she cut the ribbon officially opening the Harris & Frank Store at Grossmont Center's grand opening. Assisting from left are Ralph Schneider, Botany Industries vice president; Lester Greenberg, president, Harris & Frank;

Joe Liotta, manager of the new store; Michael Daroff, president of Botany Industries, owner of Harris & Frank; and Milton Handelsman, executive vice president of the Harris & Frank chain of 24 stores.

Actress June Wilkinson cutting the ribbon on Harris & Frank store opening.

(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

In addition to Ward's and Harris & Frank, other stores opening that day included Anita's Frock Shop, Buddy's Barber Shop, Dryer's Furniture, Flagg Brothers Shoes, Gallenkamp Shoes, Grossmont Center Florists, Holiday Shoes, House of Fabrics, S. H. Kress & Co., Koven's Jewelers, Long's Drugs, National Shirt Shop, Security First National Bank, Weatherbee-Kayser Shoes, and Woolworth's.

The opening of the first 18 of the initial 44 stores that had obtained leases provided the public's first glimpse at the new facility. Additional shops would also open over the next few weeks.

In the meantime, work continued to make the rest of the stores ready for the next major

milestone, the November 6th opening of the anchor Marston's Department store.

Local Institution Anchors the Center

A month later the crowning jewel of the mall, Marston's Department Store, was ready to open along with 11 additional businesses to bring the total tenants to 29 by early November.



Crowd entering Marston's Department store on its November 6, 1961 opening day.

(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

On November 4th the Women's Auxiliary of the Grossmont and Edgemoor Hospitals became the first groups to get a preview of the venerable San Diego business' first branch store. That Saturday from 4 to 8pm the Auxiliary members and special guests who had purchased tickets to the hospital fund-raiser were treated to refreshments of punch, champagne and cheese pastries.

The new Marston employees served as hosts and hostesses in providing guided tours of the new, modern two-story department store. Music was also provided with an orchestra on the first floor and a roving set of "Mariachis" on the second. In addition, Mrs. Rueben Padilla, the Marston's official fashion model, and wife of the company's publicist, was also on hand in her

public role of “Conchita,” providing tours to any Spanish-speaking guests.

Two days later on Monday November 6th at 10am Company President Hamilton Marston officiated over the big ribbon-cutting ceremony. Hamilton, his uncle and former company president Arthur Marston, his aunt Mary Gilman Marston, new store manager George Grey, La Mesa Mayor Earl Logan, Miss La Mesa Geraldine Miller and her court attendants Jacqueline Nolte, Jan Akin, and Ginger Crocker, and developer Del Webb and his new bride Toni Ince Webb all contributed to the program.

spent two-months painting murals that would beautify the interior and help customers find the many different store departments.



Marston family dedicating the new store and plaza, November 6, 1961.

(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)



Band performing for Marston's opening November 6, 1961.

(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

An hour later Mary Gilman Marston, daughter of George Marston then helped unveil the dedication plaque that named the plaza at the building's north entrance to the company founder.

The reports in the San Diego Union and La Mesa Scout noted that the new store and its elegant décor had made a great impression. The store's interior featured over 3,200 lineal feet of moldings, glass panels and large block letters all covered in 23 carat gilded gold leaf.

The Company also noted that five artists had

In addition, the second floor Orange Tree Dining Room added a sense of class similar to the popular Japanese Tearoom of its venerable downtown store.

*Orange Tree Restaurant advertisement.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*



MARSTON'S
ORANGE TREE
RESTAURANT
PARTY ROOMS

*for gatherings
of 25 to 150*

- BRUNCHES
- LUNCHEONS
- TEAS
- COFFEES
- DINNERS

Contact dining room
hostess for reservations. Grossmont HO
5-1121, ext. 205. Chula
Vista 427-1161, ext.
276.

The Orange Tree featuring espaliered orange tree murals on its walls with Italian wrought iron chandeliers shaped with leaves and oranges.

In reverence to George Marston's interest in California and San Diego history (he was a founder of the San Diego Historical Society and promoter of historic sites such as Old Town and Presidio Hill) the adjacent coffee shop featured additional murals featuring local icons such as Balboa Park's California Tower and the Cabrillo Bridge.

This "high-class" store represented an "arrival" of sorts for La Mesa. The Center promised to create over 2,000 jobs and provide at minimum a six-figure boost in sales and property tax revenues to the growing city. With La Mesa's recent annexations and developments north of U.S. 80, the city leaders recognized the obvious value—and good fortune to have been chosen as the site for this economic asset.

Bringing Modern Retail Design to La Mesa

The planning and construction of this major project was a five-year journey.

For San Diegans in 1961, as noted above, Marston's Department Store was the region's hometown high-class retailer. Pioneering merchant and civic philanthropist George Marston opened his first store in downtown San Diego in 1878.

By the 1950s grandson Hamilton Marston was the company president. Marston's and the other San Diego department store, Walker-Scott, dominated the San Diego market and downtown business district.

As noted architectural historian Richard Longstreth has documented in numerous books and articles, retailers realized that the future rested in the markets found in the automobile-happy Post-WWII American suburbs. These

new trends requiring retailers to move their stores from city centers to suburban regional malls.



*Full parking lot on Opening Day October 5, 1961.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*

By the mid-1950s retailers and shopping center developers recognized as well that the most successful retail centers needed more than one anchor store and free parking.

As such they moved from early automobile-oriented shopping centers with stores facing out toward the parking lots to stores facing onto well-landscaped pedestrian friendly "malls"—more in common to former "main street" business districts—but in a more cooperative and integrated way.



*Internal focused shopping mall design with storefront facing interior.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*

Mall designers then worked to create more than a series of shops with common parking—but one-stop “destinations” with their own character and strategically planned landscapes that provided retail, restaurant and entertainment opportunities.

For retailers such as George Scott and Hamilton Marston the need to expand their companies into the growing suburbs was considered essential to their future success.

In 1955 Scott was the first to act. He announced that Walker-Scott would become the anchor for the county’s first regional center at the south foot of Chollas Heights adjacent to the new SR 94 freeway and College Avenue. College Grove Center would open in July 1960.

In 1956 Hamilton Marston along with his family-led company “directors” recognized the need to do the same. They hired the world-renown Los Angeles planning and design firm of Welton Becket and Associates to undertake a study to find a site for their first branch store.

Looking for a large piece of property with good freeway access, the consultants’ two-volume report recommended a 100-acre parcel owned by another long-time San Diego family.

Pioneer rancher Adolph Levi had acquired the 125-acre parcel in the 1890s. His daughter Mrs. Selma Levi Moore had held onto the property and in the early 1950s had sold a 25-acre piece to the new Grossmont Hospital District (the hospital opened there in 1955). She placed the remaining 100 acres into a trust for her teenage grandsons Stephen and Lawrence Cushman, the property owners until a few years when they sold most of their property to the current owners.

The Moores and Cushmans agreed to partner with the Marstons to create the new retail project, but they needed to find a developer.



La Mesa Scout article announcing the planned Grossmont Shopping Center.

(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

Phoenix developer Roy Drachman was approached. He had recently partnered with the nationally known Del E. Webb Corporation to develop two large shopping center projects in Arizona—including the fully enclosed and air-conditioned Chris-Town Center.

Webb, a native Californian was already one the country’s most visible and successful developers known for his large projects including residential and retirement communities (Sun City, AZ), hotel/casinos, golf courses, and apartment and office buildings. (Webb was also a part owner of the New York Yankees at the time).

In September 1957 Hamilton Marston along with Mr. and Mrs. Elliott Cushman announced the plans for what would be the largest retail shopping center in San Diego County on the site just west of the hospital. The partners would announce in January 1958 that the Del E. Webb Corporation would be the developers and Welton Becket and Associates the designers.

La Mesa Secures its Regional Mall

The partners’ original plans called for a spring

1960 opening, but the challenges of such a large project on a rocky site would result in delays.

One of the first being the unincorporated site's connections to local infrastructure. Cushman's attorneys Jennings, Engstrand and Henrikson also initially announced the project's intention to request annexation for the property to the City of La Mesa.

By summer 1958 however the City of El Cajon made a play to annex the proposed commercial property. Having recently annexed land up to the end side of Grossmont High School in Fletcher Hills, El Cajon mayor Earl Tuttle had asked city staff to find a legal way to possibly annex the land and to start negotiations with the property owners.



*Future site of Grossmont Center, 1956. New Grossmont Hospital in center of shot.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*

Rumors also persisted that the City of San Diego had its eyes on the property. The City had already annexed the land on La Mesa's northern boundary that would become Carlos Tavares' San Carlos development starting in 1959. La Mesa's larger neighbor was reportedly investigating how to bridge the gap down to the Grossmont Center property along the right-of-way to the future freeway to Santee (now SR 125) corridor.

However on August 14, 1958 the Grossmont Center developers reiterated their commitment to joining the City of La Mesa. And after over a year of negotiation to secure the City's commitment to improving Jackson Drive and access to U.S. 80 (now Interstate 8), filed their annexation request to La Mesa in December 1959.

In arguably one of the most important economic decisions the La Mesa City Council ever made, they approved the annexation of the future retail center property in January 1960, securing the economic engine that would provide the soon-to-be built-out city a steady revenue asset for the next sixty plus years.

Design and Construction

The complexity of turning the 100-acre site into one of the largest retail centers in southern California was not an easy task.

Del E. Webb filed their initial building permit in May 1960 for a record \$7.8 million project (eventually the permits would total over \$10 million in construction). One of the largest costs being over a half million dollars and seven months needed to move and remove over 1.4 million cubic yards of soil and material to grade and fill the site for construction.



*Construction of Marston's Department store, 1960.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*

The entire construction project took over 16 months to complete and required over 1,200 tons of steel and 25,000 cubic yards of concrete. The project at opening also included 42 acres of asphalt parking lots.

Welton Becket and Associates of Los Angeles had been tasked with the design of the center. One of the most revered planning and design firms of commercial architecture at the time, the firm looked to incorporate the latest in Modern and Contemporary design into the project [some of the firm's most iconic projects being the Bullocks Pasadena (1944), Beverly Hilton Hotel (1953), the Capitol Records Tower in Hollywood (1956), and the Disney World Resort in Florida (1971)].

At Grossmont Center the two most distinctive buildings being the Marston's and Montgomery Wards buildings. Becket adorned the 156,000 square foot Marston's store with vertical "ribs" to accentuate the prominence of the building and to break up the decorative concrete block façade—a façade that was infused with mica flakes to make it "sparkle" in the sunlight.



*Aerial view of Grossmont Center prepped for opening
September 1961.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*

Modern-style barrel vaults were also used to provide distinctive and contrasting horizontal lines at the entrances to both anchor buildings. These vertical lines and barrel vaults incorporated into the Center's initial logo and marketing materials.

The most iconic and memorable feature was found inside the mall. Becket reportedly incorporated a Modern interpretation of these Gothic vaults in the shade canopies over the fountains in the plaza on the north entrance to Marston's. These distinctive arch-shaped canopies would be the icons of the center for several decades.



*Welton Beckett's long-gone iconic gothic vaults.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)*

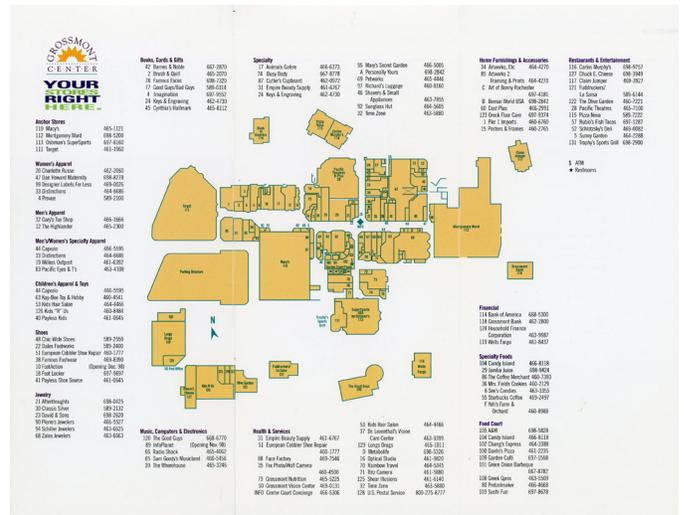
These shade canopies along with the extensive planting plans created by project landscape architects Purdy & Fitzpatrick set the scene for a Modern, cutting-edge, but inviting shopping experience.

A cutting-edge shopping experience that helped put La Mesa on the map as more than a bedroom community for the region.

In many ways, the opening of Grossmont Center represented the maturing of La Mesa as an independent and self-sufficient city.

An Enduring Retail Legacy

Over the next 60 years Grossmont Center would continue to expand on the original 44 stores available to La Mesans and East County residents available in autumn 1961. In 1965 the 1,000-seat Cinerama Theatre would open to a Hollywood star-filled premiere. Major expansions in the early 1980s, including a three-story parking garage and additional anchor store on the west end were built.



Grossmont Center map c2000.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)



Grand opening advertisement for Cinema Grossmont movie theater June 1965.
(Grossmont Center Collection, LMHC)

In the late 1990s the Center refocused and expanded again to meet new trends and additional competition from big box centers (the eventual fate of College Grove). Grossmont Center maxed out at approximately 110 retail and dining tenants at its height of development.

Although such icons as the single-screen Cinerama Theatre would be replaced over the years by the high-tech multi-screen cinema complex of today, the memories of original tenants such as Coffee Dan's, Food Basket, S. H. Kress & Company and Woolworth's provide a collective past for many La Mesans.



Historian Jim Newland presenting at 60th Anniversary celebration.
Image by Steven Churchill, LMHC

The 60th Anniversary presentation is available on our youtube site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63nhlixY-1A>

18TH ANNUAL LA MESA HISTORY CENTER HOME TOUR “GOLDEN GEMS OF LA MESA” History Center Revisits Historic Downtown La Mesa

“Golden Gems of La Mesa” Home Tour

Featuring Historic Downtown La Mesa

The La Mesa History Center Home Tour, in its 50th anniversary year, returned its focus to the historic downtown area for its 19th annual home tour held on Saturday November 8, 2025.

This year’s tour provided ticket holders with seven of La Mesa’s most historic, beautiful and gracefully preserved architectural gems on a perfect sunny November day.

The spectacular tour homes, including the Grable House, a unique 1910 landmark that had been recently confirmed as a design of renown San Diego architect Irving J. Gill and project of pioneering La Mesa builder J. B. Davis. Other homes included the 1935 Herritt House, an architect William Wheeler designed and Dennstedt Company built Spanish Eclectic stunner, and Craftsman style gems such as the 1912 Caldwell House, 1911 Russell/Sprung House and 1922 King Houses which trace their origins to early La Mesa contractors such as Henry Russell and David Marker. We also featured our own 1908 Folk Victorian McKinney House at the History Center.

We also celebrated our 130-year-old community service partner, La Mesa First United Methodist Church’s anniversary. They opened their 1922 Los Angeles architect Arthur G. Lindley designed and Marker & Russell constructed church along their 1955 San Diego architect F. D. Harrington designed and Riha Construction Co built sanctuary for a special tour day ticket holder experience.

Thanks again to our generous Homeowner participants for providing this unique opportunity to visit these well-preserved “Golden Gems of La Mesa.” Their efforts and willingness to share these gems once again prove why La Mesa continues to be the “Jewel of the Hills.”

In addition to our Home Tour participant families opening their homes, our crew of dedicated volunteers and docents, our sponsors, and of course all those who purchased tickets in helping us with our third ever sold-out Home Tour—A Great Big Thank You!!!

Special recognition goes to our 2025 Home Tour Platinum Sponsors:



Andrea Flint-Gogek, REALTOR®
Aaron Duggan, Broker/Owner



La Mesa Village Association





Above, right: Three examples of the “Golden Gems” that featured both exquisite exterior and interior settings.

Below: Ticket holders queue up for the tour buses while LMHC Board Member Donna Bloomer helps visitors investigate the Tour Day raffle offerings.



Above: House docents gathered at City Parking Lot/Tour Center in preparation for their distribution to their assigned Tour Houses.



Left: Home Tour team survives another sold out tour.



Left, above: Tour guests on the complimentary Shuttle Buses that take them to the “architectural gems” that await them ahead while Bus Docents Sharon Smith and David Cline provided commentary, information and encouragement.



Appreciative homeowners such as Bobby MacDougall & Katie Hicks (above) and April Bolduc (right) accept kudos on their beautiful homes as they answer questions about their home restoration efforts with tour guests.



Smiling guests reflect the positive attitudes and experiences of this year's Home Tour.



Left, above: Smiling volunteer docents led by Docent coordinator Sheryl Castro with lead docent Mike Stowe (L), Marsha McDonald (L) and Mary Earnest (R) also represent the positive experiences.





La Mesa First United Methodist Church Rev. Christian De Ment greets tour visitors while organist Paul Rosas demonstrates the church's historic pipe organ virtuosity.



Owners such as Janie Kelley (above left), Jerry Niehaus (above right) and Katie Martinson (left) share their home's inspirational restoration and rehabilitation stories with visitors.

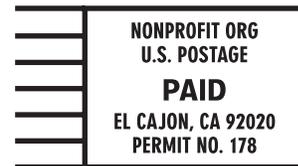


**Special thanks to Steven Churchill
for capturing this year's
Home Tour.**



McKINNEY HOUSE MUSEUM
AND HISTORY CENTER
ARCHIVES RESEARCH FACILITY

8369 University Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91942



LMHC MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 882
La Mesa, CA 91942



lamesahistory.com



[LaMesaHistoryCenter](https://www.facebook.com/LaMesaHistoryCenter)



619.466.0197



[@LaMesaHistoryCenter](https://www.instagram.com/LaMesaHistoryCenter)

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.

Submit contributions via email, or email the Editor at info@lamesahistory.com