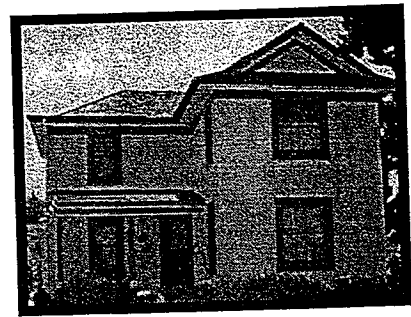


Lookout Avenue



Lisle Shoemaker*



Volume 26 Number 3 Summer 2004

Election-time - 1910 style

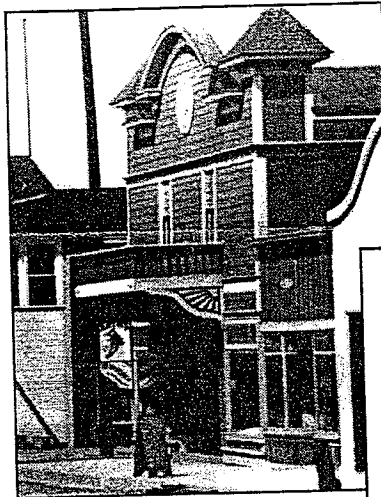
By Pat Kettler

In 1908, La Mesa's Baldrige Opera House was completed at the northeast corner of Palm Avenue and La Mesa Boulevard (called Lookout Avenue in those days). From what can be ascertained from reading early editions of the *La Mesa Scout* newspaper, the "opera house" was used for local plays and traveling minstrel shows, and probably not for opera performances. Prior to the building of a moving picture theater further west on La Mesa Boulevard, the opera house was also used to show silent movies to the townsfolk. In 1927, the building was torn down and replaced with the Bank of Southern California building (presently Por Favor - a

Mexican restaurant).

An interesting additional use for the opera house came to light while reading *The Memoirs of Ed Fletcher*. The following is an excerpt from Ed Fletcher's book:

One day, in 1910, Judge Sloane telephoned me that a Mr. Hiram Johnson from San Francisco and Sacramento, would arrive the next day by train.



Baldrige Opera House, circa 1910



Interior of the Baldrige Opera House, circa 1908

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* *Lisle Shoemaker*, who is pictured above writing a news story in a foxhole on Okinawa during World War II, came to La Mesa at the age of nine in 1924 with his parents Edwin and Iva. Edwin worked for the *La Mesa Scout* and Lisle, who graduated from Grossmont Union High School in 1932, worked as a box boy at the Piggly Wiggly before becoming a reporter. Lisle was a combat-war correspondent for the United Press in the South Pacific for the last part of World War II. He landed with the Marines on Peleliu and Iwo Jima - two heavily defended Japanese-held islands vital to a U.S. victory. He also went ashore with the Army and General Douglas MacArthur when the U.S. returned to the Philippines.

A note from the LMHS president

by Gordon Jones



We are developing a set of quarterly meetings that further our mission and which should prove most interesting to our membership. These are Saturday mid-morning meetings with a light sandwich buffet available about lunchtime; all at very low prices (say, about \$2 or \$3 for members). The first is planned for Sept. 25, with a superb presentation on the early history of Native American peoples of our area, by the Barona Museum director and archeologist. Subsequently, we hope to cover the art and science of preservation and restoration of local La Mesa homes and commercial buildings; the Grossmont/Mt. Helix Arts Colony early in the last century; and, the history of movie-making in La Mesa and San Diego. These events are to be alternated with our other numerous activ-

ities. Naturally, volunteers are welcome to help.

This is shaping up to be a very good year: significant numbers of new and younger members; volunteers like **Donna Niemeier** and her committee who presented a fine high tea to many La Mesa newcomers; **Rosemary Cosgrove** and **Jan McMurray** of the Legacy Quilting Guild who produce such great quilts for our raffles; the merchants who continue to support us; the donors who remember us with financial support and historical items, and the volunteers who provide the books, maps, and physical effort it takes to make a successful organization. Thanks so much to those individuals, named

La Mesa Historical Society, Board of Directors

July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005

President: Gordon Jones

1st Vice President: Donna Niemeier

2nd Vice President: Ruth Contino

3rd Vice President: Leslie Tonkinson

Secretary: Sharon Crockett

Treasurer: Donna Niemeier

Past President: Karna Webster

Directors-at-Large:

Stephanie Glazer

Ed Blackman

Kathy Tinsley

Bob Freeland

Virginia Hill

and unnamed.

Have you visited our archives building (Palermo Building) in the past couple of years? We believe you will be pleasantly surprised by what we have and what you, as members, have access to.

100 Years of the Post Office in La Mesa

We recently became the recipient of a display of 100 years of postal history in La Mesa. Put together by the Letter Carriers, it features pictures of the nine post offices, genuine envelopes, cachets, stamps, etc. over the 100 years; all very nicely presented. It is not really portable, but we have mounted it in our archives building. Come take a look!

The La Mesa Historical Society welcome its newest members

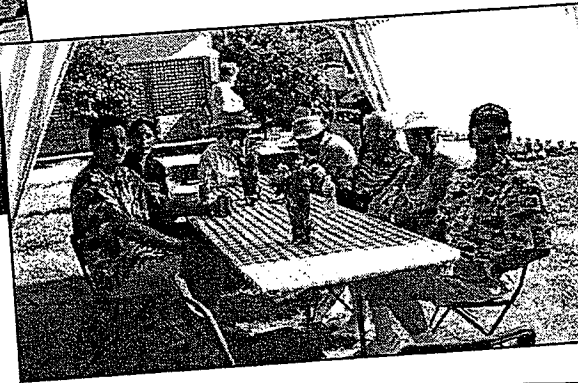
They are: David and Holly Fields, David Levy, Joe and Viki Young, George Spellman, John and Shirley Lucy, Shelly Atkinson and Jim Maples, Lisa Drake, Kathy Sowden and Deborah Grier, Finders Keepers Antiques,

Susan Mitchell, Craig O'Neil, Rienzi and Erin Haytasingh, Dan Yelvington, Claude Hart, Sharon Fitzpatrick, Martin and Connie Schroeder, Mrs. Margaret Howard and Margaret (Peggy) Botte.

It's great to have you with us!

Sizzling summer celebration - a smashing success!

The lawn of the McKinney House was the scene for the La Mesa Historical Society's annual summer celebration held on Saturday, July 10. Young and old alike enjoyed the sounds of oldies (but goodies) music, while marveling at the arts and crafts, ogling the raffle prizes, munching on Johnny B's famous hamburgers. Congratulation to the raffle prize winners. They are: Linda Michael, Helen Hivens, Ruth Kramer, Jim Polak, Dieter Fisher Mercedes Service, Ed Risdgeyway, Sharon Crockett, Hazel Ross, Mark Gundert, Myrtle Howe, Darby Michaels, Sharon Fitzpatrick and Dr. Jerome Heard.



\$ LMHS annual financial report - July 1, 2003 through July 30, 2004 \$

As of June 30, 2004, the LMHS had a total of \$43,430.33 in monetary assets. The Histories CD, Capital Improvement CD and \$2,619.15 of the savings account are restricted funds and can only be used for designated expenditures. Total gross receipts for the year are *\$11,769.84. Total expenses for the year ending June 30, 2004 are •\$10,558.68

Checking account	\$2,865.70
Savings account	\$23,520.91
Histories CD	\$9,354.06
Capital Improvement	\$7,664.66
Cash	\$25.00

* Contributions	\$1,083.60
* Special events	\$3,770.00
* Sales	\$3,136.50
* Membership	\$3,570.00
* Invest. Income	\$209.74

• Fund raising	\$682.07
• Sales	\$673.86
• Promo/Adv.	\$1,307.90
• Utilities/Main	\$7,308.92
• Preservation	\$58d5.93

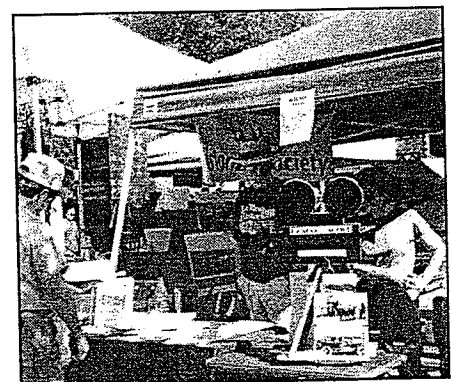
If you would like a copy of the itemized spreadsheet showing specific income and disbursement in each of the general categories listed above, contact Donna Niemeier at (619) 461-2419.

Residents flock to 1st Annual Antique Street Faire



If you missed this first of a planned annual event in March, you may have missed something that seems truly attuned to the character of La Mesa Village.

We worked in conjunction with the Merchants Association of the Village. We signed up many new members, exhibited our old photos, sold books and talked to hundreds of interested La Mesans. This is a critical part of our mission, and we believe the Faire will become ever more important to La Mesa.



Continued from page 1

Johnson planned to start his campaign in San Diego that night for Governor of California on the Republican ticket. He pledged that, "if elected, I would drive the Southern Pacific Railroad out of politics."

Sloane, my attorney, knew that I had a brand new 4-cylinder, 20-horsepower, air-cooled Franklin and asked if I would drive them out to La Mesa in my car where the first meeting in Johnson's campaign would be held in the Opera House at 3 p.m. I accepted, and at five minutes before 3 p.m., we were at the La Mesa Opera House in La Mesa only to find it locked.

Sloane had made the arrangements and apologized to Johnson. He suggested that we all go into the several stores and introduce Johnson to a few businessmen. Johnson turned to me and said, "Mr. Fletcher, what do you say?" I answered, "Let's have a meeting in the Opera House even if we only have a few. I will get some in there any way to hear Mr. Johnson." Sloane and Johnson both approved,



Hiram Warren Johnson

so I had Sloane go get the keys and open the Opera House, leaving Johnson in the car.

I had a fruit-packing house in La Mesa and, in 10 minutes, marched 26 employees to the Opera House, shutting up the packing house. I then went across the street, rang the fire bell, and in 20 minutes had 96 people in the Opera House. Johnson, a polished speaker and attorney, made a wonderful impression and publicly announced that he would oppose the Southern Pacific Railroad and take away their control politically of the state of California. Johnson told me he got the idea of ringing a

bell from my action at La Mesa to attract citizens all over the state so that he might talk to them from an automobile along the highways and byways.

Hiram Warren Johnson was elected Governor of California in 1910 and served in that office until 1917, when he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served California for 28 years.

Mark Your Calendars

The first of a series of quarterly meetings of the Society will be held at 10 a.m. on **Saturday, Sept. 25, 2004** in the Nan Coats Cottage on Memorial Drive. It will feature a presentation on Native Americans in the East County and the La Mesa area, by Cheryl Hinton, director and curator of the Barona Cultural Center and Museum. She will also report to us on the opening of the new National Museum of the American Indian (on the Mall), which she will have attended the week before.

These four meetings are co-sponsored by the City of La Mesa. The presentation will be followed by an inexpensive, light buffet luncheon. The cost will be \$3 for LMHS members and \$5 for non-members. We suggest you make reservations by calling (619) 466-0197, since seating will be limited.

Members enjoy a 'rip roaring good time' at Tea & Rose celebration



(left to right) Sisters Jan Covey, Debbie Petrea and Leslie Tomkinson attended the event to honor their grandparents - Leo Benjamin and Jessie Fay Highfield McCarthy.

The scent of roses, scones and freshly brewed tea greeted guests at the annual Rose Garden Celebration and English Tea held on a Saturday afternoon in April.

Thirty-three guests listened as the LMHS honored four, long-time residents: **Gilbert Judy**, a former city councilman and Grossmont High School teacher; **Jack Mashin**, a coach at Grossmont High School for 30 years; and **Leo Benjamin** and **Jessie Fay Highfield McCarthy**, a married couple whose family settled in La Mesa in 1908 and 1897, respectively.

Students enjoy McKinney House

In February, second-grade teachers Lisa Tovar, Carol Fleisher, Lynda Banner and Helena Bruner, from La Mesa Dale Elementary School taught their students about La Mesa history. As a culmination to this history unit, the children took a historical walk down La Mesa Boulevard, which ended at the Rev. McKinney House.

Then the children took a tour of the McKinney House, directed by docents Pat Kettler, Virginia Hill and Carol Lockwood. The students also participated in lessons about antique toys and school practices from 1908 to 1920.



Docent Virginia Hill shows students of the La Mesa Dale Elementary School the boy's bedroom in the McKinney House.

*Looking for something to do?
The La Mesa Historical Society is
always looking for volunteers.*

La Mesa Historical Society honored by tree planting

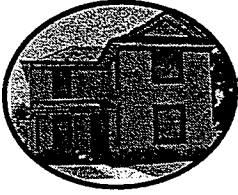
On Friday, January 23, 2004, a Queen Palm tree was planted in front of the La Mesa Community Center in honor of the La Mesa Historical Society.

Board members from the La Mesa Historical Society and representatives of the City of La Mesa were present at the ceremony.

The tree was donated to the city by **Mary Em Teresa Hardie Howard**. This is the seventh year that Mary Em Howard has donated a tree to honor an individual or group.

Mary Em Howard is a charter member of the La Mesa Historical Society. Her mother Teresa Hardie planted trees with Kate Sessions.

**This newsletter is created by
LMHS Newsletter Editor,
Stephanie Glazer.
For information or suggestions,
call (619) 466-0197.**



La Mesa Historical Society

Museum: Rev. Henry A. McKinney House (1908)
8369 University Ave., La Mesa, CA 91941
Mailing address: P.O. Box 882, La Mesa, CA. 91944

Change service requested

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Permit No. 208

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La Mesa, CA 91941

31941+5310 33



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 Ave. (at the corner of Pine Street) in La Mesa. Open 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday 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
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.

- \$250 Patron
- \$100 Sponsor/Organization
- \$15 Individual
- \$50 Sustaining
- \$20 Family
- \$5 Student

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Ph () _____

Memberships and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.