

Volume 36, Issue 1

Winter 2011



### President's Comments

I hope Christmas brought you your favorite things and that your New Year is filled with many happy surprises.

There has been a significant change here at the Historical Society. Gordon Jones, who has been a major player in the Society for over 10 years, has been seriously ill since mid-October. His recovery has been slow but he is doing much better. He is at Grossmont Gardens and hopes to return home in February after surgery on his right foot.

We did not realize how much Gordon was doing or how much we depended on him until we tried to find others to fill his shoes! The big hole that has not been filled is the Newsletter. This Newsletter is 4 months late and in order to continue regular newsletters we desperately need a volunteer to take on this responsibility.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP. IF YOU WISH TO LAYOUT AND EDIT THE NEWSLETTER, OR KNOW ANYONE WHO CAN, PLEASE CALL ME (619) 461-2419.**

Thank you to Julie Krummenacher and Steve Sund for answering the "History Highlights" question in the Summer issue of the *Lookout Avenue*. Sunset Park near Lake Murray Blvd. was used by the San Diego Chargers for an in-season practice site.

The "History Highlights" question for this issue is: Which service organization is the first that was established in La Mesa and has been in existence for more than 100 years? Give us a call if you know the answer. (619) 466-0197

### The La Mesa - Charger Connection

The San Diego Chargers used Sunset Park in the Lake Murray area of La Mesa as their in-season practice site from 1964-1970. This came about when the Chargers were looking for a location where they could practice during the football season from September to December. In addition to a football field they also needed classroom and locker facilities.



Mayor Ray Fellows (center), San Diego businessmen George Pernicano (left) and John Maabe (right) at the dedication of Sunset Park as new in-season home of Chargers in La Mesa. September 1964

(continued next page)

Head Coach Sid Gillman and local officials scouted to find a "package" that would include a field and facilities. The City of La Mesa had several locations for the field but no building to serve any of these fields. Businessmen of the community were called upon to personally underwrite the cost of building a facility.

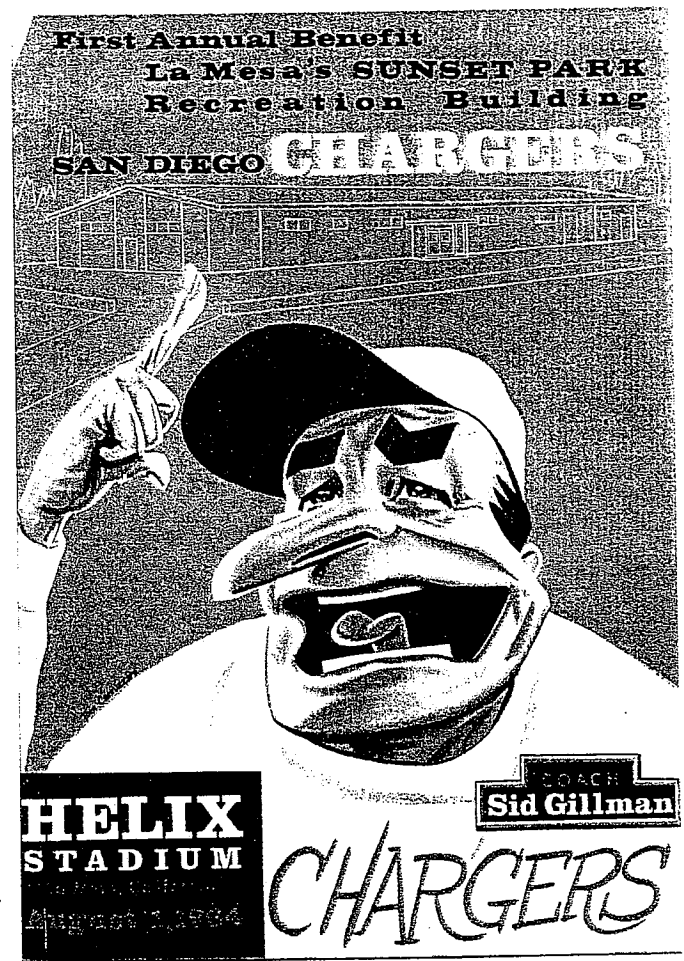
The La Mesa City Council on April 5, 1964 adopted a resolution offering a portion of Brier Patch Park for use by the Chargers during the football Season.

Opposition to the training facility in Brier Patch Park built up. Families near the field felt the increased traffic would drastically change the community and make a dangerous situation for the children who attended Brier Patch school.

By the end of April residents of the area appeared at a council meeting with 200 signatures on a petition. At this meeting Councilman Paul Jenson suggested use of Sunset Park rather than Brier Patch Park. Councilmen Robert Helland, Richard Cosgriff, George Bailey and Mayor Ray Fellows supported the switch. On April 29, 1964 Councilmen Jenson and Sid Gillman, the Chargers Head Coach, viewed the new park site and agreed to the location. Sunset Park is between Lake Murray and Lake Murray Boulevard, just inside the northwest La Mesa city limits.

The Chargers agreed to play an intra-squad exhibition game each year, the entire proceeds going into the Trust Fund established by the businessmen which would eventually pay for the recreation building.

Development of the Sunset Park site for Charger use included turfing, installation of a sprinkler system, construction of a shower, locker and classroom building and erection of a fence to maintain secrecy. The city paid for the grass and sprinklers and was repaid through lease of the land. The building and fence were financed by a loan guaranteed by Charger boosters. The loan was paid off over five years with proceeds from the intra-squad exhibition games.



Local contractors lent their personal support to the project, volunteering their materials and labor on a cost basis. The Bank of America set up the Trust Fund at an extremely favorable interest rate. Citizens and sportsmen donated their time and efforts to bring the project to completion. The first intra-squad exhibition was played at Helix High School on August 1, 1964.

The building at Sunset Park was dedicated and the Chargers began using it in September of 1964. The facilities were utilized by the La Mesa Recreation Department for many activities during the winter and summer seasons. The Trust Fund, after paying for the building, was to be used for youth activities in La Mesa.

By August of 1967 the La Mesa City council felt the Chargers had broken their contract because they failed to conduct the intra-squad football scrimmage. That, however, is a different story for a different time!

## ***Upcoming LMHS Events***

March 27, 2011	Antique Street Faire
April 2, 2011	History Roundtable Early History of La Mesa by Jim Newland
May 7, 2011	Rose Garden Celebration
May 7, 2011	Annual Meeting
June 4, 2011	Flag Day Parade

## ***Membership News!***

The La Mesa Historical Society operates on dues, donations and fund raisers. We do not rely on any governmental funds. That is why the support of our members is so very important.

### **WE GIVE A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS**

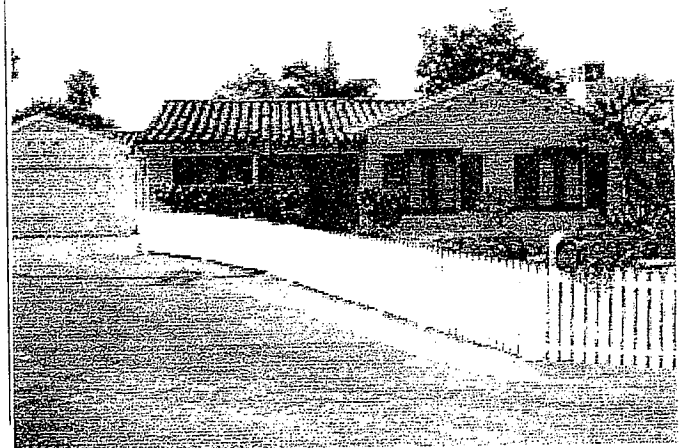
Mike and Cindy Williams, Pam Tobias,  
Darin and Cathy Simmerman, Ken Stone,  
Lynn Reeves and Claudia Powell,  
Shannon and Scott Wilson, Emy Center,  
Julie and Steve Lucas, Janet Rippinger,  
Eunice Hoody-Smith, Elizabeth Matthews,  
Katharine Sandstrom, Rebecca Williams,  
Mark and Sheila Wilson, Erin Ben-Judah,  
Dan Neighbors, Charlene Butler,  
Pataricia Taylor, Debi Peterson,  
Linda Kazarian, Sue Mountain,  
Suda House, Laurie Brown, Donna Rutledge,  
Betty Wiedmer, and Joan Rollins

## ***Newest Landmarked House***

The Jensen House at 9125 Dillon Drive is the newest home to be designated as a Historic Landmark.

In 1930, Danish immigrants Peter and Oline Jensen purchased 2.2 acres on what is now the south side of Dillon Drive. Peter Jensen planted avocado trees and established a nursery business on the site, but switched to oranges in 1937 when root rot destroyed the avocado trees. The Jensen's nursery provided many of the local avocado and citrus industry's seedlings. Peter Jensen passed away in 1968, but Mrs. Jensen continued selling oranges until 2002 at the age of 99.

The Jensen's home was completed in 1939. It was designed and built by Master Architect Henry Harms Prebisius, a German immigrant who came to San Diego in 1904. Prebisius designed residences for a number of prominent early San Diegans and larger commercial buildings such as the "new" St. James Hotel at 830 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which was the tallest building in San Diego when completed in 1914.

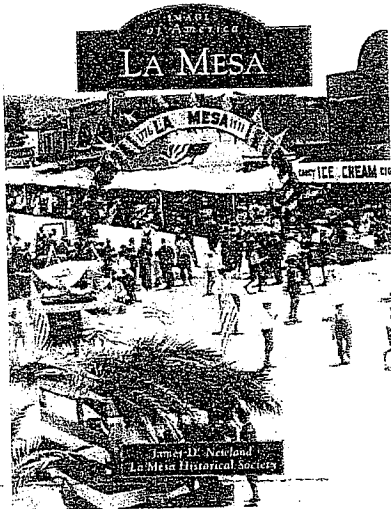


Prebisius' daughter, Hilda Prebisius, hand painted a stenciled border around the wall of the dining room of the house. The border matches the pattern of the home's door knobs and tile. Her drawings were published in Ladies Home Journal and McCalls Magazine.

## Don't Forget ....

to get your copy of the new book published by the La Mesa Historical Society, authored by LMHS member Jim Newland. It contains over 200 vintage photos and is a limited edition. A copy can be yours for \$20.

To get a copy call the La Mesa Historical Society at (619) 466-0197 or stop by the Rev. McKinney House Museum any Saturday between 1-4 P.M. We are located at 8369 University Avenue.



## The Fifth Successful Home Tour

On Saturday, November 6, 2010 approximately 350 people enjoyed our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Home Tour. Visitors were transported by the Old Town Trolley to the five homes tucked away in the Grossmont/Mt. Helix area of La Mesa.

Once again the Historical Society was able to feature a variety of homes from Spanish/Mediterranean Revival, to Contemporary Ranch and a exquisitely rehabilitated two story Craftsman. The homes were dated from 1911 to 1946 and were all beautifully maintained and decorated by the homeowners.



### Board of Directors:

Board meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 7:00 PM.

President	Donna Niemeier
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Pres.	Aaron Landau
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Pres.	Ruth Contino
Secretary	Sharon Crockett
Treasurer	Rod Whitlow
Directors-at-Large	Ed Blackman
	Tom Hart
	Cherie Peacock
	Linda Rankin
	Pat Stromberg
	Kathy Tinsley
Past President	Gordon Jones

Besides touring the wonderful homes and the La Mesa Women's Club building, visitors enjoyed viewing classic cars, working artists, and tasting munchies provided by various homeowners. Many visitors stated this was our BEST tour ever.

We would like to thank the many people who helped make this home tour another great success. THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS, La Mesa Foothills Art Association, La Mesa Women's Club, Old Town Trolley drivers, the classic car owners, florist Sandy White our many, many loyal docents and most of all our HOMEOWNERS, without their generous participation there would be no home tour.

(continue next page)

Please mark your calendars for next year's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Home Tour on November 5, 2011. If you are interested or know of any homeowners who might be interested in opening their home for the tour please let us know. We are always looking for homes that have significance to La Mesa.

## ***La Mesa City Centennial Committee Update***

The La Mesa City Centennial Committee was formed in July 2009 to prepare and set up for the centennial in 2012. As with any group we got off to a slow start. Momentum has been building as we are now just a year away from 2012. Sub-committees are in place. These committees include Marketing, Events, History and Research, and Finance.

A power point presentation has been put together as a tool for members of a speaker's bureau to use with organizations, service clubs, and the business community. The purpose of this presentation is to promote awareness and participation in the city's year long celebration which will commence on February 16, 2010, one hundred years to the day that La Mesa was incorporated. Also, a fabulous brochure has been printed as an announcement of and a fundraiser for La Mesa 2012.

The History and Research sub-committee is finalizing its role in this recognition of La Mesa as it reaches its centenary year. Members of the History and Research group are: Aaron Landau, Glenna Bloemen, Patty O'Reilly, Carol Lockwood, Jim Newland, and Tom Martucci.

All are welcome and encouraged to become part of this group. There is strength in numbers, and more can be accomplished with a larger committee. Please call Aaron Landau at (619) 698-8309 if you are interested in joining us. Your community needs you to help make La Mesa's Centennial a huge success.

## ***Christmas Open House***



The La Mesa Historical Society held a Christmas Open House on Sunday, December 12, 1010. Home made cookies were served with spiced cider and coffee.

Music was provided by the senior chorus and a raffle was held. The open house was a great beginning to our holiday season.



Lookout Avenue is a publication of the La Mesa Historical Society. Please let me know your comments and suggestions.  
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[www.lamesahistory.com](http://www.lamesahistory.com)



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### Change Service Requested



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 first and third 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 91941

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
- \$50 Sustaining
- \$20 Family
- \$15 Individual
- \$5 Student

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

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

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

Ph: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

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

- Docent/Education
- Events
- Grounds/Building
- Archives/House