



The La Mesa Woman's Club: Still Well Ahead of the Game

If the La Mesa Woman's Club appears less revved up about the city's pending Centennial, they have just cause. These women have always preferred friendship and service to fireworks. But history is at work here too. The Club is now serenely contemplating its 110th anniversary. That's not a typo. This quietly influential organization, well past its own centennial, enjoys a solid 10-year lead on the city – with no sign of relenting.

Woman's clubs were an important part of the civic fabric in communities throughout the Southland. The women of La Mesa were first to organize formally, setting their course in May, 1902. Ten years later, the Club bought a building site at 3rd Street and Lemon Avenue and broke ground for the first clubhouse. Funds were raised through a concert by renowned contralto Madame Schuman-Heink, then living in the Grossmont artist colony.



A gathering of the La Mesa Women's Club, circa 1908.

By 1948, the membership had outgrown the Lemon Avenue site. A new property was purchased at the corner of Wilson Street and Grossmont Boulevard and the Lemon Avenue building went on the market. With the dedication of the new location, in January 1960, the Clubhouse that would serve the members to this day was brought to life.

Many historical societies and related preservation efforts in Southern California grew out of efforts to create and build libraries. In many communities, the first libraries were given a strong boost by the local woman's club. Again, La Mesa was among the first.

One of the Club's earliest meeting practices urged members to bring a book for exchange. This became La Mesa's first circulating library. Today the Woman's Club is still collecting and distributing books – both for the city Library (and the Friends of the Library) and for the patients at Grossmont Hospital.

The roster of presidents reads like a "Who's Who" of notable La Mesa women, but the Club prefers not to highlight memorable characters, instead focusing on broader member-driven efforts. And the members have contributed in many ways – some large, some small – to the city's charitable and civic needs, without neglecting support for the more celebrated community entertainment events.

During the Second World War, the Club wrapped nearly 250,000 feet of bandages for use in the field, while baking 75,000 USO cookies served to the military personnel passing through San Diego.

When PSA flight 182 crashed into North Park in 1978, Club members were among the first to respond with on-site assistance.

Ask a club member what they are doing today and the answers will vary. Some will choose to emphasize efforts in the "Adopt a Family for Christmas" program; others will note sustained support for the Kidney Foundation. The Club's participation in the Forest Service's national reforestation program, Pennies for Pines, along with recognition on the Penny Pines Monument on Sunrise Highway will get a nod. And everyone will cite the five \$1,000 scholarships open to students in the Grossmont Union High School District each year. The point is not one over the other; rather it is how do they do so much?

It's not easy. The Club faces the same demographic challenges that plague service clubs across the nation. The difficulties cataloged in Robert Parker's insightful study, *We Bowl Alone*, are now amplified by years of economic recession. But the women of La Mesa are not sitting on their laurels, wringing their hands. Just not their style.

Seizing the initiative - recently joining the La Mesa and East County Chambers - they are expanding the Club's outreach. To borrow a phrase from La Mesa's *Patch*, the search is on for the right way to connect with women in the *Mommin' Around* generation.

Not content to be one of the city's most venerable organizations, the Club is out to prove that it is also one of the most viable. And that presents a wonderful two-way opportunity. For women who want to make a difference - or simply to rediscover the value of friendship - the Woman's Club is still out front.

To connect: Call clubhouse manager Maryann Alianelli at 619-466-4362, or send a note to www.lamesawomansclub.com

The Clubhouse itself is a remarkable local venue. Capable of handling a variety of special occasions, it is a significant civic asset - available to all.



President's Comments

Donna Niemeier

Now is an exciting time to be in a leadership role at the La Mesa Historical Society. Helping plan activities for La Mesa's Centennial and watching the thrilled reaction of people learning new facts or seeing something they recognize in one of the old photographs that appear in *Images of America - La Mesa* is a lot of fun and a pleasure.

The Society's membership is increasing, the volunteer pool is expanding and we have many exciting activities planned for the spring and summer. The La Mesa Antique Street Faire and Jim Newland's Roundtable presentation were great opportunities for us to share early La Mesa history with a broad variety of people. Plans are almost complete for our Rose Garden Celebration and Annual Meeting which will be held on Saturday, May 7, 2011. At this event, we will hold the raffle for the beautiful queen size quilt made by Rosemary Cosgrove.

Come summer, the La Mesa Historical Society will be represented in the City-sponsored Flag Day Parade on June 4 by Aaron and Bernadette Landau. Hope you will make time to come and give them a big wave.

A new project we are working on for the Centennial is a calendar. Sharon Crockett, Historical Society Secretary, is colorizing some of our historic pictures and the centennial committee is establishing a list of events for the calendar. It will be available for purchase at Oktoberfest.

Now let's move on to the History Highlights. The first service organization established in La Mesa was the La Mesa Women's Club. It has been in

existence for more than 100 years. This issue's feature article is a fine occasion to learn more about one of our city's more remarkable organizations - the Women's Club. Enjoy!

Here is the "History Highlights" question for this issue: The first woman to run for a national office, California's 11th District seat in the U.S. Congress, lived in La Mesa during 1911-1912. Who was she?

If you know the answer, give me a call: (619) 466-0197.

Treasurer's Report

The Society's balance sheet remains strong. We opened the past fiscal year with \$159,500 in equity and closed in June, 2010 with \$155,400. The year was not without challenges. Foremost among them was the need to make overdue window and roof repairs to the McKinley House and repaint the garage (behind the Palermo Building) for a total expenditure of nearly \$5,000.

Total income was down during fiscal 2010 because we had fewer sponsors for the Home Tour, lower photo sales and we didn't do any *landmarking* projects during the reporting period.

On the positive side, membership dues income was up 15% over the previous year. And the Society's investment in new history of La Mesa by Jim Newland is beginning show returns. Further, the author has pledged all royalties from book sales to the Society. We are sincerely grateful for Jim's continued generosity.

Members interested in line item specifics from the Treasurer's Report for fiscal 2010 may request the financial statements from the Society's Treasurer, Rod Whitlow at www.lamesahistoricalsociety.com

Membership News!

The La Mesa Historical Society's programs and preservation efforts depend upon dues, donations and fund raisers. We do not rely on government funds. That is why the support of our members is so very important.

A SPECIAL WELCOME FOR OUR NEW MEMBERS

Jill Graham,
Richard and JoAnne Hoy,
Judy Jouglet,
Susan W. Mullert, and
Bonnie Stinchcomb.

Antique Street Faire

On Sunday, March 27, 2011 the La Mesa Historical Society participated in the Antique Street Faire held in the Village. We were one of the 75 booths along La Mesa Boulevard visited by an estimated crowd of 4,000. As always, passersby stopped to search for their homes in one of the pictures, to review Jim Newland's book and talk about how things "used to be." Among the most frequently asked questions: "what happened to the Piggly Wiggly" on Lookout Avenue (La Mesa Blvd).

Early La Mesa Comes Alive

On Saturday, April 2nd, the Society's illustrious resident historian, Jim Newland, lectured on early La Mesa history accompanied by a slide presentation. He bedazzled and enthralled an audience of 43 in the spacious and comfortable

auditorium at the Grossmont Healthcare District offices on Wakarusa Street.

The program was the latest in the "History Roundtable" series of lectures/presentations offered by the La Mesa Historical Society. If you have ideas or suggestions for future programs, please call us at 466-0197 or use our website at www.lamesahistoricalociety.com

Upcoming LMHS Events

- May 7, 2011 Rose Garden Celebration & Ice Cream Social
- May 7, 2011 Society's Annual Meeting Election of Officers & Board
- June 3, 2011 Dedication of the War Memorial 10:00AM, Parkway Middle School; Pancake breakfast at La Mesita Fire House 8:00AM
- June 4, 2011 Flag Day Parade - kick-off for "information on Centennial"
- August 12, 2011 Dedication of Flying A Studio Memorial Plaque on Third St.
- October, 2011 Centennial Calendar release, with Historic La Mesa photos

Annual Meeting & Raffle

Once again Rosemary Cosgrove has created a magnificent quilt for the Historical Society's main prize in the raffle at the annual meeting. This year the quilt is queen sized and made with beautiful purple, violet and white materials.

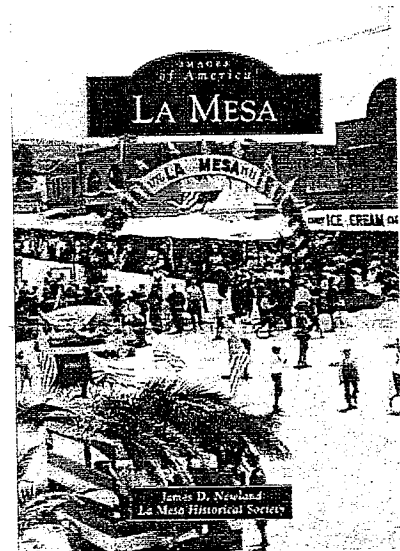
Winners need not be present to win raffle prizes. But your tickets do have to be entered on time! So, remember to get your tickets to the Society by **Saturday, May 7, 2011.**

And Don't Forget...

...to pick up your copy of the new book *Images of America - La Mesa* published by the Society and authored by LMHS member and local historian Jim Newland.

This limited edition publication contains over 200 vintage photos - a must-have for La Mesans and a wonderful "our hometown" gift as well. Copies are still available for just \$20. All royalties will come to the Society - our appreciation goes to the author.

To reserve your copy just call the La Mesa Historical Society at (619) 466-0197 or stop by the McKinney House Museum any Saturday afternoon between 1-4 PM. We are located at 8369 University Avenue.



La Mesa City Centennial Committee Update

The History and Research Subcommittee of the La Mesa City Centennial Committee is now operating under the auspices of the Society. We are pursuing five projects for 2012.

1. An essay writing contest for grades 3, 8 and 11, is now endorsed by the LMSVSD. The program for grades 3 and 8 will cover all schools in the District, as well as private and charter schools in

La Mesa. Social science classes at Helix and Grossmont will be the focus for the 11th grade.

2. A Silent Movie Night – on the golf course, if available.
3. A rotating photo exhibit at 11 sites in the city.
4. A Kumeyaay lecture/presentation with exhibit.
5. A passport or treasure hunt across famous sites in the city, with prizes for children turning in completed passports.

Project number one is now completely laid out; numbers two through five are still in the initial planning stages. The community-wide, fancy gala that will close the official celebration in January 2013 is the province of a separate subcommittee.

Current members of the History and Research Subcommittee are: Aaron Landau, Chair, Glenna Bloemen, Chris Danielson, Diann Jacoby, Carol Lockwood, Jim Newland, and Patty O'Reilly.

All are welcome and encouraged to participate. There is strength in numbers. We can accomplish more with a larger committee. Call Aaron Landau at (619) 698-8309, if you are interested.

Partners in Stewardship:

La Mesa Historical Society and The Historic Preservation Commission

The La Mesa Historical Society is an all volunteer, non-profit organization. The Society's goals include: educating our citizens, young and old, on the history of La Mesa, archiving and preserving historic documents and providing public outreach on historic matters through the museum (McKinney House) special programs and events such as the Roundtable Series.

The Historic Preservation Commission has seven members (three of whom are nominated by the LMHS) and are approved by the La Mesa City Council. The Commission is responsible for maintaining and enforcing the Historic Resources Inventory list. It has the power to approve or disapprove any alteration, improvement, modification or removal of any exterior architecture feature of a designated landmark within a historic district. The Commission nominates structures to the register of designated landmarks and encourages private efforts to protect historic resources. The Commission also provides guidance to owners of historic properties. See "Boards and Commissions" at <http://www.cityoflamesa.com>

Board of Directors:

President	Donna Niemeier
1 st Vice Pres.	Aaron Landau
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	Linda Rankin
	Pat Stromberg
	Kathy Tinsley
Past President	Gordon Jones

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

Lookout Avenue is the quarterly publication of the La Mesa Historical Society.

Please share story ideas, comments and suggestions with our Newsletter Editor Anthony Mc Ivor at www.lamesahistory.com



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www.lamesahistory.com

Kenneth and Donna Niemeier
4805 Lee Ave.
La Mesa, CA 91942

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:

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

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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Ph: () _____

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

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