



Volume 36, Issue 3 *Fellow Citizens, we cannot escape history.* Abraham Lincoln Summer, 2011

Grossmont High Museum: Foothillers Show Their Stuff

For a dyed-in-the-wool Scottie, it is hard enough to find a kind word about anything Foothiller. But something to praise? Unthinkable. Until now. Deep in the heart of the Hiller's summit redoubt – where Gus surely lurks among the boulders – a tightly packed museum showcases the memories, personalities and storied deeds distilled from 90 years of life at Grossmont. A gift to the community, it deserves high praise – and a visit.

In display cases organized by decade, Grossmont's story unfolds with highlight after highlight. 1921, school colors selected; 1947, Gus chosen as mascot; 1972, Title IX provides for equal opportunity in sports; 2009, Grossmont named a California Distinguished School. The photographs, documents, yearbooks, pep ribbons, trophies, special events programs, and a deft selection of artifacts make nine decades seem like yesterday.

For students, for alumni, for families and for researchers, this is a veritable treasure trove. And it is the largely the work of two remarkable women, Connie and Lynn Baer.

Local history heroes. What else to call two retired English teachers in pursuit of a vision who learned the arcane art of accession, then became curators, preservationists, researchers, cataloguers, archivists, advocates and not least, docents?

With impeccable Grossmont bona fides, members of an extended clan of GUHSD teachers, the Baer's breathed new energy into a long-standing dream.

Quick to credit the earlier efforts, the two sisters decided to make the museum a retirement project in 2007 and soon sorted the roles: Connie as lead spokesperson; Lynn as archivist and researcher.



GHS Museum's guiding spirits Lynn and Connie Baer

After 18 months of meticulous effort the storage room where Grossmont had stashed years of memorabilia was finally inventoried. The hunt for display cabinets followed, along with the never-ending quest for financial underwriting to restore, repair, frame, occasionally purchase, and then preserve extraordinary artifacts and rare items.

The Baer's developed supportive relationships with local historical societies in Lakeside, El Cajon and La Mesa. In their view, the GHS Museum is not only for alumni. It is a journey through the 90 years of Grossmont's place in East County history – charting the changes and the continuities.

There were plenty of surprises and joyful moments along the way. The Baers delight in the interactions between multi-generation visitors – as when a current student brings an alumnus

grandparent for a walk through history. On one occasion, an alumnus whose mother graduated in the 1920s reconnected with a side of her family that had been lost for years after both sides of the family donated memorabilia.

Already bursting its seams, the Museum is on track for a new campus site adjacent to the Performing Arts Center. Scheduled for completion in 2017, the new location will provide more display space, better storage capability and room enough for visiting classes. The Center lobby and the remodeled District office will rotate exhibits.

The Baer's passion for high school history burns unabated. Having learned so much first hand, what advice can they offer to others? Just this: "Save it!" Squirrel things away in a closet, before they are lost. Sound counsel, hard won.

The Museum is open to the community the first Wednesday of each month, from 12 - 4PM. To arrange a visit by appointment, or to schedule a donation of memorabilia, contact Connie Baer at ghsmuseum@guhsd.net or **619-668-6140**.

The Museum is part of the GHS Educational Foundation, a 510 (c) 3 non-profit organization. Visit the website through the Grossmont HS homepage by following the School Information drop down menu at <http://grossmont.guhsd.net>.

Many worthwhile things begin with a dream, only to be finished with plain hard work. The sisters Baer are doing the work. And they've got the stuff. So go. And be sure to chat with Connie and Lynn. Just don't say a Scottie sent you.

HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS: APRIL QUESTION
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?

Helen M. Stoddard
President, San Diego Chapter
Women's Christian Temperance Union

"Histerical" Thoughts

By Aaron Landau,
LMHS President



As the La Mesa Historical Society's newly installed President, I'm opening my inaugural column with a *thank you* for your membership in this great, 36-year-old organization.

The mantle of responsibility for the Society will rest on my shoulders for the next year and, hopefully, through June 2013. I am honored to lead this fine organization. However, it is actually very much a joint effort to guide and to grow the Society. Without our dedicated and energetic board, I would simply be an emperor without clothes.

Without the continued effort, commitment, and invaluable assistance of the two immediate past presidents - Gordon Jones and Donna Niemeier - I might simply be the helmsman that steers us onto the shoals. My sincere appreciation goes to Gordon and Donna and to each of my board colleagues.

The LMHS is your organization. Inside this edition of *Lookout Avenue* you will find a membership survey. We need your input, and I encourage you to respond. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts and get the survey back to us via the mail.

Incoming board member Wade Douglas has agreed to be our webmaster. His immediate goal is to keep the Society's site up-to-date and "fresh." We are planning new features for the site. They will be introduced in the coming months. We would sure appreciate the benefit of your thoughts and observations. Visit the site at www.lamesahistoricalociety.com

At some point in the future, we expect to "print" and distribute an electronic edition of *Lookout Avenue*. The printed version will still be available. Our objective is to reduce expenses by offering a "paperless" newsletter. We currently have e-mail addresses for almost half of the membership. We hope to compile and verify e-addresses for all members who have one and use it. Those records will be used solely to send *Lookout Avenue*, notices of upcoming Society events, and LMHS membership information electronically.

Please assist us in this effort by providing your active e-mail address, if you have not already done so. Not sure if we have it? Call us at **(619) 466-0197** to verify, or simply use the space provided on the survey form to mail it in, along with other thoughts and ideas.

Eventually, the survey will be posted on the Society's website. If you prefer, you can submit an updated e-mail address, along with any other comments or concerns, via that channel.

One last item. The Society is planning to launch a membership drive that will run through La Mesa's centennial year in 2012. The roster is currently at 230. Our goal is to reach 300 members by the end of next year, if not sooner. This will be "**The 300 Campaign**". We'll need everyone's participation to get there.

Spread the word about this great organization. The Centennial is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase the Society's contributions to La Mesa. Family, friends and neighbors deserve to hear about the benefits of joining LMHS. Let's get them enrolled!

Newland on La Mesa in Patch

Don't miss Jim Newland's La Mesa history series now running in the *La Mesa Patch* e-paper. In over three dozen articles, Jim's work provides a fresh look at materials preserved in the LMHS archives.

Election Report: Meet the New Board Members

Wade Douglas came to southern California from the Midwest in the mid-sixties. A radio journalist for over four decades, he spent five years in TV news as an assignment editor.

Since his retirement in 2008, he has focused on his twin interests: restoring classic-era British motorcycles and exploring local history. Wade founded the Flying A Committee in 2009 with the goal of commemorating La Mesa's role in the early film industry. He is a founding member of the City's Centennial Committee. Now a 30-year La Mesa resident, Wade lives with his wife in their home in the Village.

Suda House, a resident of La Mesa since 1986, Suda lives in what she believes is a late-1920's home on El Capitan Drive. Suda began teaching photography at Grossmont College in 1980. Selected as Distinguished Chair in 1985, she is now a full professor in the Visual Arts and Humanities Department.

During her tenure at Grossmont, Suda has been a member of the Academic Senate, serving on the Fringe Benefits Committee as well as chairing the Arts Council's fundraising for student scholarships. For 17 years, Suda collaborated with the Education Department of the Museum of Photographic Arts, with an Artists-in-Residence Summer Workshop series, bringing well-known photographers to the College for weekend courses.

Recently Suda represented her discipline on a Task Force charged with the design and construction of a state-of-the-art facility for the photography program, now housed in the new Digital Arts Building at the College.

Jim Newland moved here from Northern California in 1985 to attend college. He has lived in or near La Mesa ever since. A graduate of San Diego State, with a bachelor's in the social sciences and a master's in public history, Jim's

academic, professional and volunteer work provide opportunities to study the land-use history of Southern California, with a special focus on the history of La Mesa and the surrounding areas.

Jim is supervising historian and a manager for the California State Parks Department's Southern Service Center in San Diego. The author of numerous articles for academic journals and for popular history outlets as well as hundreds of technical reports and planning documents, Jim has published two books: a history of the region's Cleveland National Forest and a photographic history of La Mesa, in collaboration with the LMHS.

To Suda, Wade and Jim, *Welcome Aboard!*

LMHS Volunteer of the Year: Gordon Jones

Members are the foundation of the La Mesa Historical Society; volunteers give it life. At the Annual Meeting, the Society recognizes that simple fact with a special award. This year the Board selected Gordon Jones as outstanding Volunteer of the Year.



Gordon Jones at the awards ceremony. Photo courtesy Ken Stone, La Mesa Patch

Gordon served as President of the La Mesa Historical Society from July 1, 2001 to June 31, 2009. As Past President, he continued to volunteer for various activities and events. We honor Gordon Jones not because of anything different he

did this year, but in appreciation of his numerous accomplishments and countless hours of service over many years.

The record includes, but is not limited to, his Saturdays in the Palermo building patiently guiding the research of visitors interested in La Mesa and their homes; organizing McKinney House wine and cheese parties to welcome new members; representing the Society at City Council meetings and on the Historic Preservation Commission; meeting with the local business community; leading walking tours; planning the Annual Home Tours; writing numerous reports and publications; raising funds by preparing Landmark Reports; and producing the "Photographic History of the First 100 Years" now on display in the library.

And with all that, Gordon was unfailingly a "good guy" always ready to change light bulbs, raise umbrellas, or carry boxes. Temporarily sidelined by medical issues, he is now working on the fall Home Tour, at home. Mr. Jones, we salute you.

Rose Garden Induction Ceremony: Charmon Lehw

The Honor Roll at the Society's Commemorative Rose Garden grew to 75 with Charmon Lehw's induction during the Annual Meeting in early May. Out-going LMHS president Donna Niemeier recalled some highlights and local connections in a notable career. The following excerpts are taken from her warmly-received remarks.

"The first time I saw Charmon, in 1964, I was student teaching. I had gone over to Northmont Elementary to do a required master teacher observation. The entire student body was in the auditorium, where Charmon was leading the "all school sing." She was plainly doing more acting than singing, but she had 300 children completely involved and tremendously excited while they performed *Little Cabin in the Woods*.

I had one thought: may I never have to do that. If keeping 300 kids involved, excited and motivated, while the whole staff watched, was part of teaching, I wasn't going to make it.

My career crossed Charmon's path many times before she retired from the La Mesa-Spring Valley District in 1989. She was the principal at Murdock Elementary when I was teaching there in 1981. Later, while Curriculum Director she was in charge of the District's administrative intern program. I was in that program, so we saw each other on a regular basis. Her help and advice was some of the best I ever received.

Born in San Diego in 1926, Charmon's local roots run deep. Her father, Von Marshall worked for First National Bank. When Charmon was a sophomore in high school, her father was appointed a First National Vice President at the branch in La Mesa – where Por Favor is today. Charmon finished high school at Grossmont and went on to San Diego State, where she met her future husband Clark.

Clark's father, Charles "Jeff" Lehew and Von Marshall had become friends. While Von managed the bank, Jeff was La Mesa's Postmaster, a post he held for 28 years (1941-1966). He opened the Post Office at the La Mesa Blvd location now known as Johnny B's....

...When Charmon's youngest child reached six, she returned to teaching. Seeking a slot on the substitute list, she was advised by the District personnel office to call the week prior to school opening. That weekend she was visiting her brother in San Francisco, so she made the call on a Sunday night, only to be told to report to Northmont Elementary the next day!

On arrival Charmon told the secretary she was the sub. But Northmont did not need a sub, they needed a teacher. Charmon had been assigned as the kindergarten teacher, starting immediately. As a teacher, this would have been a nightmare for me. In fact, three years *after* my retirement, I still had nightmares about the first day of school and being ready!

During Charmon's career she worked as a supervisor and master teacher for the Lab School at San Diego State, as a principal at Spring Valley Elementary, Bancroft and Murdock; she held an asst. professorship at State, where she taught education classes, and she served as Director of Curriculum before retiring as the Asst. Superintendant for Instruction. A pioneer in Early Childhood Education, Charmon developed a before-and-after-school program at Bancroft that was subsequently adopted District-wide.



Charmon Lehew, Rose Garden awardee. Photo courtesy Ken Stone, La Mesa Patch

As a teacher Charmon ran a stimulating classroom, as a principal and college professor she inspired two generations of teachers, as the Director of Curriculum she designed and implemented innovative programs – including the changes needed to shift from Jr. High to Middle School – and as Asst. Superintendant she lifted the District to one of the best in the county.

In retirement, the role she plays in my life has changed, from professional to friend. I call on her and she is always there. Charmon has helped with our school tours of the McKinney House, with the English Tea, and took the podium last year for our Roundtable Lecture on Life in La Mesa during WWII.

Charmon Lehew continues to have a profound impact on my life, on the lives of many in our profession, in the LMHS and in the community. Today, it is my great pleasure to recognize Charmon for a life-time of service.”

Upcoming LMHS Events

August 12, 2011 Dedication of Flying A Studio Memorial Plaque on LM Blvd.

August 13, 2011 History Roundtable Lecture: Flying A Studio in La Mesa
See article below.

September 24, 2011 Grossmont Center 50th Anniversary Celebration

Oktoberfest, 2011 Centennial Calendar Rollout, with rare La Mesa photos

December , 2011 Christmas Open House

Professor Driskel will speak on Saturday, August 13th, at 10AM in the Grossmont Healthcare District auditorium at 9001 Wakarusa Street next to Briercrest Park in La Mesa. The dedication ceremony on Friday and the Roundtable lecture on Saturday are open to Society members and to the public at large.

In the Spotlight: Cheryl Hinton, Barona Cultural Center and Museum

Some people seem born to their work. They do not hold a post; they live it. Exercising their office with such simple grace, it is hard to imagine them doing anything else. Cheryl Hinton is one of those people. And one of La Mesa's own.

Director and Chief Curator of the Barona Cultural Center and Museum for the past 12 years, Hinton grew up locally, attended Grossmont High and completed graduate work in anthropology at San Diego State, specializing in Southern California Indian cultures.

An accomplished leader, speaker, and teacher, Hinton says what she does best is watch and listen. For the steward of a tribal museum, answerable not just to the Museum Committee but to the Barona Band's Elders and Tribal Council, those are the two indispensable skills.

The people of Barona are intensely private, seeing their history as a personal, closely-held experience. The Museum allows them to tell the story in their own words. Hinton's challenge is to facilitate the telling with exhibitions that inform the public, while protecting tribal traditions.

Hinton readily admits that a chance to do hands-on anthropology as chief curator is often her favorite part of the week. But it's a delicate balance. Building the public confidence that will allow the collections to grow, while gathering the resources to preserve and interpret them requires a nimble change of hats. And not always in the sequence planned.

Hollywood's Roots in La Mesa

Tinseltown magic will touch La Mesa in two events the second weekend of August. We are dedicating a commemorative plaque on the historic Wolf Building on La Mesa Boulevard to mark the centennial of the arrival of Allan Dwan's "Flying A" Movie Studio in August 1911.

Dwan directed, and the company produced, over one hundred 10-15 minute "one-reel" westerns while here. They left La Mesa for Santa Barbara the following July. Dwan went on to Hollywood fame directing films with marquee stars such as Shirley Temple, John Wayne, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Barbara Stanwyck, and Anthony Quinn.

The dedication, with a special presentation, will be held outside the Wolf Building on La Mesa Boulevard (across from Third) on Friday, August 12 at 10 AM. The date coincides with the 100th anniversary of the day the Flying A Movie Studio opened its doors on Lookout Avenue.

Film historian and professor Dana Driskel of UC Santa Barbara is the expert on early film making in California and the Flying A. Professor Driskel has agreed to give a presentation on Allan Dwan and Flying A's production in La Mesa as part of the Society's *History Roundtable Lecture Series*.

With the Center's budding acceptance, came the first notable success. Barona's 75th anniversary celebration in 2007 energized the reservation and sparked a newfound desire to reach beyond the valley. Visitation at the Center is climbing, especially among local residents. For Hinton and her keen staff, the most fulfilling moments arrive when families separated by time or circumstance reconnect in the discovery of a common past. These little victories have lasting consequences. Authentic local history makes the difference.

Today, the combined Cultural and Research Centers house approximately 4,000 artifacts and 10,000 archival items focusing on the lives and perspectives of the Barona Band of Mission Indians, Southern California Native American community members, and members of the Yuman Language Family. To plan a visit, or simply to learn about this remarkable resource, see www.baronamuseum.org

What's next? Hinton is excited about the exhibition *Rock of Ages: Contemporary Music Traditions on the Barona Reservation*, opening in mid-November. Memories, great stories and the music - *corridos*, folk, C&W, pop and rock - that people love will be the center of attention.

You may have taken the road up Wildcat Canyon into the Barona Valley 100 times. A visit to the Cultural Center will reset the clock. And on the next trip, if you watch and listen, you may see a new, quite different place. Such rewards are not reckoned in dollars, but in hearts opened and voices heard. A genuine payout, no luck required.

Director Hinton is available for community programs. To arrange a booking, write to Cheryl at info@baronamuseum.org or ring the Center at 619-443-7003, ext 219.

Centennial Corner

The La Mesa Centennial Committee first met in July of 2009 to draft plans for La Mesa's upcoming centennial, with a calendar of events throughout 2012. The LMCC now meets on the third Monday of each month at 4 PM in Fire Station 11 on Allison

Avenue. The LMHS is well represented on the Committee by members Jim Newland, Wade Douglas, Carol Lockwood, and Aaron Landau.

The LMCC has several subcommittees each with its own chair and responsibilities/projects. These include Finance, History & Research, Calendar & Events, Communications & Marketing, and the year's-end Gala. The LMHS has several projects in the works starting in early 2012 under the auspices of the History & Research Subcommittee. The LMHS members on the LMCC serve on the History & Research Subcommittee as well.

Community members who desire to be a part of La Mesa's exciting Centennial Year are welcome to participate on a subcommittee of their choosing. Volunteers and novel ideas are always needed. Join us in organizing the celebration of La Mesa's 100th birthday next year. Just call and leave a message at **(619) 466-0197**.

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

<p>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</p>
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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
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- \$15 Individual
- \$5 Student

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

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

LMHS Membership Survey

July 2011

Name (optional) _____

How many years a LMHS member? _____

May we use e-mail to contact you? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, please provide an e-address here _____

(NOTE: To preserve anonymity, all contact information may be sent separately.)

What events have you attended (Rose Garden Ceremony, History Roundtable Lectures, Christmas Open House, Home Tour)? _____

Which do you most enjoy or prefer to attend? _____

Ideas and/or suggestions for new events? _____

What information/features/stories would you like to see in the *Lookout Avenue* newsletter? _____

On the LMHS website? _____

Would you like to write articles or story ideas to the newsletter or website? If so, please provide e-contact information _____

General suggestions and/or concerns? _____

Would you be interested in becoming a docent for the Society's McKinney House? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please give name and contact information _____

Would you be interested in volunteering in another capacity? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please give name and contact information _____

Please mail completed form to **La Mesa Historical Society**
PO Box 882
La Mesa, CA 91944

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