



La Mesa Historical Society LOOKOUT AVENUE



Volume 17, Number 3

Summer 1996

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Jo Coffey

It has been a pleasure being President this year. It would have been a different story if I had not had the encouragement and help from the board and committee Chairs.

The yard just gets better and better, due to the diligent work of **Ed Blackman**.

Mary Lou McClellan and **Ruth Kramer** did the Christmas Open House in fine order.

Mary Lou also has come up with some great ideas for membership growth.

Our money is in the hands of the most capable **Bill Hastings**. I will be forever grateful for his help.

Pat Kettler made sure everything got down on paper. She also keeps our photos in order and does the slide program like no one else. Now she will take over the exhibits.

Nancy Neffson went out of her way to keep our exhibits interesting — she carried more than her weight in setting them up.

Carol Lockwood was a great help in recruiting docents and keeping track of the school tours at McKinney House.

Brice Lockwood was our liaison from the Board to the Yard Committee — he also helped in any area he was asked.

Sandy Campbell kept the Quilters on their toes — that group is such an asset to the Society.

May Ann Ehlers gets the mail out quickly and efficiently.

Mary Kelley chaired the Nominating Committee (great results) and planned the membership brunch which was delightful. Now she has taken on the Accessions Committee.

Beth Blackman did a great job as our Historic Preservation Liaison.

Karna Webster created a House Committee and gave us the benefit of her knowledge of history. She also had great success in getting us publicity in the papers.

Donna Regan, Artifacts Chair, is the resident expert on La Mesa history and historic La Mesa. She can answer any question.

I call **Betty Teague** my spiritual advisor. As Parliamentarian, she kept me on the straight and narrow. She brought the Sprites organization in to help the Society, and she is our depot expert.

I could never have done anything without my husband Roger. He does all of the computer work, goes to the house and fixes and moves things, and is just my right hand.

As you can see, my job was made easier by a group of enthusiastic friends. I wish Karna the very best next year. I know that with her expertise and the help of the Board, the Society will set and reach many new goals.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social provided the Society with another successful Summer fundraiser. Thanks to a lot of people who helped make this event a success.

To -

The **LMHS Quilters** for the Cactus Flower quilt won by **K. Elaine McAlpin**,



D'Ann Dobbins, Miss La Mesa and 1996 Fairest of the Fair, and winner K. Elaine McAlpin, admire the Cactus Flower quilt.

Ken Wharton Fine Photography for the camera session w/ 8x10 portrait won by **Judy Jo Rinder**,

The San Diego Zoological Society for the deluxe ticket packages to the Zoo and Wild Animal Park won by **Margaret Baly**,

J&J's Garage Sale Store for the \$50 gift certificate won by **Ray Major**;

to -

Marie Callender's - Alvarado Road.

Baker's Square - Baltimore Drive.

Price Club - Gateway Center

Smart & Final - El Cajon

Smart & Final - Lemon Grove

for contributions of food;

to -

LDS Church 2nd Ward La Mesa for the tables and chairs, and to the **Campbell family** for pickup and delivery;

to -

Brice Lockwood, ice cream Super Scooper, and his helpers - **Mary Kelly**, **Kathy Tinsley**, **Lynne Ekiss**, **Roger Coffey**, **Bill Hastings**, **Nancy Neffson**, and **Sprites Margie Brosselle**, **Shannon Park** and **Katie Dries**; (see **Ice Cream**, page 2)

Ice Cream (cont'd)

to- Scott and Margaret Baly for helping set up;



Construction Crew

to- **May Ann Ehlers** for keeping track of tickets;

to- **Mary Lou McClellan, Jane Chianese and Erlene Hayes** for handling ticket sales at the social ;

to- **House Docents Karna Webster, Margaret Baly, Scott Baly, Donna Regan and Beth Blackman;**

to- **Ed Blackman**, who every year does the entire plant sale with the able assistance of his helper, **Beth Blackman;**

to- **Evelyn Estabrook and Janet Franey** for playing the pump organ;



Janet Franey plays the McKinney House pump organ.

**LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SPRING BRUNCH**

by Mary Kelley

The La Mesa Historical Society Spring Brunch and General Membership Meeting was held on Sunday, April 14 at Nan Coutts Cottage at the La Mesa Community Center. Sixty members and guests attended and heard an interesting presentation by Helen Halmay while enjoying the brunch prepared by Ranch Catering.

Ms. Halmay, a former Society Editor and staff photographer for the *La Mesa Scout* newspaper, recounted her experiences which included interviewing the Beatles during the period 1964-66 when she was employed by the *Scout*. She is a native of San Diego County, a graduate of Grossmont College and co-editor of the its student newspaper, and, with her parents, a founder of the Lemon Grove Historical Society. She is currently President of the Congress of History of San Diego County. She is also a mother and grandmother. Her two granddaughters attended the Brunch as her guests.

During the General Membership meeting the Nominating Committee presented its slate of officers and members of the Board of Directors for 1996-97, as follows:

to- **Jean Guy**, who was on hand to sell **GROSSMONT ISN'T ONLY A SHOPPING CENTER**, written by her



Karna Webster and Jean Guy at the Ice Cream Social.

husband **Hubert Guy**, grandson of **Ernestine Schumann-Heink**.

to-

The **Campbell Family** for looking after the book sale, sale of baby quilts and literature and to **Eleanor Doerr and Margaret Pearson** for a demonstration of quilting; and-

a very special thank you to all members who accepted drawing tickets for distribution. Your donations of time and money were the principal reasons the Ice Cream Social was a fund raising success.

- President - Karna Webster
- 1st Vice President - Betty Teague
- 2nd Vice President - Mary Kelley
- 3rd Vice President - Mary Lou McClellan
- Secretary - Lockey Palermo
- Treasurer - Bill Hastings
- Directors- Ed Blackman, Roger Coffey, Dorothy James and Kathy Tinsley.

This slate was approved by acclamation. Carol Lockwood will continue in her current position as a member of the Board and Jo Coffey will serve as Past President.

Special thanks to Nominating Committee members **May Ann Ehlers, Brice Lockwood and Mary Lou McClellan** for their efforts.

During the Membership Meeting, out-going President **Jo Coffey** thanked the retiring officers and Board members for their efforts and assistance during her term of office. The Brunch ended with the drawing for doorprizes including a Topiary Plant donated by Topiary Presence.

Thanks to those who assisted with the Brunch: **Jo and Roger Coffey, Bill Hastings, and Claude Williams** for set-up and clean-up, and **Pat Kettler** for bringing the display items and selling LMHS items and quilts.

NAN COURTS

By Karna Webster

Sarah A. ("Nan") Courts was born in Yorkshire, England in 1889. She was the daughter of James Taylor Van Rensselaer and Agnes Sarah (Bradley) Van Rensselaer.

When Nan was one year old, her parents brought her to San Diego and the family lived for a time at the Hotel del Coronado. The family then moved to a ranch at Fallbrook. As a child, Nan met her future husband, John Forster Courts, Jr., the grandson of two famous San Diego County pioneer residents: Col. Cave Courts and Ysidora Bandini. Col. Cave Courts is remembered in San Diego today as the colorful military man who built the famous Rancho Guajome. Nan and Forster were married by 1915. After their marriage, Nan and her husband lived in Mission Hills, but when a son developed asthma, they moved to La Mesa in 1928 for the drier climate here. They purchased a nearly 20-year-old farm house, added a screened porch at the rear and enlarged the kitchen.

Before long, Nan became involved in La Mesa community activities. When she discovered a need, she did something about it. While serving as the welfare committee chairman for the P.T.A., she learned that some sort of community group was needed to provide clothing, health care and often food in the community. To meet these needs, she organized the La Mesa Welfare Association and its thrift shop in 1931 and served as its president for 19 years. She also obtained a visiting nurse for La Mesa through the SERA program. During the Depression she worked as the supervisor of surplus commodities in the La Mesa area and

gave many hours to the American Red Cross. Nan also worked with county and state welfare departments and, in 1939, served as the acting administrator of the San Diego County SRA (State Relief) office.

During World War II, Nan Courts held a staff job as director of Home Service for the Red Cross and did volunteer service for the organization as well. She served on a number of committees and boards including a citizens' advisory board for an alcoholic clinic.

Through her various activities, she became aware of additional needs in the community. In 1947, she was one of a small group of citizens who organized to build some sort of health

care facility in the area. She spearheaded the drive that resulted in the construction of Grossmont Hospital and turned the first spadeful of dirt at the groundbreaking ceremonies. When the hospital officially opened on August 15, 1955, Nan had already organized the Grossmont Hospital Auxiliary on July 15, 1952 and served as its charter president. She also helped organize the auxiliary at Edgemoor

Geriatric Hospital.

Nan was instrumental in the establishment of the La Mesa Youth Center, and when she discovered a special need for a facility just for girls, she started a drive that raised funds for the Girls Cottage that was completed in MacArthur Park in 1957. She persuaded service clubs and the City Council to help with this project. The building was named the Nan Courts Cottage in her honor.

Nan Courts served the city, too, on the Police Commission, the La Mesa Park and Recreation Commission (five years), and the La Mesa Personnel Appeals Board (six years). On October 5, 1960, the city held a large reception to honor her for her many years of service to the community; the mayor proclaimed the

occasion "Nan Courts Day." She was 80 years old at the time. When Nan passed away on September 9, 1985 at the age of 96, her obituary related her important contributions to La Mesa.

Nan Courts is remembered for her advice to young people, "Look for things that need doing and do them." During her 40 years in La Mesa, before moving to El Cajon in 1968, Nan Courts found many things that needed doing, and her accomplishments touched the lives of all La Mesa citizens.

We wish to thank Nan Courts' daughter, Nanette Courts Thompson, and Nanette's daughter, Cathee Thompson Harris, for their generous assistance in the preparation of this report.



Nan Courts



Nanette Courts Thompson and Susan Courts Springstead, daughters of Nan Courts, attended the opening of the new La Mesa Women of Distinction exhibit.



Cathee Thompson Harris, Art Thompson and Nanette Courts Thompson.

LA MESA WOMEN OF DISTINCTION EXHIBIT OPENS

Nine women of La Mesa, from the turn of the century to recent times, have been selected for recognition as La Mesa Women of Distinction. This special exhibit was opened at the 1996 Ice Cream Social on Sunday, June 9. The women are:

HELEN STODDARD:

Only woman candidate who ran for U.S. Congressional seat in 1912.

ERNESTINE SCHUMANN-HEINK:

World-famous opera singer and early resident of Grossmont.

ROSE MILLER PARKS:

Early resident of La Mesa; La Mesa City Treasurer - 1934 to 1952.

EVA QUICKSALL:

Grossmont High School English teacher - 1921 to 1962. Originator of Grossmont High's annual Christmas Pageant.

IRMA ROMBAUER:

Elementary school teacher and principal in La Mesa-Spring Valley Dist. 1923 to 1964.

MARY GARFIELD:

Early La Mesa resident, artist and poet.

NAN COUTS:

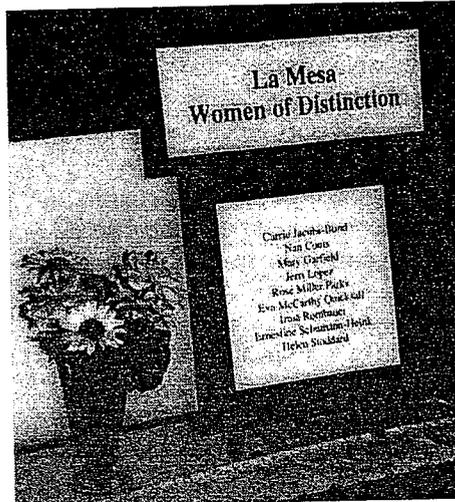
A leader in making possible the La Mesa Welfare Association and thrift shop, Grossmont Hospital, and the Nan Coutts Girls Cottage.

JERRI LOPEZ:

First woman elected to the La Mesa City Council, serving 1980 to 1991.

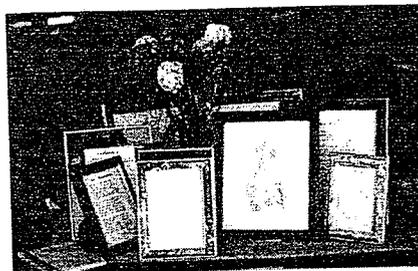
CARRIE JACOBS BOND:

Popular American composer and lyricist of her day; early resident of Grossmont.



Jerri Lopez visits the exhibit honoring her as a La Mesa Woman of Distinction.

Pat Kettler has done an outstanding job researching and collecting the articles on display in this exhibit. It will be open during normal Museum hours 12 to 3 P.M. on Saturdays, until further notice. Thank you, Pat!



Additional articles displayed in the garden by Mary Garfield's family.

FROM THE LMHS PHOTO ARCHIVES

by Pat Kettler

Photographs recently accessioned into the LMHS collection are:

Two 1923 original photos of Marjorie and Florence McKinney, granddaughters of Rev. Henry and Florence McKinney who built and owned the Society's house museum. Donated by Robert McKinney.

A 1925 photo of City Marshall B.L. Mercer and Deputy Homer Baker displaying paraphernalia confiscated from a raid on a local still. Donated by Gilbert Judy.

Seven photos from the Isaac Shaw, Sr. family taken during the 1930's and 1940's of the family, friends, and Mr. Shaw's paint store which he built and operated at 8359 La Mesa Blvd. (east of Palm Ave.) from 1925 until around 1942. The photos were loaned for copying by Hazel Shaw Ogle.



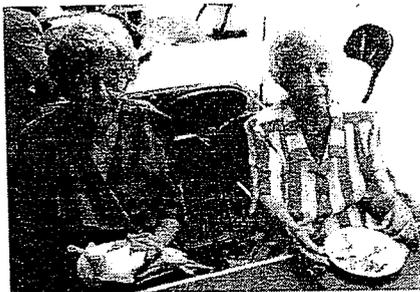
The Lilly and Isaac Shaw, Sr. Family with Pabco, the family pet - 1933

OUR CURRENT PROJECTS

We are currently in the process of expanding the McKinney House Museum content by restoring the children's bedroom as a child's room in the early 1900's. When completed, the project will include toys, books and other artifacts appropriate to the period. We feel this will be especially interesting for the many children who visit the house with their families or on the regularly scheduled school tours. We estimate the cost of the project to be about \$5000.

Also, as you may have noticed in our last newsletter, we are soliciting donations to procure special acid-free document preservation boxes for storage of historical documents in our custody. The cost is \$6.00 per box.

We invite you to participate in accomplishing these special projects. Each document box donated will have a label identifying the donor. Donations of \$100.00 or more for restoration of the Children's Room will be acknowledged by inscription of the donor's name on a plaque to be displayed in the house. Donations of items appropriate to the period and selected for display in the Children's Room will be similarly acknowledged.



Hazel Odom and Lucile DeWaide enjoy a treat at the Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social.

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

The new Children's Room is on the move. Thank you to the following life members whose donations have made this possible:

- Jerri Lopez for Grandson David Arthur Lopez
- Mr. and Mrs Robert Rapp
- Ann McKinney Robinson
- James Polak
- Judy Howard Strydon
- An anonymous donor



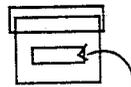
David Arthur Lopez worries about whether he got the words right as he presents a \$100 donation for the Children's Room to Donna Regan and Jo Coffey. He did.

A donation was also received from the Lion's Club.

ACID-FREE BOXES

Thank you to the following members for responding to our request for donations for acid-free boxes for storage of sensitive documents:

- Ruth Papendick
- Lena Kasitz
- Jean Twiss
- Julia Park Howard
- Judy Howard Strydon



Your Name Here

MORE ICE CREAM

Ice Cream Social Fundraiser Results:	
Income:	\$1553.00
Expenses:	\$296.96

How lucky this city is to have D'Ann Dobbins as Miss La Mesa and also Miss Fairest of the Fair. Her lovely smile and graciousness were wonderful additions to our afternoon.



Ernestine Schumann-Heink exhibit with concert gown



Many relatives attended the opening of the new exhibit, including Susan Coutts Springstead, Nanette Coutts Thompson, grandson Art Thompson and granddaughter Cathee Thompson Harris; and Harriet Garfield Halley, Patty Garfield, Tom Garfield and grandsons Brian Garfield, Stephen Garfield Bair, and Ken Kuhlken; and David Brock Lopez and grandson David Arthur Lopez.

A recollection

Cleaning up the Neighborhood with Jean McGill

by Toni Michael.

When I was a small child in La Mesa, just after World War II, I became friends with Jean McGill, an elderly neighbor who spent her time cleaning up the neighborhood, and enrolling children to help her.

Just before my 5th birthday, my family moved to a property on Parks Avenue, near the southern end of the first long block south of El Cajon Boulevard. My parents and grandparents had gone in together to buy an acre of land with an old house and set of outbuildings. My parents, my baby brother Jim, and I moved into the house, along with my grandfather Michael. My grandmother moved into a two room cabin, with electricity and cold running water, but no toilet. In addition to the bathroom in the house, with a bathtub, we had a shower in the "wash house," a small building with laundry facilities. We lived in this manner while my grandfather, a retired carpenter, built a new house for himself and my grandmother.

La Mesa was still semi-rural, in those days. My family and our neighbors kept chickens, exotic fowl, and a few horses. We children ran and played freely in the wide-open fields, soon to be built up into housing developments in the construction boom after the war.

At the corner of Parks and El Cajon, was a neighborhood grocery store which carried all the penny candies and nickel candies and related treats a child could imagine. Almost immediately I began walking the long block up to the store with my mother or one of the other adults. As I grew older, I gained permission to walk there by myself.

Walking up the long block to the corner, we soon met Jean McGill. She was an elderly widow who lived

in the first house south of the corner store. In my child's memory, she seemed very old. Certainly, she was of my grandmother's generation, not my mother's. She was a tall, wiry, spry old woman. Very cheerful, always friendly.

Jean spent much of her days going about the neighborhood picking up trash. She walked up and down both sides of Parks Avenue, wearing a sensible navy blue skirt, nondescript blouse and cardigan sweater, rayon stockings and sensible shoes, with a straw sunhat on her head. She picked up candy wrappers and popsicle sticks and bottle caps and large twigs, and eventually deposited them in one of her trash cans. When we asked what she was doing, she said, "Well, I'm cleaning up the neighborhood."

Jean quickly enrolled all children she met into helping her in her campaign against trash. She kept a supply of the penny candies from the store, and always freely offered us a candy. But she was very formal about the process. When she first met a child, she explained that she'd like to offer the child a treat, but only with the parents' permission. If she hadn't met the child's parents, she'd write a note introducing herself and asking permission to give candy to the child on occasion.

Actually, the "occasions" turned out to be when we picked up trash and brought it to show her that we were doing our part to clean up the neighborhood. Then she'd give us a treat.

Jean taught us many important rules by example, without stating them as rules.

1. Don't throw trash in the street.
2. Pick up trash when you see it.
3. Be friendly when you meet people, but don't take candy from strangers without your parents' permission.
4. Smile and be pleasant when you talk to people,

During the years I lived on Parks Avenue, aged 5 to 13, I visited with Jean countless times, sometimes with my brother Jim, sometimes with my best friend DeLoris, sometimes alone. A few times, I was privileged

to enter Jean's home. She occupied an apartment above a multi-car garage. The building had been the carriage house for an extensive estate at one time. In Jean's day, it was filled with clutter, much too valuable to throw away, but completely disorganized and becoming perilously close to a trash heap. It seemed as though Jean devoted so much time and energy to cleaning up the neighborhood, she had none left for cleaning up her own home.

In the 4-car garage below, Jean kept her ancient black automobile, which she occasionally drove, sitting up straight as a ramrod, totally alert, at attention. The rest of the garage was filled with stacks of newspapers, waiting to be recycled, I suppose, but Jean was decades early in her vision of recycling.

I don't know how many generations of children learned those few important rules from Jean. But for myself, Jean planted seeds of awareness and habit that have grown throughout my life.

MEMORIAL ROSE GARDEN

Ed Blackman has researched the history of roses appropriate to the turn of the century and acquired and planted 26 roses in the Memorial Rose Garden along the east fence. Cindi Lauritzen sent a donation in memory of Steven S. Whitcomb. A plaque with all names will be completed soon. Future donations to the Memorial Rose Garden will be for upkeep and the names will be added to the plaque.

TRASH TO TREASURES

A big THANK YOU to all those who donated items to be sold, those who priced, those who sold and those who bought! You're combined efforts resulted in a treasure for the treasurer of \$242.78. Wonderful!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jane Chianese
 D'Ann Dobbins (Miss La Mesa)
 Robert and Lynn Ekiss
 Dorothy James
 Aaron and Bernadette Laudau
 Kenneth and Barbara Nichols
 Deanna Noriega
 J. Phillip and Peg Overlund
 Lockey Palermo
 Margaret Pearson
 Nanette Coutts Thompson
 Claude and Velma Williams

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS LAGGING

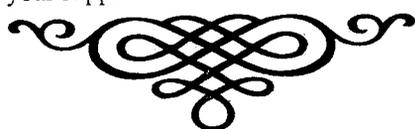
Have you renewed your membership for 1996-1997 yet? The odds are that you have, but we are still far behind the numbers hoped for at this time. It may just be a calendar problem. Many people write all their checks on the first of the month, and we may have been on your July 1 list.

Then again, you may have become so frustrated at trying to open those multi-purpose envelopes that we used that you just threw the whole package away. We apologize. We ran out of the standard envelopes and had to improvise.

Nevertheless, can we still be friends? If we weren't on your July 1 charity list, and if you don't have our multi-purpose envelope any longer, write a note telling us your name and renewal category (as listed on the membership application above) and send us your check in any old envelope you have available.

Send it to La Mesa Historical Society, PO Box 882, La Mesa, CA 91944.

Membership dues are counted on for a large part of our budget. We hope we can continue to count on your support.



MEMBERSHIP IN LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An Invitation to Join

The Society depends upon membership dues, bequests and fund raising activities to support restoration and preservation of local history. *Memberships and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.* Membership categories include:

___ Benefactor	\$250	___ Sponsor/Organization	\$25
___ Life (Single)	\$125	___ Family (2 adults)	\$15
___ Patron	\$ 40	___ Individual	\$10
		___ Student (under 18 yrs.)	\$1

To join the La Mesa Historical Society, please complete and return this form with your check to: LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P. O. BOX 882, LA MESA, CA 91944.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ I would like to become involved in the Society's work.

THANK YOU, SPRITES

For the second year, the La Mesa Historical Society has been fortunate to be one of the philanthropies of the SPRITES. These girls and their mothers have helped with both the Christmas Open House and the Ice Cream Social. They also assist the Docent some Saturday afternoons when the McKinney House is open.

SPRITES is a mother-daughter philanthropic organization in East San Diego County in which one generation prepares the next for the task of helping its fellow man, explained Betty Teague who is the contact person to the organization.

SPRITES' major fund raiser is a fashion show held at Theater East each spring. With the receipts from this gala event, each of the six grade levels (from 7th to 12th) present special requested gifts for the philanthropies of the 28 organizations which benefit each year from the efforts of these girls and their mothers.

This year LMHS presented them with a basket of lemons from the three trees they gave us last year. In return, two boxes, adorned with festive ribbons, which contained a silver coffee service and a 30 cup electric coffee maker, were given to LMHS according to Jo Coffey, President. Both items have been needed and will be used at Christmas and on other special occasions.

The LMHS is looking forward to a continuing and growing association with these young women, according to Karna Webster, incoming LMHS President

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONS OR ERRORS

If you have any questions about your membership, or if you have noted any mistakes with your new membership card, please call Mary Lou McClellan at 287-1617.

If you know a non-member that is interested in supporting the Historical Society and the McKinney House, please call Mary Lou and she will get information to them.

EDITORS NOTE:

I sincerely appreciate the assistance of Tom Ridley, introduced to us by Dorothy James, and Positive Image Printers in cooperating to expedite printing our newsletter in a timely fashion.

I'm doing some experimenting with my computer to see if I can add more pictures. To those of you that can't recognize yourself, I apologize. If you do recognize yourself and do not like the result, I will join you in a class action suit against the manufacturer of my camera.



P. O. Box 882, La Mesa, California 91944

La Mesa Historical Society

Museum: Rev. Henry A. McKinney House (1908)
8369 University Avenue
(619) 466-0197

Address Correction Requested

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La Mesa Historical Society Officers and Directors 1995-1996

- President* **JO COFFEY**
- First Vice President* **KARNA WEBSTER**
- Second Vice President* **BRICE LOCKWOOD**
- Third Vice President* **RUTH KRAMER**
- Secretary* **PAT KETTLER**
- Treasurer* **BILL HASTINGS**
- Director ('94-'96)* **MARY LOU McCLELLAN**
- Director ('95-'96)* **NANCY NEFFSON**
- Director ('95-'96)* **KATHY TINSLEY**
- Director ('95-'97)* **CAROL LOCKWOOD**
- Director ('95-'97)* **BETTY TEAGUE**
- Past President* **DONNA REGAN**
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- Publicity Chair* **KARNA WEBSTER**
- Grounds Chair* **BRICE LOCKWOOD**
- Newsletter Chair* **ROGER COFFEY**
- Historic Preservation Liaison*... **BETH BLACKMAN**



The La Mesa Historical Society operates the Rev. Henry A. McKinney House, a 1908 house museum located at 8369 University Avenue (corner of Pine Street) in La Mesa. Hours are 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday afternoons or by appointment. Docent tours are available. Call 466-0197 for further information.

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