Fall 2025

lookout avenue



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LA MESA
History Center

The NEWSLETTER of the LA MESA HISTORY CENTER

VOLUME 50 #2

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Another busy summer has flown by for the La Mesa History Center and what a tremendous summer it was. Around sixty of our members gathered for our Annual Meeting on June 29th to kick off our year-long 50th anniversary celebration! We launched our new exhibit highlighting our anniversary year! And we installed a temporary display in our new exhibit building!

As we transition into the fall, focus has shifted to our upcoming 19th annual home tour. As we transition into the fall, focus has shifted to our upcoming 19th annual home tour. Wildly popular, the tour is also our largest fundraiser of the year. The tour committee has been busy determining the houses, laying out the route, recruiting sponsors and securing the needed docent to ensure that a fun and safe time is had by all. It has also been a pleasure working with the La Mesa First United Methodist Church to arrange for the accompanying Roundtable presentation. And I'd like to give a special shout-out to Pastor Christian DeMent, son of Archives' volunteers Don and Julie DeMent, for his partnership in this planning.

The fall session also means school is back in session and that means a new group of interns from San Diego State University. The LMHC is grateful for our relationship with the Anthropology and History Departments at SDSU which allows us to engage with energetic and enthusiastic students who are looking to get additional hands-on experience in the archives, preservation, museum curation, and public history fields. We currently have one student working on an independent study project with our textile collection and another student assisting with metadata for various digitized photographs and documents.

And speaking of interns and volunteers, the LMHC has a need for additional McKinney House docents. We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to commit to three hours, one Saturday a month to help in the McKinney House. Duties include welcoming visitors, answering questions (training provided), and helping keep the house in tip-top shape with light dusting and sweeping. If you are interested, reach out to info@lamesahistorycenter.com and include "McKinney House docent" in the subject line or stop by any Saturday from 1pm to 4pm for a quick chat.

Veronica Martzahl, President
La Mesa History Center



ANNUAL MEETING KICKS OFF CELEBRATION OF 50 YEARS OF PRESERVING LA MESA'S HISTORY

An engaged and energetic group of La Mesa History Center members gathered at the McKinney House on Sunday, June 29, 2025 for the La Mesa History Center's annual meeting. Board President, Veronica Martzahl, updated the group on the activities of the Center for the past year and acknowledged the contributions of the long list of volunteers and partner organizations that have supported the organization since its founding in 1975, and presented the 2025-2026 Board of Directors' slate for membership vote. The following Board was elected by member consent:

Executive Board
President – Veronica Martzahl
Vice President- James Newland
Secretary – AnnMarie Provancha
Treasurer - Tracey Stotz
Vice President Membership – Emily Alessio

General Board
Kristine Alessio
Steven Churchill
Dan Lee
John Loughlin
Sharon Smith
Kevin Vigil

Terms Continuing
Samantha Alberts
Donna Bloomer

Our sincere thanks to outstanding Board members Steven Christiansen and Dianne McCann who have completed their terms.

Additionally four awards were presented in the following categories:

LMHS Sponsor/Business of the Year - San Pasqual Winery
This award is presented to an active business, sponsor or institution within the Greater La Mesa area whose work and efforts clearly supports the La Mesa Historical Society in preserving and educating the community to its heritage.

La Mesa History Maker of the Year - La Mesa Woman's Club
This award is presented to an individual or family or a business or institution that is currently making a positive influence in the Greater La Mesa community in social, civic, business or educational activities.

La Mesa Historical Preservationist of the Year - Todd Pitman and Carmen Pauli
This award is presented to an individual or property owner whose efforts are exemplary in the preservation of the historical properties within the Greater La Mesa area.

Lifetime Achievement Award - Carol Lockwood
Normally we would award a volunteer of the year award, but this year that just did not seem sufficient to recognize the contributions of Carol Lockwood. From her work with the Quilters group through her work in the McKinney House and our docent program, a lifetime achievement award was the only fitting recognition for all she has done over the 50 years of the La Mesa Historical Society/History Center!



Mike and Linda McWilliams with LMHC vice-president Jim Newland and president Veronica Martzahl



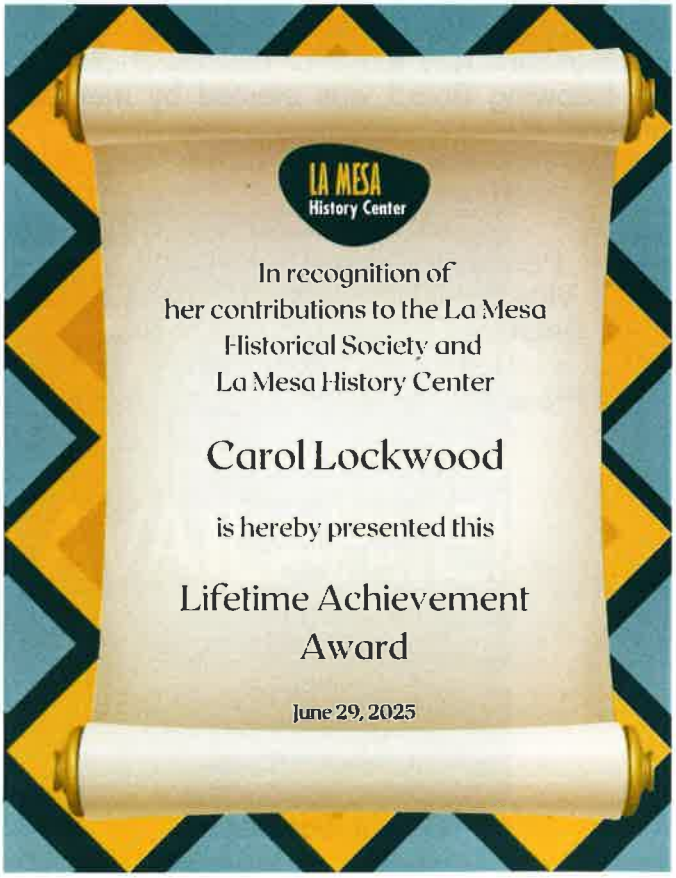
Members lined up for burgers and fries from the Badas Burgers Food Truck



Sandi Phoenix, Darcy Barghols, Pat Spear, and Margaret Mendez along with Jim Newland and Veronica Martzahl



Carol Lockwood



Lifetime Achievement Award presented to Carol Lockwood

Many thanks to Steven Churchill and John Loughlin for the photos!

Thank you

to the following Home Tour Sponsors

Platinum ($1000)

La Mesa Lumber
La Mesa Village Association
Pete's Place
Tracey Stotz, Broker
Tranquility Property Management and Andrea Flint-Gogek, Realtor
Urbana Preservation & Planning

Gold ($500)

Bougie Cheese Shop
EDCO Disposal Corporation
La Mesa Flooring
RCP Block and Brick

Silver ($300)

Laura Lothian
S Curve Strategies

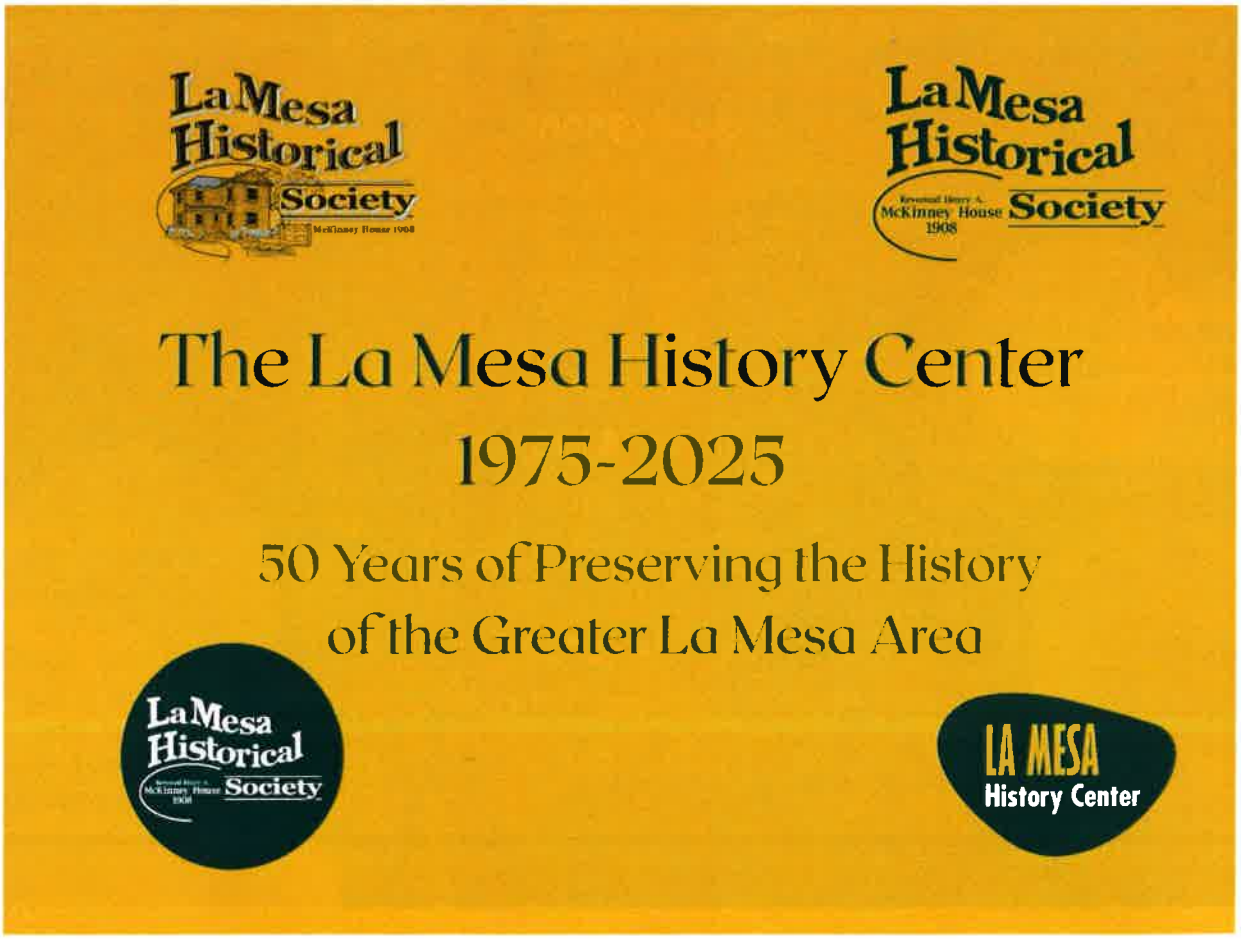
Bronze ($150)

Ryan Umbenhaur, Edward Jones
Small Batch

NEW EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS LA MESA HISTORY CENTER'S OWN HISTORY

The 2025 Annual Meeting on June 29th served as the opening for the La Mesa History Center's latest exhibit: The La Mesa History Center - 1975-2025: 50 Years of Preserving the History of the Greater La Mesa Area. The exhibit highlights the role of the La Mesa Pioneers (a group of early residents of La Mesa) and the La Mesa America's Bicentennial Committee in the formation of the La Mesa Historical Society in 1975 and how the McKinney House became the group's home. Also celebrated is the role of the La Mesa Quilters in supporting the early work of the Society and how the Annual Home Tour has become the group's signature event.

Have you ever wondered where the outhouse on the McKinney grounds came from or when the Palermo Archives Building was built? Not sure about the history of the pine tree or rose garden? Stop by the McKinney House any Saturday between 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to take a look at this anniversary exhibit to learn these answers and much more!



La Mesa History Center

History Roundtable Presentation

previewing

the 19th Annual Home Tour

"Golden Gems of La Mesa"

featuring seven of Downtown La Mesa's Most Notable Landmark properties, and the Architects, Builders, Institutions, and prominent La Mesans that made them home



Saturday October 11, 2025

10:00am to 12:00 noon

La Mesa First United Methodist Church

4690 Palm Avenue, La Mesa

LA MESA History Center

1975-2025



Program:

James Newland: *historian and author*

"Images of America: La Mesa"

"Classic Gems of La Mesa's Architectural Heritage"

Including the work of notable architects such as Irving J. Gill, William Wheeler, Arthur G. Lindley, F.D. Harrington and pioneering local builders J. D. Davis, Harry Russell and the Dennstedt Company

Roundtable Admission: Free for LMHC Members; $5 donation for non-members

Come Learn about some of La Mesa's most historic, beautiful, and preserved properties that represent the distinctive architecture, landscapes, and artisanship that sets La Mesa apart as the "Jewel of the Hills."















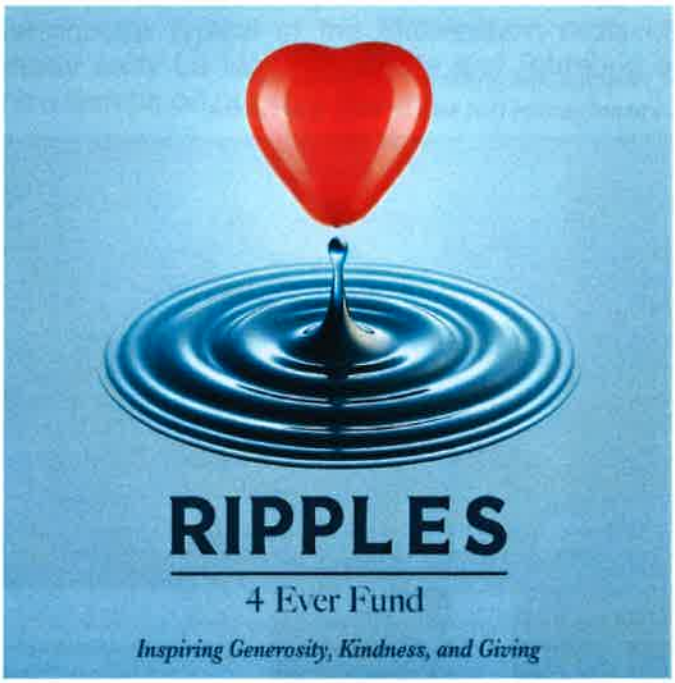
MATCHING GIFT ISSUED TO WRAP UP THE SITE RENOVATION

Big news! We are honored to announce we are the recipient of a matching gift from the Ripples 4 Ever Fund of up to $7500 to be used to finish the site interpretive signage. This is a huge boost for us. We are so appreciative of the Fund for its support.

The first sign will be located near the lemon crate interactive exhibit on Pine Street and will tell the history of the citrus industry in La Mesa. A $1000 grant from the La Mesa Rotary will pay for that sign. The rest of the funds raised will be used for additional signage throughout the site. We are working on the content now and hope to have something in place in the next few months.

If you would like to contribute to the interpretive signage consider making a donation of any size. You can mail in a check to our PO Box 882, La Mesa, CA. 91944 or donate with this website link https://lamesahistory.com/product/variable_donation/

All variable donations will count toward the campaign. Thank you to those who have made recent gifts.





19TH ANNUAL LA MESA HISTORY CENTER 2025 HOME TOUR "GOLDEN GEMS OF LA MESA"

Featuring Historic Downtown La Mesa Date Avenue Historic District, Parks Addition, & Boulder Heights

Saturday November 8th 9am-3pm

The La Mesa History Center Home Tour presents its 19th annual Home Tour as we commemorate our own institution's 50th anniversary. In October 1975 a history-minded group of La Mesa residents incorporated the La Mesa Historical Society. Their interest in preserving local history also grew to incorporate historic preservation and a recognition of the unique, impressive, and significant architectural heritage of the Greater La Mesa region. In this our "Golden Anniversary Year" we will be offering some of La Mesa's "Golden Gem" properties for viewing.

Since 2006 the Society (now known as the History Center) has put on an Annual Home Tour to share this architectural heritage with our tour ticket holders from both near and far. Our Home Tour, with its free-style touring format, has earned a well-deserved reputation as one of the most popular and welcoming home tours in the county.

This year our home tour returns to the streets and hills surrounding downtown La Mesa, the Jewel of the Hills. Our tour will feature an eclectic mixture of Folk Victorian, Craftsman, Prairie Style, and Spanish Eclectic designs emblematic of these historic neighborhoods. The Society's last tour here in 2023 was a great success. This year promises to be another outstanding event highlighting these historic neighborhoods, their distinctive properties along with the significant designers, builders, artists/ artisans, and historically significant residents and families featured at these landmark homes. It will also let us honor our present proud owners who continue to preserve and steward these landmark properties.

This year's History Center's tour also features another significant and long-standing local institution that is currently celebrating its own 130th anniversary—La Mesa First United Methodist Church.

Historic Community Gem Homes

The preservation of each of the featured tour properties also highlights the history of some

of the most prominent and fascinating families, individuals, and long-standing institutions in La Mesa history. These include the **1910 Sherman Grable House**, a Prairie Style influenced home built for the prominent local developer, business and civic leader, and recently confirmed as the work world-renown architect Irving J. Gill; the **1922 John and Charlotte King House**, a classic Craftsman style home with rustic landscape and City views; the **1935 Chester Herritt Home**, an unique Spanish Eclectic gem with art and artisanship throughout, built for the influential Irrigation District manager and designed by San Diego architect William Wheeler during his partnership with the Dennstedt Company; the **1912 Caldwell House**, a beautiful and authentic Craftsman home with period retro landscape and restored interior woodwork and built-ins; the magnificently restored, rehabilitated and tastefully decorated **1911 Russell/Sprung House** a Craftsman gem; the aforementioned **La Mesa First United Methodist Church** featuring Los Angeles architect Arthur Lindley's **1922 Spanish Colonial church** and San Diego architect F.D. Harrington's 1955 Spanish Contemporary style interpretations; as well as the History Center's own home, the **1908 Henry & Florence McKinney House**, a Folk Victorian farmhouse typical of the Midwestern roots of many early La Mesa residents and featuring a new exhibit on our own history.



1910 Sherman Grable House

Two featured homes for this year's Tour. Current images courtesy of Steven Churchill.



1935 Chester Herritt Home

Current Gem Owners

These special homes also provide us an opportunity to thank the current owners who steward these properties preservation today. All tastefully and compatibly furnished, artistically decorated, maintained, and wonderfully landscaped, they continue to provide the current homeowners and their families, the same functions, and assets that the original owners experienced for these many generations.

La Mesa's Suburban Roots Revealed

For La Mesa's early 20th century home makers and community builders, the former citrus ranches around the La Mesa Springs Depot and its Lookout Ave (now La Mesa Boulevard) businesses were rapidly subdivided into suburban house lots between 1906 to 1912. Two newcomers named Sherman Grable and C.C. Park were the main catalysts for this conversion.



La Mesa "clean up crew" in front of Park-Grable Company office and Bank of La Mesa buildings, 1912. Located at northwest corner Spring Street and La Mesa Blvd. These Irving Gill designed buildings were demolished c1920 for a new bank building.

Their Park-Grable Investment Company not only developed these tracts but helped form the Bank of La Mesa to help finance the fledgling community and an Improvement Club that would evolve into the original La Mesa Chamber of Commerce to help promote—and eventually motivate--the small community of approximately 700 residents to incorporate in February 1912.

This year's Tour taps into these "Progressive Era" ideals of Arts and Crafts aesthetic and indoor-outdoor California lifestyle. Three are beautiful Craftsman landmark homes dating from 1911 to 1922. Visitors will be presented with these wonderful period examples including those built by local early contractors such as J.B. Davis, David C. Marker and Henry L. Russell. The Irving J. Gill designed Grable House provides a cutting-edge example of Gill's work at the height of his influential career.



Newly completed Grable House, 1910. Recent documentation identifies Irving J. Gill as the architect.

It is not designed in the revolutionary, austere, proto-Modern style that shunned all ornament and for which Gill is now renown. The Grable's English half-timber facade, roof lines, and Prairie influenced elements of clean lines show his adaptation of these elements to southern California's mild climate and indoor-outdoor lifestyles—and likely the client's aesthetic interests.

These can be contrasted with our oldest tour home the 1908 Folk Victorian farmhouse built for Rev. Henry A. McKinney, wife Florence, and their family. Typical of the homes many Midwestern emigrants to La Mesa constructed at that time, the McKinney House, now home to the La Mesa History Center and City Historic Landmark #1, invites guests to see recent upgrades, especially the Center's recent efforts to return the site's landscape to its agricultural roots as a citrus ranch.



Rev. Henry A. McKiinney, wife Florence and younger sons Joyce and Donald outside their new home, c1909.

Also, new exhibits commemorating the History Center's 50th Golden Anniversary and the organization's founders will be displayed. These exhibits illuminating on our half-century old non-for-profit institution's efforts in preserving Greater La Mesa's history and promoting historic preservation locally.

La Mesa Methodist Church, A Pioneering Institution

The History Center is also proud to partner with the La Mesa First United Methodist Church, one of the longest standing institutions in La Mesa. The Church has been a vital community asset for 130 years. The Southern Conference of the Methodist Church formally established the La Mesa Methodist Episcopal Church in November 1895. It was the first church to be established in what was then known as Allison Springs. (The La Mesa Congregational Church being established in October 1895 in the La Mesa Townsite at today's College Area centered at 70th and El Cajon Boulevard).

With the San Diego Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway depot, and subsequently the La Mesa Post Office, located at Allison Springs, developer/landowners Andrew Crowder and Joseph Allison subdivided the land around the depot and renamed the fledgling community La Mesa Spring in 1895. Crowder's La Mesa Lemon Company built a store and packing house across the street from the depot. In that same year the locals created the Allison School (the La Mesa School being established at the townsite in 1891).



Photo showing 1908 Methodist Church, former buildings used for services, and the empty future location at Lemon and Palm Avenues.

The La Mesa Methodist Episcopal Church used both the Allison School and the second floor "hall" at the packing house for services in these early years.

In 1908 the Church completed its first building at the southeast corner of Lemon and Palm Avenues. In 1921 they brought in noted Glendale architect Arthur Lindley who designed the classic Spanish Colonial style church constructed by local contractors Marker and Russell across the street on the southwest corner where it stands today. This beautiful and functional sanctuary served the growing congregation until the early 1950s. At that point the church brought in noted San Diego architect F. D. (Frank) Harrington to complete additional buildings for a campus school and a larger modern sanctuary. Both architects are noted for their numerous church commissions throughout southern California.



Arthur Lindley's 1922 Church building shortly after completion.



Methodist Church Choir in new 1955 Sanctuary.

The Church's campus facilities were enlarged and adapted over the years as the renamed First United Methodist Church continues to serve the greater La Mesa community.

Recently First United Methodist participated in a planning charette with national non-profit Sacred Places that included local designers and community members to help create a renewed vision for maximizing this historic and essential community institution's campus.



Current photo First United Methodist Church sanctuary.

Don't miss the special tours being provided to ticket holders to experience and learn about this seminal religious institution's history and the plans for its continued role in the community. *Note that First United will also be the location of the Home Tour Roundtable Lecture on Saturday October 11th from 10am to 12 noon.









Images courtesy of Steven Churchill.

Hope to See You On the Tour!

Once again, we thank our generous homeowners for opening these Greater La Mesa area gems to tour guests—they are also community Jewels! This year's tour looks to be another memorable event. Don't miss it! Get Your Tickets Now!

James D. Newland
La Mesa History Center

FIRST TIME!

FRIDAY NIGHT PREMIUM HOME TOUR TICKETS AVAILABLE

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 7, 2025
6:00PM-9:00PM

LA MESA History Center 1975-2025

19TH ANNUAL HOME TOUR
"GOLDEN GEMS OF LA MESA"

La Mesa History Center
is also offering a limited number of tickets for the Friday Night Pre-Tour and Reception — November 7th, 6:00-9:00PM

Get a chance to meet and thank the Homeowners, get and get a guided tour of the tour properties with historian Jim Newland.

Friday Night Premium ticket price **$125** and includes ticket to Saturday's tour.









Sponsorship opportunities to support local history and share your brand with those who love our area

PLATINUM LEVEL $1000

- Full page ad in home tour guide
- Full page ad in LMHC newsletter
- Sponsor logo/link on LMHC website (For fiscal year)
- Sponsor mention in all event media blasts
- Sponsor mention in LMHC newsletter
- 4 tickets to home tour

https://lamesahistory.com/product/home-tour-sponsorship-levels/

Support through the link or mail in a check

GOLD $500

- Full page in home tour guide
- Sponsor mention in all event media blasts
- Sponsor mention in LMHC newsletter
- 2 tickets to home tour

SILVER $300

- Half page ad in home tour guide
- Sponsor mention in the LMHC newsletter
- 1 ticket to home tour

BRONZE $150

- Quarter page ad in home tour guide
- Sponsor mention in the LMHC newsletter

Mail to: La Mesa History Center
PO Box 882,
La Mesa, CA 91944

DEADLINE TO BE INCLUDED IN PRINTED MATERIALS IS OCTOBER 20, 2025. ALL ADS AND PAYMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THAT DATE SO WE CAN PROVIDE GOOD EXPOSURE TO OUR SPONSORS.

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The La Mesa History Center is an all-volunteer non-profit 501c3 corporation charged with preserving the history of the greater La Mesa area. The La Mesa History Center operates the Rev. Henry A. McKinney House, a 1908 House Museum and the History Center Archives Research Facility located at 8369 University Avenue in La Mesa, California.

The ***Lookout Avenue*** is the official quarterly publication of the La Mesa History Center. Closing dates for submitting contributions are the 1st of every March, June, September, and December. Word document and jpeg image files preferred.

Submit contributions via email, or email the Editor at info@lamesahistory.com