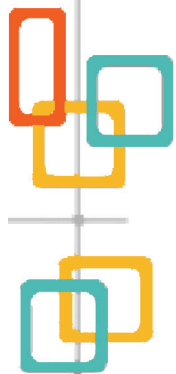


FALL 2019



# lookout avenue



The 14th Annual  
La Mesa Historical Society  
Home Tour

**Stone Age**  
to  
*Space Age*

Saturday, November 2, 2019  
From 9am to 3pm

*Page 6-11*

## SOCIETY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

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"STONE AGE TO SPACE AGE"



The NEWSLETTER of the LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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# MCKINNEY HOUSE MUSEUM

OPEN SATURDAYS 1-4 PM

## ROTATING EXHIBITS

**FALL 2019**

**LA MESA'S HOSPITALS  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF LOCAL  
HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS**



*Photo of Recent Military Veterans of La Mesa Exhibit*

COMING WINTER 2020:  
MADAME ERNESTINE  
SCHUMANN-HEINK,  
GROSSMONT'S  
WORLD-FAMOUS RESIDENT

## JOIN OR RENEW YOUR LMHS MEMBERSHIP

FIND MORE INFORMATION  
GO TO [LAMESAHISTORY.COM](http://LAMESAHISTORY.COM)  
AND VISIT OUR MEMBERSHIP TAB



# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

## ITS BUSY SEASON FOR LMHS

The Society and its members continue to move our programs and activities forward. For example, progress on getting bids for the initial work on the McKinney House landscape is underway, the Archives continues to be a center of activity as with our exhibits at the McKinney House museum—and of course all our preparations for this year's Annual Home Tour scheduled for November 2nd.

This year's Tour, our big Society fundraiser, promises to be another amazing event. We again have seven stunning homes ranging from 1928 to 1968, all reflecting on the unique historic architectural heritage of our eastern neighbors in the Grossmont/Mt. Helix community. We feature the Tour and the fascinating history of those communities in this issue of the Lookout Avenue. Don't miss it!

Also, in preparation Modern San Diego's Keith York and I will be presenting at the upcoming October 19th Roundtable lecture, once again being held at the Grossmont Hospital District Auditorium (see more info on the Roundtable inside).

Thanks to Reena Deutsch of the San Diego Railroad Museum for her well-attended lecture on the Centennial of the Impossible Railroad on August 8th and for those over 40 members who attended the LMHS Meet Up Social at Surf Rider Pizza on September 19th.

Our partnership with the City of La Mesa and SDSU is also active. SDSU students from

both the history and archaeology programs are preparing to help with updating the City's Historical Resources Survey. The City's Historic Preservation Commission—and commissioners—are also working to help out.

The Archives and research room have also been busy this summer. We recently took possession of the La Mesa Women's Club Collection. Read more about what is happening in the Archives report.

Most of you are also likely reading this via email. This is a reminder that we are now delivering this newsletter digitally to the vast majority of our members. This is saving us significant time and money from mass mailing hard copies.

As always, thanks for your efforts, hope to see you all at the Home Tour and feel free to contact me at [info@lamesahistory.com](mailto:info@lamesahistory.com) with your thoughts.

*Jim Newland*

Jim Newland

President, La Mesa Historical Society

# STONE AGE TO SPACE AGE: GROSSMONT/MT. HELIX'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

## HISTORY ROUNDTABLE LECTURE SERIES

La Mesa Historical Society invites all to learn more about  
Grossmont/Mt. Helix's distinctive Rustic, Classic and Modern Architectural Heritage

**Saturday October 19, 2019 (10am to 12noon)**  
**Grossmont Healthcare District Auditorium 9001 Wakarusa Street**  
**(next to Briarcrest Park)**

**James Newland:** historian and author of "Around Mt. Helix"

**Keith York:** producer, historian and host of the Modern San Diego website

**Free for LMHS Members \$5 donation requested from Non-Members**

**EVENT INFO:** Call 619-466-0197, or email to: [info@lamesahistory.com](mailto:info@lamesahistory.com)



LMHS President and historian Jim Newland will master the ceremonies and present on the Grossmont and Mt. Helix community development and architectural heritage. Modern San Diego website host and historian Keith York will then present on the art and architecture of the area including renown artist/designer John Dirks.

# SEEDS OF CHANGE COMING SOON TO THE LANDSCAPE

## MCKINNEY HOUSE LANDSCAPE

While it feels as slow as watching grass grow, things are moving forward on the McKinney House landscape plan. Specs have been sent out seeking nonprofit-friendly bids for the initial demolition and hardscape installation. As soon as the quotes are in and pricing on all aspects of the plan is complete the Society's Board of Directors will kick off a capital campaign to raise the funds needed for the project.

The Landscape Committee, comprised of Board members Tracey Stotz, Jim Newland, Kristin Dooley and Alexander Quintero, with input from Landscape Architect Karen Adams, developed a schematic for the site that reflects the interpretive period (1908-1920) of the McKinney House while making the site more engaging. To that end, the plan calls for as follows:

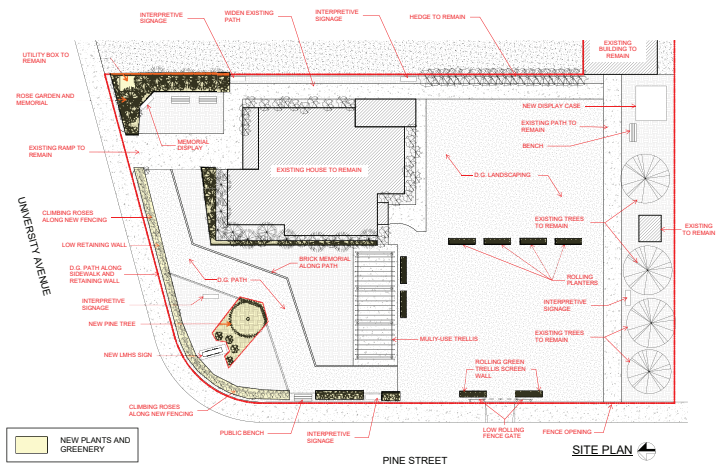
- A flex-use area in the backyard available for educational programs and events
- A large display case near the Archives Building to permanently display large objects such as a printing press from The La Mesa Scout and historic signage from the La Mesa Pharmacy
- Interpretive signs throughout the site
- Historically accurate fencing

"All of this costs money," said Committee Chair Tracey Stotz, "so we want to be sure we have our numbers right and can afford at least the initial phase of the project before we break ground."

One component of the fundraising plan will be a "Buy a Brick" fundraiser. The inscribed bricks will line a new path winding throughout the front yard of the property. Two gracious donors have already sent in "seed" money totaling \$2500 to get things started.

If you would like to help with the project please email [info@lamesahistory.com](mailto:info@lamesahistory.com) or call (619) 466-0197. The Board sees this as a multi-year effort and will need community support to make it a reality. Watch for more details on the website and in social media starting in November.

*Author Tracey Stotz, LMHS Vice President*



*McKinney House Proposed Landscape Plan  
Drawn by Alexander Quintero, LMHS Director*



# FOR THE RECORD

## ARCHIVE'S REPORT

Significant activity continues in the LMHS Archives each week. Our archives volunteers are working hard to help us process, catalog and make available a wide range of historical archival materials and collections in our Archives and Research Room.

Last month we took possession of one of the most significant local historical collections, that of the La Mesa Women's Club. The Club is the oldest service club in La Mesa and its records date back to their origins in 1902. This 26-box collection has begun to be processed and promises to be a major source for understanding our community's history, adding primary sources on the significant role of many of La Mesa's ladies in our collective story.

Properly processing and storing these invaluable historical documents and collections does not come without significant costs. Purchase of archivally safe boxes, cabinets, packing and digitizing services is a major portion of the archives committee budget.

Examples of some of the costs required beyond the dedicated labor of our volunteer archives committee are listed below. Note that such assistance can be dedicated to specific items or assigned in general to the Archives Committee.

Another on-going cost will be a new state-of-the-art Archival Collections Management System (ACMS). ACMS are purpose-built database systems used to manage information about collection provenance, descriptions, and locations. A proper ACMS will allow the Society to tie into online access interfaces that eventually can allow the public to access information about the collections. Our Archives Committee chair, professional archivist Veronica Martzahl has identified, and the Board approved with

identifying funding for this essential archival tool and its annual maintenance costs.

In addition there are many jobs and tasks from complex to repetitive activities that all are helpful in caring for and making available archival or museum collections. If you are interested in helping in the Archives, please contact us at [info@lamesahistory.com](mailto:info@lamesahistory.com) or drop by the Archives Saturday afternoons.

Select List of Archival Committee Needs:

- \$100 – For Legal Size 4-drawer Filing Cabinet
- \$300 – Custom Archival Box for James Tank Porter sculpture
- \$500 – Digitizing 1,000 slides or images
- \$1,000 – Fire Safe File Cabinet for protecting media collections
- \$1,100 – One Time Set-Up and Licensing Fee for ACMS
- \$3,200 – Archival Boxes and Supplies for La Mesa Women's Club Collection



*La Mesa Women's Club ledger*



# “STONE AGE TO SPACE AGE” THE SOCIETY’S 2019 HOME TOUR

LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY INVITE  
ALL TO EXPERIENCE  
GROSSMONT/MT. HELIX’S  
ECLECTIC ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE  
NOVEMBER 2ND, 2019

## **“Stone-Age to Space Age” Home Tour Returns to Grossmont/Mt. Helix**

The Grossmont Mt. Helix communities present a unique opportunity for realizing San Diego’s distinctive suburban residential lifestyles. From Grossmont’s early 20th Century hopes for creating a rustic bohemian artist colony of Arts and Crafts influenced residences through the popular classic “revival” styles homes of the inter-war years of “gentlemen’s ranches” surrounded by avocado orchards or the Post-War Mid-Century Modern visions of “nuclear family” nirvana—this year’s tour provides a

unique opportunity for experiencing this eclectic local architectural heritage.

For all of these 20th century Grossmont/Mt Helix home makers and builders, the rocky, hillside view lots provided a natural canvas for California’s legendary indoor-outdoor lifestyle. Tapping into that intersection of organic architecture and Arts and Crafts aesthetic made logical sense in fulfilling the rural suburban dreams of these varied periods of community development. Individual lots and creative,

*“Stone Age to Space Age” Continued on Page 8*



*"Stone Age to Space Age"* Continued from Page 7

innovative and forward-thinking residents and designers found willing clients and the semi-rural landscape perfect for these eclectic versions of suburban bliss.

### Stepping Back into the Rural Suburban Landscape

The Society has arranged for tour guests to experience seven pristine and high-quality examples of Grossmont/Mt. Helix's residential homes and landscapes. The tour features a range of homes from a 1928 vernacular stone masonry house, a pristine 1933 Spanish Colonial Revival landmark, local designer Jean Brock and La Mesa architect Dennis Tuttle's compatible updates and expansions of a 1934 California "Spanish ranch house," a Modern organic gem designed and built by local artist John Dirks in 1948, two outstanding examples of east county Mid-Century designer/builder John Mortenson's custom masterpieces and a 1968 Modern gem designed by local architect Barton J. Kauffman Jr.

These homes, although well-preserved examples of these distinctive periods and styles, are illustrative of how such well-designed and constructed houses continue to serve as family homes—and not just architectural artifacts. Although tastefully and compatibly period furnished and landscaped, they continue to provide the current owners, several with young families, the same functions and assets that the original owners experienced for these many generations.

### Reflecting and Revealing Grossmont/Mt. Helix History

Mt. Helix and its lower northern twin Grossmont Peak reflect a residential development pattern resulting in a unique version of San Diego County's American dream lifestyle. Interestingly neither peak and much of the directly surrounding lands ended up being included in the Spanish and Mexican era rancho land grants such as El Cajon, Jamacha or the Ex-Mission San Diego. In addition, the steep, rocky peaks proved challenging for 19th century pioneers.



*Grossmont Peak, 1913*

### A Colony for Artists

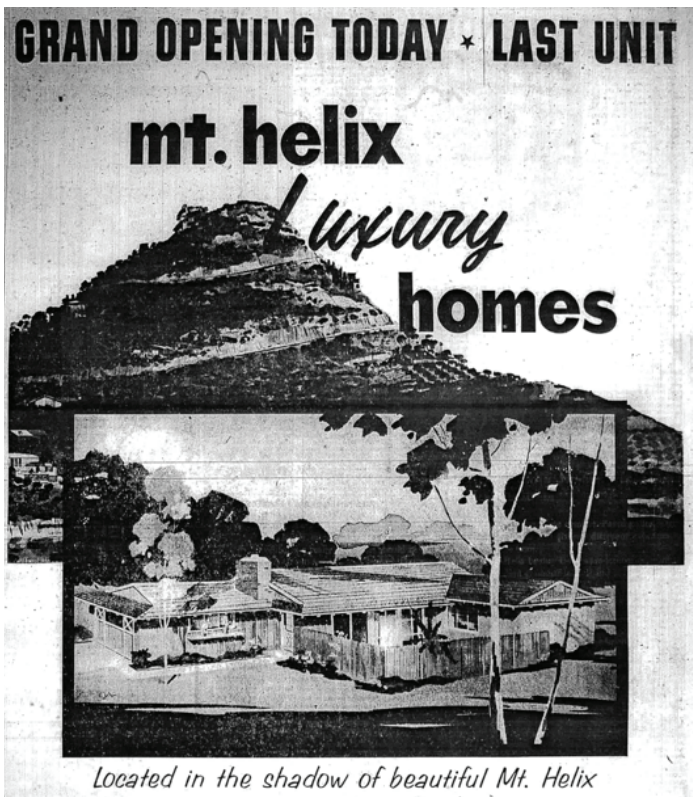
In the early 1900s this changed. San Diego merchant, promoter and entrepreneurial developer Ed Fletcher provided the area its initial suburban vision. In 1903 Fletcher partnered with former New York actor and agent William Gross to purchase much of the former Alta and Villa Caro ranches that straddled the pass from La Mesa into El Cajon Valley. In 1906 Fletcher and Gross subdivided these lands into hillside lots of the tract they named Grossmont. Fletcher then partnered with Montana cattle baron James Murray to purchase the failed San Diego Flume Company and much of the land north of the pass (later Fletcher Hills) in 1910. Renamed the Cuyamaca Water Company, Fletcher now had access to a most important resource for his land dreams—water.

As such Fletcher and Gross re-subdivided their Grossmont tract in 1910 and began to market it as a burgeoning bohemian artist colony. With Gross' entertainment connections soon notable artists and entertainers of the day such as John Vance Chaney, Teresa Careno and Carry Jacobs Bond had purchased lots and promised to build homes and reside in the new colony. In 1912 world famous opera singer Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink constructed her home in the tract and took up residence at Grossmont. Schumann-Heink's commitment was soon buoyed with the announcement of author Owen Wister's purchase and construction of a home.

*"Stone Age to Space Age"* Continued on Page 9



"Stone Age to Space Age" Continued from Page 8



*Mt. Helix Custom Home AD, 1956*

Author of the best-selling novel *The Virginian*, Wister and his quintessential Western novel inspired several street names in Grossmont's westernmost subdivision. (The untimely death of Wister's wife shortly before their new rustic home was completed resulted in his not ever living in Grossmont).

The Grossmont Colony reflected the interest in the Arts & Crafts and "Back to Nature" movements reacting to the Country's rapid urbanization and industrialization. Although architects and designers such as Del Harris included the latest in Prairie School influence (the Modern styles of the time) into Schumann-Heink's quarried native-stone walled home, the Arts & Crafts influence resulted in a variety of rustic-style cottages and homes for Grossmont. San Diego architect Emmor Brooke Weaver being one whose arts & crafts stylings in Grossmont reflected the reliance on natural materials such as redwood lumber and local stone sited around the many boulders and granite outcrops that give the area its unique home settings.

One of this year's tour homes being a 1928 stone masonry "cottage" that is reflective of these

vernacular Arts & Crafts elements. This amazing example of stone-masonry craftsmanship along with a "Story-Book Style" conical concrete outbuilding providing a fascinating example of these early Grossmont "stone age" homes.

### **Mt Helix is Opened**

In 1916 Ed Fletcher partnered with several other investors (including lumberman Fred White and his wife Mary Yawkey White) to purchase much of the undeveloped property including and surrounding the higher Mt. Helix south of Grossmont. One year later Fletcher would allow the San Diego Advertising Company to use Mt. Helix for its version of Easter Sunrise services that had started several years earlier on La Mesa's Mt. Nebo. This would lead to the annual event that inspired Mary Yawkey and her brother lumber magnate Cyrus Yawkey to fund construction of the famous Richard Requa-designed Mt. Helix Nature Theater and park in their mother's honor that continues to hold that event to this day. (Operated as a unique private-operated public park by the Mt. Helix Park Foundation).

Fletcher reportedly purchased much of his Mt. Helix lands from another early Mt. Helix area pioneer—John Parks McClurken. A former Illinois newspaper editor McClurken came to San Diego in 1905 looking for a dryer climate for his ill daughter. He eventually purchased about 1,000 acres on the peak and eastern slopes of Mt. Helix where he built a home for his family. In these years the McClurkens were one of Helix's most well-known families—slowly selling off their property to other homebuilders and ranchers—especially for the new Mt. Helix cash crop--avocados. Although John McClurken passed away in 1943, it wasn't until 1953 that his pioneering Mt. Helix legacy was dealt a geographic blow. In that year the County, against his widow's complaints, agreed to rename McClurken Boulevard after the County had incorrectly provided Resmar Road and Grandview Drive addresses to several dozen new residents of the road. Thus eliminating "McClurken" from the Mt. Helix landscape lexicon.

"Stone Age to Space Age" Continued on Page 10

"Stone Age to Space Age" Continued from Page 9

One of the homes on this year's tour is an amazing example of a house built in 1934 on the former McClurken lands. It is a unique example of the popular Spanish/Mediterranean Revival homes that dominated inter-war era San Diego County. In fact, the McClurkens sold the property with a deed restriction that required all homes in their tract to be built in "Spanish or Mediterranean" type. What makes it even more interesting is that it underwent two major expansions, one in 1981 led by local architectural designer Jean R. Brock and in 2003 under local architect Dennis Tuttle. Yet, the original 1934 Spanish/Mediterranean details were painstakingly replicated in these sympathetic but expansive remodels.

Fred Hansen was another Mt. Helix pioneer developer of note. A Danish immigrant who had moved to Illinois at age 10, he had made a fortune in the cyclone (chain-link) fence business before moving to San Diego County. He chose this area as he promoted there was "no spot so exactly suited for a country estate more than Mt. Helix." Part of his inspiration for converting the area into gentlemen's ranch estates was avocados. Starting in the late 1920s Hansen moved to make the once-mocked "alligator pear" into Mt. Helix's "green gold." His Avocado Villas and Calavo Gardens tracts (with its avocado variety street names) set the stage for development of 1920s and 1930s Mediterranean style home sites with their own avocado and citrus groves. One of those "gentlemen's ranch homes" is also part of this year's tour. Christopher Hinck and family arrived from New Jersey in 1933 and went about following the typical "gentleman's ranch" pattern of a Spanish/Mediterranean style home surrounded by acres of orchards. Although the orchards are long sold-off, this home is a pristine example of its revival style and meticulously preserved. It is a classic example of pre-WWII Mt. Helix in the inter-war years.

### Mid-Century Modern Home Community

World War II transformed San Diego County and Grossmont/Mt. Helix with exponential growth that continued into the Post-War era. Both areas promised an amazing and unique version of the American Dream. Those

dreaming of the perfect home for raising a baby-booming nuclear family in the California suburbs, the indoor-outdoor lifestyle inspired by the intersection of organic architecture and Arts & Crafts sensibilities made sense amongst the granite-filled lots of Grossmont and Mt. Helix. Available lots and a young generation of professionals and homeseekers found the semi rural landscape perfect for their suburban dreams. Visionary architects such as Lloyd Ruocco, Homer Delawie, John Mock and Henry Hester and other practitioners of San Diego's Modernist design community found palettes and willing clients. Soon hundreds of Mid-Century Ranch, Contemporary and Modern homes were filling empty lots and former orchard plots.

This year's tour features four excellent examples of Mid-Century Grossmont/Mt. Helix architecture. One has a direct connection with Lloyd and Ilse Ruocco. Lloyd is most often identified as San Diego's leading Post-War Modernist architect, along with his equally influential wife Ilse, an interior design professor at San Diego State College (several of his homes have been on other tours). The Ruoccos opened their trendsetting Design Center in San Diego in 1949, a year after colleague artist/designer John Dirks constructed his Mt. Helix home and studio.

John Dirks grew up in San Diego and served in the Navy during WWII. He returned after the war and became an art professor at San Diego State specializing in furniture and



*Homer Delawie's Cassidy Residence, Grossmont 1961*

"Stone Age to Space Age" Continued on Page 11



*"Stone Age to Space Age"* Continued from Page 10

sculpture. Dirks was a founding member of the Allied Craftsmen of San Diego and several other regional arts organizations throughout his career. John designed and built his family's home in Mt. Helix and it is featured on this year's tour. It is an excellent example of organic Modernist design and has been described as his "largest sculpture." As Modern San Diego's Keith York wrote this home provides a "seamless connection between the indoors and outdoors" deserving of its landmark status and Dirks significant regional influence as an artist and mentor.

Other craftsmen and builders found their own places within the Grossmont/Mt Helix area, and as with John Mortenson, are directly associated with custom Mid-Century Modern homes in the area. Mortenson, a Minnesota native who also had been drawn to San Diego during service in WWII, was an innovative designer and builder. Although never having a formal architectural degree or license, John is credited with over 250 single-family homes, primarily in the Grossmont/Mt. Helix/Horizon Hills/El Jardin Verde communities. This year's tour features two amazing John Mortenson custom homes. One dates from one of his earliest commissions in 1959 and another a 1962 Modern gem. These two homes, one a large sweeping home surrounding a swimming pool and the other smaller but perfectly-sited home on its precipitous hillside lot, both feature the sweeping eaves, wide gable roofs, curvilinear walls with full height glazing and masonry fireplaces that mark his custom houses.

We are also featuring an amazing 1968 home designed by local architect Barton Kauffman Jr. A San Diego native and SD High graduate, Kauffman served in the Army Air Corps during WWII. Upon return to civilian life he completed his engineering degree and worked as a draftsman for Industrial Art & Engineering before connecting with La Mesa building designer Marvin E. Parker. In 1967 Parker opened his building design office on Center Street in La Mesa's industrial zone with Kauffman. Their work focused on apartments, tract and custom



homes. Kauffman began to take on his own commissions around the time he designed this home. He is most noted for his work on Modern-style apartment complexes in Crown Point, Oceanside, Del Mar, Mission Valley and La Mesa until his passing in early 1977 at age 56.

Vestiges of International and Miesian influences are clear in this house. The belief in Modern technology inspiring innovation, industrialized materials, refined proportion and minimal ornamentation for enclosing space with post and beam structure and smooth planes is one that would gain popularity in the 1970s. Kauffman designed this home for equally innovative and creative clients, teacher/administrator Stuart Macnofsky and his wife, artist and therapist Susan Macnofsky. Sue Macnofsky, a licensed counselor and cancer survivor gained local notoriety for her use of creative art in therapy for those with both physical and mental ailments. At first glance this home's stark geometric exterior façade appears to set it apart from other homes on the tour, but upon entry visitors will see the same indoor/outdoor aesthetic and open design concepts reminiscent of all the other period tour homes in a technologically precise package.

### **Hope to See You On the Tour!**

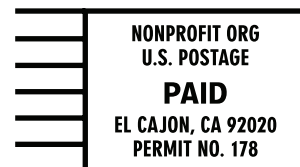
Once again we thank our generous home owners for opening these Greater La Mesa area gems. This year's tour looks to be another memorable event. Don't miss it!

James D. Newland, LMHS



McKINNEY HOUSE MUSEUM  
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ARCHIVES RESEARCH FACILITY

8369 University Avenue  
La Mesa, CA 91942



#### LMHS MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 882  
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HOURS OF OPERATION:  
SATURDAYS 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

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

The **Lookout Avenue** is the official quarterly publication of the La Mesa Historical Society. 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](mailto:info@lamesahistory.com)