

La Mesa Historical Society

LOOKOUT AVENUE

Volume 22, Number 1

Winter 2001

LMHS Officers and Directors
2000-2001

- President: Karna Webster
- 1st Vice Pres: Carol Lockwood
- 2nd Vice Pres: Pat Kettler
- 3rd Vice Pres: Ed Blackman
- Secretary: Pat Kettler
- Treasurer: Karna Webster
- Past President: Donna Regan
- Directors: Jim Orsborn • Norrie West
Desiree Romero • Susan Mitchell

Welcome New Members

- Harry George
- David and Myra Zimmerman
- Sharon Crockett (Life)
- Tanya Dafashy and Rand Palomino
- Janette Pittman Gray
- Allison Carico
- Gordon Jones
- Jean Casteel
- Mr. and Mrs. Art Jacobs
- Olivia Gonzalez
- Susan Mitchell
- Myrtle Pittman Howe
- Bob and Betty Gonia
- Chris Jacobs
- John and Betty Lehotsky
- Christine Pearson

Winners

of the

Christmas Open House Drawing

- Anne Hall
- 1890s Ingraham mantle clock
-
- Steven Smith
- Brigantine Restaurant Gift Certificate
-
- Hazel Ogle
- Floral arrangement from La Mesa Florist
-
- Terry Hovland
- 1924 Mt. Helix Video

Edwards W. Porter

Compiled by Pat Kettler, February 2001

The Porter name has been a part of local history since 1904 when Edwards and his brother, Dr. Henry Porter and his family, arrived in La Mesa. They purchased a house and 10 acres just east of the town-site, off present-day La Mesa Boulevard, on what is now named Porter Hill Road.

Edwards Porter was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin on February 23, 1841. His parents, Jeremiah and Eliza Porter, taught their children well through their example of serving others. In the early part of the 19th Century, they had come from New England to Chicago, and as missionaries, they then helped to establish one of Chicago's earliest churches. Throughout the Civil War their home was a station in the underground railroad. Jeremiah served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army during the war, and Eliza worked in field hospitals tending to the wounded and dying. Edwards graduated from Beloit College in 1862, married, and raised a son. Through the years, he became a prominent businessman and investor in Chicago, Detroit, and in Canada. In 1903, he traveled west with his ailing brother,



Dr. Henry Porter and his family, first living in Phoenix, Arizona, and then in San Diego briefly.

Henry had spent over 30 years as a missionary in China and he was now in poor health. So, the family, (Edwards, Henry with his wife Elizabeth and their three sons Lucius, Chappell, and James Tank), all decided that La Mesa's mild inland climate was better suited to improving the health of Henry and

his son, James T. (James, in 1902, while a student at Beloit College, suffered a serious and eventually life-threatening injury to his foot while playing football. In 1904, the foot was amputated by a surgeon in San Diego, making 20 year-old James incapacitated for a few years.)

Several years later, Edwards purchased a lovely Dutch-gabled house and acreage that was very

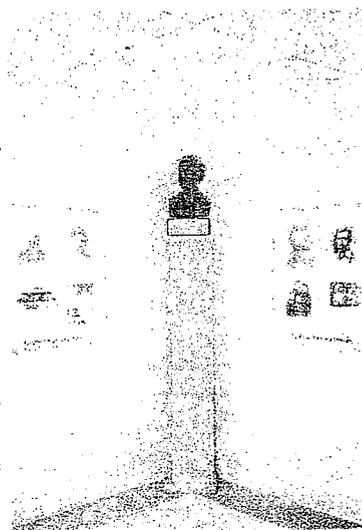
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Dedication of the Edwards W. Porter Bust



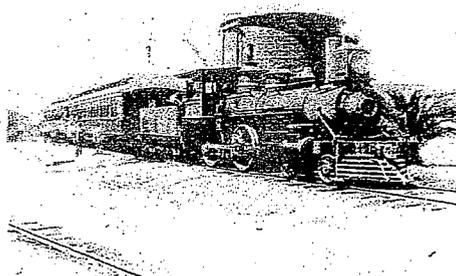
A special dedication was held on November 3, 2000 at the official opening of the La Mesa Senior Center's newly renovated and modernized lobby and offices. The bronze bust of Edwards W. Porter, mayor of La Mesa from 1920 through 1924, was given a special place of prominence in the lobby.

The bust, sculpted by Edwards' nephew James Tank Porter in the 1920s, was originally given to the city of La Mesa in 1934, several years after Edwards' death, by his brother, James W. Porter. It was originally placed in La Mesa's library where it stood for many years, and, in later years, displayed in a room at the La Mesa's senior center. The bust now sits in the corner of the lobby, on a tall wooden pedestal purchased by the La Mesa Historical Society. Photographs of the Porter families, provided by the Society, flank either side of the bust. Society board member Norrie West hired the carpenter to make the pedestal and assembled the photo display.



A Special LMHS Program

A HISTORY OF THE CUYAMACA, ARIZONA, AND EASTERN RAILROAD LINE THROUGH SAN DIEGO'S EAST COUNTY



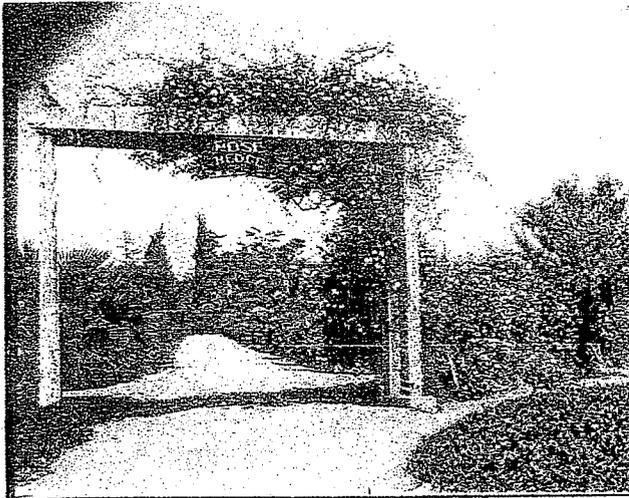
Presented by
Bruce Semelsberger of the San Diego Railroad Museum

Sunday, February 25th • 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Porter Hall - 4960 Memorial Drive (at the entrance to MacArthur Park)

Refreshments will be served.

(continued from page 1)

near, and in view of, his brother's house. This retirement home had been built in the early 1890s by Colonel James Randlett, a retired Civil War officer. In 1916, Edwards' unmarried brother and sister, James W. and Mary, joined him at the home which they named "Rosehedge" after the large Cherokee rose hedges they planted along La Mesa Boulevard (then called El Cajon Avenue).



The entry gate to "Rosehedge" at Edwards Porter's home in La Mesa.

Edwards was first introduced to local politics when he was appointed to fill a vacancy on the La Mesa City Council. He was reelected to serve a full term, and then elected to serve as Mayor of La Mesa from 1920 through 1924. He was appointed to the La Mesa City Planning Commission and served as its president for several years. He also held the position of president of the La Mesa Building and Loan Association, and he was an active member of the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce. Edwards was also an active member of the La Mesa Central Congregational Church where he served on a building committee that oversaw the completion of its first church in 1911.

Edwards died at his beloved "Rosehedge" in December of 1928, from bronchial pneumonia, at the age of 86. The *La Mesa Scout* newspaper, dated December 7, 1928, expressed the community's feelings about him as follows: "Mr. Porter was



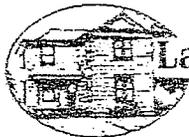
A view of Edwards' parlor in his Rosehedge home.

gentle, modest, courteous, democratic, great-hearted, and a quiet, but very earnest Christian".

Edwards Porter was representative of those people who through the years have given generously in time and talents to their community and church in order to make life better for all. He is linked forever with those who came early to our infant community and helped to make it what it is today—a pleasing and orderly place in which to live.



The vine-covered, Dutch-gabled home bought by Edwards Porter from Colonel James Randlett who built it.



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

La Mesa Historical Society

Museum: Rev. Henry A. McKinney House (1908)
8369 University Avenue

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
La Mesa, CA 91941
Permit No. 208

Change Service Requested

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- February 25 (Sunday) Special program about east county's railroad history
- March 24 (Saturday) LMHS Rummage Sale - McKinney House
- April 29 (Sunday) Annual LMHS meeting and election of officers
- May Rose Garden Celebration (date to be announced)
- June 2 (Saturday) LMHS Annual Ice Cream Social - McKinney House

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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. Open 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, or by appointment. Group tours are available. Call 466-0197 for further information.

Lookout Avenue is the official quarterly publication of the La Mesa Historical Society
P.O. Box 882, La Mesa, CA 91944.

Lookout Avenue was the original name of La Mesa Boulevard. From the 1890's until the City Council voted to change the name in 1940, *Lookout Avenue* was La Mesa's main street.

An Invitation to Join...

La Mesa Historical Society Membership

The Society depends on membership dues, bequests and fund-raising activities to support the restoration and preservation of local history.

- \$250 Benefactor
- \$125 Life (single)
- \$40 Patron
- \$25 Sponsor/Organization
- \$15 Family (2 adults)
- \$10 Individual
- \$1 Student (under 18 yrs.)
- I wish to become involved in the Society's work.*

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

La Mesa Historical Society, P.O. Box 882, La Mesa, CA 91944

Memberships and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.