LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

LOOKOUT AVE.

VOLUME 6, ISSUE NUMBER 2 DECEMBER 1982



CHRISTMAS IN LA MESA, 1914

Christmas was celebrated in early La Mesa primarily in homes and churches, but sometimes holiday decorations were a community effort as well. This large pine tree was set up in the intersection of Spring Street and La Mesa Boulevard in 1914. In the background is the Park-Grable Investment Company building on the northeast corner of the intersection and the stores on the north side of the Boulevard between Spring and Palm. The photographer was apparently standing on the corrugated roof seen in the foreground.

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

The La Mesa Historical Society will hold its annual Christmas Open House at the McKinney House on Saturday, December 11, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Traditional refreshments for this old-fashioned Christmas will be hot gingerbread with whipped cream, cookies, mulled cider, tea and coffee. The house will be decorated for the holidays in period style, and the tree will be trimmed with paper chains and cornucopias, gold walnuts and wishbones, and tiny paper parasols.

The special Christmas exhibit upstairs will feature period quilts and toys. The quilts, which will be drawn from the Society's collection as well as loaned for the occasion, will include a Victorian silk crazy quilt and a cotton Churn Dash pattern quilt from the 1920's or 1930's. The LMHS Quilters have selected and researched the quilts in the exhibit. Among the toys will be a rocking horse and toy baby carriage from the late 19th century.

The Quilters will have available for purchase handcrafted items which they have made during the year.



McKINNEY HOUSE WINDOW SHADES

In response to the notice in the last issue of Lookout Avenue, we have so far received several contributions and pledges towards our goal of purchasing window shades for the McKinney House. The cost of the shades is approximately $25.00 per window. Additional donations are welcomed.

LOOKOUT AVE. is the official publication of the La Mesa Historical Society, P.O. Box 882, La Mesa, CA 92041. Published quarterly.

SLIDE PROJECTOR NEEDED

The La Mesa Historical Society is seeking the donation of a carousel slide projector with a remote control attachment. Such a projector is needed for the presentation of slide lectures on La Mesa history which are given to local groups. In the past a projector has had to be rented or borrowed from different sources.

The slide lectures have been given to local service organizations, church groups, and school classes. The lectures are one of the Society's most important educational programs and are effective in creating an awareness of early local history and of the Society's part in preserving this history.

For information on donating a projector or in arranging for a slide program, please contact Pat Kettler at 463-0197.

NEWS BRIEFS

FEBRUARY MEETING

The annual general meeting this February will be a brunch held at the La Mesa American Legion Hall on Sunday, February 6. Members will receive an announcement with details in January.

YARD SALE

The yard sale held at the McKinney House on Saturday, October 23, made a net profit of $381.70, including $42.90 from the sale of food. The price of most of the items sold was under $1.00, which gives an indication of the volume of the material handled and the amount of time spent in pricing and other preparation for the sale. The hard work of the many volunteers was much appreciated.

WHITE ELEPHANT SALE

Please remember to save items for the White Elephant Sale at the Ice Cream Social and the yard sale next fall. Small items are needed for the White Elephant Sale, and larger pieces and clothing for the yard sale.

BAKE SALE

The Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association and the La Mesa Historical Society held a joint bake sale at the La Mesa Depot on Saturday, October 6, during the Oktoberfest. The proceeds, which totaled $105.00, will be used to benefit the Depot Museum. We would like to thank all of our bakers who responded so generously to our request.

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIBED

LMHS Secretary Hank Schupbach has begun the task of transcribing the taped interviews in the Society's oral history collection. The first interview to have been transcribed is one made with Joyce McKinney. Once the interviews are in the form of typed manuscripts, they will be available to researchers.

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

Recent recipients of the La Mesa Historical Society Certificates of Appreciation were Dennis Tuttle and Clifton Coates, who received them in a presentation at the September 12 general meeting. Dennis Tuttle has helped in the preparation of exhibits and has created posters, flyers, signs and other graphics for the Society. Cliff Coates devotes many hours of his time to maintaining the yard at the McKinney House.



MARCH TOUR

Currently being planned for next March is a bus tour to the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena and the Workman-Temple Homestead and the John A. Rowland House in the City of Industry. The Homestead contains the 1842/1872 home of William Workman who, with John Rowland, led the first group of overland settlers to Southern California in 1841. Also on the property is La Casa Nueva, a large Spanish Colonial residence built by Workman's grandson, Walter Temple, in 1923. The nearby Rowland House (1855; 1897), a two-story stuccoed brick mansion, contains its original black walnut furniture brought around the Horn in the 1850's.

La Mesa boosters...investigative reporters...movers and doers...writers and editors...proud parents and grandparents...with hearts as big as their charming, memorabilia filled home in La Mesa: Edwina and Sheridan Hegland.

Though the Heglands did not establish their newspaper, The Greater La Mesa News, (466-NEWS) until 1946, they had moved to the area in 1944, continuing their work with the USO, doing many shows and dances and sponsoring, for two years, a money-raising event called Tacky-Wacky Day. A two day celebration, the carnival brought in as much as $17,000.

In 1946, starting from scratch and having the paper printed in downtown San Diego, the Heglands hit the scene quickly and with crusading force. By 1950, the small San Diego-published Point Magazine was saying of The Greater La Mesa News and its subsequent siblings, The Suburbanite and The La Mesa Pictorial,"...One of San Diego's brightest suburban papers, The News combines metropolitan verve with the folksiness of a semi-weekly, which it is. And when The News embarks on community campaigning, its six tabloid columns leap like pistons. Often enough, it gets things done."

Two ideas in the previous paragraph are really important. VERVE. You'd better believe it! Publishing twice weekly with a very limited staff calls for energy. They had a linotypist-floor man, a pressman, one person in charge of classified advertising and one in charge of display advertising. They had a reporter, too. And who did the rest? Sheridan and Edwina, who had been educated at Stanford University where they met while working on the Stanford Daily, and all this with verve.

OFTEN ENOUGH, IT GETS THINGS DONE. For example, the Heglands were responsible for initiating action to bring about installation of stop lights at two extremely dangerous intersections in La Mesa. One was at the turnoff into the Grossmont High School campus. The other was at Highway 80's intersection with Morningside Way, now Baltimore Drive. In 1950, five people were killed in a crash there, and The News carried a sample petition for stop lights at the two bad spots. Within 48 hours, they had secured enough signatures to take to the Civic Center in San Diego. That was quite a trip. La Mesa's mayor, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the high school principal, and Congressman Leslie Gehres made the expedition and won the stop lights.

Another crusade the Heglands undertook was against polio. Mrs. Hegland, reporter, found that an area of 10 blocks near a sewage outlet west of La Mesa, had been the center of all cases of polio in the city for five years. She kept at the task of publicizing this fact until La Mesa annexed the area and installed proper facilities. You may remember the polio epidemic of the following year. West La Mesa was spared, and the Heglands could add another gold star to the growing list of good things done.

The Heglands also took a stand against racial discrimination. In La Mesa there were very few blacks, and The News pushed hard for approval of real estate sales to blacks.

Both writer-editors took great interest in La Mesa schools, not only because their children, Sherina and Kenny, attended them but also because they are champions of the cause of good education. They fought for school bond passage in many an election and stood behind safety for school children. At La Mesa Dale School, shrubbery blocked the walkways to the school, and The News kept at the problem until the walkways were cleared and sidewalks put in. As Sheridan says, "Then the kids could walk to school safely...even in the fog."

The Heglands helped John DaCosta, a Grossmont High Sophomore, who was accused of murdering his father. They were convinced John was innocent and their thorough investigative reporting turned up enough evidence to convince the court.

The Heglands gave up their newspaper publishing in 1955 when Sheridan ran for an Assembly seat, won, and went to Sacramento. After that, he "retired," though that is hardly the word for those two busy people who still work at good causes and for their ideals.

In a beautiful editorial in The Greater La Mesa News, Edwina headlined La Mesa as America's Most Friendly City. She specified many reasons why, but she left out the Heglands and their contributions to the city's growth, beauty, and charm. Lookout Avenue may make up in some small part for her neglect!

--Eckoe Ahern

LAST CHANCE TO RENEW

Dues for the 1982-1983 membership year were payable as of July 1, 1982. If you have forgotten to send in your renewal, please take a moment to do so at this time. Your contribution enables the Society to continue its work of preserving our community's heritage. Those who have not renewed by the end of December will no longer be carried on the membership rolls. Members who are not sure of their current status should call membership chairman Bea Acers at 466-5812.

Membership Categories:

____ Life $100

____ Patron $25

____ Sponsor/Organization $15

____ Family (2 adults) $12

____ Individual $7

____ Student (under 18 years) $1

Make your check or money order payable to: La Mesa Historical Society, and mail to: La Mesa Historical Society, P. O. Box 882, La Mesa, CA 92041.

HISTORIC BUILDING DEMOLISHED

In November, the historic St. Andrew's Parish Hall on Lemon Avenue was demolished despite last minute efforts to save it.

The building, originally constructed at the corner of Spring Street and Lemon Avenue in 1924, was the first Episcopal Church in La Mesa. It was built in five weeks at a cost of $3,000 and dedicated on May 18, 1924. The chapel was enlarged several times and moved to a new location at Glen Street and Lemon Avenue in 1948.

When a new St. Andrew's Church was built in 1960, the former house of worship became the parish hall. A few years ago it became apparent that a larger building was needed for parish meetings, wedding receptions, and social gatherings. The structure was offered free to the City of La Mesa and the La Mesa Historical Society if it could be moved. Inspection by the City showed that the Parish Hall was in good structural condition.

Members of the La Mesa Historical Society thought that it would make a good La Mesa Museum and investigated having it moved to the redevelopment area near the La Mesa Depot where it could be used in conjunction with the "Railroad theme" promoted by the Chamber of Commerce.

The City of La Mesa considered moving the hall to Collier Park for recreational purposes but the costs of moving and the construction of necessary features such as a parking lot and extension of the sewer line proved to be too costly.

A senior citizen's group tried to have the building moved to MacArthur Park as a recreational facility for seniors, but this fell through as well.

Ironically, the La Mesa Historic Sites Committee designated the building as "historic" only days before it was demolished.

CHRISTMAS AT LA MESA

By Rev. M. McCormack

La Mesa Scout, Dec. 30, 1921

(Note: This account of the first service on December 25, 1921, in the new Catholic Church in La Mesa, was written by the pastor, Rev. M. McCormack. Although called Our Lady of Mercy when it first opened, the church was dedicated as St. Martin of Tours by 1923.)

It was Christmas morn in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-one. The storm which for five or six days had drenched all California was still seething. It had rained heavily overnight and in the early hours of the morning. At 8 a.m. the sky was overcast, the rain might come down in torrents at any moment. The storm was the worst, people said, since the historic one in January, 1916. Nobody but a fool or a Catholic would venture out in such weather. Train and street car service had been temporarily suspended throughout the state; autos had been abandoned along the highways. Automobile parties caught in the storm were glad to get home on foot in the drenching rain, or take temporary shelter under the roof of some kindly disposed neighbor.

At 8 a.m. church bells pealed forth for the first time in the history of the city of La Mesa. The sound came forth from the handsome well balanced tower of the new church. At 8:30 some seventy or eighty people, young, old, and middle-aged, found themselves kneeling in the new church of Our Lady of Mercy. Divine services were to be held in the handsome new building for the first time.

Through the courtesy of Mr. Stokes and later of Messrs. Erickson and Henning, the Catholics of La Mesa, Lemon Grove and surrounding territory had worshipped Sundays in the undertaking parlors. Not a very inviting place, you will say, to attend religious service. Nevertheless when one got inside, the parlors lost their funeral appearance. Under the directing hand of Mrs. Florence I. O'Conner, the temporary altar was tastefully and artistically decorated, the sun streamed in merrily through the well lighted parlors, and with folding chairs for pews, the people worshipped in prayerful silence. The little organ pealed forth its notes under the magic touch of Mrs. A. L. Vogt. Mr. Vogt himself directed the choir and the sunshine of holy peace illuminated the place.

Sunday the scene was much the same, only the location and environment had changed. The people worshipped in their own church. Throughout the week speculation was rife whether or not it would be possible to celebrate mass in the new church on Christmas morning. The storm had added new difficulties to the already perplexing problem. Yet there were a few stout hearts who never lost hope; there was one who dreamed, and through the cooperation of others, his dream came true.

James V. Roche, prominent architect and contractor, had, as he had promised, completed his task Thursday. The transportation problem was solved Friday by Mr. Thomas McCarthy and his two stalwart sons Tommy and Leo. The altar, kindly lent by the Episcopalian community of La Mesa, the altar-railing and other things necessary were loaded on trucks and transferred from the undertaking parlors to the church. A small, but very serviceable organ recently purchased, was placed in the organ gallery with no little difficulty. Mrs. Isabel O'Connor, assisted by her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Power, and other willing hands attended with skill and taste to the interior decorations. Date palms adorned the pillars, walls and sanctuary. The altar was a profusion of real white roses arranged artistically. Candles were furnished by Mrs. O'Connor. The altar was backed by a drape of richly ornamental cloth of gold. There were no pews but about a hundred folding chairs rented for the occasion were used for seating accommodation. Mrs. A. L. Vogt presided at the organ with her usual skill and technique. The choir, under the direction of A. L. Vogt, rendered Gounod's Mass in C. While outside the rain poured down in torrents and splashed against the windows; from inside songs of praise and benediction

went up to God, the giver of all good gifts. The members of the choir were: A. L. Vogt, Henry Schumann-Heink, Bernard Maloney, N. J. Power, J. F. Donnelly, Mrs. Clara Brisco, and the Misses McCarthy, Mr. Chas. Walker, violinist. Henry Schumann-Heink was the soloist in "Holy Night," the popular hymn made famous by his beloved and respected mother, Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Bernard Maloney and Mrs. Brisco sang to advantage in a duet, "Venite Adoremus."

Thus passed Christmas morning 1921 in La Mesa--a day long to be remembered in the Catholic annals of the city. The church is a commodious building 35 feet by 70 feet with a large sanctuary, two sacristies, ample space for baptistry and confessional, an organ gallery and porch. It is a modernized form of mission style specially designed by the builder, James V. Roche, and has been described by competent critics as an architectural gem. The exterior finish is in shingles, the interior in wood four feet high, the upper portion being in plaster board. The ceiling is of wood finish. When painted outside, decorated and furnished inside, the church will be a thing of beauty, a credit to our fast growing little city.



St. Martin's Catholic Church, ca. 1927

St. Martin's was originally built on Normal Avenue near the southwest corner of Normal and La Mesa Boulevard. The house next to it was the rectory, which still stands at 7986 Normal. In 1948 St. Martin's was moved to its present location on El Cajon Boulevard and was enlarged to twice its original size, stuccoed, and given a red tile roof. After a new church structure was built in 1965, the old church became the Rev. Dennis J. Barry Memorial Hall.



LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
P.O. BOX 882
LA MESA, CA 92041

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
La Mesa, Ca 92041
Permit No. 208