



EL CAJON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HERITAGE



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January 2018



Thanks to all...

President's Message

Since this is my final column for 2017, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors of E.C.H.S. for their faithful (often above the call) service.

Colleen White has been my delightful cohort, finding places for Quarterly Meetings, arranging for food and speakers as well. I'm so glad she has agreed to serve for another year at your pleasure!

Linda Garity has faithfully taken, published and preserved the minutes of each Board meeting or found a substitute when necessary. She is moving on to being our part-time Office Manager and is working on putting our "official" Face book page up for all to see.

Ruth Cope has been our connection with members who are ill or homebound and with the families of members who have passed away.

George Dall, a Certified Public Accountant, has served as our Treasurer, and Joe Klock is his go-between, bringing bills to him and carrying reimbursements to members needing them.

Mike Kaszuba has spent countless hours talking to people who seek information, collecting and accepting items into our archives, providing pictures (for a fee, of course,) for those needing them, and representing E.C.H.S. at meetings of other historical organizations.

Eldonna Lay, our Curator, is a treasure trove of historical information, a representative of E.C.H.S. in the community and with the press.

Becky Taylor wore herself out coordinating docents and school tours for us, doing her slide presentations for third grade classes before their tours of the Knox House, spear-heading the First Annual Visual History of El Cajon Contest, saying "Yes", I can help on that" for many other projects.

Christy Klock keeps membership records and reminds us all when dues are due (It's time again!) She also helps on many projects, the latest of which is the Quilt Opportunity Drawing which was a great success.

Linda Foltz has ably filled the shoes of Anita Tinsley and published our Heritage Newsletter quarterly. We are grateful to Ruben at the CVUSD Print Shop for printing our newsletter and any other documents, programs or books that we need.

Rick Hall serves in so many capacities they cannot be listed here. He is, for sure, our Mister Fix-It when anything is broken inside the Knox House Museum and is our liaison with city crews who work on the outside.

Fran Hill, Carroll Rice, and Jack Dickens are Directors who help on many projects and faithfully attend meetings of the Directors.

I am also extremely grateful for Michelle Braun who maintains our website for us.

My hat is off to them all!

Carla Nowak, ECHS President

HISTORY OF SEARS MODERN HOMES

By Eldonna Lay, Curator

The hour has arrived. Dad gathers Mom and Sis into the carriage. He hops in the wagon with his brothers to ride off to the railroad station. The day and hour have come to greet the first shipment of your family's brand-new house. All the lumber will be pre-cut and arrive with instructions for your dad and uncles to assemble and build. Mom and Dad picked out No. 140 from Sears, Roebuck and Company's catalog. It will have two bedrooms and a cobblestone foundation, plus a front porch—but no bath. They really wanted No. 155, with a screened-in front porch, built-in buffet, and inside bath (!), but \$1,100 was twice as much as Dad said he could afford. In just a few days, your whole family will sleep under the roof of their custom-made Sears Modern Home.

Entire homes would arrive by railroad, from pre-cut lumber, to carved staircases, down to the nails and varnish. Families picked out their houses according to their needs, tastes, and pocketbooks. Sears provided all the materials and instructions, and for many years the financing, for homeowners to build their own houses. Sears's Modern Homes stand today as living monuments to the fine, enduring, and solid quality of Sears craftsmanship.

No official tally exists of the number of Sears mail-order houses that still survive today. It is reported that more than 100,000 houses were sold between 1908 and 1940 through Sears's Modern Homes program. The keen interest evoked in current homebuyers, architectural historians, and enthusiasts of American culture indicate that thousands of these houses survive in varying degrees of condition and original appearance.

It is difficult to appreciate just how important the Modern Homes program and others like it were to homebuyers in the first half of the twentieth century. Imagine for a moment buying a house in 1908. Cities were getting more crowded and had always been dirty breeding grounds for disease in an age before vaccines. The United States was experiencing a great economic boom, and millions of immigrants who wanted to share in this wealth and escape hardship were pouring into America's big cities. City housing was scarce, and the strong economy raised labor costs, which sent new home prices soaring.



This old Craftsman Bungalow (removed from the property during the last week of December, 2017) slumping toward the I-8 bridge over Ballantyne Street was a Craftsman "kit" home. Most likely it was mail-ordered from a Sears catalog between 1906 and 1940. Its pre-cut lumber, windows and doors were shipped by train and assembled by its first owner. Two admirably maintained sister Craftsman are between it and Madison Street. Look for other Craftsman styles throughout the city.

(Photograph by Knox House Curator, E.P. Lay)

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The growing middle class was leaving the city for the—literally—greener pastures of suburbia as trolley lines and the railroad extended lifelines for families who needed to travel to the city. Likewise, companies were building factories on distant, empty parcels of land and needed to house their workers. Stately, expensive Victorian-style homes were not options for any but the upper class of homeowner. Affordable, mail-order homes proved to be just the answer to such dilemmas.

Sears was neither the first nor the only company to sell mail-order houses, but they were the largest, selling as many as 324 units in one month (May, 1926). The origin of the Modern Homes program is actually to be found a decade before houses were sold. Sears began selling building materials out of its catalogs in 1895, but by 1906 the department was almost shut down until someone had a better idea. Frank W. Kushel, who was reassigned to the unprofitable program from managing the china department, believed the homebuilding materials could be shipped straight from the factories, thus eliminating storage costs for Sears. This began a successful 25-year relationship between Kushel and the Sears Modern Homes program.

To advertise the company's new and improved line of building supplies, a Modern Homes specialty catalog, the Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans, appeared in 1908. For the first time, Sears sold complete houses, including the plans and instructions for construction of 22 different styles, announcing that the featured homes were "complete, ready for occupancy." By 1911, Modern Homes catalogs included illustrations of house interiors, which provided homeowners with blueprints for furnishing the houses with Sears appliances and fixtures.

Some of El Cajon's Settlers' Streets and Homes Today.

J.P.R. Hall's 1886 elegant ranch house was built on Madison Avenue east of Second Street, for his wife and eleven children.

He had their forty acres planted with vineyards and fruit trees. A later purchase of another twenty acres provided the family with hay for their cattle and horses.



Farther east of the Hall house, on the corner of Madison and Fourth Streets, is the grand early Arts & Crafts home of the Geraci family.



When the County sliced fifteen feet off the steep upper portion of East Chase Avenue in the Seventies, early settlers' homes were suddenly left without access to the road. A narrow, temporary road allowed them to make their way down to Bernita Lane, then onto Chase. Not until equally steep driveways were jack-hammered through the granite hilltop to their houses and garages were they able to again enter directly onto the main road.



***All photographs by Knox House Curator, E.P. Lay.
None of the homes shown are open to the public.***

2018 BOARD & CHANGES

Slate of Officers for 2018:

President.....Carla Nowak
Vice President.....Colleen White
Recording Secretary.....Rebecca Taylor
Corresponding Secretary.....Ruth Cope
Treasurer.....George Dall/Joe Klock

Continuing Directors whose term expires December 2018

George Dall
Mike Kaszuba
Jack Dickens
Rebecca Taylor

Continuing Directors whose term expires December 31, 2019

Colleen White
Fran Hill
Eldonna Lay
Joe Klock

Proposed Directors whose term expires December 31, 2020

Linda Garity
Ruth Cope
Carla Nowak
Christy Klock

Proposed Appointed Directors

Rick Hall
Carroll Rice
Linda Foltz

Below (in red) are changes made to the By-Laws. This would allow positions of president and vice-president to be filled by the same person for longer than two consecutive terms:

ARTICLE VIII OFFICERS

Section 1. Number of Officers

Officers of the Corporation shall be President, a Vice-President, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, and a Treasurer who shall be elected at each annual meeting for a term of one year. The President and Vice-President may not hold the same office for more than two consecutive years.

a. In the event that no qualified volunteer comes forward to fill an elected position with a bylaw-stipulated consecutive term restriction, said restriction may be waived until such time that a suitable replacement might be found for the open position.

2018 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE

2018 has arrived, which means it's time for most ECHS members to send in their dues. Most memberships are on a calendar year basis. We greatly appreciate members who send in their dues early, helping their association by saving billing costs.

This cost savings enables ECHS to make better use of its funds.

Membership dues for 2018 remain:

\$12 for Individual

\$20 Family

\$30 Organization

\$40 Business

\$500 Enhanced Life (Life members never need to renew).

Please make checks payable to ECHS and send to:

P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973.

Lucky Winner

Meet Jennifer Westermeyer.

She is the lucky winner of our Quilt Opportunity Drawing.

We thank her for her support of E.C.H.S. and thank Christy Klock for coming up with the idea and carrying it to fruition.

Over \$1000 was donated.

Our gratitude extends also to Cheryl Minshew, who created the beautiful quilt and donated it for this drawing.



HISTORIC DEDICATION

Please hold 1:00 PM, Saturday, April 21, 2018 on your calendar to attend a Letitia Coxe Shelby Chapter ceremony to dedicate an historic marker at the Knox House Museum, located in El Cajon.

The Knox Museum is quite small, so the ceremony will be held at the Weighorst Museum, located one block from the Knox.

After the ceremony, tours of the Knox Museum will be provided.



El Cajon Historical Society Profit & Loss Budget Overview January - December 2018

Income

Misc. Sales	\$1,000.00
Book Sales	\$500.00
Donations	\$500.00
Dues	\$2,500.00
Investment Income	\$20.00
Opportunity Drawings	\$500.00
Quarterly Meetings	\$1,600.00
<u>Special Events</u>	<u>\$1,600.00</u>

Total Income \$8,220.00

Expense

Building Maintenance	\$200.00
Insurance	\$2,200.00
Membership	\$100.00
Miscellaneous Expense	\$100.00
Newsletter-Publications	\$300.00
Office Expense	\$250.00
P.O. Box Rental	\$90.00
Postage	\$250.00
Quarterly Meetings	\$1,250.00
Safe Deposit Box Rental	\$130.00
Sales Tax	\$100.00
Security	\$400.00
Storage	\$950.00
Telephone/Internet	\$1,400.00
<u>Third Grade Essay</u>	<u>\$500.00</u>

Total Expense \$8,220.00

Net Income 0.00

Quarterly Meeting Outings from the Past!

Remember these recent outings? Were you a part of the fun...learning about your community and partaking in the good food and friendship that were all a part of the quarterly meetings? Don't miss out this year. ... Watch for the upcoming meetings in the Heritage and be sure to send in your reservation forms!



Taylor Guitar

Olaf Weighorst Museum



*Lakeside
Historical
Society*

See the back page for information and reservation form for this quarter's meeting.

From: El Cajon Historical Society
P. O. Box 1973
El Cajon, CA 92022

To:

January Meeting

Our January meeting will be held Thursday, January 26th at 11:30am at Bongiovanni's Italian Ristorante at 15244 Olde Hwy 80, in Flinn Springs. Selection of pizza and salad at still only a cost of \$15 per person.

The speaker will be our vice president, Colleen "Flinn" White, along with other members of the Flinn family. Flinn Springs is one of the east counties' first communities.

An informal tour of the private cemetery follows lunch. The site is located on the south side of Olde Hwy 80. Entrance is at the TRAILER PARK, south of the restaurant.

Hope the weather stays nice and you enjoy both...so wear your most comfortable shoes.

Please send in your reservations!

January Meeting Reservation Form

Number Attending _____ (\$15 each)

Total Amount Enclosed _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Reservations not kept become a donation.

**RESERVATION DEADLINE –
THURSDAY, JANUARY 18TH.**

Mail reservations and checks to:
ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973

Thank you!