los altos history museum

UNDER THE OAKS

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Juan Bautista De Anza Revisited

The far-flung Spanish empire ("New Spain"), established in Mexico in the early 16th century, was on shaky ground in the late 18th. The British had explored the Pacific, while Russians were moving into Alaska. Fearing correctly that European powers coveted Upper California, New Spain sought to establish outposts there. In 1769 Don Gaspar de Portolá led the overland portion of the Sacred Expedition out of San Diego to found a mission at Monterey. Because of an inaccurate description of Monterey, Portolá missed it and continued to San Francisco Bay, the first European to see it, before turning back to San Diego.

In January, 1774, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza led a small expedition out of Tubac in northern Mexico to Monterey, where a mission was founded in 1770, and back, over 2,000 miles in all. Spanish Viceroy Antonio Bucareli then authorized the second de Anza expedition of 240 men, women and children, plus horses, cattle and provisions, to journey from Mexico to Monterey. Leaving in September, 1775, the party reached Monterey in March, 1776, its numbers having actually increased as some of the women gave birth.

Riders reenacting the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition approaching Bay Meadows, March 26, 1976. Photo credit: Vincent Maggiora / SF Chronicle / Polaris Images

George Cardinet at the 2004 Grand National Rodeo with Sunny Townsend and Jessie Zek, two members of the 12 girl drill team that performed at the Cow Palace. George was a tireless supporter of horses, trails and the history of both. In addition to the de Anza reenactment, he mapped and routed more than 200 miles of trails in the East Bay. George was the kind of guy who, after a long trail ride, would say, "Don't you wish we were just beginning?" Photo credit: Nancy Dupont

De Anza then led a smaller group north to San Francisco. His chaplain, Fr. Pedro Font, kept a detailed diary, one of the best European accounts of California in its natural state. On March 26, 1776, Font wrote "We set out from the Arroyo de San Joseph Cupertino… and halted at a small, almost dry, watercourse, about one short league after crossing the Arroyo de San Mateo, having traveled twelve leagues (diagonally)." After seeing what is now called the Golden Gate Strait, Font wrote:

> *The port of San Francisco…is a wonder of nature, and may be called the port of ports… Although in my travels I saw very good sites and beautiful country, I saw none which pleased me as much as this. And I think if it could be well-settled, like Europe, there would not be anything more beautiful.*

Settlement of San Francisco began under de Anza's officer José Moraga, who founded the Presidio and Mission Dolores in 1776, both of which still exist. The names de Anza, Portola, Moraga and Font continue today on streets, roads, and of course De Anza Community College. The Spanish empire in the Americas eventually succumbed, not to external forces but internal ones when its colonies became independent in the early 19th century.

In March, 1976, a grand reenactment of the second Anza expedition commemorated its 200th anniversary.

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President's Pen

This edition of *Under the Oaks* highlights several people who have made our community's history. Some of these people were historical figures, such as explorer Juan Bautista de Anza. Our talented staff and volunteers have drawn material about de Anza from the Los Altos History Museum's diverse collection and have connected and interpreted it in interesting and sometimes surprising ways.

History never ends; it needs to be documented as it happens. Many people, including some still living, have enriched our community's more recent history. The Museum's oral history program endeavors to collect those people's stories and to preserve them for the benefit of the community. This newsletter highlights the story of Roger Eng, former mayor of Los Altos. His story is one of many that are featured in the Museum's current exhibit about oral histories, *Many Communities, Many Voices*.

The Museum's collection is constantly growing as more artifacts, documents, photographs, oral histories, and other materials are added. Our mission is not only to accumulate and preserve history but also to make it accessible to the community. This occurs in many forms: exhibits, education programs, special events, our website, and publications such as this newsletter and articles in the *Los Altos Town Crier*.

Your ongoing support of the Museum makes this work possible. The Museum raises operating funds from various sources, such as grants, facility rentals, benefit events, and sponsorships. It does not charge admission. Therefore, it critically depends on generous annual donations from the community, including the Museum's more than 800 members and other supporters.

You can help not only by donating but also by introducing your friends to the Museum and encouraging them to become members. We are always seeking to expand the community of people whom we serve. We also welcome volunteers who would like to help further the Museum's mission.

We look forward to seeing you at the Museum.

~ Ed Taft, Board President

LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM
"Under the Oaks"

Gary Hedden, *Editor*
Judi Eichler, *Graphic Design*

A publication of interest to citizens of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, and neighboring communities, produced by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum.
A special thanks to the newsletter mailing team!

De Anza Revisited cont.

The chair and organizer was George Cardinet, Jr., born in San Francisco in 1909, whose father George Sr. was a confectioner who made the popular U-No and Baffle Bar candy bars. George Jr., raised in Oakland, worked for the Cardinet Company, but his primary interests – obsessions, even – were trail riding, exploration, development, and advocacy, on local, regional, state, and national levels.

The re-enactment started out in Horscasitas, Mexico, in the state of Sonora. Mexicans rode to Nogales, Arizona, where Americans, dressed in period Spanish regalia, began riding. Cardinet, representing Moraga, met the party in San Diego and rode on a white horse on the route described by de Anza in his diary.

On Friday, March 26, 1976, Cardinet and 19 others, in period dress, carrying banners and lances, rode from Stanford University Children's Hospital to the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital. Marching up the main driveway to music played by the Palo Alto High School band, they were met by a representative of the Daughters of the American Revolution, about 150 people witnessing the ceremony. Afterwards they continued to San Mateo County with copies of the original Spanish royal orders to establish a mission in San Francisco, meeting a second group of re-enactors who took the copies on to San Francisco.

Ceremonies were also held in Palo Alto. The height of a redwood tree by the railroad tracks at the Palo Alto-Menlo Park border, called by the Spanish *El Palo Alto* (the tall tree), after which the city is named, was measured with an inclinometer, re-enacting a measurement by de Anza. Afterwards a plaque commemorating the expedition was dedicated at the southwest corner of Embarcadero and Middlefield Road. (To be sure, historians dispute the exact route of de Anza's expedition, and even the identity of *El Palo Alto*).

Cardinet advocated, along with the National Park Service, to have de Anza's route designated the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail, which Congress approved in 1990. At the White House he was presented a certificate by First Lady Hillary Clinton that included "Cardinet's leadership will play an important role in achieving the goal of a nationwide network of trails that preserve open spaces, interpret history and culture, and promote alternative transportation routes as well as recreation and tourism."

The Los Altos History Museum is honored to have one of George Cardinet's saddles in its education collection. It is a reminder of both an important historic event and the memory of a colorful and fascinating man.

~ John Ralston

The author thanks Steve Staiger and Jack Parkhouse with the Palo Alto Historical Association for help with this article.

Our Hidden Gems

If you have visited the Museum's second floor exhibit you may have admired the beautiful leather saddle and imagined the vaqueros rounding up their cattle.

Fourth grade student Declan on the George Cardinet saddle. Fun times.

The saddle was given to the Museum for the education collection and is displayed in the California rancho section. To make history more accessible, the saddle is an interactive display with outfits that the children can wear as they sit on the saddle, and realistic background sounds of horses on the trail.

Many different volunteers were involved in creating the exhibit; two of them were Doni Hubbard and Bob Grimm. Bob asked Doni to find a saddle for the exhibit and she contacted George Cardinet who donated the saddle to the Museum. According to Doni, it came from his personal collection of saddles and was originally used on an East Bay ranch. Cardinet was a key person in establishing the Juan Bautista de Anza Trail as a national historic trail with the National Park Service. Doni remembers, "He was a true historian, totally generous and undaunted by the usual human limitations. I think he was 98 or 99 when he quietly passed away just before he was to join a group to hike a trail in Mexico. He rode horses into his 90s, then took up hiking! He was very enthusiastic about our Los Altos efforts to keep history alive and responded immediately to Bob's and my request for a saddle."

The George Cardinet saddle truly is a gem, one hidden in plain sight!

~ Johanna Fassbender

Staff

Laura Bajuk, *Executive Director*

Jane Clemmons, *Interim Assistant to the Executive Director*

Johanna Fassbender, *Collections & Exhibitions Manager*

Stefanie Midlock, *Assistant Collections Manager*

Kristin Morris, *Collections Specialist*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carillo, *Gardener*

Our New Look: Logo and Website

Not satisfied with being a very good local museum, the Los Altos History Museum prepares to become the educational and cultural center of our community. Our new logo reflects this broader vision for where we are today and where we're headed. It incorporates a tree that symbolizes the link to our orchard heritage, but also communicates diversity, learning and growth.

Upcoming exhibits and programs for children and adults encourage community residents to gather at the Museum to celebrate, connect and explore together.

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The new website is visually stunning, but more importantly provides expanded information on exhibits past and present, and related activities. Visitors to the site will appreciate the new easily navigable format. Visit *www.losaltoshistory.org*.

The Museum wishes to thank its volunteers and staff, in particular, Jan Davis who created the logo, and Kristen Fuller, the visionary behind our new website for the many hours devoted to making the logo and new website reflect our dynamic community. They truly reflect what makes Los Altos/Los Altos Hills so vibrant.

Let us know how you feel about the new logo: email *marketing@losaltoshistory.org*

~ Karen Purtich

New Members

Welcome to 16 new members, and thank you to our many renewing members. Our total membership at this moment is 773.

Sherri & Joel Bakos
John & Mary Ann Bogart
BJ & Bebe Cassin
Peter & Julia Fung
Owen Halliday
Jim & Rose Hau Heslin
Liz & Dick Henry
S.L. & E.G. Hoyer
Judie Johnson
Joanna Martin
Ian Massey and Sally Meadows
Susan Mensinger
Saroj & Jagdish Pathak
Theresa & Anupam Pathak
Ruedi and Susann Sandmeier
Ms. Wilson Roberts

Spotlight on the Oral History Project

The current exhibition, *Many Communities, Many Voices: Personal Narratives from the Oral History Collection of the Los Altos History Museum*, features a few of the many oral histories in the Museum's collection. Behind each profile is an audio-recorded and transcribed oral history with additional fascinating details from the person's life story.

One such person is Dr. Roger Eng, former Los Altos mayor and respected dentist. He started working at age 11 in his brother-in-law's grocery store, became a licensed meat salesman and learned the rudiments of being a butcher, for which he was paid $.75 per hour.

Roger Eng's parents were born in China and had an arranged marriage when his mother was 17 years old and his father was 45. Roger, their 10th child, was only 12 when his father died. He became a dentist and practiced in Sunnyvale from 1966 to 2004. In 1967 he moved to a home on one acre on Los Altos Avenue. Viewing his street, he thought, "A town that can bend a road around an oak tree can't be all bad."

Roger Eng sitting in the chair of Congressman Ernie Konnyu, U.S. House of Representatives, 1987. Photo courtesy Sylvia Eng.

When Roger became mayor of Los Altos in 1981, he did not comment on being the first Chinese-American person to be mayor of a city on the Peninsula. Instead, he proudly stated how pleased he was to be the very first *dentist* to become mayor of Los Altos! In 1982 Roger gave the City Council a gold trim flag embroidered on two sides with the Los Altos City Seal. The Council subsequently voted to make Roger's gift the official flag of the city.

The first step in doing an oral history is to meet with the person – it is great fun to be able to say, "Tell me your life story!" This free-flowing exchange allows the interviewer to learn about the person's entire life, topics for additional research, and anecdotes to be sure to cover during the recorded session. The initial meeting with Roger was in August, 2015; unfortunately he died in October before the recorded interview could occur. With the help of family and detailed notes from the initial interview, Roger's life story was documented in a written narrative that will be preserved in the museum's archives.

Connie Young Yu and Kristin Morris with Connie's panel.

Many Communities, Many Voices features people born between 1915 and 1965 in places far and near, who came to Los Altos and Los Altos Hills and found groups and activities that gave them a sense of belonging. They, in turn, shaped our community. When Bob Grimm died unexpectedly in March 2015, the Oral History Committee was grateful and relieved to know the oral history of this man who contributed so much to the city of Los Altos had been completed the previous year. Visitors to the exhibit can read Bob's oral history transcript and hear recorded portions of his interview.

According to Kristin Morris, Collections Specialist and the exhibition curator, we have over 100 interesting people in the queue yet to be interviewed.

~ Marcia Adams

Marie Backs, Linda Eckols, Don McDonald, Karen Van Buren (Don's step-daughter), and Jane Reed at the opening reception.

The Backstory

The new exhibition, *Many Communities, Many Voices* opened April 28 and you may have wondered, "Why these 24 stories?"

All of the interviews presented were conducted by members of our oral history team (Ginger Summit, Marcia Adams, and myself) between spring 2013 and fall 2015. Our focus over the last three years has been to start filling in gaps in our oral history collection. Specifically, most of our "old" oral histories cover the years before World War II. We have made a special effort to interview people who had a role in the postwar boom. We also had almost nothing in our collection on Los Altos Hills, so we have interviewed long-time residents and contributors in the Hills. And our collection did not represent the ethnic diversity in the area that began to blossom in the 1980s.

These narratives were chosen from the 37 interviews that we completed between 2013 and 2015 because they illuminate meaningful stories about diverse communities in Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. Some of the people in the exhibit will be immediately recognizable to you; others represent communities you may not even know exist. Together, they give us a wide-ranging picture of how our towns have grown and developed over the last 60+ years. This exhibit is not meant to cover every corner of Los Altos/Los Altos Hills history, but rather to share the diverse voices that populate our community.

The exhibition runs to Oct. 2; be sure to pay a visit and spend some time getting to know these interesting people.

~ Kristin Morris, Collections Specialist

Kristin Morris training the docents.

Director's Corner

We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give.

Winston Churchill may not have actually said this, but whoever did recognized that the meaning of life involves giving to others.

Nan and Chuck Geschke are two such people, quietly touching thousands of lives. Here at the Museum, they support the school tours every year, helped create the new building and our first website, and have produced blockbuster exhibits that have elevated the Museum's reputation as a regional resource.

Twenty-five nonprofits which benefit from their generosity, led by Villa Siena and the Museum, banded together to recognize the Geschkes for their service. We are proud to announce that Nan and Chuck will be honored with the Outstanding Philanthropists award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals Silicon Valley, celebrating the best in philanthropy.

Thanks to the Geschkes, Grimms and so many more community members (like you), we can all enjoy this beautiful modern museum. *Mercury News* columnist Sal Pizarro was so impressed that our recent reception for 100-year old artist Paul Hau was his lead item. Next stop? The *New York Times* (if our marketing team has its way).

The Museum is here to record and tell the stories of our community over time. What will your story be?

~ Laura Bajuk, Executive Director

Photo Gallery

Katsuko Thielke leads a demonstration of ikebana, the art of flower arranging. This is a joint library-museum program that will be repeated next spring.

History in the News

The Historical Commission named Val Carpenter as the 2016 recipient of the Historic Preservation Award. The fifth in a distinguished list of Don McDonald, Marion Grimm, Margaret Thompson, and Bob Grimm, Carpenter was recognized by Commission Chair Janis Ahmadjian-Baer for her "strong support of historic preservation." Over the past 15 years she served on the Historical Commission, helping to save the Neutra House, and on the City Council and as Mayor, helping to protect the Civic Center Apricot Orchard and the San Antonio Club. She also co-chaired the City's 60th Anniversary Committee. More recently she founded and chaired the Friends of Historic Redwood Grove in an ongoing effort to evaluate and protect the long neglected Halsey House and founded the Creekside Oaks Community Center Committee to renovate and adaptively reuse the historic Costello Barn. Don McDonald put it well when he praised her "creative vigor."

The 32nd Margaret Thompson Essay Contest had applicants writing in response to the recent exhibition, *Spirits Return: Cultural Traditions Keeping Memories Alive*. Commissioner Denise Welsh commented, "It was very personal as the students shared family traditions, events and activities." One student wrote of brass candlesticks saved as her grandmother's great-great-grandmother fled Russian persecution of Jewish families, another of a gold pocket watch from a soldier, his great-great-great uncle who died in the battle of Little Round Top at Gettysburg, a third who described the delight of the first birthday celebration, an important moment for Korean families, and finally, the fun children have in the annual Navrati celebration in India with traditional Golu dolls. There were many good stories, and the students, their parents and teachers all met for an Ice Cream Social at the History Museum in May to enjoy the recognition and the root beer floats.

In other news, the Commissioners discussed best approaches to protecting and preserving the landmark apricot orchard. In public comment, Catherine Nunes made the point that "your duty can go beyond maintenance and can include restoration." Robin Chapman concluded, "We should have an orchard that looks fabulous."

Three more historic plaques were presented in a ceremony at the Museum. One was for the home on University Avenue built in 1909 for Mrs. Shoup, mother of Los Altos founders, Paul and Guy Shoup. Almost 30 homes and properties now have the city provided plaques and the Apricot Orchard may soon get one. There is even talk of four interpretive panels, one for each season, and an Apricot Festival during harvest season. If it includes apricot jam, it has my vote!

~ Gary Hedden

The proud students with their certificates and the Margaret Thompson trophy for the school with the most winners, awarded to Gardner Bullis for the second year in a row.

Audrey's favorite tradition is baking Aunt Bess's scrumptious Christmas sugar cookies, called Sand Tarts, and sharing them with friends and neighbors.

Carly's family tradition is adoption. Injured birds, dogs from animal shelters and most importantly her two older brothers, adopted from an orphanage in Kazakhstan.

Photo Gallery–Garden Party Gala

Chuck Geschke leading a house tour.

Cynthia Riordan paints; Doug Debs intrigued.

Nan and Chuck Geschke, our generous hosts.

John Reed with the lucky key that opened the treasure chest.

Wendell Roscoe, landscape designer for the Geschke estate, chatting with Dick Henning.

Linda Eckols, Pinky Whelan and Elizabeth Lane with painted watering cans from the Gala Marketplace.

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Assn. of the Los Altos Historical Museum, 51 So. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022 www.losaltoshistory.org

Museum and Store Hours
Thursday to Sunday, Noon–4 pm

We are closed New Year's Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries
(650) 948-9427 x14 or hello@losaltoshistory.org

Collections/Research
(650) 948-9427 x16

Event Rentals
(650) 948-9427 x12

Mission Statement
History inspires imagination, stimulates thought and transforms society. The Los Altos History Museum preserves and shares our local history to enrich our community and to shape a more informed future.

Address Correction Requested

On The Calendar

Community Photo Scanning Day. Bring up to five favorite photos of your community and we'll scan them for you, Saturday, August 20, 10 am-1 pm.

Antique Evaluation by Steve Yvaska & Lunch, Sunday, August 21, 11 am-3 pm, tickets $75/person.

MoonFest! Sunday, Sept. 11, 10 am plus a special evening event.

Train Days! Sat./Sun., Sept. 17/18, 10 am-4 pm.

Save Your Treasures! Get advice from museum experts on taking care of your historical treasures. Not an appraisal. One treasure per person. Sunday, Sept. 25, 10 am to noon.

The Future of Community. A panel discussion on how our communities are developing and changing. Thursday, Sept. 29, 7:30-9:30 pm, Los Altos Library.

Paul Hau@100: Works from the Old Apricot Villa, Oct. 10 to Nov. 13.

More events are in the works – watch for your monthly member email updates!

Grace Perry, a fond farewell, now working at Stanford University in fundraising

Members & Guests Summer Party Sunday, July 10, 4:30-7:30 pm

Membership has its perks! Join us for a fun, casual evening on our gorgeous patio for dinner & live music. Cash bar. $25 per person covers expenses.

RSVP to *hello@losaltoshistory.org* or 650.948.9427 x14.

Board Meetings, First Wednesday each month, 4 pm, everyone welcome

Smith House Tours, Every Sunday, 2 pm