



the  
Exchange  
THE NEWSLETTER OF HISTORY SAN JOSÉ

SUMMER 2008

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## The Greatest Generation

Santa Clara Valley Celebrates its World War II Veterans

Our nation loses 1,000 World War II veterans every day—and with them go an important piece of our history. Whether they were serving in uniform or working on the home front, the memories of the "Greatest Generation" are an important part of our community's history, and History San José will be preserving and sharing them.

On Sunday, August 10th, History San José and the Digital Clubhouse Network will celebrate the 2nd Annual Day of Remembrance at History Park. The event celebrates the end of World War II and the accomplishments of a generation that shaped the 20th century. Special guest Edith Shain will be joining us again this year. Shain was immortalized in the 1945 photograph "V-J Day in Times Square," and is a liv-

ing symbol of hope at the end of the war. She was working as a nurse in New York City when she heard the war had ended and went to Times Square to celebrate. Shain clearly remembers the emotion and excitement of the day and supports efforts to document the experiences of the "Greatest Generation." She will be attending the event in the same nurse's uniform that she wore in the famous photograph.

Music and dancing were an important part of the World War II era, so we will be entertained at the event by the Singing Blue Stars of USS Hornet and The Swing Solution. Members of the Singing Blue Stars all have family members currently serving or are veterans of the US Military, and their "Andrews Sisters" style will take you back in time. The

Greatest Generation, continued on page 6

*Edith Shain receives kisses from Michael Houghtaling (left) and Ben Haines of the 3rd Infantry Division at the 2007 Day of Remembrance in History Park. Photograph by Kymerli Brady.*

## MUSEUM INFORMATION

[www.historysanjose.org](http://www.historysanjose.org)

Peralta Adobe-Fallon House Historic Site  
175 W. St. John Street  
San José, CA 95110

History Park  
Kelley Park, 1650 Senter Road  
San José, CA 95112

History Park Administrative Offices  
Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm  
408.287.2290, Fax 408.287.2291

Research Library  
By appointment. Call 408.521.5026

### GROUP TOURS

To schedule a custom tour of 10 or more,  
call 408.918.1047

### EVENTS & RENTALS

Call 408.918.1055, or 408.918.1045

### ADMISSION

Free public admission to History Park

### HISTORY PARK HOURS

Gallery, Museum Store, and Café at O'Brien's  
Winter (Nov. 1 – April 30)  
Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 4 pm  
Summer (May 1 – Oct. 31)  
Tuesday – Sunday, 12 pm – 5 pm



### HSJ LEADERSHIP

#### Officers 2008-09

Jim Towery, Chair; Joe Head, Vice Chair;  
David Satterfield, Secretary; Tom Scott, Treasurer

#### Board Members 2008-09

Gerry DeYoung, Don Gaglardi, Jeanne Lazzarini,  
Steve Lopes, Ernest Malaspina, Nancy Martin,  
Margie Matthews, Stephen Moore, Frank Penrose,  
Mark Ritchie, Keith Alan Watt

### AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS AT HISTORY PARK

Academic Film Archive of North America  
California Pioneers of Santa Clara County  
California Trolley and Railroad Corporation  
Chinese Historical and Cultural Project  
Connie L. Lurie College of Education Alumni  
Association  
Digital Clubhouse Network  
Hellenic Heritage Institute  
Immigrant Resettlement & Cultural Center  
Poetry Center San José  
Portuguese Heritage Society of California  
Portraits of the Past  
Printers Guild  
Rotary Club of San Jose  
A Schmahl Science Workshop  
Victorian Preservation Association

The Exchange is published four times per year by  
History San José.

Eva Guralnick, Editor; e.g. communications, Layout

## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

# Welcoming in a New Year

by Alida Bray, President & CEO

June 30, 2008, marks the end of the fiscal year. Although it has been a tough year for the organization, it has also been one full of accomplishment. In December, the City of San José demonstrated its commitment to a strong partnership with History San José when the Council voted to increase and stabilize the contract to \$875,000 annually through 2010. Then in February, after a two-year process, History San José became one of only three museums in Silicon Valley to earn the prestigious accreditation of the American Association of Museums, joining the San José Museum of Art and the De Saissat.

We finished the fiscal year with a bang! The annual Valley of Heart's Delight event, honoring Jim Salata and Garden City Construction, was bigger than ever. Over 500 friends were in attendance, raising over \$76,000 for the museum. My warmest and most sincere thanks to everyone who supported HSJ by attending and bidding, to the small army of staff, volunteers, Board members and sponsors who helped make the event happen, and of course to Jim and Suzanne Salata for their belief in the organization. Get all the details on page 6.

July 1, 2008, signals the beginning of the new fiscal year and new organizational goals, which include activating History Park and the Peralta-Fallon Historic Site with monthly Signature Events, emphasizing and maximizing community partnerships, creating a business plan with a strong marketing component, and going green with plans to save water, energy and materials.

First up in our Signature Event Series is *Founder's Day Fandango!* in July. Don't miss this great event, as with a bevy of partners San José celebrates its unique status as the first civil settlement in California. In August, the Digital Clubhouse Network along with a variety of wonderful organizations will escort us back to the 1940s for our second annual *Day of Remembrance* honoring the World's Greatest Generation. And in September, look both ways before you cross the road—over 100 antique autos will be motoring into History Park!

Then, as Danny the Dragon goes into hibernation until Happy Hollow's grand reopening in Fall 2009, you'll see Happy Hollow's retail store join the HSJ Museum Store. We'll take this opportunity to expand our partnership with Happy Hollow by offering joint programming including bird watching in History Park and the return of Haunt the Hollow to name just a few of the programs planned for 2008.

And finally, on behalf of the Board, staff and volunteers, I want to thank Margie Matthews for her tireless work serving as Board Chair for the past three years. Margie will continue her support as a Board member as we welcome our new Board Chair Jim Towery.

## SPONSORS



This issue of  
*The Exchange* is  
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## “The Whole Truth Right Here at Holy City”

by Roxanne Nilan

Holy City, once a garish attraction on the old road through the Santa Cruz Mountains connecting Los Gatos to the coast, intrigued travelers and locals alike from its heyday in the 1920s to its demise in the 1950s. Behind billboards that promised answers to all questions and signs boasting of “Perfect Government,” disciples of William Riker’s Perfect Christian Divine Way (PCDW) provided tourists with gasoline and auto repairs, inexpensive meals, groceries, and entertainment.

In 1970, *San Jose Mercury* associate editor Harry Plate set out to research cult leader “Father” Riker, “The Comforter Incarnate.” Last summer, Mrs. Trudy Plate donated her late husband’s research notes and correspondence to History San José, along with letters, documents, news clippings, publications, and more than 100 photographs he had collected.

Plate’s first article of a planned series focused on Riker’s 46 years before Holy City—the poor boy from rural California who left school at age 9 to help support his family, his life as a salesman, and his emergence as a confidence man. Plate’s article, “Riker: From Mechanic to Messiah,” featured in the *San Jose Mercury’s California Today* Sunday magazine, tracked Riker’s evolution from palm reader to self-proclaimed preacher, as he gathered disciples from throughout the Midwest.

To get behind the superficial accounts of Holy City, Plate interviewed Riker family members, aging disciples, and Holy City neighbors and critics. Riker’s niece and nephew helped Plate pin down elusive details of Riker’s early life and background. “First disciple” Irvin B. Fisher, then approaching 90, provided details about the early PCDW philosophy, while Joe Albert, the last of the early disciples to still live at Holy City, provide Plate with limited access to the Riker house. Youngest disciple and self-proclaimed heir, TV repairman Wallace E. Stovall,

gave Plate access to early documents and photographs.

“Assembling a factual, documentable chronology of Holy City is like reconstructing a rainstorm from a lake,” Plate wrote to one of his more sympathetic informants. Too often, other writers had accepted the “ocean of reported ‘facts’ replete with contradictions and time gaps, leaving a picture as obscure and elusive as his own personality.”

In 1906, Riker claimed to have a revelation in the hills east of San Jose. His Perfect Christian Divine Way evolved over the next decade from a personal search for simple answers to life’s complex questions, to a small, self-supporting commune of followers. The PCDW focused on Christian elements to be found in other American evangelical, revelation-based communities: trust in God, hard work and simple living, and the sharing of all property. Leadership by “The Teacher” was unquestioned, and loyalty to the group paramount.

The 1920 and 1930 U.S. Censuses record a community of middle-aged, working-class men and women, almost uniformly without formal schooling, and largely from English

and German-speaking backgrounds. Needy individuals, particularly during the Depression, could always get a free meal at Holy City, but only those who were like-thinkers were allowed to stay. Family members, particularly older children (including Riker’s son Willis), quickly wore out their welcome if they did not work hard and commit to both the Perfect Divine Christian Way and Riker’s personal leadership.

Key to the PCDW philosophy was a distrust of all traditional institutions—churches, schools, governments, marriage—and a disdain for books and the well educated. As a result, highly exaggerated rumors circulated of free love among the middle-aged disciples, of abandoned or abused children, and of old cult rituals among the Redwood trees.

It was Riker’s blatant racism, however, that stands out glaringly today. As first devised, “Father Riker’s Philosophy” reflected the nativism and racial assumptions of 1920s America. Curiously, PCDW did not subscribe to then-current anti-semitism, but rather claimed Judaism to be the head and Christianity the heart of mankind. “Father Riker’s Philosophy,” was just

Holy City, continued on page 5



Holy City Billboard, c. 1935.

## Founder's Day Fandango!

Founders' Day Fandango! is a living history experience where the entire family can celebrate the culture and traditions from the founding of the Pueblo de Guadalupe de San José, from 1777 to early 1800s. On Sunday, July 27 from noon to 5 p.m. come to the Peralta Adobe—the oldest address in San José—for a free family festival!

In 1777, San José became the first non-Indian civil settlement in Alta California, christened El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe by Lt. Josef Joaquin Moraga. The 66 men, women and children of his expedition were citizens of the Spanish empire, but most were of mixed American Indian, African and Hispanic ancestry. They later came to call themselves Californios. Viceroy Bucarely of New Spain sent a letter to Governor Felipe de Neve confirming the establishment of El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe on July 22, 1778.

There will be a Spanish flag-raising ceremony at noon, and then the festival will begin. Come and enjoy hands-on art and crafts activities with



Founder's Day Celebration, 2006.

spinning, weaving, candle making and roping; ceramic artist Ruben Reyes with clay activities for children and adults; music by the Alta California Orchestra and Calicanto Singers; participatory songs and dances with the Folklorico Nacional Mexicano; Olga Loya as Juana Briones; authentic foods and more!

History San José would like to acknowledge and thank the event sponsors: the City of San José, Office of Cultural Affairs; Target Stores; Air Systems Foundation; and the John and Abby Sobrato Fund.

## Antique Autos in History Park

The 8th annual *Antique Autos* presented by the Santa Clara Valley Model T Ford Club and History San José will take place at History Park on Sunday, September 14, 2008. This free event fills the Park with over 150 antique autos from 1900 to 1945, plus antique fire equipment, motorcycles, bicycles and gas engines. The Park is open to all visitors from noon to 5:00 p.m.

Demonstrations will include early-day crafts such as quilting, beading, painting, ceramics, wood carving and fly tying. The trolley will be running and the Blacksmith Shop open. A Schmahl Science Workshop and the San Jose Fire Explorer Post 888 will present activities designed especially for children. Live music by JP and the Rhythm Chasers will fill the Park from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Food will be available from Peggy Sue's Restaurant and you can buy ice cream and candy from the Museum Café at O'Brien's.



Model A Ford c.1930 at History Park.  
Photo by Sarah Puckitt.

Many participants will stroll the grounds in vintage clothing matching the era of their antique vehicle. And as in past years, members of Portraits of the Past will parade in their 1900s costumes. Recognition will be given for costumes in various categories.

Since this year is the 100th anniversary of the Ford Model T, there will a celebration of the anniversary and a special demonstration—a Model T will be assembled in less than six minutes!



## A Breath of Plein Air



Judy Welsh, *Ah Umhumnum, Lake Calero & Mt. Umhumnum*, watercolor. Courtesy of the artist.

History San José presents *A Breath of Plein Air: An Exhibition of Santa Clara Valley Paintings by Local Artists* in the Leonard and David McKay Gallery at the Pasetta House in History Park. The exhibit is open Wednesday through Sunday, from noon to 5 p.m. through September 21, 2008.

*Plein air* refers to a method of painting in which the artist attempts to capture the essence of the experience of being outdoors. The artist is challenged to respond to the changing light in the scene, and most often works with a bright palette of color. *Plein air* is closely related to the Impressionist style of painting that employs loose brush strokes to suggest immediacy and movement. Subject matter in *plein air*, as in Impressionism, usually consists of outdoor scenes taken from ordinary daily life.

*A Breath of Plein Air* was inspired by the many artists that paint in History Park and create works reminiscent of those found in the Museum's permanent collection. The exhibition aims to call attention to the vast artistic talent found in Santa Clara Valley, while at the same time documenting the spectacular landscape of this ever-changing region. Each of the 25 artists represented in the exhibition are actively involved in plein air groups, which regularly meet to paint at a variety of sites throughout Santa Clara Valley.

Nancy Patka, a Saratoga artist said, "During the course of any day there are countless sources of inspiration. It could be the way the light moves across a scene...or the character of a great old building." Two of her pieces are in the show, and depict heritage orchards. "The theme of capturing interesting images of local history before they disappear is central to my art," said Carol Lois Haywood, of Sunnyvale. She has a piece entitled "Alviso Ranch" in the exhibit.

The exhibit includes 54 pieces painted by 25 local artists. The exhibit was juried by Karen Kienzle, Assistant Director of the deSaisset Museum at Santa Clara University and Sarah Puckitt, Curator of Art and Photography. Will Maller, A.D. Ballantyne and Rebecca Osgood were each selected to receive cash awards at the opening reception on Sunday, April 27.

Over the course of this exhibit, there will be four *plein air* days at History Park where the public is invited to see artists at work and chat with them as they paint *en plein air*. History San José would like to thank our exhibition sponsors for their generous support: Robert J. Bettencourt, Casto, Heritage Bank of Commerce, and an anonymous donor.

Holy City, continued from page 3

as focused on the union of Jew and gentile as it was on the denigration of Blacks and Asians.

As Riker and his disciples aged, their racism became more strident and, in post-World War II America, more offensive to the general public. Today, the few paragraphs allotted Holy City in studies of utopian communities focus solely on this element of PCDW philosophy. And it has also won Holy City honorable mention on an Aryan Nations website as an example of an allegedly successful attempt at a white-only community.

Holy City's demise began long before Riker's death in 1969. Newly constructed Highway 17 bypassed the town in 1940. "Mother" Lucille Riker, the brains behind Holy City's businesses, died in 1950. She could not keep her husband from his political ambitions—he ran for governor four times, once winning as many as 20,000 votes—but she had kept Holy City solvent.

By 1956, the handful of aging disciples was greatly outnumbered by one disciple's 15 cats. That year, Riker "sold" half of Holy City to Hollywood producer Maurice Kline, essentially dispossessing his fellow members of the PCDW, legal owners of the property. In 1968, PCDW's new president, Stovall, reincorporated the organization and moved it to San Jose. Riker, demoted to secretary, died the next year at Agnews State Hospital. By 1970, most of Holy City's buildings had burned down (some by arson) or had been bulldozed by a land development company.

Plate found the transformation of Holy City to a Silicon Valley developer's target a compelling image of the commune's demise. "It occurs to me that the circumstances surrounding legal ownership of that Sacred Soil are absolutely basic to the entire Holy City saga," Plate wrote. "Street-corner spellbinders have always been with us, but when real estate changes hands, we touch a special code of amorality which altogether too many people understand."

## Another Wonderful Valley of Heart's Delight

History San José's third consecutive Valley of Heart's Delight fundraising event was the most successful to date with more than 500 attendees and achieving a total of \$76,000 in net revenue! This year's honoree, Jim Salata of Garden City Construction, brought many new faces to the museum, where he shared with them his passion for "preserving the past while building the future."

Emcee Dan Orloff offered personal stories of Jim and generous praise of his dedication in caring for the smallest detail on his restoration projects and recycling architectural elements wherever possible—making him a "green" pioneer. Mayor Chuck Reed presented Jim with a commendation on behalf of the City. Senator Alquist's office also sent a commendation to Jim, and Representative Mike Honda sent a letter of support and best wishes for a successful event.

Guests were entertained by the rock 'n roll sounds of the Sultans, and enjoyed a dinner buffet by Crunch Catering. A lively silent and live auction succeeded in raising \$41,000 for History San José's education programs. This year's "Last Historian Standing" (the highest donor in our fundraising



John Eric Paulson, Master Photographer

*Attendees party into the evening at this year's Valley of Heart's Delight.*

challenge to help repair and improve the Print Shop, History Park's first exhibit) was Vivian Bracher, a guest at the Cambridge Management table.

As the sun set, and the temperature cooled, Jim Salata took up the microphone to sing with the band while guests danced under the light tower. New guests are looking forward to coming to next year's event and longtime supporters claimed this year's event the best party HSJ has thrown.

We look forward to hosting them at the next Valley of Heart's Delight on June 18, 2009. Mark your calendar!

Please send us your email address so that we can keep you informed about the latest events and offerings. Just visit [www.historysanjose.org/postcard](http://www.historysanjose.org/postcard) to sign up!

Greatest Generation, continued from cover

Swing Solution, a 17-member big band, plays the sounds of Glen Miller, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and will have the park jumpin' throughout the afternoon.

World War II living historians will give History Park ambiance and encourage veterans to share their experiences. There will be jeeps, tents and a command post from the US 3rd Infantry Division, the US 10th Army Field Hospital, troops, pup tents, and a command tent from the United Kingdom, and German Paratroopers and Infantry tents.

At HSJ's History Makers program on August 10th we will ask guests to answer the question, "Where were you when you heard that the war was over?" and share their memories. Students from Stories-of-Service, a project of the Digital Clubhouse Network, will be on hand to document the day. History San José is looking for your World War II story. The exhibit, *Home Front: Santa Clara Valley's World War II Experience*, will be opening in November 2008.



*German 5th Kompanie, 352nd Infantry camped out at the 2007 Day of Remembrance in History Park.*



## JULY

### Plein Air Paint Day

Sunday, July 20, 12 – 5 pm

Join artists painting at History Park. History Park. Open to the public. Free.

### Summer Family Movie Night— *The Bee Movie*

In partnership with Happy Hollow Park & Zoo

Saturday, July 26

6 pm gates open  
(7 pm movie starts)

Join us for movies under the stars! The Giants BBQ will be open or bring your own picnic dinner. Bring blankets, but no chairs allowed.

San José Giants Stadium. Free.

### Founder's Day Fandango!

Sunday, July 27, 12 – 5 pm

This is a living history experience for the entire family. Come to the oldest address in San José, the Peralta Adobe, for hands-on arts and crafts, participatory songs and dances, storytellers, musicians, authentic foods and more!

Peralta Adobe, 175 W. Saint John Street. Open to the public. Free. Parking free at San Pedro Garage.

## AUGUST

### Day of Remembrance

Sunday, August 10, 12 – 5 pm

HSJ celebrates peace and the end of WWII with a free public festival honoring the "Greatest Generation."

History Park. Open to the public. Free.

### Plein Air Paint Day

Sunday, August 17, 12 – 5 pm

History Park. Open to the public. Free!

### Double Creature Feature

In partnership with Happy Hollow Park & Zoo

Wednesday, August 20, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Members, bring a picnic dinner and enjoy a summer evening of family fun in your honor featuring Hennigan's Spinning Frisbee K9's Show, a Conservation Ambassadors animal presentation, face painting and trolley rides.

Happy Hollow & HSJ Members only! Bring your membership card.

### *Speed City: From Civil Rights to Black Power Exhibit*

Through March 27, 2009, Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Organized by *History San José*, this exhibit is an in-depth examination of American sport in an era that spans the aftermath of World War II through America's tumultuous involvement in Vietnam. The exhibition focuses on San José State College's athletic program, from which many student athletes became globally recognized figures as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements reshaped American society.

San José City Hall Wing, 200 E. Santa Clara Street, enter on 4th Street. Free.



## SEPTEMBER

### 8th Annual Antique Autos in History Park

Sunday, September 14

12 – 5 pm

Step back in time to see antique autos, fire equipment, bicycles, motorcycles, and early day gas engines on the streets of the park.

History Park. Open to the public. Admission is free.



### Summer Family Movie Night— *Over the Hedge*

In partnership with Happy Hollow Park & Zoo

Saturday, September 20,

6 pm gates open  
(7 pm movie starts)

Join us for movies under the stars! The Giants BBQ will be open or bring your own picnic dinner. Bring blankets, but no chairs allowed.

San José Giants Stadium. Free.

## ONGOING

### *Capelinhos 1957 – 1958 and Ashes to Life Stamp Illustrations* by John Mattos

Through May 30, 2009

Saturday – Sunday, 12 – 5 pm

The exhibit chronicles the volcanic eruption at Capelinhos from devastation to Dispora, which includes actual lava samples from 1957.

History Park, Portuguese Historical Museum. Free.

### EXTENDED! *Becoming American in San José: Photographs by Local High School Students*

Through August, 2008

Tuesday – Sunday, 12 – 5 pm

History Park, Pacific Hotel Gallery. Free.

### *A Breath of Plein Air: An Exhibition of Santa Clara Valley Paintings by Local Artists*

Through September 21, 2008

Friday – Sunday, 12 – 5 pm

History Park, The Leonard & David McKay Gallery at the Pasetta House. Free.

### *Speed City: From Civil Rights to Black Power*

Through March 27, 2009

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

San José City Hall Wing, 200 E. Santa Clara Street, enter on 4th Street. Free.

### Lou's Village

[www.historysanjose.org/lousvillage](http://www.historysanjose.org/lousvillage)





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[www.historysanjose.org](http://www.historysanjose.org)

## WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU?

History San José welcomes the *Happy Hollow Park and Zoo Souvenir Shop* to the Museum Store in History Park! The two stores have joined temporarily until Happy Hollow reopens in the Fall of 2009. Look for a new line of nature-inspired merchandise in the store.

When the Happy Hollow shop reopens, the new store will be known as The Explore and More Store. It will be an expansive, environmentally friendly building with plenty of room to highlight Danñy the Dragon merchandise, puppets and puppet theatres, safari themed products, books, apparel and nature related gifts!

### MUSIC BOX

An enchanting music box featuring the Bremen Town Musicians from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale will delight a child's senses and the adorable hand puppets will spark their imagination. A beautiful gift that children will treasure for many years.



### KEEPSAKE GROWTH CHARTS

Keepsake Growth Charts are a fun way to see how fast your children grow. These colorful and whimsical charts are available in the Musical Fairy Tree, Growing Like a Weed and Lily Pond.



### BIRD BINGO

The entire family will enjoy playing the Bird Bingo Game. This educational picture bingo game is also available in Ocean, Dinosaur, California, Bug or Horse Bingo. After learning about birds why not go bird watching with our children's binoculars—one of the most popular items in the toy store.

### ANIMAL BACKPACKS AND BOOKS

Every child needs a backpack and these animal-inspired designs are functional and cuddly. A great book to carry in the tote is *The Furry Animal Alphabet Book*. This delightful book is full of facts that engage even the most reluctant readers.

