



Make History Happen!

Don't miss HMSJ's last Family Fun programs of the century.

Founding of the Pueblo Birthday Bash!

Saturday, November 13, 1999
12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Peralta Adobe & Fallon House Historic Site

Join us Saturday, November 13th to commemorate the 1777 founding of San José de Guadalupe, California's first civilian settlement. We are throwing a *Founding of the Pueblo Birthday Bash* at the Peralta Adobe from 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

No birthday party is complete without games and treats — play “pin San Jose on the map,” take a swing at a piñata and scoop up some goodies, decorate a square for a gigantic patchwork birthday card to be presented to Mayor Ron Gonzales, and enjoy a delicious slice of birthday cake. Tour the Peralta Adobe and try your hand at making adobe bricks. Once you learn this basic building technique, you're on your way to building your own adobe home.

The Peralta Adobe is the last remaining structure from the second Pueblo de San José. The first pueblo, located along the banks of the Guadalupe River, suffered damage from heavy rains and

rising river waters and was moved to present-day San Jose in the 1790s.

This is one birthday party you won't want to miss. Plan on joining us to celebrate San Jose's 222nd birthday on the 13th!

Where Did All the History Go?

Leaving the 20th Century Melodrama

Saturday, December 4, 1999
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

San Jose Historical Museum

On Saturday, December 4, Liz Mitchell's melodrama troupe, who joined us for the Gold Rush Festival last May, will once again delight young and old with a hilarious story, *Leaving the 20th Century*.

Someone has stolen all the important events that occurred during the last 100 years. Who is this

mysterious villain? Will our hero be able to find all the events? And will they make it back on the calendar? We can't enter the 21st century until the calendar is correct.

Help our hero find the events. Join the cast for this fun-filled performance. Starting at 1:00 p.m., the melodrama troupe will hold a theater workshop including special theater games and preparation of the set. After rehearsal, our new actors will join the troupe to stage a once-only production of *Leaving the 20th Century*.

Be sure to arrive for this event at 1:00 p.m. sharp and stay for the performance at 3:30 p.m. Get your popcorn throwing arm in shape and come prepared to boo, hiss, laugh and clap. This program takes place at the San Jose Historical Museum. The theatre workshop will be in the Pacific Hotel and the performance will be in the Empire Firehouse.

All activities for both programs included in the price of museum admission. HMSJ members are FREE.



Left: Liz Mitchell's melodrama troupe entertains young visitors at the Gold Rush Festival last May. If you missed the fun — don't miss their new performance next month. Above: Families work together to construct adobe bricks on the Peralta Adobe grounds.

History & Politics

Hot-Wired History...Unplugged

by Simon Schama

Never confuse history with nostalgia. In its Greek origins, *historia* meant inquiry, and from Thucydides onward, the past has been studied to understand its connections with the present. For all the elaborateness of modern scholarship, we still do what the Greeks and Romans did: figure out how we got from there to here. Electronic technology is only the latest (and most potent) tool in that work. With the arrival of the digitized archive, or the historical hypertext, manipulating alternative eventualities, the record of the past faces a brave new future.

Traditionally, historians have come in two basic models: the hang glider and the truffle hunter, and both can be helped out by electronic technology. Truffle hunters are excavators, resolute at extracting some small savory goblet of truth from an improbably hidden source, but so committed to going from hole to hole that they miss the broad landscape in between. Hang gliders, by contrast, bob about on breezy thermals of generalization, taking in the lay of the land, but never actually descending to inspect its gritty details. But with the computer's help, the truffle hunter's horizons can be broadened and the hang glider's focus sharpened. Digitized archival data — for example, letters, diaries, tax or census statistics, and increasingly, visual evidence from illuminated manuscripts to prints, posters, and photographs — can all be downloaded and scanned for flagged items of special interest. The dedicated historian of the North American widget, for example, could, at a click (or squeak) of a mouse, compare its invention, business history, and cultural significance with its counterpart in, say, Chinese history or its prototype in Moorish Islam.

Other giddy prospects suggest themselves. Who needs scholarly publications in print and paper, when devoted subscribers to the *Journal of Widget History*, as few in number as they are passionate in vocation, can have them made available electronically, thus releasing desperately needed shelf space in crowded libraries? And with the possibility of lectures and seminars being opened electronically to all (who have paid their professional dues), annual conventions of historians can revert to their essential, honest-to-goodness function as guild gatherings, assembled for feasting, gossip, and hiring inspections.

Liberated from these chores, the historian can resume his role as Grand Arbiter between what has been and what is to be. The inexhaustible electronic serf will nail down the database wherever it may be hiding, rummage through its content, flag the significant item, and produce for the analytical scrutiny of his mistress discrete threads of the past, expertly scissored away from the endless ribbon of the time continuum.

So what should we fear? What is there to lose? Nothing but our imagination. The trouble is, though, that history without imagination is just so much data processing of the dead.

For all the things that the computer does brilliantly — the searching, sifting, flagging, storing — constitute the beginning, not the end of historical wisdom. It gets the historian to the starting line of his real job: the resurrection of a vanished past; its

reconstitution into something as real, as vivid, and as important as the fleeting present. And for the tricky, invaluable business, the electronic archive is still a weak collaborator, for it lacks all the properties that trigger the historian's precious intuition of recall: the smell, the feel, the instinct of the past. Bulldozing broad, straight highways through the chaotic tangle of the past carries with it the peril of losing its messy authenticity; of obliterating the accidental nature of so many fateful turns in history. Had Archduke Francis Ferdinand's chauffeur not gotten lost in the streets of Sarajevo...had President Lincoln not been fond of theater...without a keen sense of these tragic pratfalls with which the past is littered, the historian threatens to turn into the most overdetermined political scientist, addicted to an unrealistically net relationship between cause and effect.

At its most prosaic, history is supposed to tell us how to avoid the next calamity — recession, revolution, war. It has never been done this well, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that electronically enhanced will do the job any better. But the true

value of history should be seen in a different way: as a meditation in time that helps us to understand the nature of human behavior. This makes history's true neighbor, not economics or politics, but poetry and philosophy. And it cannot work as it should (and cannot tell the vivid stories it must) unless it truly inhabits an archive where we can touch the ink and the sealing wax; smell the must and the dust; and sense our dim kinship with the long lost. Only this direct, physical exposure to the fragile relics of vanished worlds has the power to summon the ghosts and make them substantial and eloquent. So while you can wire Clio till she's red-hot and cybercool, if you make her virtual, the lady crashes.

*Simon Schama is Old Dominion Foundation Professor of Humanities at Columbia University. He is the author of *Citizens and Dead Certainties*, and is an art critic for *The New Yorker*.*

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Museum Information

Sites

San Jose Historical Museum
Kelley Park, 1650 Senter Road
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 287-2290
FAX (408) 287-2291

Peralta Adobe & Fallon House
175 W. St. John St.
San Jose, CA 95110
(408) 993-8182
FAX (408) 993-8184

Administrative Offices
1650 Senter Road
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 287-2290
FAX (408) 287-2291
www.sjhistory.org

Fees

General Admission Fees

	One site	Both sites
Adult	\$6.00	\$10.00
Senior (age 65+)	\$5.00	\$8.00
Youth (age 6-17)	\$4.00	\$6.00
Child (5 and under)	Free	Free

A ticket for both sites is valid for two weeks from date of purchase.

Group Tour Fees

	One site	Both sites
Adult	\$5.00	\$8.00
Senior (age 65+)	\$4.00	\$6.00
Youth (age 6-17)	\$3.00	\$4.00
Child (5 and under)	Free	Free

* A group is 10 or more individuals who have pre-scheduled a tour.

Waived Admission Fees

Members of HMSJ at every level of giving receive free admission to the museums. Members of

American Association of Museums (AAM) and American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) receive free general admission as professional courtesy. Teachers and chaperones are admitted free of charge during reserved school visits.

Hours

Public tours at both sites (no reservations required)
12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Tuesday - Sunday
The last tour at Kelley Park leaves at 3:00 p.m.

Museum grounds at Kelley Park

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday

Office hours at both sites

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday

All school programs and group tours must be reserved. School programs and group tours are offered Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Group tours are also offered Saturday and Sunday from 12 noon to 5:00 p.m. by reservation only.

Programs

Public Programs

Downtown Walking Tour

School Programs

Experience Adobe Days • Experience Victorian Days • Explore Peralta/Fallon • Explore San Jose's Past • Gold Rush Adventure • Historic Transportation Experience • History Mike • School Days in the 1890s • Victorian School Kit • Voices of Gold Interactive Program • Voices of Gold Self-Guided Tour • Westward Ho! • Women Who Made A Difference

Outreach Programs

Portraits of the Past

Please call (408) 918-1040 for reservations and current program prices.

Holiday Happenings

Victorian Holiday Interpretation at the Fallon House

Sundays, December 12 & 19
 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
 Peralta Adobe & Fallon House Historic Site

Step back in time and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of holiday celebration in Victorian style. On the two Sundays preceding December 25, the Fallon House will come alive with a Victorian interpretation of holiday traditions.

Visitors will tour the Peralta Adobe, decorated for the Spanish Yuletide custom of the *Posada*. Visitors will then tour the elegantly attired Fallon House, decorated by the Garden City Doll Club.

The Doll Club works throughout the year to create the type of handmade decorations that would have been used during the 1860s-70s — when Christmas as we know it today was first becoming popular. Visitors will have the opportunity to experience the tastes and smells of the season in the Fallon kitchen, where costumed volunteers will serve traditional cookies and hot spiced cider. Other costumed characters from the mid-1800s may be dressing for a holiday gathering or wrapping presents in the bedrooms.

The tour ends in the formal parlor where visitors will be invited to join a Victorian Holiday Party already in progress. The celebration will include parlor games, singing, poetry readings, a visit from St. Nick, and costumed characters from the Victorian era.

Please join us for a tour of the decorated homes any time after Dec. 4th, but mark your calendars for Dec. 12th and 19th to see the formal parlor in action. To volunteer at the Victorian Holiday Interpretation at the Fallon House or for more information, call Wells Twombly at (408) 993-8182.

We Can Help You Have the Best Event in History!

Looking for a unique venue to host your next special event?

The San Jose Historical Museum offers unique charm and ambiance like no other place in the Bay Area. With 25 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds complete with paved streets and running trolleys, the site is a perfect choice for a variety of different events and group sizes: indoor, outdoor, large or small. Whatever your event needs are, we'd be happy to discuss them with you.

The Peralta Adobe & Fallon House site is available for garden receptions, small indoor events and weddings after normal business hours.

Please contact Michelle Ignacio at (408) 918-1051 for more information on renting the museum facilities.



Don't Forget to Include HMSJ in Your Holiday Giving Plans

As we enter the season of giving, why not consider including the History Museums of San Jose in your gift-giving?

Share your love of HMSJ by giving membership to someone special, and they can enjoy the same advantages for a year to come. A membership gift certificate makes a terrific stocking-stuffer!

Or, make a gift directly to HMSJ by sending your contribution by cash, credit card or stock. Your tax-deductible gift at this time of year will not only make you feel good now, but also will bring a smile to your face again on April 15.

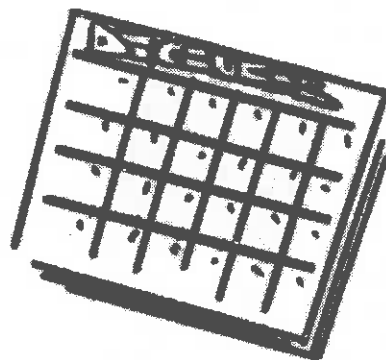
Regardless of how or when you lend your support, we are grateful for your involvement and wish you the happiest of holiday seasons!

Mark Your Calendars Now!

Exclusive Member and Volunteer Holiday Party

Thursday, December 2, 1999
 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Enjoy tasty hors d'oeuvres, holiday entertainment and festivities as we celebrate the last holiday season of the century. Plan to join us on Thursday, December 2 at the San Jose Historical Museum for a festive good time. Look for your invitation in November, or for more information call (408) 287-2290.



In the Spirit!



HMSJ is hosting a canned food drive to benefit the Second Harvest Food Bank. Join in the holiday spirit and bring your non-perishable donations on your next visit to the San Jose Historical Museum or the Peralta Adobe & Fallon House. Drop-off bins will be available at each museum gift store from October 25 through December 15.

Bring two food items to the Holiday Party and receive an additional 10% discount on top of your standard 10% member's discount. Enjoy this 20% discount on select gift items in the City Store December 2 through December 9.

Gift Membership Application

YES I WANT TO GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Century | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$45 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tower Circle | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pueblo Circle | \$500 |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission Circle | \$1000 |

Member's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Employer _____

Email _____ Fax _____

Gift from: _____

Message on gift card: _____

I would like to make a year-end gift to HMSJ:

Amount \$ _____

Please indicate method of payment _____

Credit Card # _____

Mastercard VISA _____ Expiration Date _____

Personal Check: Make checks payable to:
 History Museums of San Jose (HMSJ)
 1650 Senter Road
 San Jose, CA 95112-2599

I would also like information on:

Volunteer opportunities Donations/Sponsorships

If you are employed by a company with a matching gift program, you can double your donation to us. Contact membership services for more information at (408) 918-1042.

Museum Growth

A New Collection Center for the Museum

The History Museums of San Jose's permanent collection is moving to a state-of-the-art home in the city of San Jose's new Central Service Yard (formerly the Beech Nut Packing Company). This new 45,000 sq. ft. facility provides greatly improved conditions for the collection. In addition to improving the physical care of the collection, the move also provides an opportunity to thoroughly document the collection, thereby making these important artifacts more accessible to the public.



Original photo of the 1945 Beech Nut Packing Company, which will be the new home for the museums' collection.

The new Collection Center has fire, security, and climate systems in place, and HMSJ staff is beginning Phase I of the shelving project to house the collection. Phase I includes the installation of a space-saver high-density mobile storage system, a system that has been used successfully in museums throughout the country. It employs a combination of custom cabinets, drawers, shelves and racks, all of which meet professional archival standards for storage of museum artifacts. The city of San Jose has invested \$300,000 in Phase I of the shelving project, \$100,000 in the physical move and \$50,000 in equipment for the site.

The new Collection Center is more than a storage facility. It also includes processing areas where staff, volunteers, and interns can catalog and rehouse the collection in new archival containers. As part of the cataloging process, digital images will be taken of individual artifacts and stored in a dedicated computer system. Ultimately, these images will be accessible to the general public on the Internet.

In preparation for the move, the collection is being prioritized by need. The most environmentally sensitive materials will be moved first. These materials include over 5,000 Pueblo de San José papers. Dating from 1792, they are the oldest municipal papers in the state of California. Other artifacts prioritized for Phase I of the move include textiles, film, paintings, photographs and Native American baskets.

The History Museums of San Jose's permanent collection includes more than 500,000 artifacts, which represent a part of Santa Clara Valley's heritage. This move provides a tremendous opportunity for the Museum to organize, catalog, research, and care for these irreplaceable objects. We'll keep you posted as the move progresses.

HMSJ Makes Tracks!

Trolley Lines Dedicated This Summer

The San Jose Historical Museum made tracks this summer! A new trolley track now runs from the Trolley Barn at the museum in Kelley Park down to the parking lot of Happy Hollow Zoo.

This new line and the tracks that loop around the Light Tower at the museum, along with the Trolley Barn, built in 1984, were all dedicated at the annual California Trolley and Railroad Corporation (CTRC) volunteer recognition event in August.

CTRC, a museum affiliate under the leadership of Rod Diridon, secured \$20,000 from the County Heritage Commission and \$17,000 from the city of San Jose to pay for the materials to lay the tracks to Happy Hollow.

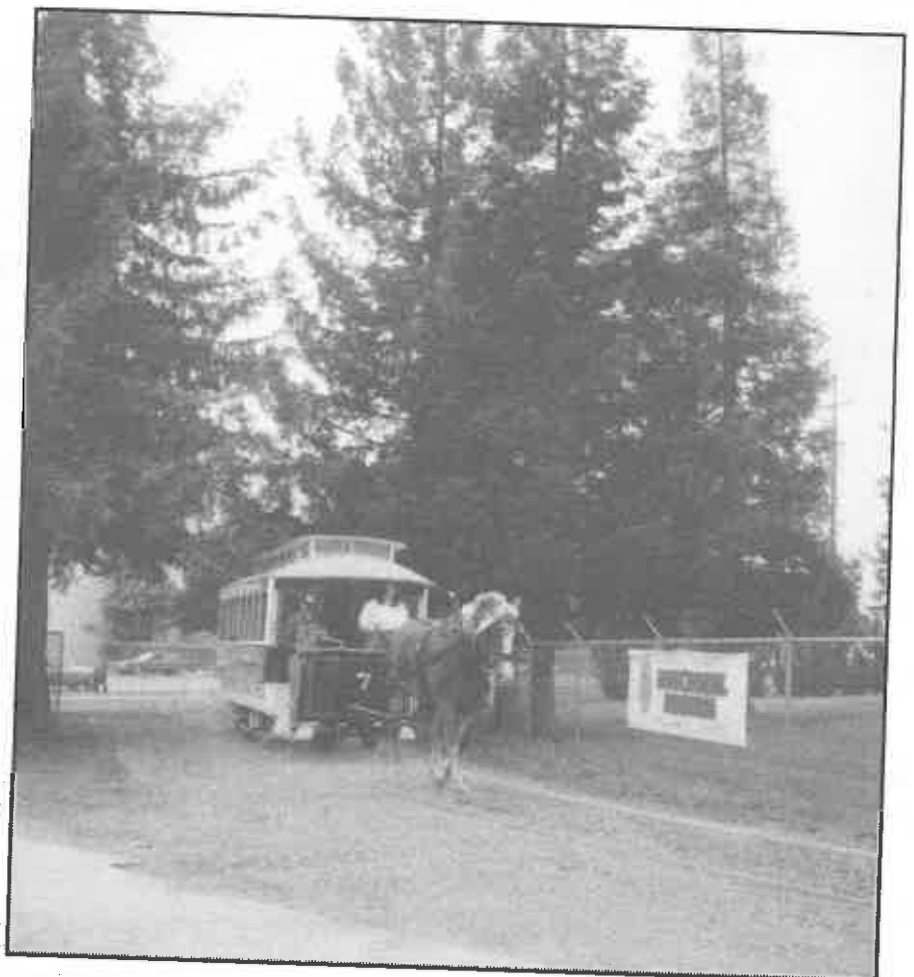
To make the tracks a reality, CTRC secured over 23 businesses that donated their labor, time and other in-kind services to lay the tracks in front of the museum along Senter Road. (See the list of generous contributors below.)

With Mayor Ron Gonzales, Chair of the Board of Supervisors Pete McHugh and many sponsoring contractors present, the new tracks were officially dedicated at the San Jose Historical Museum last August. "Jigs" the horse, pulling trolley car #7, lead the inaugural trip on the new tracks to Happy Hollow Zoo parking lot and back to the Trolley Barn.

The trolleys won't run on the tracks until the next phase is complete — the installation of electric wires — which power the vintage trolleys. Unfortunately, "Jigs" had to go back to the farm. If you would like more information about this project and how to become involved, please call the CTRC office at (408) 924-7566.

CTRC and HMSJ give special thanks for the pro bono donations for the Light Tower loop and Happy Hollow rail line: Granite Construction Co., Collishaw Landscape, DeSilva Gates Construction, Stacey and Witbeck, Inc., Union Pacific Railroad, Hatch Mott McDonalds, HNTB, PacBell, PG & E, Railway Services and Products, Stevens Creek Quarry, WSP Transportation, Kevin Hildebrand Trucking, Reed & Graham, Raisch Products, West Tek, ABSL, Pacific Trench, Big 4 Rents, Sheedy Crane and Rigging, DePaoli Equipment, Inc., George Maciel Trucking and Cobra Trucking.

Pro bono donations for the Trolley Barn: Prodis Associates Architects, A.I.A., Bottomley Distributing, The Kroll Company, Laborer's Local Union Number 270, Cygna Consulting Services, Coast Engraving, Kearney Pattern Works, Roy M. Butcher Electric, Castro Painting, Inc., Patton Brothers, Peninsula Crane & Rigging, Polyaire Mechanical, Union Pacific Railroad, Superior Automatic Sprinkler Corporation, R.W. Taylor Company, Inc.



Inaugural trip: Jigs pulls trolley car #7, full of excited passengers, on the newly laid tracks along Senter Road. Photo credit: Fred Bennett.

Special Teacher Programs

School Days Are Here Again and the Education Department is in Full Swing!

Teacher Workshops

Three new special teacher programs will be offered in the fall and additional programs are planned for spring. Two of these programs were already successfully hosted by HMSJ in September and October. At the *School Programs Showcase* on September 30, 2nd-6th grade teachers previewed many of the exhibit buildings and hands-on activities used in school programs at the Historical Museum in Kelley Park.

During *First a Bite, Then a Hike* on Saturday, October 2, 5th and 6th grade teachers enjoyed a bagel breakfast at the Peralta Adobe & Fallon House Historic Site followed by a walking tour of downtown San Jose with docents from the History Hike school program. They explored Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, and Mexican architectural elements in San Jose buildings and brainstormed ways to prepare students for a History Hike field trip.

Upcoming Teacher Workshop

Teachers are invited to participate in a special program designed specifically for classroom educators. *What Do You See? What Do You Think? Object-based Teaching and Learning* will highlight ways teachers can season their curriculum with object-based classroom lessons. Museum staff will lead this interactive workshop on teaching techniques using objects, documents, and photographs from current exhibitions and exhibit buildings. Teachers will brainstorm fun ways to prepare their classes for museum visits.

What Do You See? What Do You Think? will be held Tuesday, November 16, 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the San Jose Historical Museum. The workshop fee is \$30 and includes a boxed dinner. Pre-registration is required. For more information, please call (408) 918-1050.

School Programs

HMSJ's 1999-2000 school programs brochure was mailed to thousands of teachers throughout Santa Clara County and the reservation process began in August. This year, teachers will use a new and improved system to book their favorite fieldtrips — registration forms returnable by mail, fax or e-mail. This system eliminates the frustration of voice mail and busy signals. The brochure and registration form is also available on HMSJ's web site. Fieldtrips began Tuesday, September 14.

Continuing this fall is the very popular *Voices of Gold* Interactive school program in conjunction with *Voices of Gold: Santa Clara Valley and the Gold Rush*. Fourth grade students participate in an interactive gallery game in the *Voices of Gold* exhibition and try their luck panning for gold. Beginning in April, *Gold Rush Adventure* introduces 4th graders to the stories recorded in historic documents such as letters, diaries, legal records and photographs. Students also design their own *Gold Rush* adventure journals and learn to pan for gold. Experience Adobe Days, Experience Victorian Days, Explore San Jose's Past, Explore Peralta Adobe & Fallon House, Historic Transportation Experience, History Hike, Victorian School Kit, Westward Ho!, and Women Who Made a Difference also return this school year. These popular programs served more than 33,000 students last school year.

For more information about school and teacher workshops, please call 408-918-1040, e-mail the education department at education@sjhistory.org or visit our web site at www.sjhistory.org.

**"Super hands-on activities!
Correlates with the curriculum
beautifully."**

Teacher, Encinal School

**"I have never been on a field
trip with so many fun activities!
I loved your place."**

Student, Grade 4, Vinci Park School

**"This was one of the best field
trips I have ever taken. The
students didn't even know it was
lunch time after the last activity!"**

Teacher, Vinci Park School

**"Thank you for giving us an excellent
tour. I enjoyed the Chinese
Temple. I hope you enjoyed us!"**

Student, Grade 4, Laneview Elementary School

"Excellent learning fieldtrip!"

Teacher, Cedar Grove School



Above: Museum docents Nancy Martin and Eileen Hutchins have fun between teacher visits at the *School Programs Showcase* on September 30th at the San Jose Historical Museum. Right: Iva Morris shows off some of the materials used in school programs such as this loom from *Experience Adobe Days*. Photo credit: Lisa Falk.

Historical Highlights of Santa Clara Valley

Moffett Field: From Helium to High Tech

by Jack Douglas

Since the Navy's departure from Moffett Field there have been many suggestions on how the air-base should be used. The building of housing or an expansion of the San Jose Airport are two ideas that have been proposed. The cities of Sunnyvale and Mountain View, however, are adamantly opposed to its use as an airfield due to the noise of modern jets. There was a time, though, when these two cities went to great lengths to secure this site for the Navy's only west coast lighter-than-air (LTA) rigid airships.

In the early 1930's, during the depths of the Great Depression, the leaders of the Bay Area communities saw Navy projects as a great boon to the local economy. Farsighted engineers and scientists were intrigued by the potential of having a center for the latest in aeronautical technology. It seemed entirely possible, then, that these giant airships would have the capacity to carry large passenger loads.

LTA aircraft or dirigibles were developed in Germany and used by them in bombing raids on London during World War I. After the war the Navy acquired a German dirigible as reparations and renamed it the *Los Angeles*. Soon after, an American-made ship, the *Shenandoah*, was built by the Navy as its first of four "dreadnoughts of the sky." Not content with these models, the Navy planned sister ships that were to be almost three times the size of the *USS Los Angeles*: the *USS Akron* and *USS Macon*. The *Akron* was to be based in Lakehurst, New Jersey, and the *Macon* (prudently named for the home town of the Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs) was to be based at a California site which most assumed would be in the southern part of the state.

In what appeared to be an almost hopeless effort, San Francisco's longtime mayor (soon to be gov-

ernor) James Rolph made an appeal to Bay Area leaders to launch a campaign to bring the new facility here. In an outpouring of cooperation not seen before or since, the cities and towns around the Bay raised funds and used their influence to get the Navy to forgo its Southern California plans.

Finding a Site

Mrs. Laura Whipple, a real estate agent from Niles, became a major force in the campaign. It was she who found the ideal site when she visited the 1,700 acre Ynigo Ranch near the village of Sunnyvale. With the support of the editor of the *Mercury Herald* and the San Jose Chamber of Commerce, she spread the word that a location had been found, and that fund raising should begin for the purchase of the ranch. The land would then be offered to the Navy for \$1.00.

In a three year drive, to which almost all the cities around the Bay contributed, \$476,619 was raised to acquire the ranch. San Jose Congressman Arthur M. Free presented the "Free Bill" in the House of Representatives, which appropriated funds to build the base, which would be called the Mountain View-Sunnyvale Naval Air Station. Navy brass questioned the logic of building a base with a "mountain view," so they asked that the facility be named simply the Sunnyvale Naval Air Station.

The Free Bill authorized the expenditure of five million for the construction. One wonders if President Herbert Hoover wasn't a bit jubilant when he signed the bill in February 1931. The new facility would be just down the road from his home at Stanford University.

An Unusual Airport

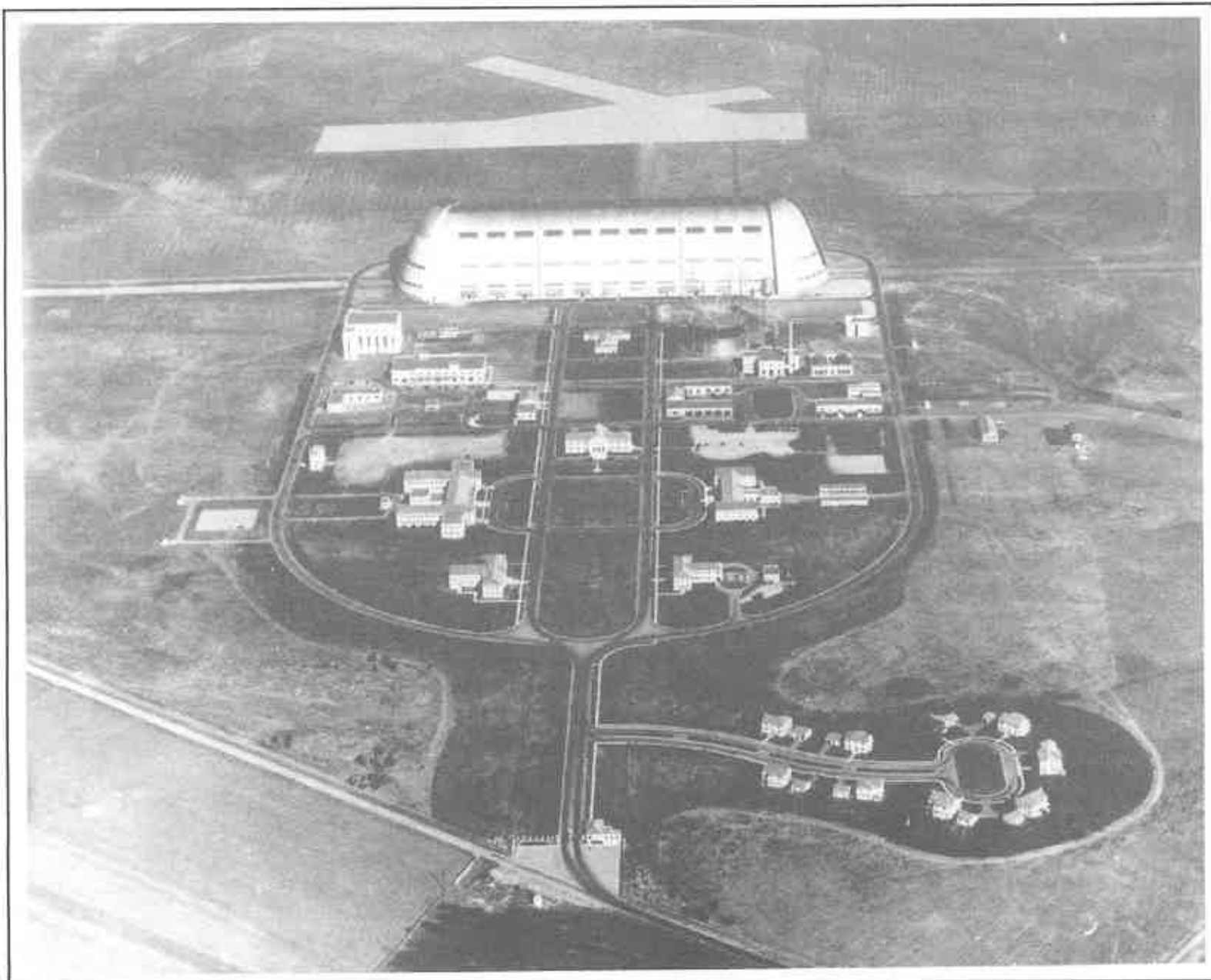
On October 5, 1931, construction was begun on a new kind of airport. The primary structure would be the hangar for the giant dirigible, which was itself under construction in Akron, Ohio. The cost for building a shelter for the 785-foot dirigible would take half of the five million dollar appropriation.

Building what would be called Hangar One was as great an engineering feat as the dirigible itself, and it has proved to be much more lasting. The hangar covers an area equivalent to six football fields — it is 198 feet high and 1,138 feet in length. A *Mercury Herald* article of the time illustrated the fact that all of San Jose's "skyscrapers" could be contained within its walls and under its ceiling. The giant sliding doors, weighing 600 tons each were moved by electric motors. The building is so large that it creates its own indoor microclimate.

A large gasometer or helium storage tank (now gone) was another unique feature of the base. A small landing strip for conventional aircraft was placed east of the hangar. The headquarters, barracks, officers' housing and other structures were all built around a spacious parade ground. All are appropriately designed in the Spanish Colonial motif. These buildings are as functional and attractive today as they were when they were constructed. To make the base more accessible the county agreed to build a major roadway nearby.

Giants of the Sky

The people of our Valley got their first look at a giant dirigible when the *USS Akron* paid a visit to the soon to be completed Sunnyvale Air Station. Thousands of folks flocked to the base to experience this marvel up close, and few were disappointed. (This author, as a small boy, witnessed one of these flying leviathans and can attest to an unforgettable experience.)

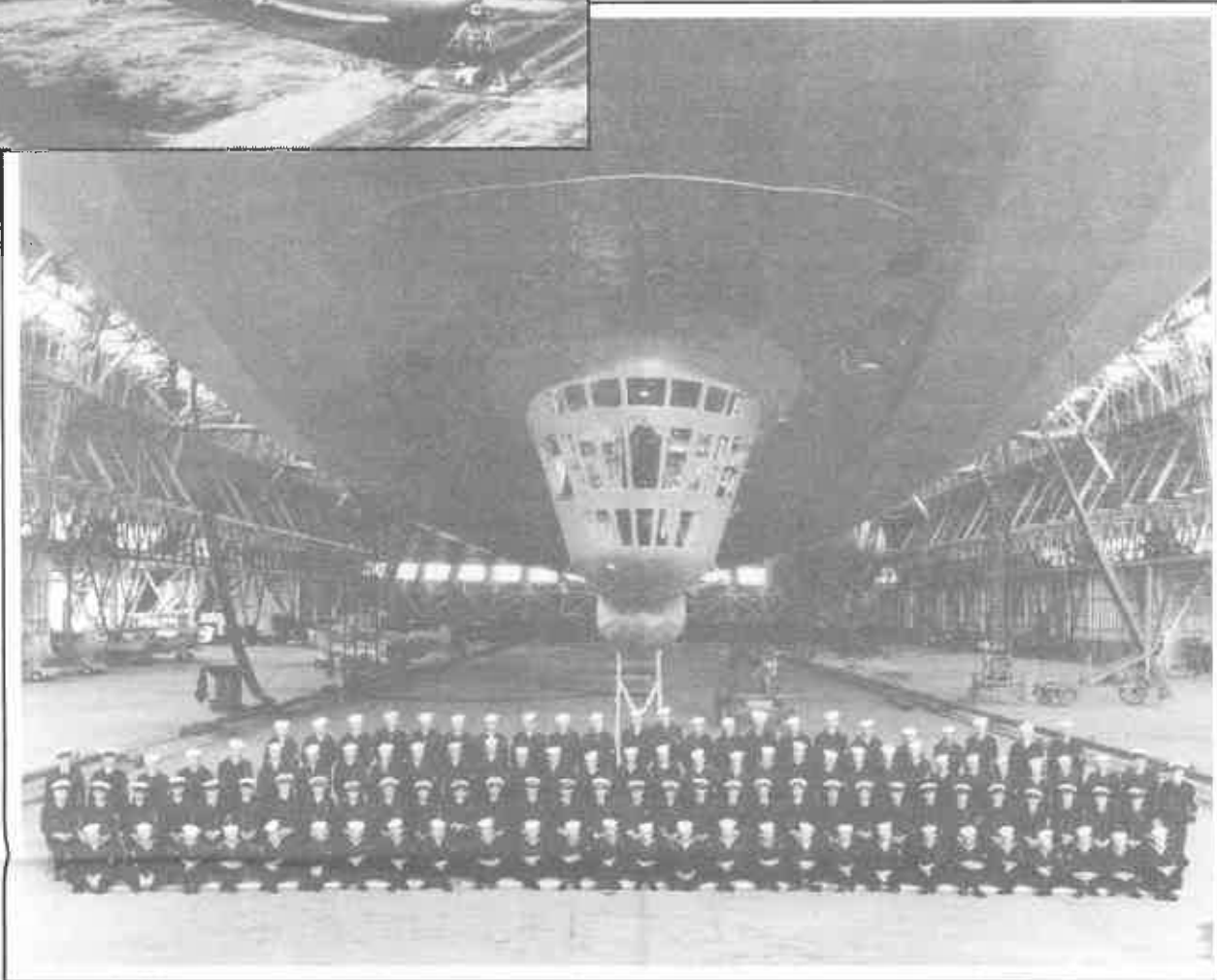


Left: Birdseye view of the new Sunnyvale Naval Air Station, 1934.

Historical Highlights (continued)



Left: USS Macon on its mooring mast, 1934. Below: Crew of the USS Macon, Spring 1934. Official US Navy photographs.



On April 4, 1933, a week before the Sunnyvale Air Station was to be commissioned, the USS Akron crashed during a storm on the east coast. Only three of her 76 man crew survived. Among the dead was Rear Admiral William Moffett, Chief of the Naval Bureau of Aeronautics, and a firm believer in the dirigible program. It was decided to christen the new base Moffett Field.

October 16, 1933 was a day to remember, as the long awaited USS Macon came into view. Almost everyone throughout the Bay Area was on the street or seeking a position atop a building in order to cheer the world's largest dirigible. The Macon settled gently into her home port and soon became a regular sight in the Valley.

The Macon was much like a galactic starship. Inside her hull she had a fleet of eight planes which could be launched and retrieved by a trapeze-like device. She also could lower observers through cloud cover to monitor the actions below.

All did not go as well with her as her supporters had hoped however. The strain on the airship's rigid structure in heavy weather caused problems. On February 12, 1935, while on maneuvers off Point Sur south of Monterey, a piece of the tail broke off, sending particles of metal into the rear gas cells. After struggling to stay aloft the Macon slowly descended to the ocean where it sank. Fortunately 81 of her 83 man crew abandoned the craft in time to be picked up by nearby naval vessels. The loss of the Macon was the final straw for the Navy's dirigible program, and the base was turned over to the Army Air Corps for a training base.

Other Uses for the Field

Moffett Field was used by the Army Air Corps until the outbreak of World War II. During the war the Navy reoccupied the field and used it as headquarters for its squadrons of non-rigid blimps that patrolled for enemy submarines along our coast. Hangars Two and Three were built to house this fleet. This job was continued after the war by four engine Orion aircraft.

Although the visionary dirigible program failed, Moffett Field continued its role as a center for aeronautical research and development. The Ames Research Center and the nearby Lockheed Missile and Space Facility were to come in the future.

With the departure of the Navy, Moffett Field is now more accessible to the public. I would encourage everyone to visit the historical museum which is attached to Hangar One. On display are numerous models and exhibits on the various operations of the base from its beginnings to the present.

The Museum is open Wednesday – Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., sometimes on Sunday and on request. Call for further information at: (650) 603-9827.

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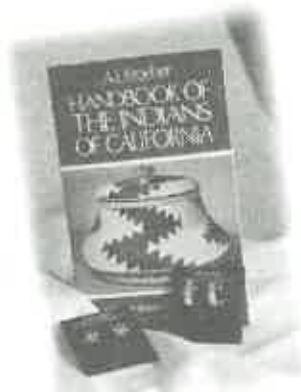
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Volunteer Opportunities

HMSJ's volunteers open the doors for many visitors who are interested in multicultural history. Volunteer training is ongoing. If you know someone interested in joining us, call Jennifer Warner at (408) 918-1050.

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