WINTER HISTORY NIGHTS

Two evening presentations will be offered to Museum Association members and guests during the months of January and February.

A donation of $2.00 is requested of all Association members and $5.00 from non-members at the door. Coffee, tea and cookies will be served. Please make reservations by phoning the Museum (287-2200).

The programs will be held in the upstairs meeting room of the Firehouse, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Parking will be available on the Museum grounds; enter through Phelan Avenue gate.

Thursday, January 21, 1988 — 7:30 P.M.

Historic St. Joseph Church — California's Oldest Parish
A talk and slide presentation by Frank Fiscalini, Executive Director of St. Joseph's Restoration Project.

The Saint Joseph structure is a national and state historical monument, preserving the heritage begun prior to statehood in Pueblo San Jose. The present church celebrated its 110th anniversary in March, 1987.

At the present time the building and its contents are undergoing restoration. The restoration will include finishing parts of the original structure that have remained incomplete for 100 years. The unique paintings, Father Berchicelli murals, the Odell organ, stained glass windows and other artifacts will be meticulously returned to their original quality.

Frank Fiscalini will explain to us what is being done to the church and tell us about the wonderful finds that have been discovered during the restoration.

On Saturday, January 30, 1988, there will be a tour of St. Joseph's, for those who have attended the January 21 lecture.

Thursday, February 4, 1988 — 7:30 P.M.

Eye on the Sky — The Centennial of the Lick Observatory
A talk and slide presentation by W.J. Shihoh Unrath, Lick Observatory historian and guide.

Eye on the Sky — Lick Observatory's First Century is the title of a new book on the world famous Lick Astronomical Observatory on the occasion of its centennial anniversary. W.J. Shihoh Unrath, co-author of the book (together with Donald Osterbrock and John Gustafson) and historian of Lick Observatory will give a talk and slide presentation on the fascinating history of the observatory. The construction of the world's first mountain top observatory equipped with the largest telescope ever built at that time was an adventure requiring the talents and resources of unusual and sometimes eccentric individuals. Mr. Unrath's talk will include stories of the construction illustrated with slides of vintage photographs, as well as accounts of life on Mt. Hamilton through the years and slides of some of the important astronomical discoveries made by Lick researchers over the years. An advance printing of the book will be available for purchase.

See also bus trip to Oakland on page 4.
**ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Being selected as the 1988 San Jose Historical Museum Association President is an honor for me, and a responsibility I do not take lightly. Looking ahead, 1988 should be a banner year for the Museum. The Stephens Ranch Fruit Barn, the Zanker House and possibly the DeLuz House to the growing list of Development Organizations. While much progress has been made in program and site development, attention is being focused on various issues related to the Museum.

This spring Museum City staff, along with Museum volunteers, will be meeting to resolve four issues relating to development: 1) code interpretation, 2) historic district status, 3) Master Plan update and revision, 4) commercialization and private funding guidelines. Each of these four issues is complex and clarification is necessary for a variety of different reasons. As decisions are made they will become the tools for further development.

**Streets—Every City Needs Them**

The streets at the Historical Museum are only a safe place without a final surface treatment on what is existing. While a dusty/summer and muddy/ winter surface may be historically accurate, it is not compatible with visiting public and optimum Museum conditions.

The Historical Museum streets, which will contain water, electrical, telephone, sewer, storm drains, fire hydrants and other details, are outside our capability. Our Board of Directors has approved a proposal for engineering the street system with an estimated completion cost of $3.1 million. Should anyone be interested in providing membership or financial support to the Historical Museum street system, or willing to help, please give me a call.

**DOCENT REPORT**

The end of February begins a busy time for the San Jose Historical Museum Docent Council. For the next two weeks, February 26 through March 9, a group of prospective docents will receive training at the San Jose and the Historical Museum. This training, in their respective fields, is intensive but very complete, and by summer one has an excellent historical overview of San Jose's past. The training includes workshops on various subjects, technical training, and special guest lectures. This training may be considered as the Museum's way of preparing its staff and volunteers to assist in the services to the public.

**FROM THE EDITOR**

Happy New Year! And a warm welcome to the many new members of the Museum Association who are joining us for 1988. I urge you to take full advantage of the Museum and its services. The Museum often, attend lectures, and sign up to become a volunteer or docent. You will meet a helpful and friendly group of people and be enriched by your experience.

At the December meeting of our Board of Directors, the Committee on Development was honored for their contributions to the Museum. Gloria Hom, Joan Helms, and Marvin Bambrough each contributed a tremendous amount of time and energy, and expertise to our Association during their terms of office and we are very grateful to them.

New Board members who began service in January include Gerry DeYoung, Rosa Fountain, and Joe Meislah. Kathleen Muller continues as Association Administrator.

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION CORNER**

As 1987 draws to a close, I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Historic Landmarks Commission, to wish everyone involved with the Historic Museum and its friends a Happy Holiday season. We look forward to working closely with the Museum staff, the City of San Jose, and other City departments for the development of projects that will preserve the heritage of the City. In addition to holiday greetings, we wish to encourage the various City departments (the Recreation Agency, the City Council, Parks and Recreation, General Plan Staff, Collection Care, others) and other private organizations which have maintained their support and assistance this year.

Leslie Parks
Chairman

**MUSEUM AUXILIARY**

Auxiliary Volunteers are important to the San Jose Historical Museum because they provide service and helpful staffing for the on-going operation of the Museum, and help to support the other visible areas where you will see Auxiliary Volunteers are the Library, the Gift Shop, and the Programming, Group Tours and Special Events departments. Many of the volunteers work behind the scene. Some of these areas are: Gardening, Research, Educational Services, General Administration, and Collection Care.

People interested in becoming a volunteer at the Museum must have a two-year commitment (to Volunteer Coordinator) at (408) 287-2290. An appointment will be set up for an interview, at which time skills and interests are discussed to determine and help the volunteer choose an assignment. Once an assignment is chosen, the volunteer is trained by the appropriate area supervisor. Upon completion of training, the assignment begins and everyone depends on the volunteer to fulfill his or her responsibilities and commitments.

The Auxiliary Volunteers make a commitment to provide a minimum of six hours of service per month to the Museum. However, many of the volunteers put in significantly more time than required in their commitment, not only doing the Museum a favor, but also ensuring that the Museum benefits, both as volunteers and as visitors.

If you would like to volunteer at the Museum, please fill out the Volunteer Spotlight form on p. 11 which is included in the March edition of the Museum News.

**MULLER CONSTRUCTION**

1277 OLD BAYSHORE HIGHWAY
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95112
PHONE: (408) 286-2727
ANNUAL CORPORATE MEMBERS
PATRON
KRON-TV 4
Southern Lumber Co.

BENEFICTORS
Jerry Seiber Memorial Fund

Sustaining Members
Loma Family-Erickson
Muller Construction Supply, Inc.

Regular Members
Avis-Young

Supporting Members
Blossom Hill

AERIAL VIEW OF AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC ON MULLEN ROAD NEAR THE NATIVE AMERICAN VILLAGE

ASSOCIATE
Barry Swenson Builder
Berliner, Cohen & Biagioni
Central Concrete Supply Co.

Executive Director
NOBIS

Executive Secretary
KBAY/KENN

Executive Staff
Lima Family-Erickson
Muller Construction Supply, Inc.

Home of the

Rosicrucian Press

Valley Heating & Cooling Co.

Bamburg (Marvin) & Associates

Burke Industries

Infiniti of South Bay

California Coin

Calif Oil Co.

Capote Associates

Aurea Pool Company

Collegiate Shops

Cooper, Collins & Foss Accountancy Corp.

Corex Corporation

Hall and Rambo

HMII, Inc.

In Situ Sales

Keystone Co.

McCormack Associates

Main Event

March Development

Manhattan Community Foundation

Markovits & Fox

Charles T. Muehle, D.D.S., Inc. Mirasol Vineyards

Morgan, Lewis & Bockius

George S. Noltz & Assoc.

Normandin Chrysler Plymouth

Olsen & Associates

O'Brien Travel Service, Inc.

Pfeiffer Electric Co., Inc.

Pacific Amusements

Provenzano Brothers Building Materials

Raisch Equipment Leasing

Safeco Printing Service & Supply Co.

Stapleton-Scovell Packing Co.

Thorton, Marrin, Johnson & Bridges

Valley View Packing Co.

Western Appliance & Television

Western Sales Engineering

Winston G. Alvin

Willow Glen Travel Agency

Winchester Mystery House

Winchester Ranch

Wolf/Sonnen-Buttrey

TRUST FOUNDATIONS

California Electric Company

Hubert Stuart Charitable Trust

KPMG

Mariani Foundation

Lockheed-Missile & Space Corporation

Stella B. Gross Trust Fund

MUSEUM STAFF
Mignon Gibson Director
Carolyn Sherrod Staff Technician
Walter Johnson Senior Steno
Jeanne Kondo Clerk/Typist
Archives
Leslie Navasaga Archivist
Education
Virginia Beck Curator of Education
Vivian Bubbe
Dulce Janzen Volunteer Coordinator
Ellen Garboe (p/t) Volunteer Projects Manager
Monte Duran Museum Events Coordinator
Michele Martin Collections Coordinator
Sarah Helgho Nunes Curator
Nancy Valby Curator

ASSOCIATION STAFF
Kathleen Muller Administrator
Mary Benitez Administrative Assistant
Barbara Bruce Atkins Administrative Assistant
Carol Ouellette Bookkeeper
Earline Shields Membership Secretary
Carol Carlson Manager
Anita Kaczuba Scheduler/Supervisor
Dee Colacino Supervisor

John Smurthalwe

JOHN SMURTHWAITE - INCOMING VICE PRESIDENT

The Association's Holiday Party of December 3, 1987, found in-coming Vice-President John Smurthalwe behind the bar in the newly decorated O'Brien's dispensing wine, soft drinks, and good humor to the holiday crowd. John is a familiar face at Association events. Long before he joined the Association Board of Directors as a Member-at-Large in 1985, he frequently attended Museum functions with his wife, Joan, who has been a docent at the Museum since 1981.

A Manager of Sales Support with the General Electric Company John's work involves organizing conferences, meetings and special events for customers and management personnel. G.E. Vice President of the Association and an expert in the "meetings industry" John will be an excellent source of suggestions for new and better special events. He will also chair the Personnel Committee in 1988. John and Joan have become two of our most interested and dedicated volunteers.

Although John enjoys the study of history, particularly the military history of the world wars of this century, the most important benefit to him in supporting the Museum Association is the sense of continuity, of belonging to a tradition that feels like a family. Many newcomers to the area are looking for an identity for San Jose, a feeling of belonging. Joining the community. John feels that the Museum provides the good small town associations that are often lacking in a big city.

In the coming months of "family" events, more events just for Association members, like the very successful annual 4th of July picnic. Several friends from work who came as John's guests in past years promptly joined the Association because they so enjoyed the event and people.

The growth of the Association over the last two years has been phenomenal. John attributes that growth and success to the "great people involved." During his term as Vice-President he would like to see his Association family continue to grow and develop, so with each Association event he will have more old friends to greet and more new friends to welcome.

VINTAGE REFLECTIONS

WINTER FASHION SHOW AT CALIFORNIA HISTORY CENTER, DE ANZA COLLEGE

Le Petit Trianon at DeAnza College was the site of a vintage Reflections fashion show on November 16. The event was sponsored by the California History Center. This restored home of the 1890's was a perfect setting for a fashion show of antiques and reproduction clothing from the 19th century.

Scripwriter and producer Sylvia Grevelding provided the music, in a historically accurate series of vignettes from San Jose settings of the late 1900's.

Jack Webb, who has much experience with community theater, directed the production, served as narrator, and provided appropriate music for the models' entrances and exits. His wife, Frances, assisted in preparing the script.

ENDOWMENT FUND DONATIONS

During the months of November and December, 1987, the San Jose Historical Museum's Association Endowment Fund Special Projects Fund in honor of the following individuals:

In Memorium
Bert Boysen
Harry A. Martin
Mary Sinsara
Alice B. Stelling

Gifts to the San Jose Historical Museum's Association to honor someone on a special occasion, or as a memorial, may be sent to the San Jose Historical Museum's Association Endowment Fund, 685 Phelan Avenue, San Jose, CA 95112. These gifts will be sent to the person being honored or the family of the deceased.
FROM THE ARCHIVES

Document Preservation Or Why There Are Shredds On The Storeroom Floor

In the last year the physical structure of the Archives has been improved to provide greater space, which has given rise to a bigger collection. This has included the improvement of the security system, earthquake braking of the structure, and the end of storage units with separate tracks and ultraviolet protection sleeves, and the repair of the roof.

The most important aspect of the preservation of documents. We are also seeking means to preserve materials from deterioration faster than the rate at which the quality of the "inherent vice," the self-destruction of the materials themselves. In the mid-1980s paper was the newest and most important producing paper for the evergrowing demand. Rather than the linen-based, high-rag content, wood pulp became the predominant base material. We made paper more available; however, this also produced paper which, because of the acidic content, is now causing problems.

In a recent article in the Library of Congress it was estimated that nearly a quarter of the more than two million volumes in its collection is "too brittle to handle" and that an additional 77,000 volumes each year are in danger of loss. The Library of Congress has launched a major deacidification project to attempt to stabilize the materials and prevent major loss. This process involves the placement of very carefully-designed chamber which removes moisture and then pumps in diethyl zinc (DEZ), an agent which neutralizes the acidity present and provides a chemical buffer on the paper to prevent further erosion. This project, being involved in the preservation of all of the books in the Library of Congress, is a major step in the preservation of a $10 million deacidification plant which will save approximately one-half million volumes annually.

Other means are being used to preserve the materials in their original state. Some materials are being protected by the placement of materials within a protective envelope, lamination, and copying onto other media such as film, paper, or optical discs for information purposes. Other means to strengthen the paper and stabilize the materials being investigated.

The preservation of materials is a very costly procedure. The Library of Congress project is estimated to cost $2 per volume and is not available at this time available to other Archives and Libraries. Page by page deacidification is an expensive and time-consuming process as is the transfer of materials to other media such as microfilm. In addition document formats such as films, computer tapes, discs, compact cassettes, etc., need research as to means of insuring their preservation.

What does this mean to us at the San Jose Historical Museum Archives? The practice has been to preserve materials in the best possible manner given the limited circumstances. We are fortunate that we have a storage area, albeit rather limited, which has both temperature and humidity control. In the cataloguing process we are transferring materials to acid-free folders which are stored in acid-buffered boxes. The volunteers and others who are handling materials are encouraged to wear gloves and handle materials with special care. The most important thing is to be aware of the condition of materials and not because we want to keep information from people, but because the materials in themselves are only temporary record of the past and the methods used today. The sweeings from the storage areas attest to the deconstruction in the materials and the need for preservation.

We are looking at other means to protect materials ranging from better storage, greater indexing and cataloguing which will allow for better handling of the materials, and a greater use of new technology which will allow for better identification of the materials and the need for preservation.

One of our goals is the preservation of these materials for public research not only for the information's needs but for those generations yet to come.

Leslie Masunaga
Archives

SATURDAY ARCHIVE HOURS: The Archives will be open for the following Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m. for research: January 16 and 30, February 6 and 20, March 12 and 26. Please phone (287-3290) ahead for an appointment.

MEMORIES OF BARNSTORMING

LOUIS LIEBER AND THE LYRIC THEATER

Publication of actor Frank Bacon's autobiography, "Can't Live Without Me," the 1987 Museum Association premium dredged up some history and a few memories.

One of Bacon's friends and fellow thespians in San Jose before the turn of the century was Louis Lieber, longtime sign painter on Second South Street, whom Bacon credited as being the one to put him on a career on the professional stage.

The sign over Lieber's sign shop at 61-63 South Second St. was familiar to many in San Jose and remained long after Lieber's death in 1932.

But what many San Joseans do not know is that he built the building at 61-63 South Second St., which housed the Lyric Theater on the ground floor and his shop upstairs. The Lyric, one of the city's first movie houses, was built in 1908 or 09, and was torn down in February, 1959.

The late Roy Butcher, electrical contractor, was chairman of the City's Redevelopment committee when it was decided the old theater had to go to make way for more parking space for downtown San Jose.

He recalled that soon after coming to San Jose in 1912 he got a job managing the theater, serving as projectionist, usher, booker, movie

LEGAL MUSEUM - THE MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

HIGHLIGHT TOUR OF THREE CALIFORNIA MUSEUMS

WHEN: Thursday, February 25, 1988
WHO: Association members and their guests
HOW: Royal Coach Tours
Leaving and returning to the Phelan Avenue Parking Lot of the Historical Museum
TIME: 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.
COST: Members $12.50 (lunch on your own)
Non-members $15.00 (lunch on your own)

The Oakland Museum — The Museum of California — covers four square blocks and sits alongside and beneath an evergreen park. The third story level contains a complete representation of the.sf's present urban environment. The roof of each level becomes a garden and terrace for the one above. The basic concept of the museum is not only intriguing but, in many ways, unique. Three different disciplines — history, natural science, and art — are combined into one building. The museum presents a narrative of the life of the environment. You'll see actual rooms (kitchens, parlors, offices out of the past) or vivid displays suggesting a historical period, such as the time of an election campaign, the gold rush era, or the 1906 earthquake. In the natural science section you may see a weather station and a meteorological exhibit. And in the art gallery, California artists have their work on display.

We will have a ¼ hour docent led highlight tour of the three galleries.

After lunch you will be able to return to the galleries and look at the exhibits at your leisure, visit the Education Photo Exhibit in the Stryker Gallery, stroll in the gardens and shop at the museum gift shop.

We will return to the Historical Museum by 4:00 P.M.

Reservations for this trip are limited to 45 and may be made only when there is a waiting list for the trip.

Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland 94607
NAME: [ ]
ADDRESS: [ ]
PHONE: [ ]
NUMBER OF RESERVATIONS: [ ]
RESERVATION CONFIRMED: [ ]

Patricia Loomis
Oakland Museum, February 25, 1988

Oakland Museum, February 25, 1988
FIRST GLIMPSE THROUGH THE EYE OF A GIANT

This New Year’s Eve of 1988 will mark the centennial of the installation of the “eye” into Lick Observatory’s great refracting telescope. This “eye” was the glass plate lens ever manufactured anywhere in the world at the time of its construction. It measured one meter (36 inches) in diameter.

The Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton was the first astronomical observatory ever built on a mountain top. The clear steady atmosphere of a high altitude site is a major advantage for astronomical research. Although a larger refractor was built in Wisconsin a decade later Lick’s, is at a much lower altitude and therefore is not as effective. The Lick refractor remains the most powerful refracting telescope on earth.

The Lick Observatory’s present status as a world renowned astronomical research facility is due primarily to the efforts of two men: Captain Richard S. Floyd and Thomas E. Fraser. Both of these men gave the final years of their lives to the planning and construction of the observatory.

Captain Floyd was personally selected by James Lick, the benefactor of the Lick Observatory, as the President of his estate’s Board of Trustees. Thomas Fraser had been Mr. Lick’s confidant and the manager of his San Jose properties.

The idea of building and maintaining the world’s first astronomical observatory at a high altitude site was thought by many to be impossible. Had it not been for the tireless efforts of both Floyd and Fraser the whole project might have wound up as a disaster. The observatory’s construction took nearly a decade of diffusion and break-back working.

Although James Lick died in 1876 it was not until the Century had built a road up Mt. Hamilton to the chosen site that construction on the observatory building could begin in 1880. By the end of 1887 the building was finished. (The Bacon Bros. photo below probably dates to about that time.) The refracting telescope was nearly functional late in 1887. The first observations were made the first week of January, 1888.

W.J. Shiloh Unruh
Lick Observatory

January 3, 1888

We have not had trouble with condensation. I have used dome but once. Then it came down like rain...

Hoped to get a peep at some of the stars through the great telescope after dark. At 7:30 P.M. we prepared for the first look. Found the dome hard frozen in the liquid seal from water that had gotten into it. Fortunately had turned the shutter to S.E. during the day before the dome got stuck. Open the shutter with great difficulty from the same cause...With a good deal of manipulation after pitching several faint stars got well pointed on “Alderberan”...got short looks at him at best through thin mist and he appeared like a blazing Red Sun even when the mist at times grew so thick as to obscure him from sight of the naked eye.

January 7, 1888

Please ship me 24 dozen cases cold oil right off. We have only 3 cases left out of the last shipment and one case only lasts 2 days during the rough passage. Please move the dome on the 16th. I am afraid we will be clean out and in darkness before we can get another wagon up the road.

9 P.M. We have a beautiful night and are now observing. Just had a look at Rigil [a star]—splendid! We can only catch what comes by the shutter which is open to the South Eastward. We cannot move the dome an inch because it is frozen up hard in the liquid...We have the glasses now in two of the finders but they are not yet adjusted to parallellism with the big telescope. The big telescope works well I can safely say excellently but there is a world of nice adjustments to be made before we get it in that condition...justice and with such a monster every one of these means lots of adjusting to great and giddy heights and great precautions to save one a neck.

We are all waiting in this office (next to the big telescope) for the shutter to come down and the dome will be in about 2 hours. It is now 10:10 P.M. and bitterly cold. It has been exceedingly uncomfortable here for 4 weeks. We are short of blankets and of wood and everybody is frigid.

January 8, 1888

We have a magnificent look at Saturn last night. The definition was exquisite and it had the silvery brightness of the moon. All hands were delighted and turned in at 2 A.M. We have this moment begun looking at Neptune. There is no doubt that we have the most powerful optical instrument in the world. Our dome is still stuck and the weather bitterly cold. We are being perfectly shivering over sickly fires of wet wood.

January 14, 1888

We are having a rough time with the frost. Thermometer went to +6° last night the coldest by 7° ever known here...I think the photo lens is going to be wonderful...I will send you some negatives as soon as I can...What we want now is a good watch. Our 11th winds, however, have perhaps blown up more good than bad, for I am convinced now, that to have transferred the observatory to the Egmont of the University of California in midwinter would have placed a heavy “handycap” on its start in scientific work. “All is well that ends well.”

W.J. Shiloh Unruh
Historian
Lick Observatory

January 1888

It is here, with all Floyd’s notes and letters, that we can see what a difficult task he had and was having attempting to complete the responsibility charged to him of constructing a “powerful telescope” and suitable observatory.” The accounts here only cover a period of roughly two weeks. Imagine fourteen years of such headaches. The difficulties of the project took a heavy toll on Floyd’s health. He died in 1889 shortly after the observatory was transferred to the University of California.

Perhaps all this is best summed up in the last sentence of one of Floyd’s letters: “All is well that ends well.” Floyd saw the planning and construction of Lick Observatory all the way through to its completion. No one else wanted it “to end well” as much as Captain Richard S. Floyd.

MUSEUM WISHBOK – DREAMS AND DONATIONS

The Docent Council Public Relations Task Force has put together a Wishbook or catalog which represents the collection, preservation, exhibition, interpretation, research and promotion needs of the Museum. The Task Force welcomes suggestions for items and services which will contribute to the Museum’s growth and well-being. Forms for wish suggestions are available from Virginia Beck, Curator of Education, and should be returned to her.

The Wishbook will be available in the upstairs reception area after January 15th for those who express interest in making donations. The wishes are categorized according to cost and already include a portable copier for the Archives, towel service and three silk ferns for the Plants’ and a special exhibit maintenance book. Recent donations have included two electric typewriters and a stereo cassette tape player.

The Task Force looks forward to receiving wishes and encourages your donations of cash, specific items or services.

Nancy Martin
Shirley Veen
Public Relations
Task Force Members

WANTED: OLD PAINTINGS

Westview Gallery
FINE ARTS BROKERS
1088 LINCOLN AVENUE
SAN JOSE, CA 95125
408/953-3555

The original Lick Observatory building as it looks today. Note the architectural changes from the Bacon Bros. photo of a century ago. Photo by W.J. Shiloh Unruh.
The members of the San Jose Historical Museum Docent Council act as interpretive tour guides and teachers to over 40,000 children and adults each year at the Museum complex in Kelley Park, the Peralta Adobe in downtown San Jose, historic downtown San Jose, and the Japanese Friendship Garden in Kelley Park as well as in the school classroom. The creative talents and deep commitment of these 160 men and women is evidenced by the thousands of volunteer hours they contribute to the Museum each year.

Providing tours at the Museum complex is the primary function of the Docent Council, but this is only the beginning. Beyond this exciting service, the Docsents create new education programs for children and adults, publicize the Museum through appearances at special events, and participate in the Museum special programs: Living History Days and Victorian Christmas.

The Docsents extend the Museum into the community in a variety of ways: the Victorian Schoolkit and Ohlone Indian Schoolkit, hands-on programs for 3rd through 5th grade; the Adult Outreach Kit, "Decades of Change, 1912-1938," for high school students through senior citizens; and a walking tour of historic downtown San Jose featuring in four different versions, over 70 sites which are significant to San Jose's history. In addition, the Docsents enable special groups to enjoy the Museum through the Armchair Traveler and mobility-limited individuals and a touch/tour experience for visually-limited individuals.

Docsents were involved throughout their association with the Docent Council. Meetings include speakers on such informative topics as the history of Alcatraz Island, the Santa Clara Trolley Restoration Project, and Art Deco Memorabilia. The Docsents also have the opportunity through field trips to visit such interesting places and exhibits as San Jose's Japanese Friendship Garden, Oak Hill Cemetery, and Ardenwood Farm in Fremont. Docsents also enjoy social gatherings such as a Christmas party and an Appreciation Luncheon in June. As Glennia Branner, long-term Docent and fourth generation Californian says, "I enjoy being a Docent at the Museum every day." A Victorian Christmas at the Museum is one of the highlights of the year.

Each spring the Museum staff conducts a training session for those individuals interested in becoming a Docent. This year's training begins on February 24th, 1987. Classes meet every two weeks, Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Education Room of the Pacific Hotel on the Museum grounds. At that time information will be presented on the Museum, the Docent Council, and the training program. Anyone wishing to attend a coffee or to learn more about the Docent Council may call the Curator of Education at the Museum (408) 297-2280. We look forward to hearing from you!

Virginia Beck
Curator of Education

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS AT THE SAN JOSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

In spite of muddy streets and high winds, the San Jose Historical Museum took on a festive holiday atmosphere on December 10, 11, and 12, 1987 to host A Victorian Christmas. This second annual holiday event was chaired by Sylvia Grevelding, Chairman of Special Events for the Museum Association Board of Directors. Assisting Sylvia was a very able committee and hundreds of volunteers.

Museum buildings were decorated through the courtesy of local florists and special groups provided free entertainment. Craft vendors presented lovely handmade and unique gift items for sale in the various Museum exhibit buildings and the Main Museum were entertained with music that was continuous throughout the day. Entertainers included children from San Jose Unified and Cambrian Schools, Opera San Jose, bell ringers from the United Methodist Church,形成的 Campbell and Los Gatos Presbyterian Church, the Thalia Trio, Jubilo, a Trombone Quartet, and street carolers.

Craft vendors presented lovely handmade and unique gifts for sale in the various Museum exhibit buildings and the Main Museum were entertained with music that was continuous throughout the day. Entertainers included children from San Jose Unified and Cambrian Schools, Opera San Jose, bell ringers from the United Methodist Church, formed Campbell and Los Gatos Presbyterian Church, the Thalia Trio, Jubilo, a Trombone Quartet, and street carolers.

Our Donations Drawing featured wonderful prizes donated by A.O. Nova, both Bridge, Los Gatos Porch, Thomas, Richard, and Morganic. Articles were donated by A.O. Nova, both Bridge, Los Gatos Porch, Thomas, Richard, and Morganic. Articles were featured in the Museum Association’s November 1987 newsletter. Our Donations Drawing featured wonderful prizes donated by A.O. Nova, both Bridge, Los Gatos Porch, Thomas, Richard, and Morganic. Articles were donated by A.O. Nova, both Bridge, Los Gatos Porch, Thomas, Richard, and Morganic. Articles were featured in the Museum Association’s November 1987 newsletter.

On February 18th, 1986, 1:00 p.m. in the Main Education Room of the Pacific Hotel on the Museum grounds. At that time information will be presented on the Museum, the Docent Council, and the training program. Anyone wishing to attend a coffee or to learn more about the Docent Council may call the Curator of Education at the Museum (408) 297-2280. We look forward to hearing from you.

Virginia Beck
Curator of Education

Fred L. Thomas, a young San Jose attorney, was appointed Deputy District Attorney of our county. He would remain in that office until his death on December 29, 1938, and is remembered as one of Santa Clara County’s most able prosecutors.

Born in Gold Run, Placer County, in 1874, Thomas graduated from Auburn High School and the old Normal School in Stockton. After teaching school in that city for a year Thomas began an office clerkship in San Jose with attorneys H. V. Morehouse. Thomas was admitted to practice law in 1901.

Thomas then entered private practice locally. After joining the District Attorney’s office he was allowed to maintain his practice so long as it did not interfere with his prosecutorial duties.

In 1926 District Attorney Clarence Coolidge did not run for reelection. Thomas, who by this time had risen to the status of Chief Deputy, ran unopposed for the position. Among his duties was the handling of the cases of the accused in the primary of 1934 when he defeated challenger Earl E. Girvin. One of the issues of the campaign was the right of district attorneys to have private law practices on the side.

Because of ill health Thomas did not run for reelection in 1936. His death occurred only days before he would have been reelected. A newspaper article in the December 30, 1938 edition of the San Jose Mercury Herald made the following comments: "Though an able criminal prosecutor - his office for many years was among the leaders in the state for percentage of convictions - he considered his work as general legal advisor to the county as important, and was especially successful in keeping the county out of litigation."

"Faithful to his duties, he hobbed about the courthouse on crutches in the Summer of 1935, after breaking an ankle, and in the years of ill health since then was often at his desk when his physicians advised him to be in bed."

"He served as president of the District Attorneys Association of California in 1936 and was well-known in many lodges."

Judge Mark Thomas Jr.
Advisory Board
HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES
OF SANTA CLARA VALLEY

By Jack Douglas

THE GREAT BRIDGE DISASTER OF 1917

We all take the many bridges in downtown for granted as we pass to and from across them. Most of us don’t realize, however, that because our city is bisected by three waterways, the Guadalup River, Los Gatos Creek and Coyote Creek, early San Joseans had to focus considerable attention on transportation across these obstacles. At that time, when our engineering skills were not so sophisticated, it was common for bridges to be washed out in the winter floods. It was, therefore, a great achievement when, in the 1870s, an iron bridge was built across the Coyote Creek at Santa Clara and 17th Streets.

One of the busiest overpasses in town, the Coyote Bridge was the main link to the farmers, factories, lumberyards and other services in the east valley. Two sets of rails traversed the bridge in order to accommodate the popular Alum Rock Trolley line that carried people to East San Jose and on to the wonders of Alum Rock Park.

The people of San Jose realized just how important the bridge was when it collapsed on Saturday morning, October 20, 1917. The Mercury Herald, in their Sunday edition, exclaimed: The greatest catastrophe sustained by San Jose since the earthquake of 1868. A Weighted down by three heavily laden railroad cars, the forty-year old structure snapped with an eerie crack and fell into the darkness.

As one might imagine, there was a great public outcry. Why were there freight cars on tracks meant only for the Alum Rock Trolley? Why hadn’t the City replaced the bridge which had been declared unsafe six years before? More practical types wondered how they were going to get back and forth to work, and others were concerned that the prunes in the boxcars, scheduled to be shipped to the Allies, be salvaged before they became soaked in creek water. A Mercury Herald editorial seemed to imply that it was a propitious accident: had these few freight cars not gone down...one filled with human freight must have done so sooner or later. Instead two heavily laden automobiles might have broken through this structural fraud and a heavy toll of life... The thought that the freight with its 200 tons of dried prunes (and sugar beets, three times the maximum load for the bridge) saved the lives of the passengers may have added a little consolation to the family of Larry Foster.

The inquest pitted the railroad against the city administration, the former consisting of President of the San Jose and Alum Rock Railroad, Judge William Beall, his attorneys Louis Oneal and James P. Sex, and the latter, City Attorney Earl Lamb and City Manager Thomas Reed. Reed, a former UC professor and city reformer, was the city’s first manager to be installed after years of political “bogusness” at City Hall. He didn’t need this scandal at a time when he was trying to clean up city government. It didn’t help matters to have one of his arch foes, Oneal, representing the railroad.

The newspapers were full of charges and countercharges. Reed said that he wasn’t surprised that freight cars were moving over the bridge, and that the railroad had no franchise to do so. He and G.W. Hunt, the newly installed city engineer, pleaded ignorance of the report made six years before that the bridge was unsafe. Hunt testified that a recent inspection found the structure quite capable of carrying loaded trolleys whose weight did not exceed 45-50 tons.

Railroad officials maintained that they had a right to use the bridge on a nightly basis. The city had used the same tracks in 1911 to move gravel over the bridge for street improvements. In his testimony, Reed said that during the night and the day, the council had looked the other way when the freight cars used the span. It was, after all, in the interest of east side business and development that the bridge be so used. We were never wishful to be too technical in our dealings with the company, Reed stated, and even had they been caught hauling freight cars in the city, there could be no punishment. We could only have confiscated their franchises, which no one was anxious to do. The city does not want to cut off its nose to spite its face. Reed shifted the responsibility by stating: I should imagine that if people want to do something they have a right to do, they would be careful to obey the rules of sound judgement in their operations which the company did not do in running something on the bridge that was much above the maximum weight for a railroad bridge, over a bridge only designed for street traffic.

The Mercury Herald editorial entitled “Mr. Chapin and Mr. Reed” ended with this statement: We are both glad and regretful that the City Manager takes so lightly the violation of railroad franchises; glad that his attitude has been made clear, and regretful that one holding a public office of great responsibility should thus irreverently esteem those legal safeguards which are supposed to stand between the public and corporation injustice.

East side residents were not so sparing. After having recently voted to be annexed by San Jose, they were not happy to have their access cut off. Mrs. Mary McCarthy, a leading critic, stated: We are living here in no man’s land and if the council don’t give us what we want we may do a little re-electing. We have lost faith in the City Manager and city council because they have not a representative here [at the meeting.] I believe Mr. Reed is in Stockton talking about good government.

Gas and water lines to the East Side were soon repaired but automobile traffic had to be rerouted to the Julian Street bridge, and trolley passengers had to leave the trolley and cross a hastily installed footbridge to resume the journey on the opposite bank. Reed rejected the idea of a temporary bridge, finding the $10,000 price tag too costly.

The lead article on the front page of the October 28th Mercury Herald read: Blame not placed for bridge crash, coroner’s jury does not fix responsibility for death of L. Foster in crash. And so it was left to investigators to sort out their hands on a staggering example of gross negligence. There is no evidence that the Foster family received anything to compensate them for the loss of their son, something almost inconceivable in our present day litigious society.

The scandal was soon forgotten when the public’s attention became totally absorbed in the casualty figures and liberty loan drives of World War I. The new bridge, which took fifteen months to build, was opened for traffic in January 1919. By then, the war had been won, Reed had moved on, and headlines were full of news of the great flu epidemic. Theodore Roosevelt died that month so it was decided to name the new structure the Teddy Roosevelt Bridge. In all due respect to Teddy, it had better been named for Larry Foster.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: ON YOU!

Spring into action! Rejuvenate yourself and give something positive back to your community by becoming a valuable volunteer at the Museum.

There’s a spot for you! Phone Volunteer Manager and the City Council because they have not a representative here (at the meeting.) I believe Mr. Reed is in Stockton talking about good government.

Volunteer Spotlight: On You!

Spring into action! Rejuvenate yourself and give something positive back to your community by becoming a valuable volunteer at the Museum.

There’s a spot for you! Phone Volunteer Manager.

Phone Volunteer Manager.

Name:

Address:

City:

Zip:

Phone:

Mail to: San Jose Historical Museum, 635 Phelan Avenue, San Jose, CA 95112. And thank you for your much-needed involvement and sup-
disastrous fire of 1877 which destroyed an earlier Chinese settlement located at the southeast corner of Market and San Fernando Streets, the Chinese built a new community on a block leased from John Heinlen. By 1888 they had built new homes, shops and the important Ng Shing Gung structure which was placed in a prominent position near the corner of Taylor and 6th. The two-story brick building served a variety of functions for the Chinese. The top floor was used as a temple, the bottom floor for community meetings, school classes and as a temporary shelter for new immigrants and visitors.

This San Jose Chinatown, also called “Heinlenville” after the landlord, was one of the largest Chinese communities in the state. With 4,000 inhabitants at the turn of the century it was second only to San Francisco’s Chinese community in size and importance.

Religion has always been important in the life of the Chinese, so wherever they congregated along the West Coast they built a temple where individuals could go for quiet moments of reflection, to give thanks to the gods, or to ask guidance for important life decisions. It was a small island of comfort and familiarity in a very strange land.

Some temples were very small, housed in lean-tos or sheds. The larger communities were able to support the construction of substantial buildings with expensive and elaborate altar furnishings especially ordered and manufactured in China. The San Jose community was one of these and the furnishings — which fortunately were saved during the 1940’s vandals — are recognized by scholars and historians as one of the most significant collections of Chinese altar artifacts in the country. The intricately carved and gilded altar screen is the largest and best preserved Chinese altar screen in the country.

The Chinese were initially welcomed to California during the early years of the Gold Rush, but with changing economic conditions they became handy seaport workers and the subject of virulent racial persecution. They began to build together in “chinitowns” for protection and to avoid all unnecessary contact with whites. (In 1860 only 8% of the Chinese in California lived in the San Francisco Chinatown, by 1890 37% were settled there.)

These conditions that had forced the San Jose Chinese into Heinlenville in the 1880’s had abated by the 1900’s. Younger Chinese accepted into the larger community. They moved away from the old Heinlenville, many of whose structures were torn down in 1931 to make way for City Corporation yard. The City also wanted the land where the Ng Shing Gung building stood. The few elderly Chinese remanded fought to save the building and for a time they were able to rally sufficient public support to prevent immediate demolition. But eventually, after an eight year struggle, the building was lost and the City tore it down in 1949.

The altar furnishings and the majority of the carved pieces from the Temple as buildings facades and interior were saved by the City and stored under the bleachers of the Municipal Stadium until the founding of the Museum and the construction of proper storage facilities. They are in remarkably good condition and await the day when they can be reinstalled in the reconstructed Ng Shing Gung building.