Celebration 150 a Huge Success!

Over 5,000 people attended the daylong festivities celebrating California's sesquicentennial in San José on September 9, 2000 — 150 years to the day that California was admitted to the union. The event, a very successful private and public partnership between History San José and the City of San José, brought together pieces of San José and California's past, present and future. Diverse music, dance and storytelling filled the stages; the adobe teemed with hands-on activities; and the streets were filled with exhibits and demonstrations representing City of San José departments.

During an exciting and educational ceremony, Meredith Kaplan, Superintendent of the Anza Trail Program, dedicated the Peralta Adobe as the first historic site on the Anza Trail. A permanent wayside exhibit was unveiled in front of the adobe. The Honorable Spanish Consulate Lorenzo Gonzales and the Honorable Mexican Consulate Sergio Casanueva spoke eloquently, as did Honorable Judge Paul Bernal, whose family was among the original Californios in this area.

Presiding over the entire ceremony, Vice Mayor Fiscallini and HSJ Chairman Steven Cox led everyone in “Happy Birthday California” before cutting the giant birthday cakes donated by the Fairmont Hotel.
Exciting Plans for New History Center

History San José is working actively with public and private leaders to secure the site and plan a new History Center in downtown San José. In order to plan this significant initiative, the board of directors created a museum project committee, chaired by Skip Wall, and a leading museum and preservation architect, which generated a preliminary space plan and building design.

A new downtown History Center will meet several important needs, especially significant exhibition spaces for both long-term and special exhibits; indoor school education and public program spaces; expanded public research space for the extensive collections of manuscripts, maps, archives, and photographs; and enhanced partnership and marketing possibilities. “The single most important goal and intent,” according to Senior Curator Alida Bray, “is to expand public access to our shared past. History is of no value if it is hidden away.”

Historic Location. The preferred location for the new museum is the north end of San Pedro Square, in the historic core of the city, adjacent to the Luis María Peralta Adobe and across the street from the Thomas Fallon House. The City of San José and the Redevelopment Agency already own most of the properties and are in active discussions on acquiring two remaining lots. If everything goes well and both public and private funds can be secured, the new facility would be available in 2003.

“Our ultimate goal is to create a national model of a regional historical center in San José,” said HSJ Board Chair Steve Cox. “We have been very encouraged in our discussions with city leadership and the Redevelopment Agency. They clearly understand how such an institution can contribute to the economic, social, and cultural success of San José and the Silicon Valley.”

As the first step in planning the new facility, HSJ engaged the architectural firm of Mark Cavagnero Associates, of San Francisco. Together, principal architect Mark Cavagnero and associate Laura Blake combine extensive experience in museum design with practical experience in, and passionate commitment to, the preservation and interpretation of historic resources. This is the perfect combination of experience and concern for what arguably is the most historic block of land in San José.

Conceptual Design Phase Complete. The architects spent several months interviewing staff, meeting with public officials, and reviewing previous planning documents, including the 1999 History Park Programmatic Framework and several recent marketing studies. Although the final design may vary, the conceptual plan meets programmatic priorities while unifying existing structures through thoughtful new construction.

Challenged to protect and enhance the existing historical resources, Cavagnero has developed a conceptual design that would, for the first time, create a visual and interpretive relationship between the Peralta and Fallon sites. “Where else in California,” asks Cavagnero, “will you be able to stand in one spot and experience four centuries of history and architecture?”

Complete historical and structural studies of the existing buildings are planned for this fall, along with a preliminary archaeological study of the site. “We are a long way from having a final plan,” said HSJ President David Crosson. “In addition to the archaeological, structural, and historical studies, we also must complete extensive business and visitor experience plans, which in turn may challenge some of the assumptions of the original design.” The capacity to raise private funds must be tested in the spring.

“It is also important,” said Crosson, “to create a process for public input into the design. We are dealing with historical resources that belong to the entire community. We will — and should — be held to the highest possible standards for their preservation and interpretation.”

This is only the beginning, but soon San José will join Pittsburgh, Washington, and Boston, by opening a vibrant new regional history center. Be sure to follow the progress of this exciting project in upcoming issues of The Exchange.
February History Makers Program to Feature Former San José Mayors

What do former city leaders think were the turning points in the development of San José over the past seventy years? What do they wish they had done differently? How would they advise current civic leaders? These and other questions will be addressed by four former mayors in the third program of the new History Makers series at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, February 8th, 2001.

Past Forward: Former Mayors Discuss the Past, Present, and Future of San José, will provide a fascinating view of San José's political leadership over the last seven decades of the twentieth century, as well as the opinions of former leaders on current issues. Moderated by HSJ President David Crosson, the program is co-sponsored by Barnes & Noble Booksellers and will be held at the Barnes & Noble store at the corner of Almaden Expressway and Blossom Hill Road.

February Program Participants. Two of the four participants in the February program already have accepted. Al Ruffo was first elected to the San José City Council as part of a reform coalition that overthrew what was largely viewed as a corrupt city machine in the late 1930s. Tom McEnery is most noted for his efforts to revive downtown in the 1980s. The other participants will fill in the intervening years.

The first two History Makers programs on the meaning of California statehood and the valley’s agricultural past have received rave reviews from all who have attended. Crosson’s questions keep the discussion both meaningful and lively. According to Crosson, “The History Makers programs prove that the past is very current and very important in our daily lives.”

The evening is free. Mark your calendar now: Past Forward; 7:00 p.m., Thursday, February 8, 2001 at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Almaden Expressway and Blossom Hill Road. It is an evening you will not want to miss.

Fascinating Research on Rare Bicycle – The Snake Bike

The museum’s permanent collection contains a variety of bicycles – the most unusual of which was built by Frenchman Alexandre Lefebvre, possibly as early as 1842. Lefebvre brought the bicycle to the United States in 1861, and then around Cape Horn to California in 1863. Long-time members and volunteers may remember seeing the unusual Lefebvre bicycle, or “snake bike” as it was often called, on display in the Pacific Hotel Gallery until 1999.

Researcher Jacques Graber’s curiosity was peaked after reading a Bike World magazine article titled Stashed Away in San José by sports historian Andrew Ritchie. Graber approached HSJ and began actively investigating the metal and wood used to make the bicycle, fabrication techniques, as well as the bike's only manufacturer's mark found on the left pedal. From numerous measurements Graber has taken, he will make a replica bicycle that can actually be ridden. Graber believes “the Lefebvre could be the oldest existing example of a bicycle that employs a pedal-to-rear-wheel drive.”

Where does the Lefebvre fit in bicycle history?

German Baron Karl von Drais invented an “aid to walking” in 1817. It was called a Laufmaschine or Running Machine, but popularly known in Germany for its maker as a Draisine. The rider straddled the vehicle and propelled it forward using his own feet—ala the Flintstones. He patented the Laufmaschine in France where it was translated as Velocipede. The debate continues as to who first attached cranks and pedals to the Draisine, but by 1868 Michaux et Company were making 12 pedal-driven Velocipèdes a day in Paris. However, the pedals on these Velocipèdes drove the front wheel and were not attached to the rear wheel like modern day bicycles. So questions remain, was Lefebvre the first to attach pedals and cranks? Is this bicycle the oldest example of pedal-to-rear-wheel drive? Is this bicycle the direct predecessor of the modern bike?

Soon Graber’s research on the Lefebvre bicycle will be on the museum’s web site www.historysanjose.org where you can follow the progress. HSJ will conserve the Lefebvre bicycle and ultimately plans to feature it in a Santa Clara Valley sports exhibition. If you would like to contribute to the Lefebvre Conservation Fund to preserve this rare bicycle, please contact Linda Spencer at 408-918-1042.

Detail of bicycle's pedals, photo courtesy Jacques Graber, 1999. Note pedals move up and down, not around.

Mrs. Estelle Cardine, Alexandre Lefebvre's daughter, posing with the bicycle.
Courtesy The San Francisco News, 1933.
Board Chairman, Steve Cox, Wins Philanthropy Day 2000 Award

Steve Cox, Chairman of History San José’s Board of Directors, received a Distinguished Volunteer Fund Raiser award on November 2, 2000, at the NSFRE Philanthropy Day Awards Luncheon at the San Jose Fairmont Hotel.

Outstanding Leadership Recognition. Cox was recognized for his outstanding leadership and his remarkable increase in fund raising on behalf of History San José. In description of Cox, the nomination stated:

Steve Cox is the volunteer leader every non-profit organization dreams of having. He has served on the Board of Directors of History San José for the past 10 years and has passion for the mission of the organization, as well as extraordinary dedication to seeing HSJ reach its full potential as a community resource.

Steve is in his third year as chairman of the board of directors, and through his vision, strategic thinking, personal commitment, and consensus-building skills he has galvanized the board into a highly effective leadership group and has inspired peak performance by individual members of the board. Leading by example, this past year Steve increased his personal fundraising by 1000% (one thousand) and through his encouragement and assistance, enabled the board to more than triple the amount of money it raised the previous year. The goals he has set for this year are equally lofty.

Visionary leadership is critical to an organization in transition, such as HSJ — it is the difference between success and failure. Steve Cox has provided the outstanding leadership necessary to position History San José for success!

We applaud Steve Cox for his leadership and dedication.

HSJ Volunteers Honored at Recognition Dinner

On the evening of September 18, 2000 History San José staff members took the opportunity to thank our wonderful corps of volunteers. There was a delicious spread of food by Café Primavera, and jazz tunes filled the warm summer air. Board Chair Steve Cox said a few words expressing his and staff’s sincere appreciation for everything volunteers do for the organization. Gifts were given to volunteers who have been with HSJ for 5, 10, and 15 years. Dorothy Wuss, who celebrates her 20th anniversary with History San José, received a special vase and bouquet.

The Volunteer Recognition Dinner is an annual event to honor those who give so much of their time and dedication to History San José. Volunteers from all areas of HSJ were invited to attend and share in the good food, conversation and fun.

Interested in Volunteering?
If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering at History San José, please contact Dori Vaught at 408-918-1047 or email dvaught@historysj.org. Help is needed in the museum stores and O’Brien’s Ice Cream and Candy Parlor, and to lead interpretive programs at Peralta/Fallon and History Park.

Object Obsession Preview Party

On September 14, directors and members of HSJ were joined by Institute of Contemporary Arts members, educators, and community leaders for a private reception and preview of History San José’s new exhibits Object Obsession and re:Collections.

Fun for All. While enjoying refreshments by Café Primavera and classic jazz, guests took advantage of the private reception and preview to meet exhibit curators Steven Gelber and Alida Bray and artist David Pace, who answered questions about their works and the extensive collection of History San José.

Gelber and Pace autographed their book and poster, respectively, while guests enjoyed both the inside exhibits and the grounds of History Park well into the evening.
Hot Off the Presses –
Sand Dreams & Silicon Orchards

History San José and Heritage Media have partnered on the first and finest book ever written on the history of the region now known as Silicon Valley, Sand Dreams & Silicon Orchards. In-depth and fascinating interviews with descendants of the early fruit growers in the valley and the people responsible for the evolving Silicon Valley, accompanied by a beautiful pictorial essay, provide the reader an intellectual and visual journey. Sand Dreams & Silicon Orchards is the ideal coffee table book that readers will not only browse, but want to read cover to cover. History San José is proud to be a sponsor of this book – just in time for holiday gift giving.

Collecting Mania Debuts at HSJ

Collecting Mania, a new interactive gallery-based museum program for middle and high school students, opens in December and runs through the remainder of the school year.

Multidisciplinary Museum Experience. Based on the new exhibitions Object Obsession and re:Collections (open through June 30, 2001 at History Park), Collecting Mania combines history/social studies curricula with reading, visual and language arts to create a multidisciplinary museum experience that middle and high school teachers will find relevant to their classroom teaching. In small groups, students analyze objects as tools for learning about the past, discuss collecting as a universal human behavior, and explore how social stereotypes are conveyed and often perpetuated in material culture. Students practice public speaking and writing and have an opportunity to create their own visual works of art. This 90-minute program is offered on Wednesday and Thursday mornings at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Collecting Mania is promoted in partnership with the San Jose Museum of Art’s own exhibition and school program based on collecting, Dale Chihuly: The George R. Stroemple Collection. Classes may visit both museums during the course of their study for a unique multidisciplinary experience.

For more information about Collecting Mania, please call 408-918-1040.

Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming Holiday Events

History Park and the Peralta Adobe and Fallon House

will be decorated for the holidays from December 1 – January 3.

Convenient parking and free admission to History Park. Call 408-918-1045 for more information.

December 14, HSJ Members and Volunteers Holiday Party. Become a member today and receive an invitation to this festive affair.

December 10 & 17, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Holiday Traditions: From Posada to Victorian Christmas

Take a break from the hustle and bustle! Bring the entire family to Holiday Traditions and step back in time at the Peralta Adobe & Fallon House. Enjoy Christmas in old San José from the Spanish Posada to modern Christmas in the Victorian age. Visit the simply decorated adobe as it might have been at Christmas time in Spanish San José, learn Posada songs and sample tasty treats from the Posada table. Hear tales associated with common Christmas decorations like Holly, Mistletoe, and Christmas trees, while sipping hot apple cider and enjoying cookies on the porch.

Visit the extravagantly decorated Victorian Fallon House with handmade period replicas made by the Garden City Doll Club. Join the Victorian Christmas Party in the formal parlor for music, parlor games, caroling, and Christmas readings with costumed characters from Victorian San José.

Tours will start on the hour at 1, 2, 3, & 4:00 p.m. The shop will open at noon for tickets. Free for HSJ members.

The Peralta Adobe & Fallon House Historic Site is located at 175 W. St John St. at the end of San Pedro Square. For more information, call 408-993-8182.

Celebration 150 Thank You

History San José would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the following sponsors for their generous support of Celebration 150!

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NEW MUNDO

San Jose Mercury News

Vie!

December 2000, Page 5
The Houghton-Donner House by Jack Douglas

Recent research has uncovered information that the Allen Apartment House at the southeast corner of South Fourth and St. John Streets was the mansion of Sherman Otis Houghton, one of San José's most distinguished early settlers. Originally built on a lot at Third and Julian Streets, the house was moved to its present location in 1909. The building's current owner, Keith Watt, commissioned the Dill Design Group to do an historical analysis of the building, and after extensive research by their historian Charlene Duval we now have a graphic depiction of life among the city's elite from before statehood to the 1890's.

Despite its current shabby appearance, the Allen Apartments was obviously a home of some significance. Built for Houghton and his wife Eliza in 1881 by local architect and builder John T. Burkett, the house has many beautiful Italianate design features, which were popular among the more well-to-do home owners of the era. From the porches, balconies and widow walks (the latter now removed) and the graceful rounded bay windows on the western side it is evident that this was one of the most graceful homes of the period, and it is one of the last such examples in our city.

Houghton married Mary M. Donner, survivor of the ill-fated Donner Party, in 1859. She died of complications after the birth of their daughter, and a year later he married her cousin Eliza Donner with whom he had seven children. Sherman Houghton gradually rose in prominence in San José. His knowledge of Spanish gave him an advantage in law cases involving land ownership. He also became a trustee of the Woolen Mills in 1869 and a Director of the Santa Clara Valley Railroad and Transportation Company in 1870.

During the Civil War he served as a Captain and later Lieutenant Colonel in the National Guard. In 1871 he was elected to the U.S. Congress where he served on committees dealing with railroads and finance. He was defeated in an attempt for a third term, and in 1881 he was appointed by President Arthur as commissioner to investigate the affairs of the U.S. Mint in San Francisco.

Eliza Donner Houghton

Eliza Donner was only three when her parents George and Tamsen Donner left Illinois for their fateful trek to California. It is a credit to the caring adults in the party that so many of the children survived that dreadful winter in the Sierras. A number of them, including Eliza and her sisters, were orphaned as a result. The experience would be a defining factor in her life. She was raised by foster parents in the military outpost of Sonoma and educated in Benicia and Sacramento. As an adult she made a personal study of the Donner tragedy and provided C.F. McLashen with background for the first history of the event. In 1911 she published her own account: The Expedition of the Donner Party and Its Tragic Fate (recently reprinted).

As the wife of Congressman Houghton she was hostess to many influential people in Washington. President Rutherford Hayes paid a visit to the couple when he passed through San José in 1880. The magnificent home that Sherman Houghton built for his wife as a symbol of their place in the community would not be their final address. Eager to develop new areas of California, the couple moved to southern California in late 1886 after hosting an almost legendary going-away party that was attended by every notable citizen in San José.

It is evident that the Houghtons' San José home has a history that is the equal of our lauded Fallon House, but because of plans to clear the block on which it stands its fate is in doubt. Sherman Houghton has a place in almost every biographical reference of prominent Americans. His home should have a place in San José.
Lester Brothers Give HSJ a “Lift”

“Ask and ye shall receive”—and it isn’t always in the form of cold, hard cash!

History San José facilities staff, responsible for moving heavy equipment, picnic tables, crates and such around the History Park grounds, got a welcome “lift” from long-time supporters and HSJ members Lee and Ray Lester. The Lesters own Lester Farms, the Santa Clara Valley land business started by their grandfather in 1883.

When mutual friend Glenn George asked the Lesters if they had a spare forklift lying around, by golly, they DID! They donated the specialized vehicle to HSJ, easing the burden of manual labor on the facilities and event staff at the site.

The vehicle was a 1948 Ford truck frame, which was converted to use as an orchard-type forklift by a retired banker with mechanical talent and inclination. Forklifts used in orchards require extra big tires so they won’t sink into the soft dirt.

HSJ facilities technician Isaac Cobian, who learned to operate the forklift on History Park grounds, is now an old hand at it and has already used his new skills to set up for two Rotary barbecues, as well as numerous other events.

A World of Gratitude

History San José is grateful for the support of all its members. Listed below are gifts of $1,000 or more received between July 1, 1999, and September 31, 2000.

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Santa Clara County Office of Education
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Holiday Giving

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

Share your love of history in a way that will benefit both the recipient and History San José.

~ Purchase a gift certificate at the museum store, which can be redeemed for any of the wonderful items – books, jewelry, toys and much more. (And what a terrific place to do YOUR holiday shopping!)

~ Give a gift membership in History San José, which will extend the benefits of membership to the recipient – free museum admission, discounts at the museum stores, special event invitations, and more. (a GREAT gift for stocking stuffers for families with youngsters!)

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

Call the HSJ office, 408-918-1042, for further information on these suggestions. Regardless of how or when you lend your support, we are grateful for your involvement and wish you the happiest of holiday seasons!
What’s in Store for You?

Great Holiday Gift Ideas — We Gift Wrap Too!

Delicious Hostess Gifts
Stonewall Kitchen gourmet foods was voted “Outstanding Product Line” at the International Fancy Food Show. Award-winning Bodega Chocolates feature luxurious fudge truffle bars in the tradition of the finest European confections. When in doubt about a hostess gift – these two items are winners.

Whatever Your Role — Dress the Part
A coordinated ensemble — apron, soap, towels and a wide selection of accessories are available to complement the most distinguished chef.

Cheese Please
Platters imported from England fashioned after the turn-of-the-century original. The “Mouse and Cheese” knife was designed by American metalware designer Michael Aram. This design encompasses Aram’s interest in narrative pieces and he hopes that it inspires creative interactions with those who use them. The Cheese Course describes the tantalizing array of top quality cheeses now available, with suggestions for presentation and more than 40 delectable recipes for sweet and savory pairings.

The Children’s Corner
Enjoy the growing selection of children’s toys and books My Little Red Toolbox is a fun, interactive book for little hands that like to drill, hammer and saw.

The perfect gift for mom, dad or grandparents — An original creation by your favorite artist! The Artware Kit By You provides everything needed to create a tote bag, t-shirt or mouse pad.

Down by the Station provides delightful illustrations to accompany that favorite song enjoyed by children of all ages.

San Jose With Kids is a “must have” for parents and grandparents. You’ll never be at a loss as to what to do for a few hours, a day around town, or a day trip.

Bountiful Harvest
Keeping time is easy to do with this charming, fruitiful clock handmade by two young artists in Maine. Unique fruit crate labels from San José and Santa Clara Valley abound in the museum store and beautifully scented fruit candles provide a harvest of color and fragrance.

Object Obsession Poster
Exhibit poster by noted photographer David Pace — This is a great gift for anyone and all proceeds benefit History San José!

Have You RSVP’d Yet?

Light Up the Holidays With History San José
Join us for an evening of festivities!
Thursday, December 14, 2000
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Pacific Hotel at History Park

Please help us spread good cheer by bringing a non-perishable food item. Second Harvest Food Bank bins will be available for drop-off.

Museum Information
Please call 408/981-1040 for reservations and current program prices.

Sites
History Park
Kelley Park, 1650 Senter Road
San José, CA 95112
408/287-2290, Fax 408/287-2291

Peralta Adobe & Fallon House
175 W. St. John St., San José, CA 95110
408/993-8182 Fax 408/993-8194

Administrative Offices
1650 Senter Road, San José, CA 95112
408-287-2290, Fax 408-287-2291
www.historysanjose.org

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

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Group Tour Fees
10 or more individuals who have pre-scheduled a tour

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Hours
History Park hours of 10:00-5:00pm have returned as of November 1.
Both sites are open Tue-Sun, 12:00-5:00pm
History Park: Tue-Fri, self-guided tours; Sat-Sun, guided tours. Gallery, museum store and O’Farrell’s are open. Admission is free. Regular admission fees are charged for guided tours and special events.

Programs
Public Programs:
- Downtown Walking Tour
- School Programs: Collecting Mania
- Experience Adobe Days
- Experience Victorian Days
- Explore Peralta/Fallon
- Explore San José’s Past
- Gold Rush Adventure
- Historic Transportation Experience
- History Hike
- School Days in the 1880s
- 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