



**Celebrating Seven Decades of Service  
to the  
Community of Solana Beach**

**December 2023**

This booklet features articles about Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society accomplishments that have been shared through our newsletters in recent years and as a monthly feature during our 70th Anniversary year of 2023.

*These articles are by no means a complete story  
of the Society's contributions since its founding in 1953.*

However, the lists on following pages will give you an idea of the scale of the Society's impact in our community. Longtime members Bob and Nancy Gottfredson helped compile these lists of the first 60 years of the Society's accomplishments. Your current Board of Directors has added achievements during the past 10 years.

We hope this souvenir from our Platinum Anniversary Celebration will fill you with pride and inspire your continued membership and support.

*Your SBC&HS Board of Directors  
December 1, 2023*

# *Summary of Achievements 1953 -2013*

## AN AWESOME ACCOUNTING OF WONDERFUL PEOPLE WHO HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS CITY

These people, individually, should be honored and named in a Solana Beach Register of Excellence. All these years, our volunteers have tirelessly and without fanfare or publicity brought about miracles -- big miracles and small miracles. Many hundreds have volunteered wonderful leadership as well as countless hours of yeoman services on behalf of the Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society and its predecessor organization, the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club.

Forgoing individual names, their achievements are credited here. The Solana Beach Civic and Historical Society provided opportunities, and our members have done their best.

The late Bob Gottfredson was one of our valuable historical researchers and chroniclers. He and his wife, Nancy, a former president of the Civic & Historical Society and our first official Historical Archivist, together undertook the task of recording many of the Society's accomplishments, as listed on the following pages. They represented the saying: "When the Society says they will do something, they indeed step up and do it!"

### **WE SPONSORED:**

- Designation of Old Highway 101 as a Scenic Route
- Removal of 17 large billboards along scenic Highway 101 on County Railway right-of-way
- Improvement of low-level lighting system on the median strip of Highway 101
- Beautification of the median strip on Highway 101
- Irrigation system along Highway 101 and Railway right-of-way from Del Mar to the lagoon
- Traffic signals on Highway 101 and at Via De La Valle and Stevens Avenue
- Railroad gates on Lomas Santa Fe at Highway 101
- Establishment of a County branch of the Library in Solana Beach
- Bicycle paths in Solana Beach and through to Batiquitos Lagoon
- Formation of County Service Area #33
- Sidewalks on the west side of Highway 101
- Sewer improvements along Stevens Avenue to prevent flooding in Eden Gardens
- City of Solana Beach named as a Bicentennial City
- Semi-annual beach cleanup support with home-baked cookies, by passing out bags and gloves, and by weighing trash collected
- Santa Claus' arrival via Fire Engine and visits with children for the annual Cedros Christmas Tree lighting
- Legacies: the Solana Beach Youth/Elder Story Art project
- Creation of the Alliance of Education to coordinate the volunteer efforts and educational resources of the SBC&HS with the Solana Beach schools
- The annual Living History program at the Heritage Museum for third grade classes from Solana Vista and other schools, featuring hands-on experience with early Solana Beach history
- Antique sales as fund-raisers to furnish the Heritage Museum

### **WE SPONSORED, continued:**

- Annual fund-raising craft bazaars (later dubbed Holiday Boutiques) in Solana Beach Community Centers
- Two "Tastes of Solana Beach" (in 2001 and 2002), plus sales of a cook book and a "New Millennium Calendar" to raise \$27,720 for replanting Torrey Pines on the Coastal Rail Trail
- An arts-and-crafts-style Historical Monument erected in 2003 at the north end of the Coastal Rail Trail with a bronze plaque recounting how, in 1971, Wenetta Childs and the Women's Civic Club transformed "Billboard Alley" by removing the signs and planting 450 trees
- Publication and sale of "Early Solana Beach, Recollections by George C. Wilkens & Robert 'Chuckles' Hernandez as told to Jim Nelson" in 2002. Book sale proceeds of more than \$25,000 were used to refurbish the Heritage Museum. The popular book was reprinted in 2012 (and again in 2022)
- In 2008, a photo inventory of the 83 houses and shops built between 1887 and 1945
- In 2009, placement of 25 framed tile markers on commercial buildings built between 1912 and 1952. The Heritage Museum and Fletcher Cove Community Center also received plaques.
- In 2009, establishment, with the City of Solana Beach, of a War Memorial for the Fallen in World War II and Vietnam located in the Solana Beach downtown Plaza
- Also in 2009, publication of Society historian Richard Moore's book titled "The Service Eternal," which profiles 14 Solana Beach residents killed in World War II and the Korean War. In conjunction with the book, the Society contributed to a cast bronze plaque in the Plaza honoring six residents killed in the Vietnam conflict
- In 2010, publication of former Society president Jim Nelson's prequel to "Early Solana Beach" entitled "La Colonia and Solana Beach Spring Up From Colonel Ed Fletcher's Running Water," which traces the origins of the then-separate communities and profiles the City's founder

### **WE BEAUTIFIED:**

- By planting flowers and bushes at the Post Office, wherever it has been located over the years
- Planting the Solana Beach Plaza with trees and shrubs
- Landscaping at the Community Center building at 131 Pacific Avenue
- Landscaping the northeast area of the railway right-of-way at Highway 101 and Lomas Santa Fe Drive
- Landscaping along the east side of Highway 101
- Plantings at the entrances to Fletcher Cove and San Dieguito Park
- By planting 14 queen palm trees in front of Skyline School
- By providing historical guidance and financial support for Betsy Schulz's mosaic art projects -- the entry arches to the Coastal Rail Trail at Via de la Valle and around the walls of the Fletcher Cove Park
- Repainting the sign and refurbished the plantings at the north entrance of the City on Highway 101 and arranged for irrigation to support the succulent garden there
- Providing volunteers and support for Community Gardens along the Coastal Rail Trail
- Contributing \$1,200 for materials for 2008 Arts Alive Banners
- Installing an irrigation system and new garden in front of the Heritage Museum in 2007
- Planting trees and landscaping at the south end of railway right-of-way
- Contributing to the landscape architect plan for Highway 101 beautification

## **WE DONATED:**

- Ten folding banquet tables and 50 stacking chairs for the Community Center at Fletcher Cove
- Four large carved/sand-blasted wood "Welcome to Solana Beach" signs
- Two marine-band (ship-to-shore) radios to the Solana Beach Lifeguards -- first ever to be used by the service ( 1980)
- New vinyl flooring, drapes (several times) and carpeting for the Fletcher Cove Community Center
- Two Solana Beach banners for Fiesta del Sol
- New stove for the Solana Beach Fire Department
- Remodeling and enlarging the Fletcher Cove Community Center kitchen, including a new refrigerator and stove
- Funds for tile inserts around restrooms at Fletcher Cove Park
- Funds and labor to remodel and replace louver windows on west side of the Community Center
- A tele-caption and VCR for the hearing-impaired to the Solana Beach Library
- Monetary support to a substance abuse program in Solana Beach for children to 17 years of age
- A merry-go-round for the San Dieguito Park playground
- Funds to the San Dieguito Conservancy for a grove in Holmwood Canyon
- A flag set for the City Hall
- Walkie-talkies for San Dieguito Park Rangers
- Audio-visual and VCR equipment for the Solana Beach Lifeguards for Marine Safety Education (1989)
- Washer and clothes dryer for the Solana Beach Lifeguards in 1991
- Seed money for a granite rock sign for La Colonia Park
- Funds to North County Meals-On-Wheels
- Scholarship funds to the Mexican-American Educational Guidance Association (MAEGA)
- Bicentennial flags for Solana Beach City Hall, the Solana Beach Post Office and at the Plaza
- Funds to the Solana Beach Foundation for Learning
- Funds for moving the Heritage Museum to La Colonia Park
- La Colonia Community Center furnishings
- Annual support for the Children's Christmas party, Easter Egg Hunt and the Fiesta del Sol
- Financial support to the Firemen's Foundation which helps the needy of Solana Beach
- Major funding starting in 1992 to remodel, repair, paint and maintain the Solana Beach Heritage Museum
- Seed money to "Friends of the Library" to enable them to organize in 1982
- More funds to the "Friends of the Library" for relocating and furnishing the Solana Beach Library (1983) and to purchase of books
- Two contribution to the "Friends of the Library" for construction of the new library (1996 and 1999)
- Design, purchase and installation of four direction/identification signs for the Heritage Museum (1996)
- New Northwest sand-blasted entryway sign "Welcome to Solana Beach" (1997)
- Funding for VFW Veterans Memorial in La Colonia Park (1997)
- Funds to create the "Tree of Life" mosaic in La Colonia Park
- Publication of a "Recipes to Remember" cook book (1999)
- Old Solana Beach photographs for the mural in Henry's Marketplace, now Sprouts (1999)
- A Community Picnic in La Colonia Park (2000)

### **WE DONATED, continued:**

- Publication of a Historical Solana Beach Millennium Calendar (2000)
- Table and chairs for the Breakfast Club tutoring program at Earl Warren Jr. High
- Funds for transporting the third grade students to the Heritage Museum for annual Living History programs
- Cookies and other treats for Beach Blanket Movie Night
- \$40,000 toward reconstructing and refurbishing Fletcher Cove Community Center (2011)
- \$10,000 to further the Gateway Park (now Harbaugh Seaside Trails) project at the south edge of San Elijo Lagoon (2012)

### ***In addition. . .***

- Since 2014, the Society's Scholarship Program has awarded \$31,500 to 24 college-bound student and continues to contribute \$1,000 yearly to the Mexican-American Educational Guidance Association.
- In 2014, the Society donated \$8,000 to build a skate park in La Colonia Park. Plus, another \$2,000 later.
- In 2017, Society Historian Richard Moore and Richard Schwartzlose compiled a Sourcebook of reference documents cataloging the history of the San Dieguito River Valley from its earliest known times through to the present. The collection of maps, illustrations and photos, along with a narrative penned by Jim Nelson, was intended for lecture series or for history curriculum development. These materials were put into binders (25 total), saved to thumb drives and distributed to librarians, educators and the San Dieguito River Conservancy.
- Starting in 2017, we added "quick response," or QR codes to plaques marking historical buildings that passers-by can use to access information about the sites on the Society's website.
- In 2018, we began the enormous task of digitizing our archives for future generations and, starting in 2020, we updated and expanded our multi-media platforms to stay connected during the Covid-19 pandemic and to keep up with the digital age.
- In 2019, the Society and Surf Ride sponsored the Solana Beach Skatepark Challenge to celebrate the Skatepark opening in 2019. Middle-school students were invited to create artwork for a skateboard deck that conveyed the importance of the new park to the community, or to develop a video documentary of the long history of the skatepark.
- During the 2020 Covid 19 pandemic, we sponsored food drives for families whose livelihoods had been disrupted.
- In 2021, our SeaWeeders encouraged the City of Solana Beach to take the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, a National Wildlife Federation program to promote development of pollinator habitat. Together, in April that year, we planted the City's first garden to support migrating Western Monarch butterflies at La Colonia Community Center.
- In September, 2021, we hosted a Centennial Celebration of the founding of our first neighborhood, La Colonia de Eden Gardens, that was attended by close to 200 guests.
- In 2023, we helped sponsor a reunion of more than 200 descendants of the Gonzalez family, one of the first to settle in La Colonia.

## 70 Years Strong!

### *Society Marks a Seven-Decade Anniversary*

A yellowed clipping from the February 26, 1953 edition of the San Dieguito Citizen News reports on the objectives of the newly-formed Solana Beach Women's Civic Club: "Highway 101 beautification, beach warning signs, organization of a blood bank and construction of a county [library] branch building." In 1953, Solana Beach was unincorporated and governed by San Diego County.

The Citizen that month also reported on the Club's first "Trash and Treasure" sale, initially slated to raise funds for landscaping beautification along Highway 101. Today, our SeaWeeders Garden Club sustains this purpose with annual poinsettia sales and maintains several public gardens in what is now the City of Solana Beach. Meanwhile "Trash and Treasure" sales have evolved to our spectacular Holiday Crafts Boutique, which we sustained through the pandemic shutdowns with a remarkable pivot to eCommerce. And Society members were instrumental in founding our City, establishing a permanent branch of the San Diego County Library here, renovating Fletcher Cove Community Center, and so much more!



Thursday, February 26, 1953

THE SAN DIEGUITO CITIZEN

## Solana Woman's Club Objectives Are Outlined

Highway 101 beautification, beach warning signs, organization of a blood bank and construction of a county branch building here are the objectives of the recently organized Women's Solana Beach Civic Association.

Mrs. Olive Smith, temporary president, said shrub planting on a one-mile stretch of Highway 101 through this community will receive first consideration.

All day trash and treasure sales will be conducted Feb. 27 and 28 at Witmer's store to raise funds for the project. A 4-H club has agreed to handle shrub planting and care.

Mrs. Smith said beach signs warning parents not to allow unaccompanied children on the beach are needed because of "danger of molestation." She said the problem "is worst during the racing season" at Del Mar.

Other temporary officers are Mrs. Frances Cornwell, treasurer, Mrs. D. K. Crawford, secretary, and Mrs. Irene Walker, public relations chairman. Mrs. Port Leatherbury is sale chairman. — S.D. Union.

## *Women's Civic Club Quickly Focused on Creating a "Centerpiece" for our Town*

In its early years, the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club busied itself with landscape beautification along Hwy. 101. Members hand-watered new plantings of hundreds of Torrey Pines, palms and flowering shrubs through bucket brigades — until finally badgering county officials to get proper irrigation in place. They also created a bike-path along that roadway — which was then littered with billboards that stretched from Via de la Valle well into prime ocean viewpoints at the north edge of town.

Larger ambitions were rooted in these early days of the organization, as well. In November 1954, just a year after its founding, the Civic Club expanded its focus to hardscape improvements in and around the Plaza. Improved pedestrian access and parking at the newly built Post Office on Sierra Ave. was the first priority. But the Club's Improvement Committee Chair envisioned more: "The far-sighted founders of this town formulated an overall plan for the Plaza, beach, community center, streets, etc.," wrote Wenetta Childs in February 1954. "Thanks to their general layout, we not only have convenience but an ideal foundation to make this the most attractive beach town on the coast."

"In order to 'beautify Solana Beach' with good taste and clear purpose, it is my strong personal belief that this can best be done by creating a MASTER PLAN."

So they did.

Artist Edward Burns sketched the Club's shared vision for improved sidewalks and curbs, new plantings for the Plaza, and recreational facilities at beach access points. The plan was displayed at the Solana Beach Post Office and presented in a series of meetings with San Diego County officials, since much of the area slated for improvement was then county-owned. At one encouraging meeting in August of 1954, Claud Hupp of the County Parks Department told members that towns with active women's clubs tended to get the most help from the county because "A squeaking wheel gets the grease."

The squeaking was ceaseless. The Club raised essentially all of the funding to transform what was a blacktop parking lot into shaded sidewalks lined with flowering plants. But the County had to be constantly nagged to fulfill its promises. Club (now Society) archives include copies of countless letters to County parks, roads, traffic, public works and other officials; to SDG&E imploring the company to underground utilities; and to area businesses and organizations soliciting their moral and financial support through the years.

Finally, by 1963, the Plaza stage was set to erect what then-Civic Club president Ada Scarborough called a "centerpiece" for Solana Beach.

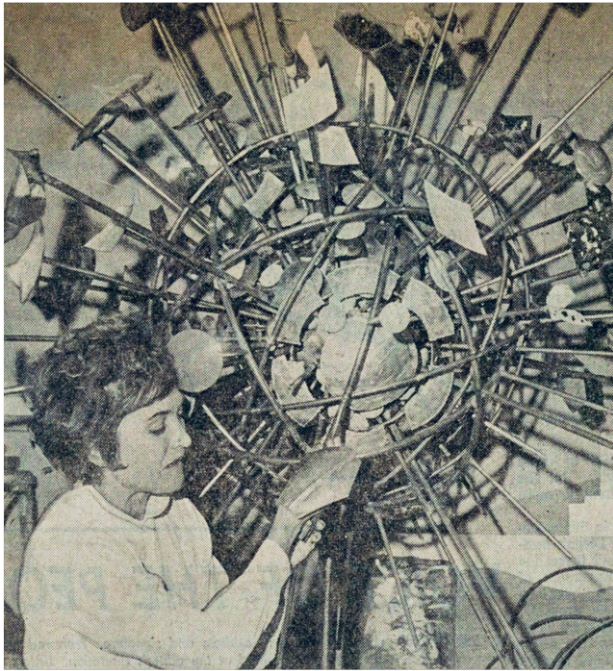


*Continued*



## *Centerpiece . . . continued*

A central, landscaped median with a fountain and sculpture was envisioned; once again Wenetta Childs brought it to life. Her design for the “Sun Sculpture” and fountain underwent several iterations over fully three years of “research, many many disappointments, uncounted interviews and endless hours,” according to Club notes from its March 1966 meeting. A “simplified fountain design (for financial reasons)” was approved, along with \$1,500 to fund to install an eight-foot circular bowl and underwater lighting at its base.



A \$1,000 donation from Harry Haelseg of Lomas Santa Fe, Inc., developers of the then-future Lomas Santa Fe neighborhood, improved the Club’s fortunes and the sculpture’s dimensions. The local Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Club and a more expressive, 25-foot-tall sculpture design was approved by the County Board of Supervisors in April 1966.

While architect Lloyd Rocco, with landscape designers Wimmer and Yamada, finalized plans for the median and plantings, Wenetta lit her oxy-acetyline torch and got to work. She spent hundreds of hours designing, firing and welding dozens of multicolor enameled pieces — each one

made of powdered glass melted at high temperature on copper. After eight months, the sculpture was ready for installation.

The colorful orb, with its carefully-crafted rays, was hoisted from Wenetta’s workshop onto a flatbed truck and driven to the new Plaza median, where crowds watched as it was lifted and welded into place.

A formal dedication of the Women’s Civic Club’s \$12,000 gift to the community took place on March 23, 1967. Shortly after, pranksters filled the fountain with detergent, creating a second, bubble-bath christening of the “Sun Sculpture” — the new centerpiece of Solana Beach.



# Holiday Crafts Boutique and Predecessor Events Have Raised \$250,000 over the Decades

It all began back in February 1953 with a “Trash & Treasure” sale to raise beautification project funds for the newly-founded Solana Beach Women’s Civic Club. That first “pop-up” shop at Witmer Drugs netted \$650 to buy and plant shrubs along Hwy. 101. In December, the same year, the Club hosted its first Christmas Tea and gift sale, launching a tradition that has expanded and continues annually — our treasured Holiday Boutique.

Crafts Group co-leader Pam Dalton recounted the early Teas after a long morning of pricing and tagging a staggering array of beautiful, hand-made quilts and pillows, embroidered dish towels and pillow cases, ornaments, vintage ceramics, and more, for the 2018 Boutique.

“In the beginning, they’d select four or



The Union Tribune noticed our “crafty women” in 1953

five members’ homes to decorate for the holidays and then invite folks in for tea and to select from hand-made gifts for sale,” Pam said.

The Christmas Tea tradition continued that way for five or six years, said former Society president Phyllis Schwartzlose. “Then, before it was renovated, we held rummage sales at Fletcher Cove Community Center, which evolved into the Holiday Bazaar and, now, the Holiday Boutique — which has become quite popular.”

No kidding! We welcome upwards of 300 visitors every year! The Crafts Group counts more than 30 members, many of whom work year-long in their sewing rooms or art studios, turning donations of vintage fabric and laces into one-of-a-kind treasures. Be on the look-out for cleverly adorned paperweights, hand-knitted dish scrubbers, potholders, tea cozies, bookmarks, children’s activity books, etc., etc., etc!



“And these just showed up on my doorstep this morning,” Pam said, displaying adorable sets of hand-knitted baby sweaters with matching hats from an unknown artisan donor. Phyllis also contributes hand-knit baby items, as well as her signature sock monkeys and sets of Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls.

“What I love about our group is that we make gifts — year-round presents — not just Christmas items,” Phyllis said.

## ***A Historic Trio of Virtual Holiday Boutiques***

After 67 years, and having raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Society, we were determined that a beloved tradition would prevail through the lockdowns of 2020. With hundreds of items already filling craft rooms



and storage boxes, our Craft Group got even busier. Members cataloged their wares, staged photos and built an online store to go live for four days at our completely revamped website.



*“My craft skills have been inspired . . . and expanded to include building an online store for our 2020 Holiday Boutique.”*

*Lenore Dale*

Nearly 1,000 hand-made items were sorted, SKU-ed, photographed, described in detail and uploaded to a new section of our website that debuted Monday, November 9, 2020 — introducing the Society’s first-ever “virtual” Holiday Boutique.

Visitors could shop around the clock for everything from original artworks to zip-lock storage alternatives. There were hand-turned wooden bowls and utensils, as well as bedding, bags and purses. There was clothing for kids of all ages, along with art and jewelry; one-of-a-kind pieces of pottery, pillows, paintings and holiday decor, galore, including

special ornaments that help to capture the unique spirit of the season in the challenging year of 2020.

Stuck mostly at home for most of those years, our Crafts Group elves outdid themselves, adding website design and eCommerce skills to their already formidable embroidery, painting, photography, pottery, quilting, basket-making and woodworking talents. “Now we even know what SKU means — “stock keeping unit,” joked organizer Lenore Dale.

Although they couldn’t meet for their usual monthly project gatherings, the Crafters gathered on Zoom calls to figure out how to transform the usual one-day, in-person event into a mostly online experience that emphasized our shoppers health and safety, above all.

Our entire website had been upgraded to support the online shop and provide for secure purchases using Pay Pal or a credit card. Items were batched and packaged for each buyer. Buyers collected their wares via a “contact free” drive-through at the La Colonia Community Center. Home deliveries to local addresses were offered for a \$10 donation to the SBC&HS Scholarship program.



***Who knew that we would still be in the eCommerce business through 2022?*** For three years, the online Boutique continued -- albeit with an outdoor, in-person shop in 2022.

## ***"Tenacious Solana Women" Won a Long, Scrappy Fight to End "Billboard Blight"***

***It was the '60s. Around the country, girdles were given up for bell bottoms. Bras were burned. And in Solana Beach, a whole lot of billboards were about to come down.***

"Billboard War Declared" bugled the March 2, 1962 headline in the Los Angeles Times Southland edition.

**"We can prove most of (the existing billboards in Solana Beach) are illegal," Wenetta Childs, Billboard Chair of the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club (SBWCC) had told reporters, sparking what would become a long battle to ban the unsightly signs that lined Highway 101 up and down the coast. At the time, the road was not only the primary coastal thoroughfare -- Interstate 5 was still in planning stages -- but also an "advertising alley." Along the mile-plus stretch of Hwy. 101 in Solana Beach, the number of billboards had quadrupled to 40 -- on both sides of the road -- from 10 in the mid 1950s. They included two big gas station signs that book-ended the community.**



**Twenty-seven of those billboards on the east side of Hwy. 101 had been erected or altered in violation of a 1955 San Diego County ordinance prohibiting structures on railroad rights-of-way, the Club argued.** Within months, the County's own deputy council, Frederic Dunn, formally agreed, based on an inspection by its own Department of Public Works.

Wenetta encouraged a coalition of Chambers of Commerce, civic clubs, tourism and nature promoters to join the fight. "The more organizations, the more powerful is the protest," she said. "Although legal counsel advised us we had undertaken a difficult and involved battle, to date we have diligently pursued our objective. Our prime project concerns billboards on the railroad right-of-way in Solana Beach and now we must be prepared for their exclusion after the new freeway is constructed."

County officials promptly swatted down a proposal to impose billboard controls, as they had done four times previously. The Board of Supervisors tossed the hot potato to the Planning Commission, asking that group to provide recommendations before they would consider regulations.

*Continued*

## *Civic Club Battled "Billboard Blight" . . . continued*



Meanwhile, Wenetta's vision for a powerful protest had coalesced. Twenty-eight North County organizations had organized the Citizens Coordinate to represent billboard-ban interests. At the state level, California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963 with the purpose to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors. And the Assembly Natural Resources Committee had taken notice of the pressure building in SoCal.

At a special hearing of the committee in September 1964, then-Civic Club Billboard Chair [Mrs. Austin] Carlton testified: "As the tourist drives through the San Dieguito area on U.S. 101 following the coast . . . what a disillusionment it must be when these vistas are obscured by the intrusion of demanding and unsightly billboards proclaiming the various brands of whisky or soap or deodorants or cigarettes, with or without filters."

The following year, thanks in large part to First Lady "Lady Bird" Johnson, scenic byway beautification efforts got a big boost from the 1965 Federal Highway Beautification Act. County officials could no longer duck the issue.

In 1966, County Supervisor Bill Craven successfully sponsored an ordinance banning nonconforming billboards -- those which violated the County's own railroad rights-of-way ordinance -- stipulating that they be removed within five years. The Women's Civic Club counter-argued for a quicker one-year removal of any signs erected since 1955. The last of the nonconforming billboards came down in 1971.

Finally, on May 31, 1978, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved a ban on billboards from Solana Beach to Leucadia along Hwy. 101. By then, the San Elijo (Lagoon) Alliance had joined the fight: the ban was positioned as part of a "scenic preservation overlay zone" to provide for regulation of development in areas of "high scenic value." With the exception of a few billboards being contested in courts by advertising companies, all of the signs -- plus any in violation of stricter County codes -- were slated for removal by 1985.

With incredible patience, steely determination and the wily strategy that caught County officials breaking their own rules, the "tenacious Solana women," as one news report dubbed them, had finally prevailed.

# The Long History of Solana Beach's Coastal Rail Trail

In 1999 the "Big Dig" was completed, lowering Amtrak and Coaster tracks below Lomas Santa Fe. In hindsight, the foresight by leaders of the effort cannot be overstated. The \$25 million project, co-sponsored by the City of Solana Beach, the North County Transit District, SANDAG and the State of California, set the stage for continuing improvements that neighboring communities probably pine for.

Removal of temporary tracks during the grade separation made land available for the Coastal Rail Trail linear park. But the vision for beautifying our "main street," and making it pedestrian friendly dates to the 1950s.

As then-unincorporated Solana Beach started to boom, Highway 101 was widened to four lanes and commercial development proliferated, along with unsightly billboard advertising. In 1955, Women's Civic Club Beautification Chairwoman Wenetta Childs

started a lobbying effort to remove 40 billboards from the railroad right of way. After recruiting County Supervisor Bill Craven to the cause, the last of the billboards were removed by 1971.

In 1973, the Women's Civic Club obtained lease of the western section of the railroad right of way. They planted 450 Torrey and Aleppo pines, hand-watering them with the help of the Boy Scouts until funds could be raised for irrigation. The Club also spurred creation of a walking/running trail, which grew in popularity — as did the trees — for the next 20 years.

*Continued*

## *From Billboards to Bike Paths*

With billboards going away, the Club next crusaded to create bike paths from Via de la Valle to Batiquitos lagoon, as well as a spur along Lomas Santa Fe Drive to San Dieguito Park. A ribbon cutting on April 11, 1975 officially opened the North Coast Bicycle Trail, representing the conclusion of the first phase of a recreational project to enhance the designation of "Scenic Highway 101." Supervisor Craven also was



Getting set to open North Coast Bicycle Trail in Solana Beach are, from left, county planning commissioner Gemma Parks, with hedge trimmers, bicycle

chairman Wenetta Childs and Schools Supt. Michael C. Breen. Waiting in the background are Brad Porterfield, left, and Chris Collard.

## *Coastal Rail Trail and Torrey Grove . . . continued*



A biker rode south on Highway 101 past some trees the Solana Beach Civic and Historical Society hopes to replant in the future Linear Park. The trees were originally planted along the railroad tracks as part of a beautification project in the early 1970s. Dan Trevan / Union-Tribune

In the early 1990s, plans were finalized for the grade separation to lower the railroad tracks through town, eliminating the street-level crossing on our City's sole beach-to-east corridor. To keep the trains running, temporary "shoo-fly" tracks were installed on the right-of-way, right through the popular arbor. Loathe to let the trees go, the Society and the City launched an "Adopt a Tree" campaign to relocate as many pines as possible. The effort ultimately resulted in the relocation of 361 trees to residential gardens and commercial landscapes.

Fifteen trees were saved for future Rail Trail use. Eight were boxed and stored on Hwy. 101. In 1991, two were replanted near the train station. Now six Torrey and two Aleppo pines remained boxed -- each towering to 25 or 30 feet and with 10-foot diameter root balls. The estimated cost to replant them was at least \$3,100 each.

About the same time, in 1995, a master plan was hatched for a linear park along the 1.8 mile rail corridor. But by the time the "Dig" was completed, temporary tracks removed, funding challenges overcome, and the Rail Trail park slated for planting, residents petitioned against the straight-arrow design and sent the City back to the drawing board.

Meanwhile, the boxed-pines' roots were bulging. Concerned about their health, then Society president Kathalijn Nelson launched fundraising to overcome the City's objections of investing in replanting while the park redesign remained underway.

The Society organized a world-culinary-tour fundraiser dubbed "A Taste of Solana Beach." Cuisines of 10 countries were presented by 17 local restaurants on September 23, 2001 in booths set up in the town Plaza. Participating eateries included the Fish Market, Pacific Coast Grill, Red Tracton's, Tony's Jacal, Pamplemousse Grille, Parioli Italian Bistro, California Pizza Kitchen and Bangkok Bay.

*Continued*

## Coastal Rail Trail, Torrey Grove . . . continued



*Kathalyn Nelson  
with  
Wenetta Childs*

Other participants might make your mouth water for their memories: Victoria Station, Cafe Europa, Pasta Pronto and Sam's Ship A'Hoy, as well as Nobu's Gourmet Japanese Restaurant, Java Depot and Solana Beach Coffee Company. All of the restaurants donated their food and time.

Day-of-event tickets sold out within 15 minutes, as more than 400 people joined the "Taste."

"I came here today because I miss the

trees," one attendee told the North County Times. "A Taste of Solana Beach" was a huge financial success, and the Society's efforts were rewarded in December, 2002, when the pines finally were replanted to create a small grove at the north end of what is now our Coastal Rail Trail.

Another \$6,000 was committed to create and erect the commemorative historical marker, designed by Stephani Stephenson of Carlsbad, that marks the site once occupied by a giant Union 76 billboard.

On May 2, 2003, Society members, City and County officials gathered to dedicate a commemorative marker honoring Wenetta Childs and State Senator Bill Craven for their tireless efforts to eliminate billboards, create a nearly eight-mile bike path along the coast, and help the roadway earn its "scenic Highway 101" designation.



### ***End of an Era in Torrey Grove***

*The fierce wind and rain storms of 2023 were too much for one of the venerable Torrey Pines our Civic Club/ Historical Society members planted in the 1950s, nurtured for decades, dug up and boxed for relocation during the "Big Dig," and replanted at the north end of our Coastal Rail Trail in 2002.*

*This tree was uprooted and toppled over nearby public benches. Sadly, City crews had to take it away in pieces. Only sawdust remained.*





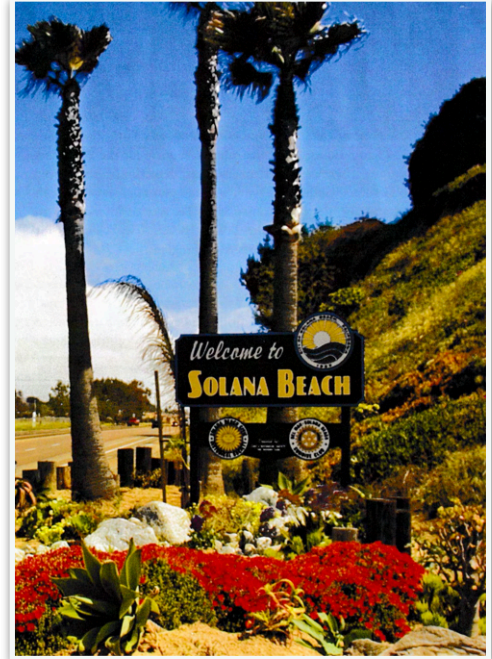
# *Coastal Rail Trail Hosts our Community Gardens*

When the Coastal Rail Trail along Highway 101 through Solana Beach finally came into flower (so to speak), the newly-named SeaWeeders Garden Club coordinated with the City to tackle planting of two "Community Gardens" along the linear park. Each stretched about 100-feet long by 20-feet wide: one at the north end of the trail across from Ocean Street and other other at the south end, diagonally across from what is now City Hall.

Gerri Retman-Opper and Donna Golich were instrumental in gaining an agreement with the City and the Civic & Historical Society to allow the garden club to install and maintain their own plantings in the two sections. Planning got seriously underway in 2004, with a series of meetings. Mike Nichols and other members of the Solana Beach Parks and Recreational Committee took part, lending both professional landscape expertise and their experience working on the decade-long plan for the Coastal Rail Trail.

Construction started late in 2005, when several pallets of flagstone and nine large boulders were delivered for accents and walkways. El Camino Equipment Rentals, KRC Rock, Hunter Industries, Hydro-Scape and A-1 Soils donated equipment and support. City Council awarded the group a \$5,400 grant to purchase plants. Volunteers installed irrigation, roto-tilled the soil, added compost and generally got dirty -- digging, planting, tending and trimming the gardens during the following several years. Eventually, the northern Community Garden was "returned" to the City to care for, but SeaWeeder volunteers still meet regularly to tend the south section.

In 1997, the City, Society and Rotary Club teamed to create and install the sand-blasted wooden Welcome to Solana Beach sign at the north end of town on Hwy. 101. The Society also arranged for irrigation to nurture a garden at the site. The sign and garden were featured on the front page of Shorelines magazine to announce that the Coastal Rail Trail and southern Gateway Arches by artist Betsy Schulz had, on November 17, 2006, been awarded two "Orchids" for outstanding design.



## ***Post-pandemic "rehab" . . .***

2020 Covid-19 pandemic shutdowns and related budget cutbacks left the Rail Trail and the south Community Garden badly overgrown. Regular landscaping had been suspended by both City crews and volunteers; weeds were taking over. The SeaWeeders approached the City in 2021 to propose some teamwork to "get the Trail back into its glory." Volunteers met with Mayor Lesa Heebner, Director of Public Works/City Engineer, Mo Sammak, and representatives from the Public Works Operations group for a series of morning walks along the trail to pinpoint trouble areas and plan solutions. The partnership continues at the south Community Garden, where City crews faithfully pick up the weed and trim piles our volunteers create while caring for that community space.

*From grocery storefront to sculpture park, with Society and SeaWeeder assists*

## *Here's the History of our Solana Beach Post Office*

The first U.S. Post Office in what is now the City of Solana Beach operated out of a grocery store run by Addie Waits and her husband George in the west portion of the Harker building, located at the northeast corner of the Plaza by Hwy. 101.

Addie Ellen Phillips and her twin sister Emma were born in 1870 in Nebraska. She married George Waits in Kalispell, Montana in 1909. It was the second marriage for both. The Waits migrated to Solana Beach and Addie was named Postmaster in 1923. (Strictly speaking, Addie was the second postmaster. George Nichols served several months in a temporary position before her nomination.)

During that time, postal customers would drop off and pick up their mail at the grocery store. But how did “our” mail get there, and how was outgoing mail sent on?

Addie batched outgoing mail in a canvas bag. George then carried the mailbag down the steps from the store to his steel-wheeled wheelbarrow. He had cast a narrow concrete ramp — just wide enough for the wheel — from the sidewalk to the street. He wheeled the mail down the ramp, across Hwy 101 and south along the railroad tracks to a tall 4 x 4-inch post with snaps on top and bottom. George snapped in the mailbag. As the train raced through town at 50 to 70 miles an hour, an extended arm on the mail car would snatch the bag. Workers in the mail car would take it in and at the same time throw out a mail bag for Solana Beach.



Fowler Construction completed a newly-built Solana Beach P.O. in 1952.

In 1936, Addie retired and the Post Office moved across the Plaza to what is now the Saddle Bar, where it served the community until 1953. Irene C. Witmer became Postmaster and served in that capacity until her own retirement in 1956. Her husband Howard served as assistant Postmaster. Irene also was president of the Solana Beach Women’s Civic Club in 1955 and is described in reports from the era as tireless booster of Solana Beach. The Witmers ran Witmer Drugs and Sandwich Shop at 145-149 Hwy. 101 and lived above it. During Irene’s tenure, a new Post Office building was completed at 127 S. Sierra Ave., with planter boxes and plants provided by the Civic Club. She retired in 1956 and was replaced by Postmaster Charles Leffingwell, another local resident.

Neighbors remember Leffingwell, a U.C. Davis-educated horticulturist, for the vegetable and gladiolus garden he maintained around his home across from what now is our Fire Station. Among his first successes: once-daily home and business mail delivery was inaugurated in November, 1956 to 300 addresses. Foot carriers delivered the mail west of Hwy. 101; a truck delivered east of the highway.

However, Leffingwell’s stint as Postmaster was not without drama or controversy. A smoke bomb went off in the P.O. doorway in 1958. Construction of the current federal building/post office at 153 S. Sierra Ave. during the 1960s was deemed a “boondoggle” dogged by “budgetary bungles” and delays. When postal workers moved into the new 6,500-square-foot quarters on September 2, 1965, there was no ribbon cutting.

*Continued*

## *History of our Solana Beach Post Office . . . continued*

Nor were there ceilings, signs or landscaping. “We are just the U.S. Post Office Department’s step child,” Postmaster Leffingwell commented.

He taped a sign to the door and hoped that the General Services Administration would finally put the finishing work out to bid. "We thought about a ‘do-it-yourself’ project to get the place looking better," Leffingwell said. "But I hesitate to ask for civic money or spend it out of my own pocket if it is just going to be torn out when the contract is finally let.”

The tradition of long-tenured Postmasters ended after Leffingwell’s term. Since 1969, we have had 12 Postmasters and many more “acting Postmasters” or “Officers in Charge” — some of whom held the titles more than once. In 2014, then-Postmaster Betty Rabreau, embraced a “do it ourselves” invitation from the SeaWeeders to update the landscape and create the seating and sculpture garden that graces the P.O. today. “I thought they were just going to pull a few weeds. I had absolutely no idea of the magnitude of the job," Postmaster Rabreau said at the time.

The \$11,000 rehab was aided by the Society, Solana Beach Presbyterian Church's Community Outreach program, and local Rotary Club. Along with new plantings, the re-design included a concrete patio, bike rack, two benches, sculpture platforms and formal paths that replaced the raggedy trails customers had worn through the old ice-plant.

Ever since, upkeep of the Post Office landscape has been a volunteer activity sponsored by the SeaWeeders and our Society. In 2017-18, work teams tackled overgrown fortnight lilies and added water-wise aloes, aeoniums, agaves and Kangaroo Paws. We trimmed trees, painted the flag pole and railings, laid a bed of newspaper between plants and covered that with a hearty layer of mulch to deter weeds.

Recent donations have included Forest Pansy Redbud and Ginko trees, as well as an additional bench in honor of former Society president Gloria Jones. In 2021, Society friend Jimmy Joe Gooding repainted the colorful Topiary sculpture by artist Christi Beniston that was part of the 2014 project. It was never meant for permanent outdoor installation, but Jimmy Joe punched up the colors and finished with an industrial-strength overcoat of varnish that has kept the popular sculpture colorful and shiny.

Meanwhile, inside . . . a ‘60s kind of vibe was preserved in the faded, pastel interior until 2023, when the weathered interior walls were repainted. The redo included painting over a pastel, Southwestern-styled mural that dated to the 1980s.

Our current Solana Beach Postmaster, Richard Zamora, was appointed in September 2022. He manages 23 employees and the daily distribution of mail on 12 delivery routes and to 1,500 P.O. Boxes at the facility. Zamora is a 15-year postal employee and U. S. Navy veteran who began his career as a mail handler and who previously served as a supervisor at our P.O.



Solana Beach Civic and Historical Society Board Member Trudy Synodis, Postmaster Betty Rabreau and Seaweeder Member Michele Stribling. Photo/Kristina Houck

# Dedicated "P.O. Posse" Keeps the Garden Polished

You'll find them pulling weeds, cleaning paths and dead-heading the fortnight lilies almost every Saturday morning -- rain or shine. The dedicated SeaWeeder volunteers we call our "P. O. Posse" take payment only from the thanks and compliments of Postal patrons and passers-by. Although they do also delight in snapping visitors' photos at the popular "Love Above All" bench and slyly snipping the bushes into heart shapes. See if you can spy them next time . . .

Members of Teen Volunteers in Action and their parents joined the Posse in March of 2020 and 2021 and again in October, 2023, to refresh walking paths and lay fresh mulch in the Solana Beach Post Office sculpture garden.



## Enjoying a New Poop Post

SeaWeeders asked, and the City of Solana Beach swiftly answered a request for a dog waste station at our Post Office in May 2023.

## Birth of a City

# *Solana Beach was Voted into Independence in 1986*

After an almost three-year and sometimes rancorous campaign, a third vote for incorporation brought the City some independence from the County of San Diego, which seemed endlessly willing to permit development. An ongoing scheme to build a hotel on what is now Harbaugh Seaside Trails was one of many development plans that were catalysts for Citizens Intending to Incorporate (CITI), the group advocating incorporation.

The City's inaugural event was scheduled for 7 p.m., July 1, 1986. But after learning that San Diego County still legally had control of Solana Beach until the first Council was sworn in, newly elected Council members advanced the swearing-in ceremony by 12 hours to prevent the County from issuing building permits throughout the day.

*At 7 a.m. on July 1, 1986 members of Solana Beach's first City Council took their oaths of office*, sworn in by then San Diego Supervisor Susan Golding. (L-R in this photo) first Mayor Margaret Schlesinger (who would be Society President in 2007-08), Deputy Mayor Jack Moore

and Council members Richard Hendlin, Marion Dodson and Celine Olson (Society President in 1985-86 and 1994-96). They then promptly voted to elbow the County out of City affairs. In its second independent act, the council approved a 45-day moratorium on new building permits. At the time, more

than two dozen building permits were pending.

"You are represented much better as a community in this County when you become a city," noted first-Council member (and long-time Society member) Marion Dodson. She later served as Solana Beach Mayor three times during her tenure of 14 years on



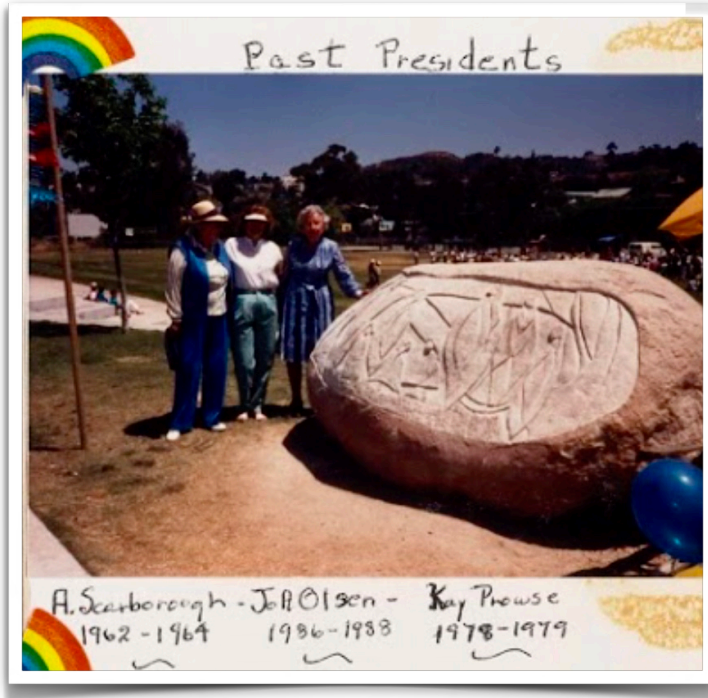
City Council and also represented the City in the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) for eight years.

At the outset, there was no revenue, nor budget, nor staff, nor an office (nor email, nor internet) to run a city. The first Council went to work fast to rent offices, hire a City Manager, City Clerk and City Attorney, plus staff — and to develop the policies by which it would govern. "To get all of the rules and regulations set up for a city — we worked so hard as Council members. I can't tell you how many hours we put in," Marion remembered in a 2020 interview. "We worked our asses off."

*Continued*

## *Birth of a City . . .continued*

In the few weeks between the successful June 3 vote to incorporate and the July 1 inauguration, the new Council drew up 21 ordinances and regulations, all of which also were adopted at the first morning session. Among them: allow the City to collect its share of taxes that previously had gone to the County and State; establish Council as the official planning agency; and set Council member salaries at \$300 per month (since raised to \$860).



For its first birthday, the City celebrated around a “founding stone” in La Colonia Park. Local artist Tom Emery was commissioned to chip into a 10.5-ton boulder of pink granite to depict early and ongoing residents of Solana Beach. In 1989, to celebrate its third birthday, the City published a review of its early accomplishments and a preview of future plans in the Fall issue of Solana Beach Shorelines.

On July 8, 1994, the City marked its eighth anniversary with a Grand Opening celebration at its new, 14,000 square-foot City Hall on Highway 101. Perhaps ironically, the gleaming structure with its backlit eight-foot stained glass replica of the City Seal had previously housed Diego’s, a bar and disco. That business had generated years of neighborhood complaints about overflow parking on residential streets, noise, vandalism and drug-dealing before the club was almost

destroyed by fire and closed in the early 1990s. Its owners and managers had more than once been hauled before Council in what the San Diego Union Tribune described in 1986 as a “sizzling feud.” Marion recalled how much “We enjoyed telling folks that we turned a nightclub into City Hall.”

Solana Beach continues to be a sizzling presence in San Diego County, scoring many significant firsts and still fighting to retain our beachside community vibe. Among all cities in San Diego County, we were:

- First to lower Amtrak tracks, in the 1990s, and complete our section of the Coastal Rail Trail, in 2003
- First to ban smoking on public beaches, in 2003
- First to ban single-use plastic bags, in 2012
- First to ban disposable plastic food containers, in 2016
- First to adopt Community Choice Aggregation, in 2018, enacting local control over procurement of electric power
- Second to adopt a safe gun storage ordinance, in 2019.

### ***Society Leaders = City Leaders***

Perhaps it's no surprise that so many of our community and City leaders had Society-leadership ties.

Celene Olson, Margaret Schlesinger and Judy Hegenauer each served as Society President before and/or after serving as City Mayors and/or Council-members.

June 1989 . . . our Historical Society is Born

## *Civic Club Embraced Call to Track History of New City*

The late 1980s were the era of independence for Solana Beach. Proposition N for "Cityhood" had passed, bringing Solana Beach independence from the County of San Diego.



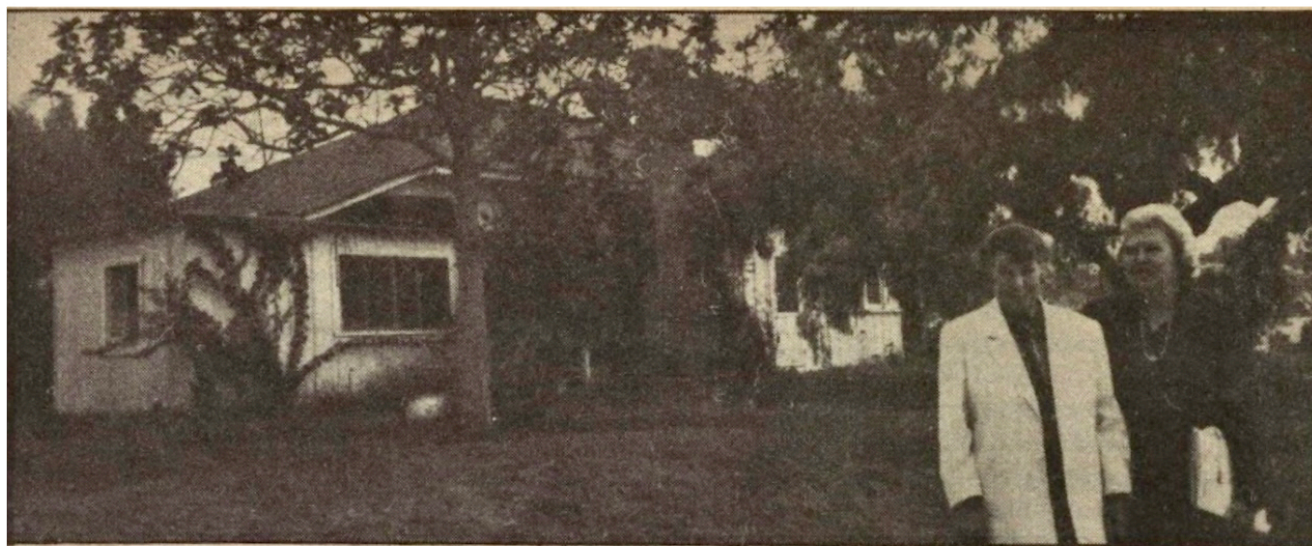
Margaret Schlesinger

Recognizing the import of the era, Mayor Schlesinger also expressed her interest in forming a historical society for the new City.

The Solana Beach Women's Civic Club had vanquished unsightly billboards, created the Plaza "centerpiece" for the new City, sponsored bicycle paths, successfully sustained landscaping along Hwy. 101, and repeatedly demonstrated their fund-raising prowess through cause-specific campaigns, annual Holiday Home Tours showcasing decor and crafts, and the Holiday Crafts Boutique. Now, they stepped up to the role of Solana Beach historians.

In the summer of 1989, the California Secretary of State approved a name change for the organization to the Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society. With the change in name and charter came a significant change in membership rules -- for the first time, men would be invited to join. The Society's first president was Sue Evans; first male member, Eddie Lewis.

Among the new Society's early initiatives was to establish a headquarters for itself and a historical museum for the city. They already had identified the candidate -- the Stevens House, built in the 1890s on Lockwood Mesa. Because of a planned condo development (Del Mar Downs), the old house was slated to be moved to a temporary site near Saint James Catholic Church.



Mary Thurman, left, and Ada Scarsborough, historians for the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club, stand in front of the Stevens home built in the 1890s.

## *Turning a Century-old House into a Historical Museum*

The ink had barely dried on official documents renaming and rechartering the Women's Civic Club as our Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society in 1989 when then-Board members charged ahead with plans to transform a deteriorating 100-year-old home into our Heritage Museum. Although the structure -- the former Stevens house, built in 1888 -- had been identified and promised for the purpose of creating a museum, a few challenges remained. Among them: Where to put it? And how to get it there?

The City had agreed to assume ownership and committed \$25,000 for exterior renovation, but there was no consensus about where to place the planned museum. As many as eight locations were under consideration, including Skyline School, several undeveloped acres in residential neighborhoods, and the 16-acre property then used as a flower farm at the north end of North Rios Ave. From the start, City staff and Park and Recreations Committee members advocated for siting the planned museum on City-owned land. They eventually prevailed in 1991 when Council approved a proposal to move the old house to La Colonia Park.

Now it was up to the Society to fund the \$4,000 cost of the move. Help came with a \$1,000 donation from Bruce Howe, a former resident of the house, whose family owned it from 1979 to 1984.

*On Friday, February 22, 1991, starting at 9 a.m., the historic house was loaded on a flatbed truck for the mile-long journey from Del Mar Downs Road to Via de la Valle, then to Valley Avenue and the east side of the park.*

Over time, the City took on exterior renovations, including a foundation, painting and a porch that wrapped around one of two eucalyptus trees preserved on site. Volunteers helped install the new roof, which also accommodated the tree, and began to

Wednesday, February 27, 1991



Staff Photo / Jamie Scott Lytle

### **On the road again**

The historic 100-year-old Stevens House sits on a flatbed truck during its move from Del Mar Downs Road in Solana Beach to La Colonia Park in Eden Gardens on Friday. The Solana Beach City Council has set aside \$25,000 to pay for the restoration of the

building, believed to be one of the city's oldest. The interior of the house will also need to be refurbished but no city money has been set aside for that, according to City Manager Michael Huse.

refurbish the interior. The work took years. It wasn't until September, 17, 1994, that our Heritage Museum was formally dedicated and began opening for visitors.

It was another decade before the interior displays were completed to tell a story about the history of our City.



## *Building on a Theme to Curate our Heritage Museum*

By 1994, the Society and the City had completed sufficient repairs on the century-old Stevens House to open it for visits. It had been a big undertaking to find the home, convince the City to buy and agree to maintain it, determine where it would be located and fund its move -- not to mention the actual move of a 100-year-old structure. Following which hundreds of volunteer hours were required to make it safe and presentable. Several donations of antiques added visual history and ambience.

But now that the doors could be opened, perhaps bigger questions loomed -- *what makes a museum a Museum? How would this old house tell a story of Solana Beach's history?*

As with so many prior achievements by the Solana Beach Women's Civic Club-turned Civic & Historical Society, the answers needed a champion. Which it found, this time, in the heritage-dedicated team of Kathalijn and Jim Nelson.

Jim already had embraced a project to capture the oral histories of early residents George C. Wilkens and Robert "Chuckles" Hernandez in the book *Early Solana Beach*, published in 2002 (reprinted in 2012 and 2022). In the initial printing, it was noted on the title page that revenue from book sales would be used for ". . . refurbishing the Solana Beach Museum, the Fletcher Cove Community Center and other civic and historical projects."

"However, we frankly had no idea how we would refurbish the museum," Jim wrote in a January 2015 Society newsletter recap about the effort. "A year later, the book had raised over \$12,000 and we still had no idea how to proceed."

Inspiration came from . . . water. At the time, Jim was volunteering at Birch Aquarium. The Volunteer Coordinator, Brad Krey, had had previously been curator of Mt. Shasta Sisson Museum, so Jim sought his advice. "He responded with three main points: first a small museum should have a theme, second you need a formal furnishing plan and third you should consider having a Living History Program," Jim wrote. The advice came with an eight book reading list, most of which reiterated the need for a theme.

One theme that had emerged from his interviews with "Chuckles" Hernandez was the role that fresh water played in the creation of what is now Solana Beach. Completion of the Lake Hodges dam and subsequent irrigation for area orchards created huge demand for Mexican laborers to tend the fields. And they needed housing. Which led to the development of what is now La Colonia, initially an agricultural workers' camp with a common washhouse made possible by fresh-water irrigation systems that those workers also created.



Lake Hodges Dam, completed in 1919. Subsequent construction of a distribution pipe system delivered fresh water to Lockwood Mesa, where the community of La Colonia was created to house workers for area orchards and ranches.

*Continued*

## ***"Building on a Theme " . . . continued***

***"Kathalijn and I proposed to the Board we use 'The Impact of the 1923 Arrival of Running Water on the Community then Known as Lockwood Mesa.' We proposed to divide the house in half and have a kitchen and parlor furnished with items used before the arrival of running water and electricity and two corresponding rooms furnished with items [that could be] acquired soon after the arrival of those utilities."***

The Board agreed. The furnishing plan was developed, thanks to Brad's book list. Now, the search was on for furnishings that were authentic to the "before and after" theme.

"We started in the Antique Warehouse in Solana Beach and virtually came up empty. We were a little more successful on Adams Avenue in San Diego and Newport Avenue in Ocean Beach. We consulted the San Dieguito Museum's antique experts . . . and joined them for a trip to an auction. We struck out there and were getting discouraged," Jim reported in a recap of the effort published in 2015 Society newsletters.

Solution? Hit the road. The couple decided to drive their station wagon to a reunion of Kathalijn's American family near Binghamton, New York and go antique shopping along the way.

They drove to San Francisco, then Salt Lake City and Minden, Nebraska, where San Dieguito Museum experts Dave and Bertha Young had recommended visiting Harold Warp Pioneer Village. "It was a gold mine," Jim recalled. One football-field-size building housed sample kitchens, dining rooms, bedrooms and living rooms as they would be furnished in ten-year increments starting in 1860 and ending in 1930. They photographed and catalogued the 1900 and 1930 kitchens and living rooms . . . and bought rugs for the museum hallways.

Next stops: Springfield, Il, Lancaster, PA, Binghamton, N.Y. and all of the small-town antique shops along the way. "At this point, we had collected over 50 small items ... cameras, gold leaf china, an electric fan, a lantern, a stereoscope, a manual vacuum cleaner, a carpet sweeper and myriad kitchen implements. We were traveling with our Welsh Terrier, Rusty, who had the whole back of the car when we started but now was confined to a small area."



The artifacts are as unique as the retractable kerosene ceiling light that still illustrates how pre-electricity homes were illuminated. And did you know that the shade-less electrified chandelier on the 1930s side of the Museum has bare bulbs because folks who had electricity back then wanted to show it off?

Bruce Coons, then Executive Director of Save Our Heritage Organization was instrumental in helping to identify appropriate period furnishings for the museum. Don Terrwilliger, who had visited the former Stevens home as a child, provided memories of paint colors and wallpaper patterns.

*Continued*

## *Building on a Theme . . . continued*

Another fun fact has to do with what once was a full-grown eucalyptus tree by the front door. The porch was built to wrap around the trunk. Unfortunately, the tree died from a bark beetle infestation and the crown was lopped off. In 2004, the Society sponsored a "vote" to decide what to do with the scarred stump. The options presented were:

- Paint it brown to match the roof
- Cut to below the roof and patch the shingles
- Cut to 30" from the porch floor and build a table top
- Cut lower and attach a half wine barrel to make a planter
- Cut below the poor floor and repair the roof and floor

The winning idea turned out to be "none of the above." Instead, the Board went with Irene De Watteville's suggestion to put a weathervane atop the stump. In 2005, George and Vi Wilkens donated the Mother Quail and Young vane that had been mounted on the roof of their garage for 50 years.



April 2023: Tarey Gerardy, costumed as "grandma" Susannah Stevens, showed visiting third-graders how a wood-burning stove was used in a 1900s-era kitchen

The "crown jewel" of the interior furnishings , in Jim's opinion, was the 1902 cast iron wood-burning stove that is showcased in the 1900s-era kitchen. The wood-burning stove came from Rangeley, Maine, where it had been stored in the basement of the grandmother of the Nelson's son-in-law. He had been asked to take it to the dump, but the couple's daughter recognized that it could be valuable to her parents' project.

RMR Stove Restoration Company, a restorer of vintage gas stoves, advised to have the stove disassembled and shipped to a sandblaster in San Diego. RMR further advised not to paint the reassembled stove, but rather to apply black stove polish within a day of the sandblast cleaning to avoid rusting in our salt air environment. The bright work was to be replaced not with chrome but with nickel.

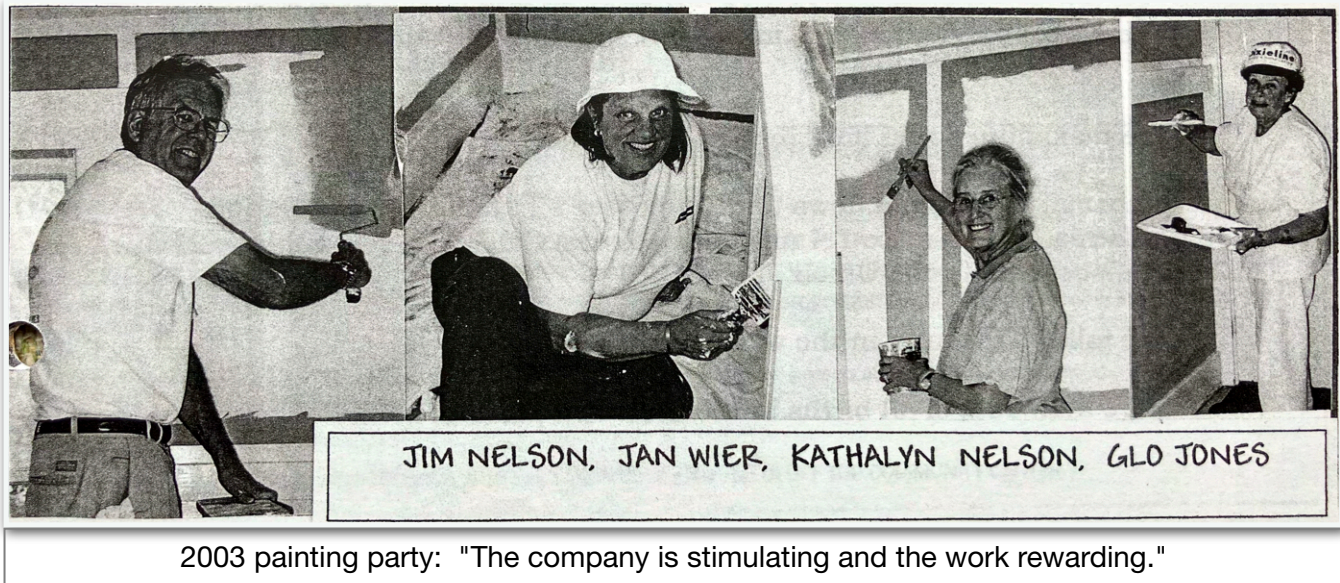
"We followed RMR's instructions to the letter and converted a pile of rubble into our crown jewel," Jim reported.

In the counterpart 1930s kitchen, the leaders of RMR donated a gas stove that they had restored. Another artifact spared from the dump -- and still operating: the 1930s-era refrigerator with the cooling unit on top. The Society had it powder-coated to look brand new. The two-tub washing machine that was the "latest thing" in the mid-1930s came from an Arts-and-Crafts house restoration in Mission Hills. The '30s-era kitchen sink came from a "second wife's" house that was being restored in Kanab, Utah, by a couple who also restored the 1900s-era water pump.

Thank you notes from visiting school-children often highlight their new insights into life in the Stevens home: "I learned that the Stevens never needed a gym because they did their chores as their exercise."

## *Museum Reopened in 2004, with a Story to Tell*

By 2003, refurbishment of the Heritage Museum was in full swing, with new artifacts arriving almost weekly that would tell the story of life in Lockwood Mesa both before and after the arrivals of running water and electricity. It's a theme that continues to fascinate museum visitors today.



Kathalijn and Jim Nelson's cross-country shopping trips were so successful that a shed was needed to store wares during the interior transformation. Architect Rich Bokal came up with the design and builder Terry Wardell managed construction, creating a miniature copy of the Stevens house, with the same gambrel roof and board and batten detail. "Pretty fancy for a shed, but [Rich and Terry] want it to look authentic," the Nelsons reported.

Inside the old house, one abode was renovated to depict two. A big display cabinet, dining table and chairs and bed were re-gifted to make way for new partitions to create two kitchens and two living areas, each depicting a different era. Dixieline Lumber donated materials; electrical work in the 1930s side of the Museum was donated, as well. Society volunteers tackled painting both the floors (authentic to the eras), halls and two kitchens, wallpapering the two living rooms and hanging the kerosene and electric ceiling lamps. "From . . . homes seen in our tours, we knew the 1900 kitchen should be painted a dark olive green to hide the soot from the wood stove. For the 1930 kitchen, when soot was not a problem, the walls should be bright and airy," Jim reported.

Some \$4,200 in grants from the Seth Sprague Foundation and the Johnston family provided for the purchase and rebuild of the 1930s parlor player piano. Two crank phones common to that era also were donated. For the 1900s parlor, donations included a pump organ, Victrola and treadle Singer sewing machine. Meanwhile, in volunteers' homes, needles whirred to make curtains for both parlors.

The Santa fe Irrigation District awarded a \$2,400 grant for construction of the rotating panel display that shows a timeline of the area's history in photos and maps. A refinished cabinet radio arrived just in time for the **Grand Reopening on June 27, 2004.**

*Continued*

## *Museum Reopening . . . continued*

Close to 100 Society members came out for the ribbon cutting, presided over by then-Mayor Joe Kellejian and Society President/Curator Jim Nelson. Solana Beach players of the "Blue Grass Saturday Morning" band provided the music. Horizon Frozen Foods and California Pizza donated pies and confections. Jim King parked his mint-condition 1930 Model A Ford at the Museum entrance for ambience.

Then outgoing Society President Gloria "Glo" Jones greeted visitors, along with Shirley Foote and Margaret Schlesinger. They provided an overview of the refurbishing project and orientation to the new Museum.

Jan Wier and Nancy Gottfredson took turns playing the part of Susannah Stevens in the newly scripted Living History program. Janann Moffatt and Bonnie Powell were Jennie Stevens. Richard Moore and Jim Nelson played Senator James West Stevens, Byron Disselhorst was Charlie Stevens; Wayne Brechtel and Bob Gottfredson played Edwin Stevens.

Visitors requesting a tour in Spanish were escorted by Effie Lewis Lopez. After touring the house, the Wilkens, Trydy Synodis and Carolyn Carrol sought signatures for the new guest book.

Meanwhile, young visitors learned to play popular turn-of-the-century games of marbles, pick-up-sticks, hop scotch, jump rope and croquet -- just as they do during Living History programs today.



Richard Moore (L) and Jim Nelson as serious Senator James West Stevens

## *Solana Beach Library Opened after 21 Years of Planning*



After a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 22, 2001, our new joint-use library opened to the public on July 5, culminating in a \$3.4 million venture that the San Diego Union Tribune described as “an effort of epic proportions and planning. . . Twenty-one years of planning, to be exact.”

The idea for siting a County library branch on the campus of Earl Warren Junior High School germinated in 1979, when Bill Berrier, then Superintendent of the San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUSD), suggested it in a letter to his colleagues. At the time, the Solana Beach branch tended to be transitory, regularly outgrowing its leased spaces as the City’s population and its collection expanded. Friends of the Solana Beach Library -- which included many Society members -- formed in March 1983. By October, with help from Society donations, they had moved the branch to a 3,800-square-foot home in the Lomas Santa Fe shopping center. Within about a decade, however, that branch was again cramped for space.

In 1995, according to a history of the library by advocate Richard A. Schwartzlose, the Solana Beach City Council appointed Joe Kellejian and Marion Dodson to a sub-committee to work toward a new home for the library. Schwartzlose, and many other Society members took up the challenge of creating a permanent, joint-use facility — and wrangling all of the agreements required to fund it.

An “epic” undertaking, indeed. It required dogged determination by the Friends and tireless negotiations with the City of Solana Beach, SDUSD, the County of San Diego, and eventually, the State of California. Finally, each entity committed its investments:

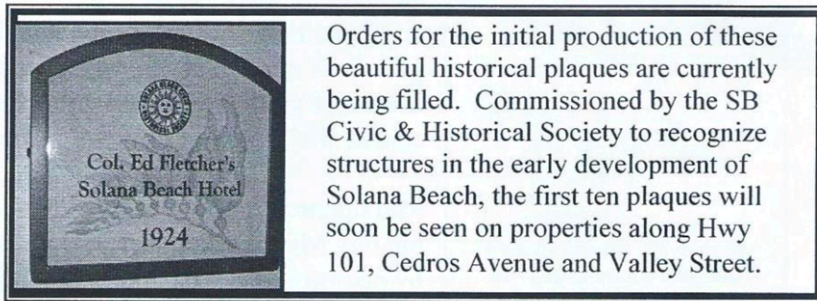
- SDUSD: 1.3 acres of land: \$540,000
- City: \$820,000
- County: \$100,000
- Statewide School Construction Bonds: \$960,000
- Friends of the Library: \$780,000 in private donations — including a big anonymous gift.

It was a masterful assemblage of agreements, but still shy of the total needed to complete construction. The shortfall was exacerbated by delays when, according to the North County Times, workers hit an aquifer during grading. So budgets were tweaked; landscape plans edited; contractors encouraged to redouble their efforts. Earl Warren students’ families and the City of Solana Beach pitched in to close the funding gap. Friends of the Library, alone, raised an additional \$56,000 for furnishings.

Remarkably, the Solana Beach branch was dedicated almost a year-to-the-day after groundbreaking. “It’s a case of the community *really* wanting the library,” commented the Society’s Bob Gottfredson, then president of Friends of the Solana Beach Library.

## ***Historical Building Plaque Project Launched in 2009***

Following the big project to create our Heritage Museum, Jim Nelson and Society historian Richard Moore took the story-telling of Solana Beach history to the streets.



The pair tracked down original owners, uses and construction dates for more than 20 buildings constructed between 1923 and 1952. The idea was to highlight their significance as some of the City's earliest structures. Most are (or were) located along Cedros Avenue, Highway 101, La Colonia or at the Plaza.

The Society secured grant funding to commission explanatory tile plaques, which were designed and fabricated by local artist and then-Public Arts Advisory Commissioner Kathryn Schmiedeberg. She chose a "classic style that would work well with all the different architectural styles of the buildings," Kathryn said.

Initially, 28 plaques were installed by volunteer Mike Dalton. Starting in 2017, they have been augmented with "quick response" or QR codes that link to information about the site in the Historical Places section of the Society's website. Board member Cindi Clemons and her husband Dave keep the codes in good repair.

In 2018, we created a brochure that includes a map of historical sites in the City, along with QR code links to their website descriptions. These sites also are featured in annual scavenger hunts sponsored by Bike Walk Solana Beach.

## ***Funding a Fletcher Cove Community Center Renovation***

In 1944, San Diego County wrangled the transfer of four 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps barracks into County ownership. One building was moved from Vista to the bluff above Fletcher Cove beach, where it was put into service as a community center. From its founding in 1953, the Society frequently used the building for member meetings and the annual Holiday Bazaar, as it was called at the time.

By 2007, weathered by coastal storms and ailing from deferred maintenance, the structure was in shambles and basically unusable. "While the Pacific Avenue facility has a multi-million dollar ocean view, the pathways are pitch black . . . and the walls literally crumble to the touch," reported the Solana Beach Sun. *Continued*



Then-Society President Carol Childs presents the check that finally launched Fletcher Cove Community Center renovations in 2011

## *Fletcher Cove Community Center Renovation . . . continued*

That year, the City's long-planned effort to create Fletcher Cove Park had finally come to fruition, again supported in large part by the Society and other donors whose contributions are honored in the expansive ceramic ocean-theme tile-work that wraps around the park like a wave. The beautiful new park was in stark contrast to the dilapidated community center on the adjacent, overgrown ice plant-filled slope.

City Council set up a Fletcher Cove Ad Hoc Committee in November 2007 and tasked members to gather community input on a vision for the center. Society Executive Board and many members immediately got involved. "It's such a part of our organization," past Society president and former Mayor Margaret Schlesinger said. ". . . we don't want to lose a meeting place." She and then-Society president Judy Hegenauer told the City that the Society didn't feel the building had local historical significance and pledged to fundraise for the new center.

The project quickly grew into a community-wide effort. Volunteers removed a truckload of ice plant from around the structure during the Solana Beach Presbyterian Church's Community Serve Day in February and again in July, 2010. They would return after the renovation was completed for a community planting day to install landscaping around the center in "Overlook Park."

Stephen Dalton Architects of Solana Beach was selected to design the renovated multi-use center, adding the south-facing window wall that offers views of the ocean and Fletcher Cove park. Wide doors that open to adjacent outdoor patios help to compensate for the center's limited floor area, which couldn't be expanded due to coastal building regulations.

The City budgeted \$279,000 for the project, but construction bids came in higher. Additional funding was secured through the Americans with Disabilities Act, redevelopment agency money, and several generous donations -- including \$185,000 from the Solana Beach Community Foundation, \$40,000 from the Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society, and an additional \$25,000 from an individual donor as a "top-off" to the broad citizen financial participation in the effort.

The renovation got underway in February 2011 with a goal for completion in time for a summer celebration of the City's 25th anniversary. Workers said the building was in such poor shape that it wobbled when they removed siding.

Nevertheless the transformation was completed in time for the July 2011 anniversary events, to which the Society contributed a "Birth of a City" book and DVDs containing a slideshow of Solana Beach scenes throughout its history. The renovated center was decorated with historic photos. The Society also had

photos printed on large banners for a "then and now" exhibit at City Hall. The same banners are re-displayed each May at our Fiesta del Sol booth and always seem to delight visitors and spark memories.





## *100th Anniversary Celebration of Lake Hodges in 2018*

Our Society teamed with the Del Mar Historical Society, Rancho Santa Fe Historical Society, Santa Fe Irrigation District and the Fletcher Family Foundation in November, 2018 to co-host a Celebration of the 100th "birthday" of Lake Hodges. The event at the L'Auberge resort in Del Mar featured speakers from the Journal of San Diego History and Trish Boaz, then Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy.

The reservoir began to fill during completion of Lake Hodges dam and its waters eventually were distributed to what now are Del Mar and Solana Beach, as well as other communities, making ranching, farming and residential development easier.

As part of the anniversary celebration, the Society and the City of Solana Beach also hosted a "Follow the Water" exhibit of original art and prints by local artist Kevin Anderson at City Hall.

## *Archival Digitization Project Began in 2018*

From the outset, officers of the Women's Civic Club kept careful records of its meetings, correspondence and press clippings. Many of these made their way into annual scrapbooks, which in time made their way into the "archives room" of the Heritage Museum. Over the years, the Society also acquired historical photos, books and other documents through research projects and donations.

Aware that these records could be valuable to researchers -- and that everybody's first stop for information was Google -- Board members began a daunting effort to "digitize" our archives. Museum Curator Lisa Montes and Civic Affairs/Corresponding Secretary Chair Cindi Clemons lead the effort, which has included securing a series of community grant funds from the City of Solana Beach.

Backstage Library Works was selected to handle digitization of what grew (so far) to 11 batches of documents -- each boxed and shipped for scanning into four file formats. Society volunteers also spent countless hours scanning documents, clippings and photos.

The intent was to make this data available through the San Diego County's Library system online database, but the County's project sputtered. The Society's digital archive now occupies 3.51 gigabytes of a dedicated Google Drive. Our online presence is augmented by an ever-growing website -- updated in 2020 to support our Covid-19 eCommerce era -- as well as a YouTube channel housing videographies and slideshows.

**Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Lake Hodges**

**Follow the Water**

Original art and fine prints on exhibit  
Oct. 1-Nov. 15  
Solana Beach City Hall  
635 S HWY 101

**Opening Reception**  
October 6, 3-7 p.m.  
Free admission Refreshments

Sponsored by the Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society and the City of Solana Beach

**Featuring Peter Sprague**

## *Let's Get La Colonia Skatepark Rolling!*

The Community Center at La Colonia was dedicated on May 5, 1991. In November 1996 the San Diego County Sheriff's Department opened an office in the La Colonia Park Community Center. In 2007, the City came up with a Master Plan for the whole of La Colonia Park, envisioning elements such as a skatepark, an expanded tot lot and a courtyard honoring veterans. The latter was completed in 2016 with support from the Society.

After the City's anticipated funding source was shut down at the state level, the City had to tackle the Master Plan piecemeal.

The skate park remained a priority among residents and an enthusiastic local skateboarding community. A \$5,000 donation from the Tony Hawk Foundation kicked off fund-raising. From there, the City received a \$100,000 Neighborhood Reinvestment Program grant from the County, as well as donations from the Surfing Madonna Oceans Project, and the Coastal Community Foundation.

Following an inspiring General Meeting about the history of skateboarding in Southern California, the Society Board approved an \$8,000 gift from the Civic & Historical Society (later increased by \$2,000).

The Parks and Recreation Commission also raised money through fundraisers at Culture Brewing and the Fire Department hosted a pancake breakfast. Funding for the approximately \$1.1 million project was completed from the City's Capital Improvement Program Fund.

Project designers Van Dyke Landscape Architects gathered input from local skaters for park features, which include a wave-like donor wall displaying the names of individuals, families and businesses that contributed \$500 or more. Adjacent to the park is a small basketball court and a free-standing electrical grid, called EnergiPlant, with WiFi and ports for phone-charging.

*Continued*



Then-Society president Michele Stribling, Lisa Montes, Cindi Clemons, Kirk Wegner of the Solana Beach Parks and Recreation

## "Skatepark Challenge" Celebrated Park Opening . . .continued

To help celebrate the skatepark opening on April 29, 2019, the Society sponsored a competitive challenge for local 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Students were invited to participate in two contests:

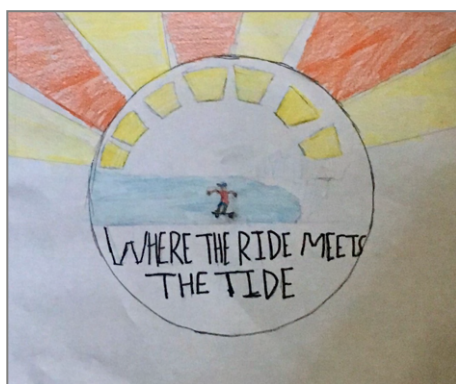
1. Create artwork for a skateboard deck that conveyed the importance of the new skatepark to the community and the athletes who will use it, as well as the importance of its location in La Colonia de Eden Gardens, Solana Beach's first neighborhood. Or,
2. Develop a video documentary on the long history of the skatepark, from idea to the grand opening.

In the video category, Cleo Krems, then a Skyline School 6th grader, took home the \$250 first place prize (you can view her winning entry on our YouTube channel or via a link from the History section of our website).



A team of Earl Warren Middle School 8th graders each earned \$100 runners-up prizes — Danika Blease, Tanner Phillips and Robert Schmidling.

In the skateboard deck design competition, Camden Cassara, then a 7th grader at Earl Warren, was the first place winner. Runners-up were Avery Austin, Lauren Prior and Kathryn Reese, then 7th graders at Earl Warren, as well as Cristina Milne, then in grade 7 at Saint James Academy. Each received a \$100 prize.



Contest judges assessed more than 50 entries. They decided also to award \$50 "special recognition" prizes to two more Earl Warren 7th graders: Dylan Flynn, for a clever photo montage that incorporated some of Solana Beach's iconic curved rooflines, and Eli Shiah, for a catchy tagline: "Where the ride meets the tide."



## *SeaWeeders Team with City, Lagoon Conservancy on Landscape Upgrades*

In 2018, the SeaWeeders built on a partnership with the City and the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy (now the Nature Collective) to spruce up the Rios Trailhead into the lagoon. The partners created a stone wall sitting area to make it more comfortable and welcoming for kids on field trips. Volunteers helped the Conservancy select and install native plants for the surrounding hillside and keep them watered until they were well established.

When Betsy Schulz's beautiful Fire Wall sculpture at the Solana Beach Fire Station, was dedicated on June 19, 2019, the SeaWeeders were on hand to celebrate their installation of a native-plant garden on the east slope of the Fire Station "front yard" on Lomas Santa Fe Drive. Schulz had asked the club to expand on her landscape design surrounding the sculpture, which helped jump-start a broader effort to promote native pollinator habitat in Solana Beach. To the amusement of firefighters, volunteers surrounded the new plants with layers of newsprint before mulching the native section -- a method that had proven successful at our Post Office to deter weeds and nourish the soil. Volunteers hand-watered the garden over the summer to help plants get established.



The following month, the City of Solana Beach Public Arts Commission (PAC) approved a landscape concept plan created by SeaWeeder Katie Pelisek to complete improvements at the El Viento pocket park. The park had been created by road improvements at the corner of El Viento and Granados about 10 years prior, and originally planted by neighbors. It later was added as one of the City's six temporary art sites and hosted the Fleur de Lumiere glass sculpture by Deanne Sabeck.

Subsequent landscaping improvements had been hampered by drainage issues at the site, which has no running water to help sustain plantings. During heavy rains, run-off erodes walkways. City officials approached the SeaWeeders to explore ideas for improving drainage and completing planting at the park. The rehab plan included boulders to help contain erosion at the dry site.



The PAC approved a budget, which the SeaWeeders augmented with \$4,000 in grant funding from the Solana Beach Fund, a fund of the Coastal Community Foundation.

The boulders were placed in February 2020. The following month, a gaggle of Skyline sixth graders helped spread 10-yards of mulch. And in October the PAC agreed to purchase the Fleur de Lumier sculpture for permanent installation.

Coping with Covid-19

## ***Connecting our Community through the Pandemic Era***

2020 was a challenging year all around the globe. After the shock and fear associated with initial shutdowns in March, your Society Board and members got busy working on ways to maintain connections in our community.

In-person general meetings were banned; so we learned how to meet with members and friends online and captured many informative "Zoom at Noon" sessions on video, now archived on our YouTube channel. Board meetings couldn't happen, so we Zoomed those, too. We skipped the usual summer break and kept newsletters coming to you through July and August. We published the list of local restaurants who were struggling to survive by offering take-out. We overhauled the website and added security to support online Holiday Boutiques.

Perhaps most significantly, however, we teamed with the La Colonia Community Foundation on a food giveaway in December of that dark year. Communications chair Pat Coad reported results for the January 2021 newsletter:



Food Drive leader Lisa Montes and other volunteers verified recipients' local addresses and asked for their number of family members to size donations to needs.

***We were able to provide food for 193 Solana Beach families, impacting 955 individuals — more than double the goal for the event.***

The Wounded Warrior Homes organization provided us with 2,000 pounds of non-perishables and 450 pounds of fresh vegetables picked up and delivered to us by several volunteers. The Community Resource Center in Encinitas and the Produce Good organization donated additional food. On Saturday, Dec. 19, generous community members lined up for two hours giving us food, toiletries and more than \$2,000 in gift cards to local grocery stores. In all, an estimated three tons of food was collected, along with toys and clothes.

Volunteers from Teen Volunteers in Action and their parents helped sort food and move it to the distribution site. Thank you to CVS in Solana Beach who let us use their shopping carts to help with the transfer of food. Thank you to Danny Hernandez for delivering the shopping carts.

Jewel Edson and Dave Zito helped us from the Solana Beach City Council. Dan King from the City came on the weekend to unlock the Community Center for us. Tina and Joe Zucker represented the Women's March, Solana Beach and were generous with their time.

Thank you, too, to all of the others who helped us in some way; if you saw the continuous line of cars picking up food you would have been proud. In addition to families who walked to get their food, cars were parked on the side of the road from Genevieve down Valley to the park entrance starting at 3:30 for our event, which didn't begin until 4:00.

Thank you Solana Beach for all of your care and love for members of our community.  
***Solana Beach has HEART! Solana Beach tiene CORAZON!***

## *"Together, we saved this view. Forever."*



Photo by Charlie Neuman for the San Diego Union Tribune

Our community made history — again — on February 22, 2020, with the dedication of a 3.4-acre plot of paradise that will never, ever, be “paved ... and put up a parking lot.”

Backed by a soaring sunset, Mayor Jewel Edson, Nature Collective Executive Director Doug Gibson, and Harbaugh Foundation Director manager Joe Balla

clipped a green ribbon to officially open the trails at our City’s northern gateway. New paths twine among 8,000 native plants installed by community volunteers in November thru January, 2019. They link our Coastal Rail Trail with the San Elijo Lagoon trail system via a new pedestrian tunnel under the railroad tracks.

The decades-long battle to preserve this view is now a celebration of victory for many, many long-time Society members, and Solana Beach activists. Some of us can remember that the view from what is now the donor monument at Harbaugh Seaside Trails looked like this -- until Women's Civic Club members won the epic "Battle of the Billboards."



Doug Gibson and his team made sure that *all* of the eco-warriors involved in saving this view were well acknowledged during the dedication. “The local community, they are the real heroes,” he said. “Together, we saved this view. Forever.”

## Stepping up for our Western Monarchs

# *SeaWeeders Team with City to Plant for Pollinators*

In April, 2021, Mayor Lesa Heebner and Solana Beach City Council signed the Mayors' Monarch Pledge to help make Solana Beach friendly to Western monarchs and other pollinators. The Pledge is a challenge sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation to encourage development of pollinator habitats in urban environments and eliminate practices that are harmful to endangered monarch butterflies.

During the prior year, the annual Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count totaled only 1,914 monarchs seen migrating from the Pacific Northwest to Mexico. None had been sighted in Pacific Grove, CA -- very troubling since the city is known as "Butterfly Town" due to the huge swarms of Western monarchs that typically congregate there to over-winter.

Our team helped to publicize this sad news and also to educate Solana Beach residents about how they could help -- by planting native milkweed plus nectar plants, and curbing the use of pesticides and herbicides. Why milkweed? Because it is the *only* plant where female monarchs lay their eggs and the only food monarch caterpillars eat. Nearby nectar plants provide food for adult butterflies and shelter for the caterpillars and their chrysalides.

On April 23, 2021, the City's first pollinator garden was established with 75 milkweed and nectar plants along the east wall of La Colonia Community Center. Council members participated in a pink ribbon-cutting while monarchs literally fluttered in their hair. The City and SeaWeeders also collaborated to create educational signs -- in English and Spanish -- about the garden's plants and the lifecycle of Monarch butterflies.

On April 24, 2021, Solana Beach residents collected 250 free, native milkweed plants provided by the City and SeaWeeders, plus 1,430 milkweed seeds. In effect, 90 local families had joined the pledge to add monarch-friendly habitat in our community.

Educational events are part of the pledge. In May 2021, the Society hosted a "Zoom at Noon" meeting where Ann Baldrige of the Resource Conservation District of San Diego discussed county-wide efforts to support our Western monarch population. In October 2021, The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA) recently featured our efforts as a case study for students in the Advanced Inquiry Program, a unique master's degree program run through Project Dragonfly of Miami University, Ohio, in partnership with SDZWA.

Since then, hundreds more milkweed and nectar plants have been planted along the Coastal Rail Trail, at the Fire Station, and in two Boys & Girls Club gardens. An "Adopt a Pollinator Plant" fundraiser and sales of a Monarch Butterflies book have raised more than \$8,000 to support plant purchases and educational efforts, including explanatory signs at the La Colonia garden and more planned for the Rail Trail. Additional pollinator gardens are anticipated for the Larrick Reservoir pocket park and on the east side of town, as well.



Council-members "open" our first pollinator garden.

Photo by Luke Harold, Solana Beach Sun

# *Centennial Celebration of La Colonia's Next Century*

Our September 2021 fiesta to celebrate the founding of Solana Beach's first neighborhood was enjoyed by close to 160 guests. It was the biggest event the Society had hosted in recent years and was supported by generous help from the Santa Fe Irrigation District, EDCO, the City of Solana Beach, Boy Scout Troop 782, Teen Volunteers in Action, La Colonia Changers and the talents of our Crafts Group.

Guests included Mayor Lesa Heebner, Deputy Mayor Kristi Becker, Council-member Kelly Harless, and former Council-members Judy Hegenauer, Joe Kellejian, Peter Zahn and Marion Dodson.

A huge birthday cake was supplied by Priscilla Rojo, president of La Colonia

Community Foundation, and cookies were provided by nearby Santa Fe Christian School. Tony's Jacal catered, serving up the 75-year-old establishment's signature turkey tacos and enchiladas.

Fourth generation resident Lisa Montes, Society historian and Heritage Museum curator — and the lead organizer of the event — remembered that, 30-years ago, Connie Alto encouraged Elba Montes to start Ballet Folklorico Jalisciense in La Colonia. Her charming dancers entertained during the evening. Mariachi Estado de Oro provided music for the dancers and serenaded our guests.

Descendants of many of the first families to settle in La Colonia shared their memories of growing up in the neighborhood and playing along Stevens Creek in what is now La Colonia Park. We taped their testimonials, which are linked through our website, as is a slideshow of the family photos residents provided.

“My great grandfather, Francisco Guterrez ... purchased a lot of the lots here. And he was a great builder, skilled in a lot of building methods. He helped build a lot of the buildings that are still standing here today,” including his own home, remembered attorney Joe Villasenor.

“He was a leader in bringing water to our community, as well.” Francisco had nine children “and those children and their heirs still live here today,” he continued. “We are really proud to continue the tradition and build on the legacy that was established by our forefathers.”



Jalisciense Folklorico Group performers (Photo by Robert McDenzie, Del Mar Times)



*Continued*



## Centennial Celebration . . . continued



Five generations of Guitierrez descendants  
(photo by Robert McKenzie, Del Mar Times)

Christine Hernandez Aleman recalled the fight the community launched to preserve the very community center and park where the fiesta was held. “We took many, many, many hours fighting for this with the supervisors in San Diego. It was earmarked for condos, both sides. As kids, we all came here . . . To play baseball. The guys would play football. It was a great place to live and be raised and raise our own. It’s a sacred place for me.”

Arthur “Ono” Sentano paid tribute to first-generation resident Robert “Chuckles” Hernandez, whose memories are chronicled in *Early Solana Beach* by Jim Nelson. Chuckles was instrumental in developing the Veterans’ Memorial Wall

and courtyard at La Colonia Community Center. Arthur’s daughter Sarah was a 2020 recipient of the Society’s college scholarships.

Teresa Rincon, who with husband Ray now manages Tony’s, remembered elaborate Halloween pranks where neighborhood children would block the streets with old cars. “My Dad would say, ‘Oye! those darn kids! We had to take those old cars out of the road again!’ He didn’t know that I was one of them!” Another Halloween, she recalled, “my dad dressed in a big long coat and just stood in a corner by the restaurant. We thought it was the bogeyman and started throwing rocks at him.”

More than a dozen speakers took the mic as the sun set, sharing stories with common themes:

- **Intertwined families.** “We are all related somehow. All cousins,” several commented.
- **Strongly shared pride in the community and residents’ accomplishments through the generations.** Many speakers paid tribute to the community’s war veterans. “My grand nephew who just finished his basic training, I’m looking forward to his picture being up here,” said third-generation resident David Huizar, gesturing to the Community Center wall decorated with photos of local veterans. “We are still serving; we are Americans.”



Robert “Chuckles” Hernandez

*Continued*

## Centennial Celebration . . . .continued

- **As well as its athletes.** “We had great ball players here,” Huizar continued. One local team nearly went to the Little League World Series. At Torrey Pines High School, “EG was in charge,” remembered Paul Salgado, grandson of Tony Gonzales of Tony’s Jacal. “In that Torrey Pines first graduating class, I would say the best athletes in the school at that time were from EG.”
- **A tradition of sharing and caring for one another** that persists to this day, and will keep La Colonia strong and healthy into the next century. “If somebody didn’t have as much, the rest of the family would help. Or the neighbors would help,” said David Huizar. “We are all family.”

“I want to thank you who have talked about my father this evening, because my dad did so much for the community,” remembered Lucy Garcia, whose father Frank “Pancho” Garcia, donated the property where St. Leo’s Mission was built and still serves La Colonia. Pancho Garcia converted the front part of his home on the southeast corner of Valley and Genevieve into a grocery store in 1927. Next to the market, he built a cantina. “He also used to hang a sheet between his store and the bar and would charge 10 cents for people to watch Roy Rogers movies.”

With 14 children in the family, “We were poor,” said Esther Lopez. Don Pancho Garcia “would give my mom credit, keep a tab for her, at a time when people didn’t really do that,” she remembered. “And, we used to like it when his freezer gave out, because all his ice cream would melt. So who do you think he would give it to? The family across the street.”



Santa parachutes into town

Many La Colonia memories are magical. “In La Colonia,” Lisa Montes noted, “Santa didn’t come down the chimney, he jumped out of an airplane and parachuted into the park.”

Growing up in Eden Gardens wasn’t all fun and games. Early residents were farmers and raised chickens and goats. They helped build one another’s homes. Many guests recalled attending the segregated “Americanization School,” where the children weren’t allowed to speak Spanish.

Some challenges went all the way to Rome. Dr. Daniel Rameriz, who teaches about American religions at Claremont Graduate University, confirmed that his grandmother Cipriana Gonzales took on the Pope to keep St. Leo’s open when the archdiocese of San Diego threatened to close the parish. “There were letters from the Pope’s [representative], the Papal Nuncio, to the Bishop of San Diego and to the Monsignor of Saint James asking about the ‘trouble makers.’ And Cipriana Gonzales’ name was at the top of the list.”

Cipriana argued that the church was essential to the community of La Colonia. As essential as a beating heart.

And the beat goes on.



Cipriana Gonzales

## *Society Awarded Three \$2,500 Scholarships for 2023-24*

In June, 2023, two current college students and a recent high school graduate were awarded the Society's increased scholarships for the 2023-24 school year. Since its inception in 2014, our Scholarship Program has awarded \$31,500 to help Solana Beach-resident high school seniors and returning adult students attend college and technical schools. In 2023, our awards increased to \$2,500 each.

Overall, 24 students have received scholarships since the program was launched. Recipients are assessed based on their grade-point averages, references from teachers, counselors or community members, their record of volunteerism in Solana Beach, and financial need. Many recipients have been first-in-their-families to pursue a college education.

Each year, the awards are presented in honor of some notable community residents and Society members -- Margaret Schlesinger, our first Mayor; Jim Nelson, who authored two books about Solana Beach history; and Robert "Chuckles" Hernandez, a long-time La Colonia resident who was instrumental in organizing the war memorials at La Colonia Community Center.

Where are our scholarship recipients now? Well, here are reports on a few . . .

2023 recipient Braulio Deans is continuing his studies at Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo, where he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in mathematics.

2022 recipient Kelly Drummond completed a Masters of Advance Studies in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and is now based in Juneau, Alaska, where she has a fellowship with Alaska Sea Grant, working on aquaculture and fisheries projects. Alaska Sea Grant is one of 34 Sea Grant programs nationwide.



2016 recipient Jessie McConville (far left in the photo) is the Director of Marketing at Scientist.com, based in Solana Beach. She started work there as an intern in 2017 and is now part of a 10-person team that builds digital marketing materials to share with the company's global clients. "Our company has grown a lot in the last couple of years and I love that I get to work on many different projects and events." Jessie now lives in La Jolla and enjoys snorkeling and surfing for fun. "I'm very involved in the local organization Casas De Luz, which I have volunteered with since high school. I also make my own art prints for crafts fairs."

In addition to funding our own scholarships, the Society has for many years donated \$1,000 to the annual scholarship funds offered by the Mexican-American Educational Guidance Association (MAEGA).

Education has long been at the core of the Society's mission. Before launching the scholarship program, the society sponsored the Alliance for Education whose members -- many of them former educators -- provided breakfast, tutors and supplies for elementary and middle school students, as well as bilingual tutors through Casa de Amistad.

# Gonzalez Family Reunion

## Adding a Chapter to La Colonia's History

More than 200 descendants of one of La Colonia's first families gathered on July 8, 2023, for an epic reunion and to inspire their next generations. "It was an opportunity for folks who didn't know each other to meet, for folks who hadn't seen each other in decades to renew ties" attendee Daniel Ramirez told the Solana Beach Sun. "I think, most importantly, to root the younger generations in a sense of history and identity that's going to provide an anchor for their lives ahead."

In addition to bounce houses and lawn games, organizers engaged young attendees by distributing an "activity book" that invited them to learn about the family's roots in Chihuahua, Mexico, color illustrations of their heritage and culture, and "get the autographs of new cousins you met today."



Daniel, an associate professor of religion at Claremont Graduate University, and Dr. Sarita Gonzales, of Harvard, also collaborated to create a booklet about the Gonzalez family history. Sarita also created a poster of the family tree dating to 1765.

There were T-shirts and buttons featuring family founders, as well as raffles and music and plenty of tasty food from Tony's Jacal Restaurant, whose founders, Antonio and Catalina Gonzalez, are among the most famous of the family's large tree. Daniel Rameriz lived in La Colonia as a

child, until his father moved the family to Corona to build his construction business. His grandparents were La Colonia founders Salvador and Cipriana Gonzales. Cipriana famously battled the Vatican to keep Saint Leo's Catholic Church operating -- and holding mass in Spanish -- in the community.

Mayor Lesa Heebner opened the festivities with an official welcome from the City of Solana Beach, and many speakers acknowledged the challenges that historically and currently face their community. In the 1940s-50s, an Americanization school in La Colonia punished students for speaking Spanish. More recently, gentrification is reshaping the community -- enticing long-time residents to sell their homes and pricing house purchases and rents out of reach for many in younger generations.

The Society sponsored the reunion's reservation of La Colonia Park and Community Center for the event. We also helped videotape interviews with more than two-dozen reunion attendees, available on our YouTube channel.

"It is critical for us to tell the family story," said reunion organization and Society Museum Curator Lisa Montes. "Because if we don't . . . the story will be lost."



## **Solana Beach Women's Civic Club Presidents**

Joan Ann Olsen	1986-1988
Anne McCarthy	1986
Celine Olson	1985-1986
Monica Reiss	1983-1985
Patricia Brendel	1982-1983
Delores Riddle	1980-1982
Kay Prowse	1979-1980
Mary Liz Thurman	1978-1979
Marjorie Reese	1976-1978
Alice Peelyon	1975-1976
Barbara Folsom	1974-1975
Manette Baltz	1973 -1974
Clarisse Austin	1972-1973
Phillis Hendriksen	1971-1972
Wenetta Childs	1970-1971
Phillis Hendriksen	1968-1970
Mrs. William Roebuck	1967-1968
Lois Martin	1966 -1967
Frances Cornwall	1964-1966
Ada Scarborough	1962-1964,
Clarisse Austin	1961-1962
Betty Gollwitzer	1960-1961
Mrs. James Driscoll	1959-1960
Mrs. William Denham	1958 -1959
Thelma Crawford	1956 -1958
Carolyn Armstrong	1955-1956
Irene Witmer	1954 -1955

## **Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society Past Presidents**

Michele Stribling	2016-2023
Virginia Garland	2013-2016
Carol Childs	2011-2013
Judy Hegenauer	2008-2011
Margaret Schlesinger	2007-2008
Phyllis Schwartzlose	2005-2007
Shirley Foote	2004-2005
Jim Nelson	2002-2004
Gloria Jones	2000-2002
Kathalijn Nelson	1998-2000
Nancy Gottfredson	1996-1998
Phyllis Schwartzlose	1994-1992
Celine Olson	1994-1996
June Harland	1992-1994
Ada Scarborough	1990-1992
Sue Evans	1989-1990

*Thanks to our dedicated members,  
the Solana Beach Civic & Historical Society looks forward to another 70 years  
of contributing to our thriving community.*

*Special thanks to all who shared their stories and  
provided editorial reviews of this compilation.*

*To learn more -- and Join Us -- visit our website at [sb-chs.org](http://sb-chs.org) or scan below.*

