

LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

LOOKOUT AVE.

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER, 1986



A Grossmont Studios set for the 1925 western The Beloved Bandit. Hero Tom Bay (on floor) fights villain Bert Apling while heroine Ethyl Wade (long ringlets) looks on; Oscar Potter is second from left.

Grossmont Studios Photos Found

La Mesa's encounter with the early film industry in the 1920s is illustrated by recent additions to the La Mesa Historical Society's photograph collection. In June the Society was able to copy 14 photos showing productions at Grossmont Studios--the first such photos to be located.

Grossmont Studios, like its predecessor S-L Studios, provided a rental facility for film companies. Eleven of the fourteen photos are stills from two B.E. Stearns westerns, The Beloved Bandit and Driftin' On, made in 1925. The stills include

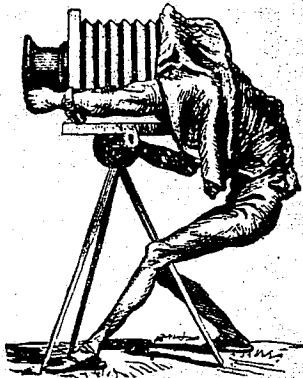
interior scenes on sets inside the studio itself and exteriors shot in the surrounding countryside. Both films featured Ethyl Wade and Bob Ray and made use of several local people as extras or bit players.

The photos were lent by Mrs. Betty Potter, whose late husband, Oscar, appeared in these and a number of other Grossmont films. Oscar's father, Charles, and brother, Wilfred, also had small parts. The elder Potter was a rancher in Julian who rented horses to the film companies.

(Continued on next page)

(GROSSMONT STUDIOS PHOTOS, continued)

The studio at Grossmont, which stood west of the present site of Anthony's Restaurant, was a large wooden building, 256 feet long by 90 feet wide by 40 feet high. Completed in 1923, it was converted to a roller skating rink in 1931 and burned down in 1934. The Society would like to discover photos of the studio itself in addition to those of other productions made there.



PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Thank you to the following people who loaned their photographs to be copied:

- Bob DeBurn - photo of his father, La Mesa Scout editor and partner Raynor DeBurn, 1930s.
- Ruth Kabler - photos of the Hawley family in La Mesa and their store and land at the east end of La Mesa Boulevard.
- Betty Potter - Grossmont Studios movie productions, 1920s.

Special thanks for photographs donated to the Society:

- Thelma Palermo - photo of her husband, Pete Palermo, c. 1910; photos of Pete's Place in the 1920s and 1940s. These photographs were used to illustrate the article on Pete Palermo in this issue.

- Pat Kettler

The La Mesa Historical Society operates the Rev. Henry A. McKinney House, a 1908 house museum located at 8369 University Avenue (corner of Pine Street), La Mesa. Hours are 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. Saturdays, or by appointment. For information call 460-3726 or 463-0197.

LOOKOUT AVENUE is the official publication of the La Mesa Historical Society, P.O. Box 882, La Mesa, California, 92044. Published quarterly.

LA MESA'S 75th ANNIVERSARY

Plans are in the making for a year-long celebration of the 75th Anniversary of La Mesa's incorporation as a city in February, 1912.

A Diamond Jubilee Coordinating Committee has been formed and includes Mayor Fred Nagel, Councilwoman Jerri Lopez, City Clerk and LMHS President Anita Underwood, and people representing the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce, Department of Parks and Recreation, La Mesa Village Merchants, La Mesa Springs Shopping Center, Grossmont Shopping Center, La Mesa Historical Society, and Grossmont Hospital. The committee has been meeting the third Monday of each month since February of this year in the Conference Room at City Hall to formulate some of the basic plans for the celebration.

Many of La Mesa's civic groups, churches, and other organizations have received a form from the City of La Mesa which asked them to list their main events and projects and if they would like to have these entered on the city's master calendar of celebration events for 1987.

More information regarding the 75th Anniversary will be forthcoming in future editions of Lookout Avenue.

- Pat Kettler

JOYCE AND RUTH MCKINNEY WED 65 YEARS

Joyce and Ruth McKinney celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on August 21, 1986. Joyce, the second of three sons of Rev. Henry A. McKinney and his wife, Florence, married Ruth Huntington in 1921. The ceremony was performed in the front room of the McKinney House by Joyce's father. Joyce and Ruth left the San Diego area in 1983 to live in the Northern California town of Magalia.

MARGARET BARKSDALE APPOINTED TO BOARD

At its August meeting the LMHS Board of Directors appointed Margaret Barksdale to fill out the remainder of the 1985-1987 term of Director JoAnn Knutson, who has resigned. The Board accepted JoAnn's resignation with regret.



CORRECTION: The Lyons House photograph which appeared in the February Lookout Avenue should have been credited to Jill Heistand.

CALENDAR

October 27 - LMHS General Meeting at
Porter Hall, 4910 Memorial Dr., La Mesa,
Monday, 7:00 p.m.

December 13 - Christmas Open House at
the McKinney House,
Saturday, 1:00 to 4:00
p.m.



1910-1935 VINTAGE DOORS

& WINDOWS AVAILABLE

MODEL A CLUB VISITS MCKINNEY HOUSE

Passersby the McKinney House on Sunday, August 24, might have thought themselves transported back to the early 1930s. Parked in front of the house was a long row of gleaming Model A Fords dating from 1929 to 1931. These beautifully restored cars belonged to members of the San Diego Chapter of the Model A Restorers Club of America who were visiting the house. Approximately 20 people were on the tour, which was conducted by docents Pat Kettler and Donna Regan.

If you are restoring an early home or trying to create the look of one, the Society may have just the right door or window that you need. The selection of doors rescued from demolished La Mesa houses includes a variety of sizes and styles. Most are interior doors; some are kitchen or back porch doors with glass in the top. There are several double-hung and a few casement windows. For more information call Donna Regan, 460-3726.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The La Mesa Historical Society extends a warm welcome to members who have recently joined and thanks to those who have renewed at a higher level:

Margaret Barksdale
Helen Beckham
R. Marie Calentine (Patron)
David Carty, Sr.
Ellen Cuadra
Lindsay Haynes (Student)
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Janda (Patron)
John Lienert (Life)
John Purdy
Susanne Spitzer
Susan Taylor & Stephen Rose
Alexandra Tuttle (Student)
Gregory Tuttle (Student)
Linda Wills

Mr. & Mrs. William Beamish
(Individual to Family)
Brent General Contracting
(Sponsor to Patron)
Mr. & Mrs. Aubrey Dunne
(Individual to Family)
Ellen M. Holcomb
(Individual to Patron)
Mary Kelley & William Hastings
(Family to Patron)
Patricia Kettler
(Individual to Life)
Mr. & Mrs. Hing Lee
(Family to Patron)
Mr. & Mrs. Oscar Ogle
(Family to Patron)
Sonya O'Rear (Individual to Patron)
Thelma Palermo (Individual to Patron)
Mr. & Mrs. Gregory Trigeiro
(Individual to Family)

IN MEMORIAM

The La Mesa Historical Society extends its deepest sympathy to the families of:

Helen Beamish
Beth Brown
Fern Sperbeck Grable
Fred Smith

ORCHIDS TO:

May Ann Ehlers for her calligraphy on the LMHS Historic Preservation Awards.

La Mesa Lumber for a generous donation of \$50.00.

Alex Lupenko and Lee Griner for disposing of the swarm of bees that had taken up residence in the McKinney House attic.

Joyce Radcliffe for her calligraphy on the Brunch flier and the Certificates of Appreciation.

Eugene Tulp for constructing three handsome wooden floor easels for use in exhibits.

Dennis Tuttle for designing the Society's Historic Preservation Award certificate.

Lloyd Donahoo for patching the plaster walls of the east bedroom of the McKinney House.





The board-and-batten house at 8087 La Mesa Boulevard dates from the 1890s.

1890s HOUSE TO MAKE WAY FOR NEW BUILDING

One of La Mesa's earliest homes will soon make way for a new office building. The small Victorian house at 8087 La Mesa Boulevard faces demolition within a few weeks unless it is removed to another site. The new owner of the property has expressed his willingness to work with anyone who might wish to move and preserve the house.

Although the date of construction is unknown, an 1897 photograph of La Mesa indicates that the house is one of a handful which remain from La Mesa's lemon-ranching days prior to the turn of the century. Research is currently being done to discover more about the early history of the house.

The walls of the house are board and batten -- 1" x 12" vertical boards with the joints covered by wood battens three inches wide. Board-and-batten houses, which have been built in the United States since the 1830s, take on a bold, striped effect in the sunlight. The flat top of the hipped roof was once bordered by ornamental cresting; a shed roof covers the rear portion of the building. The foundation has a veneer of stone-faced concrete block which

may have been added about 1910. The windows are double hung except for a bay window which was added in the front in 1951. The shed roof of the small front porch is supported by square posts which have replaced the original turned ones.

The single-wall construction used was an inexpensive building method often found in small houses and beach cottages at that time. The walls of the house are about 2½ inches thick. Local architects feel that this type of construction would require extra bracing if the house were to be moved intact. It could also be moved with some disassembly and rebuilt. The small size of the building would facilitate its move: 24 feet wide by 38 feet deep, with 12 feet of the depth in the rear shed-roofed portion.

The house is a simple, functional structure which lacks the interior detailing often found in houses of the period. Neglect over the years has taken its toll, and deterioration is evident.

The potential of the house is also evident. Moved and rebuilt, repainted in appropriate period colors to enhance its

(1890s HOUSE, continued)

details, and with its roof cresting and turned porch posts reproduced, this small house would be a handsome representative of early La Mesa.

For further information call Donna Regan, 460-3726.



McKINNEY HOUSE STUDENT TOURS

Pictures of the McKinney House and its furnishings will be part of many prized photo albums in the southern island of Kyushu, Japan. Some 24 junior high age Japanese students and their teacher toured the house on August 6th. Nearly everyone had a camera and took many pictures in all the rooms. The girls were particularly intrigued with the 1879 wedding gown of Elizabeth Porter. They took turns posing for pictures next to it. These young people were in this area for three weeks under the sponsorship of the Pacific American Institute. It was difficult to know how much they absorbed since very few understood English and their teacher translated only briefly, but they certainly seemed to enjoy their short trip back into La Mesa history and showed much interest and appreciation.

The 72 youngsters and 22 leaders from the City of La Mesa Recreation Department Day Camp, who toured a week later on August 14th, seemed once again to also enjoy the opportunity to imagine what it would have been like to grow up in the McKinney House 80 years ago. As always they were intrigued with the organ, cylinder record player, the churn and the washboard and hand-operated wringer. (Several of the boys have been on these annual tours before and asked if it was the same sock we used to demonstrate as last year!) The interest and attention to the stories of La Mesa in another era showed a healthy curiosity on their part about the history and life styles of La Mesa at its origin.

Donna Regan, Pat Kettler and Betty Teague acted as docents for both these tours. A special "thanks" to Anne Porter Hall for the lovely roses that gave the house a gracious "lived in" look.

- Betty Teague

LMHS PHOTO EXHIBIT AT LOCAL BANK

Photographs of La Mesa at the turn of the century and in the 1920s were on display at the Crocker (now Wells Fargo) Bank during the month of July.

MILES HOUSE MOVE MEETS CALTRANS DEADLINE

On Sunday, June 15, the day the Caltrans deadline for removal expired, the Lucius C. Miles House was turned 45 degrees and moved slightly north on its original site at the end of Urban Drive. The state agency was poised to begin demolition and site clearance within a few days. Since the actual freeway construction required only the southern half of the large lot, the house could be placed on the northern portion.

The Miles House was the last of three historic houses to be moved to escape demolition for the new I-8 -- 125 interchange. Under the agreement between Caltrans and the City of La Mesa, those who had bought houses at auction were allowed to purchase nearby excess freeway right-of-way property. The Miles House will be designated a local historic landmark by the city, as will the Lyons and Russell Houses moved previously.

Designed in 1909 by noted San Diego architect John B. Stannard, the two-story Craftsman-style residence was once the center of a 30-acre lemon ranch. Built for retired Goodyear Tire Company executive Lucius C. Miles and his wife Harriet, it was later the home of Frank and Tillie Huneck, who owned Huneck's Furs in San Diego for many years.

A series of complications and two changes of ownership had delayed the move. The house was originally purchased at the Caltrans auction last September by Dennis Tuttle, who later sold it to Dr. and Mrs. R. J. Splinter. Shortly before the move Diana Hinck became the new owner.

For Mrs. Hinck, moving into the Miles House will be a homecoming. She had bought the house in 1977, following the death of Frank Huneck, only to learn a few months later that Caltrans intended to acquire the property. She is happy to have the opportunity to rescue and restore the house and looks forward to returning to a home she enjoyed. Mrs. Hinck and her family will do some of the restoration themselves, living in the house as work progresses.

A CENTURY OF HOME REMEDIES

One of our latest fund raising activities has been publishing a book of turn-of-the-century home remedies. We are most grateful to the members of the La Mesa business community who have contributed to this endeavor with their advertising. We expect to begin selling the books in November for \$4.00 apiece. The LMHS logo will be on the cover. The remedies have been selected for their historical interest and entertainment value. They should make amusing stocking stuffers, hostess gifts, etc. They will be available at all of our functions and at some other locations as well.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The McKinney House dining room was transformed into a silent movie theater for this year's Ice Cream Social and Saturday at the Movies on June 14. Visitors gathered to watch Three Million Dollars, the 1911 western comedy made in Lakeside by the American Film Manufacturing Company, plus a quartet of early Charlie Chaplin classics: Behind the Screen (1916), A Night Out, The Pawn Shop (1916), and Dough and Dynamite (1917). Upstairs a special exhibit illustrated early film making in La Mesa.

Popular music from the first part of this century and a selection of movie themes played in the background as visitors enjoyed barbecued chicken, salads, Swensen's ice cream, Marie Callender pies, and baked goods. Baby quilts and other items made by the Quilters were for sale. The Society thanks all those whose hard work contributed to this event, especially: Mary Kelley, food; the Quilters; Pat Kettler, White Elephant mini sale, drawing; Anita and Brad Underwood, barbecue, films; Jo Coffey, bake sale; Henrietta Schupbach, plant sale; Lloyd Kitzman, Marie Callender pies; Donna Regan, film exhibit; Karna Webster, hostesses; Nancy Neffson, membership, music; Brice Lockwood, ice cream; Dennis Tuttle, outdoor set up, flyer design; John Ahern, treasurer; Helen Odom and Gladys Johnson, cashiers; Bob Howard, outdoor set up; and Cliff Coates, outdoor set up and making the yard look neat and inviting.



1986 ICE CREAM SOCIAL

RECEIPTS

White Elephants (Mini sale)	\$ 13.55
Bake Sale	72.70
Marie Callender Pies	163.95
Plant Sale	44.00
Drawing	1387.00
Ice Cream	124.25
Food	423.51
Sales (Post cards)	2.00
Quilters Sales	146.80
Donations	59.00
Gross Profit	\$ 2436.76

EXPENSES

Ice Cream	110.50
Chicken	78.23
Rentals (tables, chairs, etc.)	277.46
Food & paper supplies	86.98
Printing drawing tickets	75.42
Printing fliers & posters	43.04
Mailing fliers	30.35
Total Expenses	\$ 701.98
Net Profit	1734.28

ICE CREAM SOCIAL DRAWING

Ticket sales for the Society's 1986 Ice Cream Social Drawing for the Dresden Plate quilt and other prizes totaled \$1,387. The net profit was \$1,311.58, the highest of any drawing to date. Thank you for supporting the La Mesa Historical Society by purchasing tickets. The quilt and antique clock drawings that are held each year are one of the main sources of revenue for supporting the McKinney House and assuring preservation of La Mesa's history through the collecting and maintaining of early photographs, documents, artifacts, maps, etc.

We wish to thank Great American First Savings Bank at Grossmont Center, Navajo Road and Lake Murray Boulevard; Crocker Bank (Wells Fargo) in La Mesa; Central Savings at La Mesa Springs Center; and Ralph's Supermarket for letting us sell tickets at their places of business. Also thanks to the following members who sold tickets at these places:

Bea Acers	Mary Em Howard
Margaret Barksdale	Brice Lockwood
Julie Bohnsack	Dorris Palley
Betty Burns	Nina Reed
Jo Coffey	Donna Regan
Lucile DeWaide	Clara Vivian
Mary Ann Ehlers	

Additional thanks to the Telephone Committee for calling the membership regarding the drawing and the Ice Cream Social.

This year's winners were: (First) Nina Reed--Dresden Plate quilt, quilted by the LMHS Quilters; (Second) Trig Stanley--dinner for two at Snickers Restaurant, Baltimore Drive; (Third) Mack Wordell--\$15.00 gift certificate from La Jolla Village East Produce, Baltimore Drive; (Fourth) Sylvia Meier--picnic basket from the Country Loft, Lake Murray Boulevard.

IT'S RENEWAL TIME

It's that time of year again. Renewal reminder notices have been sent out. Membership renewals are due July 1 of each year. Prompt payment is most appreciated. If for some unfathomable reason you do not wish to continue your membership, please be kind enough to let us know. If you have a question about your membership you may call Nancy E. Neffson at 469-8731.

Dues may be sent to:

La Mesa Historical Society
P.O. Box 882
La Mesa, CA 92044

Life (Single)	\$100.00
Patron	25.00
Sponsor/Organization	15.00
Family (2 adults)	12.00
Individual	7.00
Student (under 18 yrs.)	1.00

"MAKING MOVIES IN LA MESA" ICE CREAM
SOCIAL EXHIBIT

"Making Movies in La Mesa" provided visitors to this year's Ice Cream Social with a glimpse of a fascinating aspect of local history.

The exhibit included photographs exploring the activities of the American Film Manufacturing Company during the 11 months it was located in La Mesa in 1911 and 1912. While here the company, under director Allan Dwan, made over 100 one-reel silents, most of them westerns.

Movie making returned to La Mesa in the 1920s with the construction of S-L Studios at Grossmont in 1922. S-L and its successor in 1925, Grossmont Studios, operated the studio as a rental facility for independent productions. La Mesa Scout advertisements and stills from westerns shot at Grossmont in 1925 illustrated these later developments.

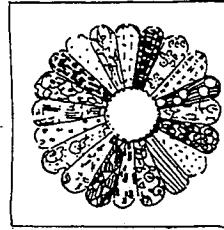
Adding to the atmosphere were women's dresses from 1912 and the 1920s, Hollywood movie posters 1915-1934, a Hollywood studio flood light, circa 1940, and western artifacts -- a Colt .45 and a saddle among them.

The Society thanks those whose generosity in lending photographs and artifacts made this exhibit possible: Ralph Bowman, American Film Company material and movie posters; John Camp of J. Camp Unlimited, studio floodlight; Dr. George Holland, western artifacts; Jo Pearson, costumes; and Betty Potter, Grossmont Studio photos.

GRABLE HOUSE REPORT WINS HISTORY FAIR AWARD

"The Historical Significance of the Sherman C. Grable House of La Mesa" won eighth-grader Diane Hagar the Save Our Heritage Organisation Award at the San Diego-Tijuana International History Fair held in March. Diane, a student at Greenfield Junior High in El Cajon, received a SOHO membership and books on historic architecture. She is giving a copy of her paper to the La Mesa Historical Society for its files. The Grable House, built circa 1910, was designated a local landmark by the La Mesa City Council last October.

The History Fair is open to junior and senior high school students who may compete for prizes by entering papers, exhibits, audiovisual presentations or performances on subjects of local history. Organizations and institutions may sponsor prizes in specific categories in addition to the standard awards presented by the Fair. This year SOHO initiated an award for the winning entry in the area of historic preservation in San Diego County. Future entries on aspects of La Mesa history could be encouraged by special awards in this category.



Dresden Plate

THE QUILTERS

The Quilters have had another busy and successful year. We made and sold many baby quilts and completed two larger quilts, one for Ruth Adams and the other the Dresden Plate quilt done for the Ice Cream Social drawing, which brought in \$1,387. The latter quilt was pieced by Rose McLean of Oregon in 1960. Mrs. McLean was the mother of the late Pearl McLean, long-time La Mesa resident and educator. The winner of this quilt was Nina Reed and here are some excerpts from a letter she wrote:

Dear Mrs. Acers and ladies of the La Mesa Historical Society:

I was the fortunate person who won the first prize at the ice cream social on June 14, 1986. I wanted you to know that it will have a good home where it is loved and appreciated.

My guest bedroom is a collection of old furniture from my parents', grand- and great-grandparents' homes in mid-Ohio. I like to associate with people who join historical societies because they like to preserve the heritage of our past.

I am enclosing some pictures of the "Dresden Plate" quilt that you all worked on. It is just what I needed to put a "spark" in my old-fashioned guest room. I want to thank you for making it for the raffle and I'm so pleased that I had the good fortune to win it.

Sincerely,

Nina S. Reed

The quilt we completed for Ruth Adams was pieced by her mother, Eva Spear, in the early 1930s. The patterns for this quilt, called Garden Bouquet, came out monthly in the Los Angeles Times and had a different flower in a pot in each square.

We would like to invite anyone interested in quilting, learning to quilt, or just viewing the workers and items for sale to come to the McKinney House on Wednesday mornings between 9:00 and 12:00 or call Beatrice Acers at 466-5812.

--Julie Bras

LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

	JULY 1, 1985 JUNE 30, 1986	1985-1986 BUDGET
Cash Balance, Beginning of period	\$ 2,758	
<u>RECEIPTS AND TRANSFERS</u>		
1. Brunch	533	
2. Christmas Drawing	1,149	\$ 1,350
3. Donations	242	200
4. Ice Cream Social (Food & Sales)	842	1,200
5. Membership	2,230	2,500
6. Miscellaneous Fund Raising	2,110	400
7. Photo Sales	245	50
8. Quilt Drawing	1,387	800
9. Quilters' Sales	1,567	700
10. Restricted Donations	143	
11. Sales	60	200
12. Tours		
	\$10,508	\$ 7,400
<u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u>		
12. Transfers from Savings	312	
14. Prepaid Dues/1986-87	312	
TOTAL RECEIPTS/TRANSFERS	\$10,820	
<u>DISBURSEMENTS AND TRANSFERS</u>		
15. Brunch Expenses	\$ 554	
16. Mortgage Payable	1,920	\$ 1,920
17. Christmas Drawing Expense	175*	*
18. Contingencies		60
19. Exhibit Expense	79	500
20. Ice Cream Social Expense	554	700
21. Insurance	925	150
22. Misc. Fund Raising Expense	2,125	200
23. Museum Restoration		700
24. Newsletter	667	45
25. Oral History	40	300
26. Photo Collection	369	25
27. Photo Sales Expense	211	350
28. Postage	306	100
29. Preservation of Collection	41	400
30. Printing & Xeroxing	411	
31. Quilt Drawing Expense	75	
32. Quilters' Expense	301	200
33. Restricted Donations Expended	143	
34. Sales Expense		200
35. Supplies & Miscellaneous	606	600
36. Tour Expense		
37. Utilities	903	850
38. Yard Maintenance		100
	\$10,405	\$ 7,400
<u>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</u>		
39. Transfers to Savings	150	
40. Transfer of Prepaid Dues	391	
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS/TRANSFERS	\$10,946	
Cash Balance Ending of Period	\$ 2,632	

*Clock purchased for 1986 Christmas Drawing in February, 1986 for \$175
(Clock purchased for 1985 Christmas Drawing in February 1985 for \$150)

LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
JUNE 30, 1986

Assets

Cash in bank, checkings	\$	2,632
Cash in bank, savings, reserved		1,244
Cash in bank, savings, restricted*		4,058
Certificate of Deposit, restricted*		3,170
Museum Building		59,333
Organization Costs		<u>63</u>
 TOTAL ASSETS		 <u>\$ 70,500</u>

Liabilities & Equity

Liabilities

Mortgage Payable	\$	3,412
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Equity

Restricted*	\$	7,228
Unrestricted		<u>59,860</u>
 TOTAL EQUITY		 <u>67,088</u>

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY		<u>\$ 70,500</u>
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MARCH 2 GENERAL MEETING AND CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH

The La Mesa Historical Society's March 2 General Meeting and Champagne Brunch at La Mesa's American Legion Hall was a success, not just in the number of people who attended the event but in the enjoyment derived from the "Tribute to Grossmont High School" program. The following was written in the March, 1986 newsletter from the principal to the parents of all GHS students:

LA MESA HISTORICAL SOCIETY GOES BLUE AND GOLD

Focus at the annual Spring Brunch of the La Mesa Historical Society in early March was a nostalgic as well as a current look at Grossmont High, the only high school in the vast Grossmont Union High School District until 1952. On display were old copies of El Recuerdo, the yearbook, and other memorabilia, including trophies, some Christmas Pageant costumes, and talks from alumni by LMHS members who were graduated as far back as 1925. Principal William Davis was present to greet guests and reminisce, since he too is a Grossmont grad, as is Vice Principal Dick Plum, who showed a reassuring slide show of

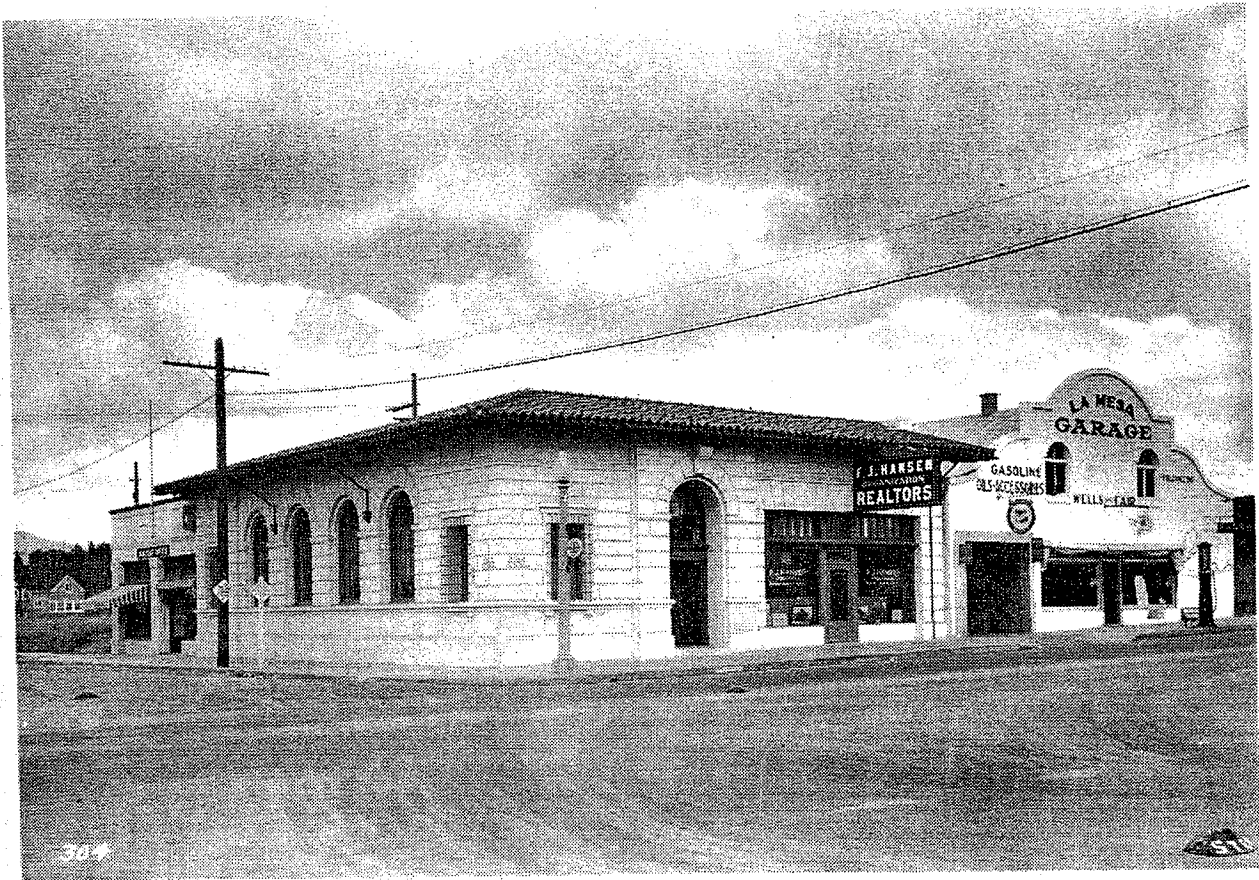
the campus as it is today. Yvonne Harguindeguy brought Grossmont dancers who recreated a Ballet Dance and the Dance of Jesters from the Pageant.

Throughout, the Grossmont String Ensemble, with James Nichols directing and handling the keyboard, played beautifully and backed up a community effort at singing Hail To Thee Dear Grossmont, Hail Blue and Gold. The general feeling at the end of the party was one of love, respect and pleasure in having been or being a part of GHS.

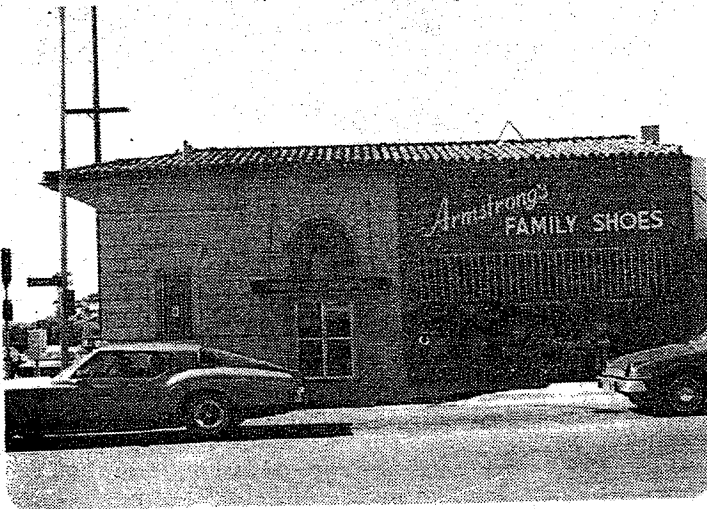
Costumes used by students in the school's Christmas Pageant were on display along with early pageant programs and photographs loaned to the Society by Eva Quicksall.

Special thanks to the following Grossmont graduates who shared some of their school memories with us: Chuck Levy (class of 1925), who remembered playing football on a decomposed granite field; Norris West (class of 1935), who recalled some humorous incidents during several of the plays he was in; Jean Haslam Murrell and Jean Busch Casteel (class of 1942), who recalled girls' athletics and some special teachers; and Brad Underwood (class of 1952), who recalled the enjoyment he had in being on the GHS football team.

LMHS HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS



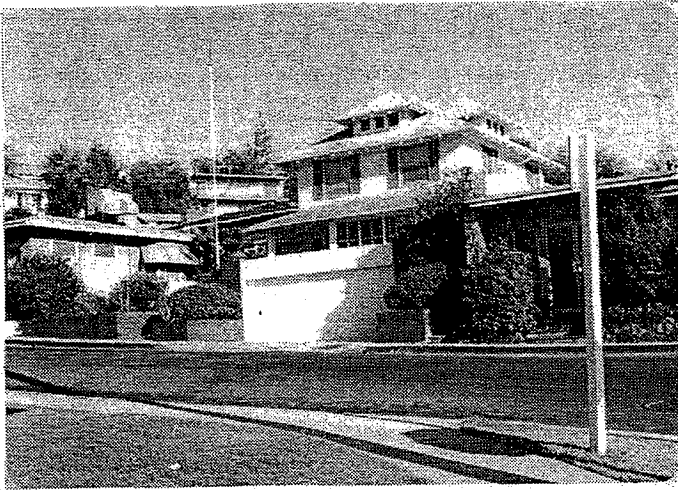
The Bank of Southern California Building at the northeast corner of La Mesa Boulevard and Palm Avenue, circa 1929.



By the 1960s the east portion was covered by vertical wooden siding and the entry recessed.



May, 1986. The original facade has been revealed and restored; the recessed entry remains.



The Houghton/Hicks House as it appeared in the 1970s was partially hidden behind a later attached garage and an adjacent building.



August, 1986. Restored and newly landscaped, the Grant Avenue house is now easily seen.

At its May 4 meeting the La Mesa Historical Society presented Historic Preservation Awards to those who had made significant contributions to preservation in La Mesa.

In cities across the country, downtown commercial buildings are being restored when later modernizations are removed to reveal the original facades. La Mesa Boulevard is also sharing in this revitalization process. Sheri and Bob Moore received a Historic Preservation Award for restoring the east portion of the Bank of Southern California Building. Built in 1927 on the northeast corner of La Mesa Boulevard and Palm Avenue, the impressive Italian Renaissance Revival structure included a separate store or office on the east side of the bank. By the 1960s vertical wooden siding obscured the east front, while the bank remained intact. After leasing the store for Sheri's Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio, the Moores had the siding removed, the stucco repaired and painted, and added a complementary awning. Looking at the newly revealed concrete and stucco facade, finished to have the appearance of cut, rusticated stone, Sheri Moore said, "I don't know why anyone would have covered it up."

Other early buildings along the Boulevard have been fortunate in remaining relatively unchanged over the years. The simple stucco storefront at 8321 La Mesa Boulevard is very representative of the Spanish and Mission style structures built here in the 1920s. The building has retained most of its original architectural details--the display windows, the black and gold ceramic tile beneath the windows, and the windows above the doorway. When the store was recently occupied by La Mesa Antiques, owners and lessees chose to preserve and enhance these original features rather than

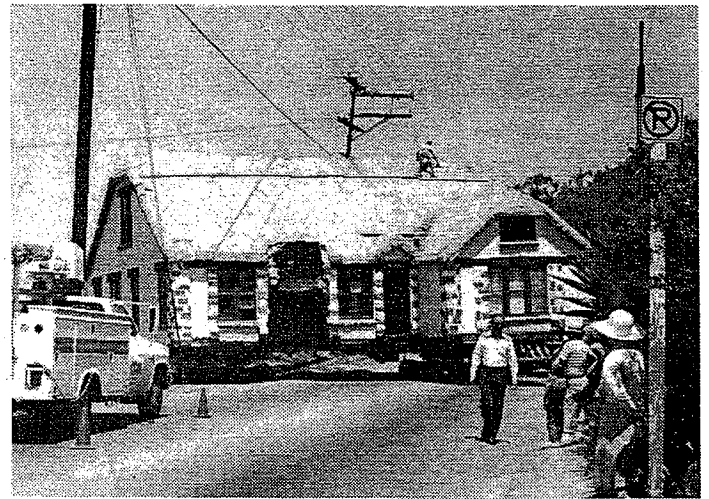
to institute changes of temporary popularity as some have done. The tile was repaired, and colors echoing those of the tile were selected for the stucco and the cloth awning, which is similar in appearance to the one shown in 1920s photos of the building. Awards were presented to owners Sheldon Hurlburt and Bernice Alspaugh.

In some cases, finding a new use for a building may help to preserve it. Mr. and Mrs. Terry Stauber received an award for the sensitive adaptive reuse and preservation of the Stephen H. Washburne House on Third Street. The Washburne House, built circa 1912, is an attractive bungalow with a gable roof ending in deep overhanging eaves and an entrance porch covered by a matching gable. Use of the Historic Building Code allowed conversion from a residence to professional accountancy offices for Mr. Stauber while disturbing the architectural integrity as little as possible. Due to its location, the property was already zoned for commercial purposes. The house remains visually a part of the early residential area it now borders. Work done on the house included exterior repainting, landscaping, and the stripping of layers of paint from the interior redwood woodwork.

Another award-winning example of restoration and adaptive reuse is the recently completed Grant Avenue project undertaken by owners Dr. and Mrs. R. J. Splinter and Dr. and Mrs. James Sarkisian. Built circa 1911, the handsome two-story Houghton/Hicks House now serves as medical offices for the two doctors. Original exterior and interior detailing was retained in the conversion and a matching one-story addition was constructed at the rear of the house. A later stucco building on the property was remodeled to resemble the house. The most dramatic change in the site was the demolition of a garage and a commercial building obstructing the



The original features of this 1920s storefront at 8321 La Mesa Boulevard have been preserved and enhanced.



April 28, 1986. The Henry L. Russell House is moved out onto Bancroft Drive.

front view of the house. With a new exterior color scheme bringing out the architectural features, together with fresh landscaping and new concrete walls reminiscent of those built in La Mesa at the turn of the century, the Houghton/Hicks House makes a striking impact on those going by on La Mesa Boulevard.

Two of the awards were for moving and preserving houses threatened by demolition for the I-8 - 125 interchange. On December 18, 1984, Donna van Donders purchased the Henry L. Russell House at a Caltrans auction when no one else stepped forward to save it. Her quest for nearby land to which the house could be moved led to the agreement between the City of La Mesa and Caltrans which helped preserve three threatened historic houses. The plan allowed the owners of the houses to purchase excess freeway right-of-way property. On April 28, 1986, the Russell House was moved to its new location on the hill north of the fire station at Grossmont Boulevard and Bancroft Drive. This charming Cotswald cottage, constructed circa 1927 by La Mesa master builder Henry Lee Russell, will be designated a La Mesa Historic Landmark by the City Council.

The 1935 Henry M. Lyons House, a simple bungalow with a clipped gable roof, was bought from Caltrans by John Lienert. The

structure was moved to the lot adjacent on the south to its original Bancroft Drive location last January. Mr. Lienert had admired the house for several years and was delighted to have the opportunity to rescue it and make it his home. The Lyons House will also be given local landmark designation.

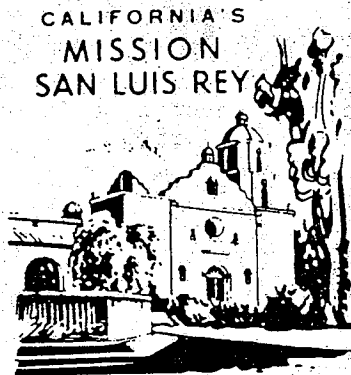
The La Mesa City Council and Caltrans also were given awards for their part in developing this innovative plan. The City is acting as an intermediary between Caltrans and the owners who have purchased the houses at auction.

The final award went to Dr. and Mrs. Eugene Hall (Anne Porter Hall) and their son and daughter, Stephen Hall and Christine Hall Trigeiro, for the restoration of the Roach/Porter House on Porter Hill Road. Built circa 1895, the house became the home of Anne Hall's grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth Porter, in 1904. Recent restoration has included a new cedar shingle roof, rebuilding the front stairway to match the original, repairing and reconstructing the roof balustrade and flagpole, a period front door, and exterior repainting with an appropriate three-color scheme. This Victorian ranch house with its broad verandas, one of the few which remain from La Mesa's lemon ranching days, will soon be ready to begin its second century.

*Celebrate Historic Places ♦♦
Our Past for Our Future*

BANKS RECEIVE LMHS CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

In March the La Mesa Historical Society presented Certificates of Appreciation to four local banks for allowing the Society to set up in their lobbies to sell tickets for the Christmas and Ice Cream Social drawings. Bank sales usually bring in one-third to one-half of the total income from each drawing and also provide an opportunity to exhibit photos of early La Mesa and to distribute material about the Society. The four banks were Crocker Bank and Imperial Savings in downtown La Mesa and the Grossmont Center offices of Wells Fargo Bank and Great American Savings.



A DAY WITH THE KING

Sunday, July 20th, La Mesa Historical Society members and friends spent the day with the "King of the Missions". Mission San Luis Rey, near Oceanside, is considered to be the most beautiful of all the missions in the California chain. It was a fun-filled day for those on our tour, which was sponsored by LMHS and arranged for by Lloyd Donahoo.

This day was the annual B.B.Q. and fiesta sponsored by the Franciscan order of monks that care for the mission. There were many events going on throughout the day, with parachutists, side shows, games, etc. Some of the events that were planned were canceled at the last moment due to unfortunate circumstances involved with insurance.

One of the interesting highlights of the day was the fact that we had with us on our tour Nanette Coutts Thompson, whose ancestors (the Bandinis) were laid to rest in the mission cemetery, and Nanette told us some of the family history.

LMHS wishes to thank all those who went on the tour. The event made a net profit of \$27.23.

- Lloyd Donahoo

LMHS MAY MEETING

The La Mesa Historical Society celebrated Preservation Week at its annual meeting on May 4. The National Trust for Historic Preservation had selected as this year's theme "Celebrate Historic Places-- Our Past for Our Future."

The meeting was held, appropriately, in the city's oldest remaining commercial structure. The setting was the second floor of the 1894 La Mesa Lemon Company and Store building and its 1912 addition, now occupied by the Jeri Kish School of Ballet.

The program began with A Place in Time, a film made for the National Trust which featured a variety of preservation efforts from across the country.

Shown for the first time was a brief slide presentation highlighting La Mesa's own historic resources and their value to the community. Prepared by SANDAG and completed by the city's Historic Preservation Commission, the program is available for viewing by local groups and organizations.

Awards were presented to those who have made significant contributions to preservation in La Mesa.

Elected to the 1986-1987 Board of Directors were:

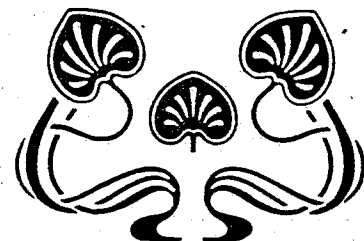
President	Anita Underwood
1st Vice President	Donna Regan
2nd Vice President	Mary Kelley
3rd Vice President	Nancy E. Neffson
Secretary	Brenda Neill

Directors 1986-1988	Lloyd Donahoo
	Gordon Newton
	Dennis Tuttle

Continuing on the Board:

Director 1985-1987	JoAnn Knutson
Director 1985-1987	Brice Lockwood
Immediate Past President	Pat Kettler
Associate Treasurer	John Ahern
	(appointed)

The Nominating Committee consisted of: Lloyd Donahoo (Chairman), Mary Kelley, Pat Kettler, Nancy Neffson, and John Morgan Twyman.



My Early Days In La Mesa

Pete Palermo

NOTE: From 1923 to 1950 Pete's Place was a La Mesa institution, first as a confectionery and then, in its later years, as a restaurant-bar. Proprietor Pete Palermo was known, liked, and respected throughout the community.

Pietro "Pete" Palermo was born May 18, 1894, near Palermo, Italy. His mother died when he was a baby, so he lived with his grandfather, Pietro Palermo, for whom he was named. When he was four years old, his father, who was living in Beaumont, Texas, sent for him and his two sisters.

Pete came to the San Diego area while still in his teens and worked at a variety of jobs. In 1915 he married Grace Dolbeare, a native of Connecticut who had come to the area two years before.

In 1923 Pete and his wife moved to La Mesa after he purchased a confectionery shop on La Mesa Boulevard (then known as Lookout Avenue) next door to the grocery which had been opened by his sister and brother-in-law, Katie and Joe Geroche. The businesses prospered and by January, 1925 Pete and Joe Geroche were able to purchase the two lots where their stores were located. The following year they built a two-story Spanish-style structure on the site, the Geroche-Palermo Building. The grocery occupied the east half of the first floor, and the confectionery the west; the second floor was divided into offices and apartments.



Pete Palermo at 16.

Both Pete and his wife were kept busy with their expanding business. In addition to such soda fountain offerings as ice cream, sundaes, and sodas, customers could be served sandwiches or lunches and buy candy, tobacco and cigars, and a selection of magazines and newspapers. Pete's Place was open in the evening as well as during the day and later required six employees to assist the Palermos.

In 1933 Pete and Grace bought the University Avenue home where they would remain.

An extensive remodeling completed in July, 1946, converted the confectionery into a restaurant and cocktail bar which Pete and his wife continued to operate until their retirement in 1950.

After their retirement, Pete's Place was leased and the business was carried on under different management. Pete enjoyed his new freedom, doing some traveling and taking up the game of golf. He played golf daily and eventually had a total of 17 holes-in-one. The Geroche-Palermo Building itself survived until 1970, when it was torn down to make way for the new Pacific Telephone building.

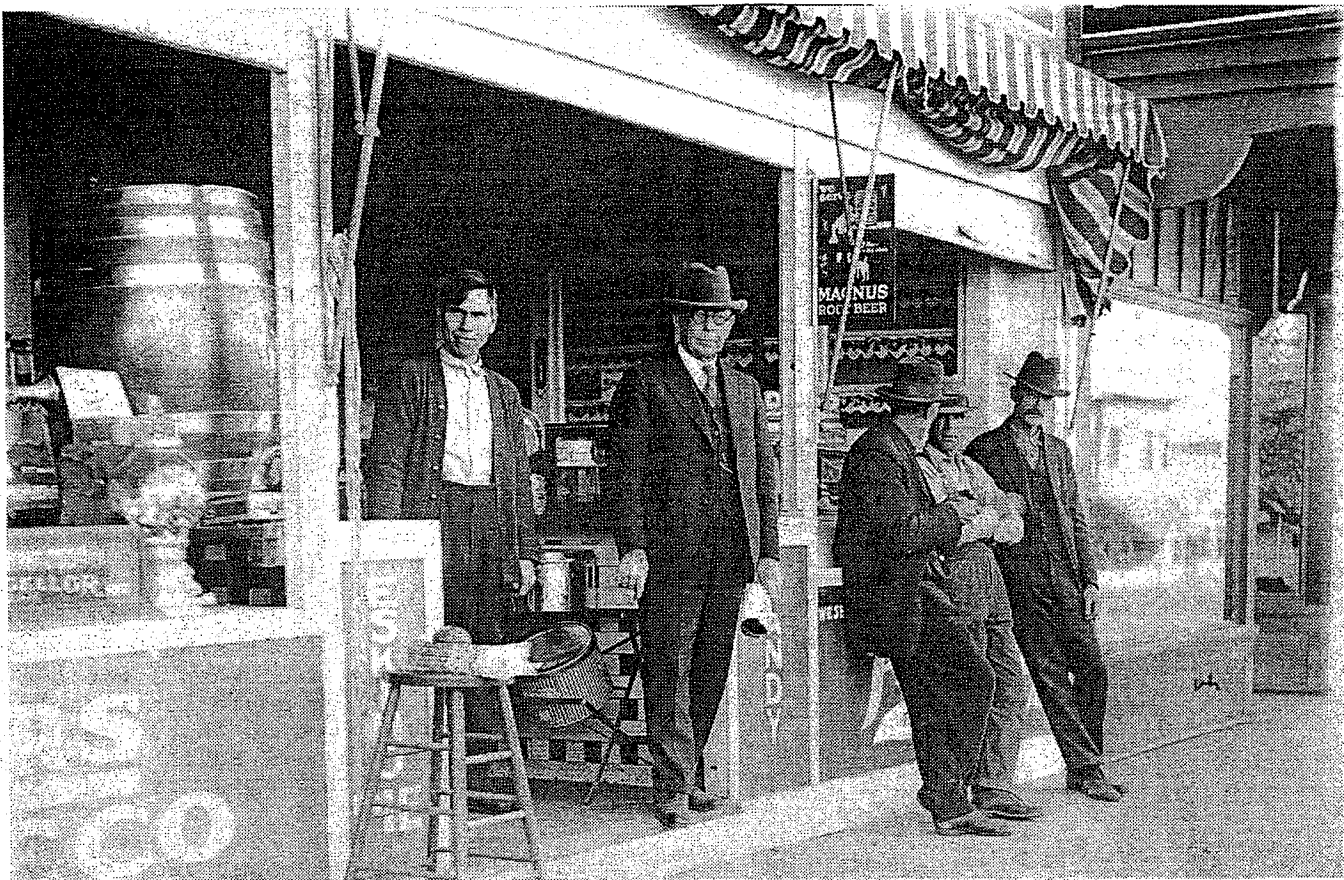
Pete lost his first wife in 1973. In 1977 he married Thelma Wilson Durbin, a retired businesswoman who had lived in the San Diego area since the 1930s.

The La Mesa Historical Society recognized Pete's contributions as a pioneer La Mesa businessman at its meeting honoring him on his 88th birthday in May, 1982.

On September 20, 1985, Pete Palermo passed on at the age of 91.

Pete's 1980 reminiscences were written down by his wife, Thelma. Among the people Pete mentions are: Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, noted Metropolitan opera singer; Mrs. Daley of the Daley Ranch and construction company; Scott King, Sr., who founded Travelodge Motels; and A.P. Giannini, founder of the Bank of Italy, which later became the Bank of America. Giannini would visit Pete's when he came to inspect the La Mesa branch of the bank.

I was living with my grandfather in Naples, Italy. When I was four years old my father brought the family, my two sisters and me, to the United States [to Texas] where I lived until I left home to come to California before 1916. I remember very well the big flood in 1916 when Mission Valley was completely covered with water from heavy rainfall.



From September, 1923, until the spring of 1926, Pete's confectionery was located in a one-story building on La Mesa Boulevard which was replaced by the Geroche-Palermo Building. Pete is on the left.

My sister Katie Geroche followed me to California, and we lived together with her family in Coronado and then in Encanto before locating in La Mesa where she and her husband had a small grocery and fresh fruit and vegetable store. Her husband Joe would get up early to go to the produce market in San Diego for fresh fruit and vegetables every morning, and Katie would wash and clean the vegetables and polish the apples for the customers who came from miles around for fresh fruit and vegetables -- the Daley family, Scott King, Sr., and Madame Schumann-Heink, who lived on Mt. Helix. Katie and Joe had delivery service by horse and wagon in those days.

When I first arrived in California I worked on a farm in Escondido for six months, and my pay was \$30.00 per month with room and board. Every morning I had to eat pancakes for the six months I worked there, so when I left there I said I would never eat another pancake as long as I lived.

My next job was with Spreckels in Coronado. I was paid \$2.00 a day (always in gold and silver) and was paid once a month, from the 5th to the 5th of each month. Then I heard about the San Diego Gas and Electric paying \$2.25 a day (with free tokens to ride the street car), so I came to San Diego to work. We worked at the place where the

Marine Base is now located, installing underground service.

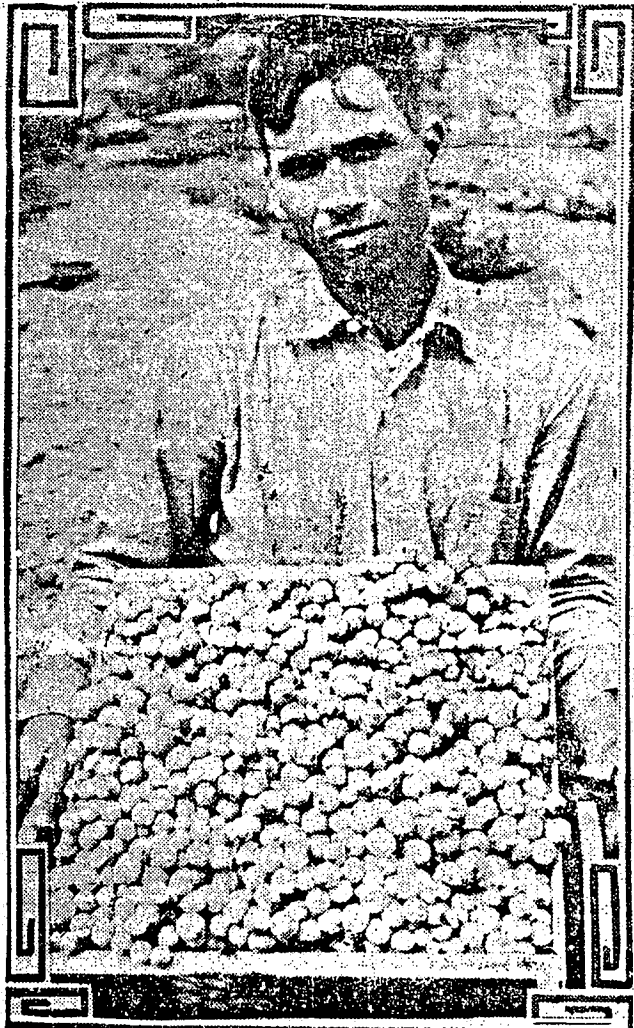
During this time I met a man who had a team of horses and a wagon, operating a house-to-house fresh fruit and vegetable service. He advised me to do the same thing. The demand for this kind of service was becoming very popular, so I soon had my horse and wagon delivery service. During this period I met my first wife, Grace, who was visiting her sister, whose husband was foreman on a ranch where I had contracted to pick olives (for two cents a pound) for the owner of the ranch, who then sold them for processing. In those days it was easy to get help. I hired men to pick olives for one and one-half cents per pound.

Grace and I were married. We bought the small building next to my sister Katie's grocery and started a confectionery place, selling ice cream, candy and soft drinks, and light lunch, sandwiches. I was selling hamburgers those days for ten cents, with everything to add on -- onions, lettuce, tomatoes. I guess I must have made a penny on them!

Many of the young men in La Mesa today in this year 1980, are the little boys who

San Diego Opportunities For Advancement Shown By Brothers at La Mesa

This photograph, taken in September, 1920, shows Pete Palmero holding a box of grapes which were being packed for shipment to eastern markets. At that time Palmero was a laborer in the vineyards of El Cajon valley.



By WINFIELD BARKLEY
Manager, County Development, Bank
of Italy, N.T.S.A.

In September, 1920, we wrote an article featuring the grape production in El Cajon valley. The grape harvest was then in full swing, and we had one of the pickers hold up a box of luscious fruit that we might photograph it to illustrate our article.

At that time, we called attention to the grapes and the immense size of the berries, which were being boxed for eastern shipment. Today, we wish to focus the reader's attention upon the man who held the box.

Four years ago, Pete Palermo, this laborer in the vineyards of El Cajon valley, stopped in La Mesa and sized up a candy stand. It was not much of a stand, and the owner was more than glad to offer the whole outfit at a bargain, for he was on the verge of going broke. A number of previous owners had failed to make good. Pete and his wife went to work, and they worked early and late. They brought the stock up to date and made additions. They gave thought to displaying their goods, and a smile went with every purchase, and they prospered.

Meantime, Palermo had been pro-

ceeded by his brother-in-law, Joe Geroche, who started peddling fruit and vegetables. He also distributed a smile with every purchase, and the one horse shortly had a mate to help in drawing the wagon over the La Mesa hills. Then he rented a stand and his wife also went to work.

Yesterday, we were out La Mesa way. On the main street is a two-story concrete-and-tile building covering two business lots valued at \$6000. The city clerk of La Mesa said that the building is valued at \$14,000. Doctors and dentists occupy offices on the upper floors, while below are the business establishments of Pete and Joe, who own the property.

Our visit out La Mesa way calls to mind another article we wrote some time since. It concerned "thrift," and we ask your indulgence as we quote:

"Pleasures are not wrong; they are right; but a pleasure becomes an evil, when, in order to enjoy it, one hatters away his capacity for higher things. The underlying principal of life, material and moral, is the principal of thrift; and thrift is simply the conservation of higher values, sacrificing the lower values for the higher."

came to Pete's Place for ice cream cones and comic books and penny candy.

One of my favorite customers was Mrs. Daley. She would come to buy chocolates for "her children," as she called them -- the children of their farm workers, Mexican families. When parents of the children living in La Mesa took the family out for a Sunday outing, it was always a stop at "Pete's" for their favorite ice cream cone. It was probably that little "dab" that Pete instructed the girls to always put on top of the scoop of ice cream that brought the children back, and probably the fact that I always loved children too.

Grace and I never had any children. We often discussed about adopting a child, but with both of us working in the business we felt it would not be the best thing for bringing up a child. There were long hours at the business for both of us, especially after we opened the bar-restaurant. It was often two in the morning when I would close up and go home. Grace would leave early to go home and would open up the business in the morning. It was long hours for both of us, but we enjoyed many good friends in those days.

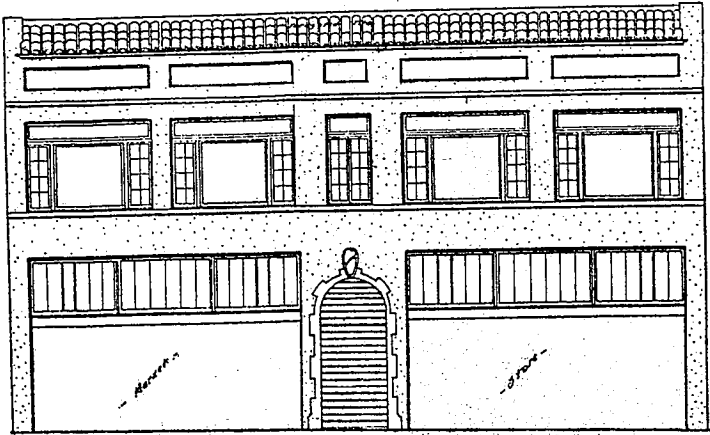
During the time we operated the bar-restaurant, I recall Scott King, Jr. would patronize the bar. One night he handed me a piece of paper money and said, "This is for you, Pete." Since he was enjoying his drinks I did not want to offend him by refusing it, but the next day when he came in I took the \$50 bill and handed it to him. He refused to accept it, saying, "I knew when I gave it to you what I was doing. I want you to have it."

During the time I was operating the confectionery lunch place, the Bank of Italy, as it was then known, was located just across the street on the corner of Lookout and Spring Street. Mr. Giannini, who founded the Bank of Italy, would come over with the manager of the bank for lunch. I don't recall the bank manager's name, but I should because it was through the Bank of Italy that I made a loan to build the two-story building next to the corner of Lookout and Spring Street. Five percent money, and I couldn't wait to get it paid off!

When I first came to La Mesa in 1923 most of the streets were dirt roads. The population was 1800. We had no ethnic problems; everybody was friendly and eager to get along.

LEFT: This Evening Tribune article of May 27, 1927, used the success of Pete and his brother-in-law to show what could be achieved with hard work and thrift.

NEW BUSINESS BLOCK FOR LA MESA



GEROCHE AND PALERMO BLDG.
LA MESA, CALIF.
MAR 1926 WESTON M HICKS

Front elevation for the new Geroche-Palermo \$11,000 business block now under construction on Lookout avenue. Two store buildings, a grocery and confectionery, will occupy the ground floor. The second story to be divided into eight office rooms. Weston M. Hicks of La Mesa has the contract.

La Mesa Scout, April 9, 1926. The confectionery and the Geroche's grocery store shared the 50-foot frontage and each extended 50 feet to the rear.

OF COURSE BLINDFOLDED BILLY RUSSELL

will not pass up

La Mesa's Favorite Fountain

Giant
MALTED MILKS 10c

Soft Drinks of All Kinds — Beer on Draught — Wines

Pete's Place

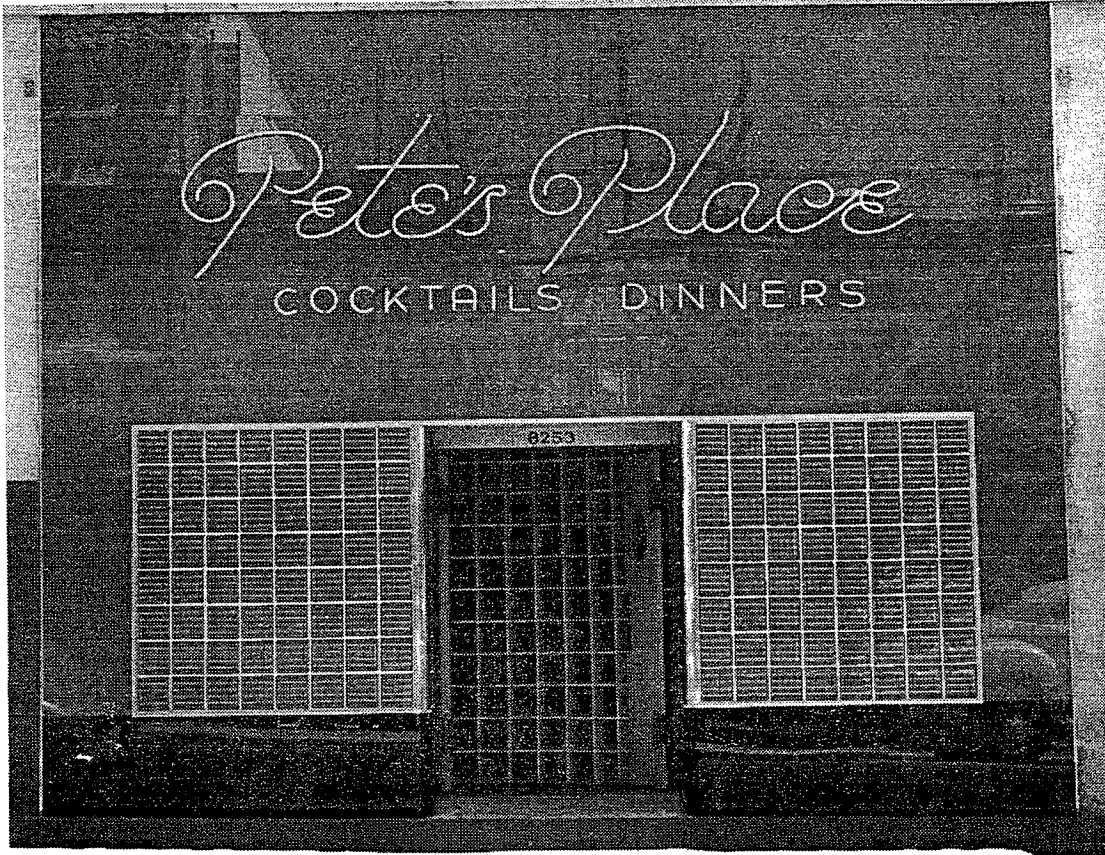
8253 LOOKOUT AVE., LA MESA

Advertisement, La Mesa Scout, February 19, 1937. As part of an advertising promotion during La Mesa's 25th Anniversary, "blindfolded Billy Russell" drove a new Studebaker around town and stopped at local businesses. Russell had performed similar feats in other cities around the country.



The Geroche-Palermo building soon after its construction in 1926, with Pete in front. The building was the second one east of Spring Street on the south side of La Mesa Boulevard. Upstairs at this time were the offices of Dr. Arthur E. Floto and Dr. Thomas M. Cunningham.

Pete's Place as a restaurant and cocktail bar, 1946-1950. The new facade was a stylish blend of glass block and green glass tile. Construction across the street can be seen mirrored in the tile.





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TEACHING A TOWN TO KNOW ITSELF

by Eric Abrahamson

The signs of decay are all too familiar: the dusty windows of vacant storefronts, the yellowed sale signs and faded displays, the closed movie theatres and empty department stores. In some places a rural population has picked up and left. In other cases, suburbanization has sparked the development of outlying and surrounding areas complete with shopping malls and highway strips. Downtown merchants, usually entrenched and poorly organized, are unable to compete.

In the 1960s and 70s, efforts to revitalize downtown and stimulate economic recovery often involved leveling whole city blocks and building brand new conference centers or hotels. The work was expensive and politically divisive as whole neighborhoods were sometimes destroyed. Apparently lost in the process was any effort to understand and build upon the traditional and evolving face and purpose of downtown.

Nine years ago, when the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched its Main Street program in three small midwestern cities, it intended to develop an approach to downtown revitalization that would combine economic development with historic preservation. The approach contrasted sharply with the knock-down-and-replace style of urban renewal. Main Street placed a premium on existing structures and institutions and encouraged cities to look for resources within the community rather than from without.

This year Main Street, with a track record of success in 24 states and 120 cities nationwide, comes to California for the first time. A pilot program approved and funded by the California Legislature, co-administered by the California Department of Commerce and, by contract, the National Trust, will begin this fall in five specially-selected small cities spread throughout the state.

Of the thirty cities that submitted applications to be part of the demonstration project, Petaluma, Ft. Bragg, Porterville, Vista, and Sonoma were selected on the basis of their demonstrated need for development, broad-based community support for the project, and the presence of potential, but underutilized, resources for development.

Unlike urban rehabilitation loan or grant programs, Main Street is fundamentally an organizing project. Its four key components—organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring—place a heavy emphasis on developing community consensus over planning and image building. Kathryn Burns, Western Regional Director of the Main Street program for the National Trust, describes Main Street as a "three year process of sorting out opportunities."

There are no formulas, no packaged projects. "Each community is unique," says Burns. "Their heritage is their own and they have to emphasize their individuality. We work with them to help them discover it." Like a franchise operator of a chain of fast-food stores, the Trust provides management training and design expertise to local project managers. The California Department of Commerce provides the economic development know-how.

Echoing Burns, Pat Noyes, Director of the Main Street program for the Department of Commerce, says it's important that communities don't try to go after things that are not there. "Not every city can capture a huge tourist market. Many towns just don't know who is around them and who is coming through." Noyes points to the example of a small town in the Southwest which was located on a highway leading to a popular fishing lake. A survey discovered that a large proportion of people who passed through town were on their way to the lake, yet the town did not have a single bait-and-tackle or sporting goods store. Local Main Street participants worked with a potential sports store owner and a building owner to launch a business which has been so successful it has sparked the opening of competing stores.

In Main Street, restoration and economic development go hand in hand. The Trust stresses efficiency, frugality, and respect for contributing architecture. Main Street challenges critics who have argued that preservation tends to be dilettantish and impractical; it does this by illustrating how architecture fits into a comprehensive communitywide understanding of the role of heritage.

"The Trust is good about saying that the downtown is a community's face," says Noyes. "Just as when you pick out what dress you're going to wear, you have to decide who it is you're trying to impress." So the communities have to decide who they are and who it is they're trying to impress.

"Sometimes the town discovers," says Noyes, "that their best market is themselves." The Trust stresses the need for a community to get at how it feels about the place—downtown. More difficult to assess on a general basis, however, is downtown's current viability as a vital part of the community. Both Noyes and Burns argue that downtown is still the heart of most communities; its function within each community has become obscured. Main Street is successful because it incorporates that community-wide process of reassessment and education.

"The best aspects about downtown merchants," says Noyes, "are their independence and their commitment to the community." In the long run, these qualities may be the key to Main Street's future. □

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Please complete and return this form to:
La Mesa Historical Society
P.O. Box 882, La Mesa, CA 92041

The Society depends upon membership dues, contributions, bequests, and fund-raising activities to support restoration and preservation of local history.

Memberships and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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