

MCHS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

MONTEREY COUNTY

FALL/WINTER 2023



HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

“History is fragile. Memories fade. Writings are lost...and relics crumble. Historians serve best when they can preserve yesterday - today. Tomorrow is often too late.”

CURATOR'S CORNER



James Perry,
Executive Director

SERVICE WARE FROM THE HOTEL DEL MONTE

We have acquired 4 meat knives and 5 butter knives, c.1906, from the once famous Hotel del Monte in Monterey! Our volunteer Head of Restoration, Tom

Spencer, recently attended an estate sale in Seaside and purchased them for us to fortify our existing collection of Hotel del Monte service ware which had only included spoons and forks. The story about the service ware is actually quite fascinating and the earthquake of 1906 predominantly factors into it. The earthquake in April of 1906 severely damaged the hotel including its grand kitchen. The Pacific Improvement Company (owners of the hotel) decided that it was time to retire the service ware that had been in use since the hotel was rebuilt in 1891 and made an order with Gorham Company to produce triple plated handled knives with stainless steel blades—very top end at the time. The Art Nouveau motif with “Del Monte” inscribed upon the handle mirrored the decorative fashion of the time and truly reflected the elegance of the hotel. This service ware proved its durability through time as evidenced by the fact that it was still being used by the Navy (until early 1944) who purchased the hotel in 1942 as a pre-flight training school. It must be noted that the Hotel is still owned by the Navy and is presently the Naval Post Graduate School.



OUR 90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 FROM NOON-4PM



“History is fragile. Memories fade. Writings are lost...and relics crumble. Historians serve best when they can preserve yesterday - today. Tomorrow is often too late.” This statement was made on December 22, 1933 during an afternoon gathering at the Hargis residence in Salinas and the statement caused discussion among the group which led them, on that

day, to establish the Monterey County Historical Society (MCHS). According to founding historical society documents, it was initially a small core of aging civic leaders who based their efforts to establish a historical society upon a deep concern for the preservation of a rapidly disappearing history of what they knew in those days as “Old Monterey County.” As time passed, membership of MCHS increased, as did the ever increasing donations of artifacts, photographs and archival materials specifically representing a region that had not only been inhabited for 13,000 years by our First Peoples, but also the first and longest continuously stable European settlement and center of government on the West Coast of the North American continent.

For the first forty years of the organization's existence, membership of MCHS primarily carried out general administrative functions from their homes, and space for the continually growing collection of materials directly pertinent to the mission of MCHS had always been an issue. As decades passed, the collections of the society came to be stored in a growing number of spare rooms in private residences, offices, storage spaces, and larger artifacts generally warehoused throughout the County of Monterey.

In 1972, MCHS acquired the historic José Eusebio Boronda Adobe resting upon five acres in the Salinas Valley. The house was subsequently restored and added to the National Register of Historic Places on May 18, 1974 and the rest is...history.

We are so very proud of what we have accomplished over the course of nine decades but none of this would have been possible were it not for our volunteers, members and patrons. Only for a short period of time during 1942-1945 were the operations of MCHS suspended because our efforts were directed towards the war effort on the home front. The cumulative sum of what the Historical

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OUR 90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

Continued

Society has become today is our very history itself - history made by the time, talent and gifts of all of you who care.

It is our privilege to invite you to our private gathering for members and volunteers, your friends and family only. This coming together shall be a momentous occasion that not so much celebrates our founding, but rather celebrates your efforts and the efforts of others through time in order for this institution to evolve, develop and flourish. There will be complimentary sweets and savories served in addition to hot cocoa, spiced cider & coffee and we would also ask you to consider bringing a small batch of sweet or savories to share as well. Additionally, we will have Hannah Alexa singing traditional Spanish ballads as well as Mariachi dancing by our local children.

PLEASE RSVP no later than December 10 and let us know if you plan on attending; the number of guests you will be bringing along and also if planning bringing something for the celebratory treat tables. Please RSVP by email: mchs@redshift.com OR phone us at 831-757-8085.

FACILITY UPDATES



*Tom Spencer,
Head of Restoration*

Progress continues on the Gumper-Castro Library. The walnut cabinets are being lacquered, as this newsletter goes to press, and the walls will be sanded and primed during the last week of November. This special preparation of the walls will make way for the wallpaper hanger to begin his craft. The wallpaper must be painstakingly trimmed, aligned and pasted by hand. This process will take approximately one month and will be further complicated by the different elevations within the library and the necessary construction of scaffolding to access all of the walls.

Once the wallpapering has been completed, the custom cabinets will be installed, followed by the reinstallation of the bannisters and handrails. The wood floor which has already been ordered, and is on site, can then be laid. The finish trim will complete the project and the library will be ready to open and be used as a research facility with access to numerous historical documents, as well as primary and secondary resources.



The restoration of the Bataan Memorial has begun with the removal of rust-covered roofing and repairs to other areas. As weather permits, sandblasting of the structure and half-track will continue. When completed, the memorial will be restored to its former glory.

Phase one of the Heritage Garden is also underway. The rough grading has been completed and two pick-up loads of trees have been purchased and delivered to the Historical Society.

MCHS would like to acknowledge how thankful we are for the volunteers, donors and friends working so hard keep these projects moving!



CHUCK WAGON BBQ!



Our annual BBQ took place on Saturday, September 9 and what a glorious day it was. The weather most certainly made up for the windy, rainy weather anomaly we endured during our BBQ in 2022.

There were upwards of 300 people who attended throughout the day and we were entertained by the historical live demonstrations such as blacksmithing and quill penmanship. Our hearts were warmed by Dan Lynch playing the historical Ignacio Boronda violin from 1880 as well as the touching Spanish ballads performed by Hanna Alexa.

The Los Californianos Alta California Dance Group put on a splendid

show of Spanish Colonial & Mexican Republic era dancing and the Salinas Valley Region of the Horseless Carriage Club of America had an exhibition of 11 vehicles dating from 1910 to the early 1920s. Another truly special treat was the presence and performances of dancing Charro horses—a tradition we hope will become part of our celebratory BBQ event tradition. Throughout all of this, David Ford's Trail Ride Band kept the event upbeat and alive.

The BBQ crew headed by Mike Chasen did a splendid job with the Tri-Tip. The portions were substantial and it was a privilege for us to present our honorary Community Service Award for Historical Preservation to Kent Seavey for a lifetime of service preserving our past here in Monterey County.

Our guests were also engaged by ambassadors from local and historical institutions that came to us from all parts of the county including: Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists, Asian Cultural Experience (ACE), Big Sur Historical Society, California Rodeo: Salinas, First Mayors House of Salinas,

Japanese American Citizens

League of Monterey Peninsula, Monterey Area Architectural Resources Archive, Monterey County Free Libraries, Monterey County Genealogy Society, Monterey History & Art Association, Monterey History & Art Association, Native Daughters of the Golden West, Santa Lucia #97, Peoples Oral History Project & the San Antonio Valley Historical Association.

We would never had been able to have such a wonderful day were it not for our BBQ committee: Thom Taft, Rita Von Soosten, Mark Wood & Kathleen Porter. Our sponsors for the event were also central in creating this successful event: Mike Chasen~HWY68 Produce, Ray Franscioni: Pessagno Winery & Puma Road Winery, Zada Fresh Farms, Salinas, Star Market, Costco, Grocery Outlet, Food

Max, Safeway, Thom Taft, Taylor Farms & Eduardo Duran: Duran Sales, Watsonville.

We believe this BBQ was one of the best ones we have ever had and we extend our gratitude and appreciation to the BBQ event committee for their gargantuan efforts: Thom Taft, Rita Von Soosten, Katherine Porter, Mark Wood, Sal Munoz, Tom & Gail Spencer.



MONTEREY COUNTY



HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

P.O. BOX 3576
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA 93912

SAVE THE
DATE

B U S I N E S S



SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2024
NOON - 4PM

We will be celebrating the Boronda Adobe being placed on the California Register of Landmarks 50 years to the day the landmark plaque was placed in front of the adobe! More to come about this momentous anniversary event in our Spring newsletter edition!



Street Address: 333 Boronda Road, Salinas, CA 93907
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3576, Salinas, CA 93912
Website: mchsmuseum.com/salinas
Office Hours: M-F 9am-Noon & 1-3pm
Daily Research & Tours are by Appointment Only

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