

Fairview Register

Monthly publication of the Costa Mesa Historical Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3)

MEMBER: CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES, NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY



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The plaque commemorating Orange County Historical Site #56 was unveiled in Estancia Park on Saturday, February 9.

New Plaque Unveiled at Adobe

The sky opened up an hour and a half before the dedication was to begin. Officials debated whether to call the event for a second time. But they trusted their instincts ... and their weather apps.

An hour later the sun was out. Azure skies provided a glorious backdrop to the dedication of Orange County Historical Site #56, the culmination of a year-long effort by the Costa Mesa Historical Society, the Costa Mesa Historic Preservation Committee, and the OC Historical Commission to honor the adobe's history and prehistory.

Scott Fitzpatrick and the Costa Mesa High School choir welcomed visitors with classic tunes like "Country Roads." Boy Scout Troop 106 opened the ceremony with a flag salute. The choristers then returned with a rendition of the

National Anthem.

After Adelia Sandoval offered a moving Native American song and blessing, cultural anthropologist Stephen O'Neil delivered a concise but thorough talk on the way the adobe epitomizes the long and varied history of Costa Mesa.

City and county dignitaries next took to the dais. Mayor Katrina Foley and Mayor Pro-Tem John Stephens emphasized the adobe's original purpose as a shelter for the vulnerable. Others stressed the power of partnerships. And special note was taken of the vision of the Segerstrom family and others who set aside this land for future generations.

The day was summed up best, perhaps, by O.C. Historical Commissioner Lee Ramos. "Today we are creating the history of tomorrow," he said.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Craig MacDonald on the "Trailblazing Women of the Old West"

Sunday, March 17 at 2 p.m.

March is Women's History month – perfect timing for historian Craig MacDonald's talk on "Trailblazing Women in the Old West." MacDonald will share fascinating tales about women who broke the norms of their time in various fields, including mining, conservation, voting, law enforcement, temperance, and even crime. You won't want to miss it!

Pulitzer-prize nominee Craig MacDonald is a perennial favorite at the Society. He's the author of 24 books on the Old West, and he has spoken at national conferences, museums, historical societies, and universities. To learn more about Craig and his books, go to www.goldrushglimpses.com.

Museum and Event Calendar

The historical society's museums will be open on the following dates in March. Opening hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. for the museum and noon-3 p.m. for the adobe. If you'd like to visit at another time, call 949-631-5918 to schedule an appointment.

MARCH 2019

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30	31					

Museum	Adobe	Speaker
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Promoting and preserving Costa Mesa's history is our mission

Remembering Betty Jean Beecher

Betty Jean dedicated her life to Costa Mesa and the surrounding area, volunteering for countless organizations both public and private. History, though, was her passion. Her dedication to the society earned her a reputation as “the glue that keeps the historical society together.”

Betty Jean DeWolfe was born on January 18, 1921. She was born just outside Modesto, but she spent nearly all her life in Orange County, attending grammar school in Santa Ana before the family moved to Costa Mesa. Her father owned a dairy where Victoria meets the river.

At Newport Harbor High, Betty Jean met a boy named Charles Beecher. They didn't talk much at first. But after her 17th birthday party, the two took a moonlit cruise around the harbor. The rest is history. They were married shortly after she graduated. From that point on, they were inseparable.

The newlyweds hopped around for a few years before settling down in Costa Mesa and starting a family. Betty Jean's community service started soon after.

“I've been a volunteer in the community since I moved in,” Betty Jean would recall later. “I wanted to know the people ... who are the foundation of the town.”

Her life of service began in the 1940s at Main School. Soon the mother of three became president of the McNally school PTA, and she spent a full 25 years on the board of the 4th District PTA. Her focus on children wasn't limited to the classroom. In 1954 she helped organize the Girls Club of the Harbor Area.

“Betty is just a spitfire,” said John Moorlach, politician and the society's one-time programming director. “She's tough, honest, aggressive, motivated, pushy, and gets into everything.”

Indeed, Betty Jean contributed to a mind-boggling number of organizations: Mesa Pride, Costa Mesa Tomorrow Club, the Freeway 55 Committee, the Orange County Visiting Nurses Association, you name it. She was secretary for the Redevelopment of Downtown Costa Mesa, Director of the Old Courthouse Museum Society, and served on OCC's Citizen Advisory committee. She was active in the efforts to restore the Madame Modjeska house, worked as a ballot inspector, and somehow still found time to work part-time at Sears.

“She was never shy about expressing her point of view,” professor Hank Panian remembered. “But she was a community minded person — formidable.”

Betty Jean organized many reunions, from Newport Harbor class reunions to reunions for SAAAB veterans. She even organized a reunion for those who received their marriage certificate at the old city hall in Santa Ana (built, it should be noted, through the labor of her stonemason grandfather).

Her real passion, though, was history. “We need to know



Betty Jean Beecher and Ed Miller examine SAAAB murals returned in 1980.

our roots,” she said. “We're losing the old Costa Mesa very fast. When I talk to children, they ask me, ‘What did Costa Mesa use to look like?’ I tell them it used to be just a few houses, but they don't understand.”

Betty Jean first joined the society in 1974. Altogether she provided 22 years of service, ten as treasurer, and four more as president. She also served as the unofficial photo curator, occasional newsletter editor, SAAAB organizer, and public face of the society. She prepared photobooks, organized rummage sales, and put on exhibits at the OC Fair. She was proud of the

fact that she was historical society life member #14.

Her husband Charles stayed beside her all along. Together they became known as “Costa Mesa's unofficial town historians.”

“I always say, ‘With us you get two for the price of one.’ I usually get involved first, knowing Charles is always there to help me out.”

As president, Betty Jean worked with City Manager Fred Sorsabal to find a permanent home for the society's collection. The move allowed the society to expand and open its artifacts to the public. The society occupies the former Orange Coast Savings and Loan building to this day.

In 1985 Betty Jean was honored with a Living Memorial Award alongside Sorsabal for their contributions to the quality of life in Costa Mesa. She won other awards, too. In 1979, she was named woman of the year by the Chamber of Commerce as “a woman of wide community involvement.” In 1985, she was named OCC Outstanding Citizen. And in 1988 she was awarded a “Silent Samaritan” award by the Zonta Club.

Upon her death, Hank Panian noted that Betty Jean had “seen Costa Mesa change from farmland to South Coast Plaza. And she accepted all of the change as progress. She never once complained about how it used to be.”

Peggy Reinert of Reinert's Department Store added: “Betty Jean was dedicated to the community, more so than most of us. She'd get in there and do it. She'd push others and get them to do it too.”

Children “don't realize that they're growing up now and everything they see and do will someday only be here in memories. So I'm asking them to stop, listen, and remember the things around them today.” — Betty Jean Beecher



Top: Jim Kubalik makes a dramatic point. Bottom: Mary Hornbuckle installs the Historical Society board.

2019 Installation Dinner

Thank you to all who came to the Society's 2019 installation dinner this past January. After last year's success, the Society returned to Newport Rib Company. Attendees once again enjoyed the restaurant's signature ribs, chicken, and cornbread in a lively and engaging atmosphere.

Soon after dessert was served, the main attraction, guest speaker Jim Kubalik of the Nixon Library, took to the stage. Kubalik led the audience on a lively virtual tour of both the Library and key moments in the former president's life. Particular attention was paid to Nixon's Orange County roots. Although Nixon remains a controversial figure, Kubalik steered away from the most sensitive topics, and everyone went home friends.

To conclude the evening, former Mayor Mary Hornbuckle installed this year's distinguished members of the board. Her characteristic wit was on full display as she handed each member a unique gift. Each gift might have been a little silly, but it also symbolized the valuable contributions of each board member.

All in all, it was a fun night. We hope you join us again next year!

Share Your Story

We'd love to hear your Costa Mesa stories. Many changes have taken place and we want to hear from those who lived through them. Write the memories yourself or come to the museum and we'll transcribe them for you. It's that simple!

Temporary Parking Instructions

Entry to the historical society parking lot is currently limited to Anaheim Avenue, but this is subject to change. If Anaheim is closed, try Park Avenue. There is no estimated completion date at this time.

Make a Difference – Volunteer

We're looking for a volunteer to **set up refreshments** at our monthly programs as well as members to sit on two committees: the **Newsletter Assembly Committee** prepares the newsletter for mailing, while the **Adobe Committee** recruits volunteers to plan an event, become a docent, or work on exhibits. Committees meet monthly and are chaired by board members. Interested? Visit costamesahistory.org/volunteer. Isn't it more fun to work as a team?

Donate Online

The Costa Mesa Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization that depends on support from people like you. Visit costamesahistory.org/donate to make your tax-deductible contribution today. Thank you for helping preserve local history!

Shop with us on Amazon

Every time you start your order with Amazon Smile, Amazon will donate to the Costa Mesa Historical Society – at no cost to you. Visit costamesahistory.org/smile before making your next purchase. You can use your existing Amazon account.

Dues Overdue?

Make sure your dues are up to date by looking at your **dues expiration date** on the address label to the right of your name. If your dues are due, renew online at costamesahistory.org/membership, mail in a check, c/o Susan Weeks, Treasurer, or drop it off on a Thursday or Friday from 10am to 3pm. Membership dues are listed on the back page.

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V I S I T U S

Diego Sepulveda Adobe

1900 Adams Ave.

Open 12-4 p.m. Every 1st and 3rd Saturday*

Explore centuries of history when you visit one of Orange County's oldest buildings in its gorgeous setting at Estancia Park.

Costa Mesa Historical Society Museum

1870 Anaheim Ave.

Open 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Every Thursday and Friday*

View a mind-boggling array of artifacts from 5,000 years of Costa Mesa history – from the first peoples to the City of the Arts.

* Or schedule an appointment at 949-631-5918.

I N S I D E

Adobe Plaque Dedication,
Craig MacDonald on Trailblazing Women,
Remembering Betty Jean Beecher & More

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— *Membership Form* —

Name: _____ Address: _____

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Membership Categories

	Annual		Lifetime	
Individual	\$20.00	Individual Life Member	\$500.00	
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Family	\$25.00			
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Contributing	\$50.00			
Business and Professional	\$100.00			
Public Agency	\$100.00			
Benefactor	\$250.00			

Make your checks payable to the Costa Mesa Historical Society.
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