

Message from President Mike Cotter

“WE STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS”

The San Clemente Historical Society was founded in 1973 to stop the wholesale destruction of the city's original 1920s Spanish type buildings. The “City of White Houses” had lost over half of its original 500 Spanish Colonial structures when in late 1972 the famous bluff top Bartow Mansion – the symbol of San Clemente in Chamber of Commerce literature – was illegally bulldozed down in the middle of the night.

Over its illustrious 35 year history, the dedicated volunteers of the Historical Society have fought block by block to preserve San Clemente's history. The Society's single most spectacular success story to date has been the preservation of the 80-year old Casa Romantica building – founder Ole Hanson's home – now adaptively reused as a Cultural Center and Gardens.

While the Society's activities have branched out to include preservation education and a historical museum, its primary raison d'être remains the preservation of historic resources. And the city has not lost a major historic building since the Society's founding.

Today's Historical Society volunteers truly stand on the shoulders of giants – those who came before – who would not tolerate the destruction of the city's physical heritage.

In just the last few years, the Society's hundreds of unpaid volunteers, contributors, docents and other supporters have achieved, and continue to achieve, many important goals. The Society:

Saved Casa Romantica, the Beachcomber Motel, Seacliffs Villa and the Miramar Theater when developers applied for demolition permits.

Loaned to Casa Romantica virtually its entire assemblage of early San Clemente photographs and plat maps displayed in the Orientation Room and throughout the Cultural Center. Loaned founder Ole Hanson's desk and chair to the Casa (compliments of the Hanson family) and Hanson's chair and Victorian bed to the historic Goldschmidt house for historical preservation benefit tours. Many of the docents at the Casa were originally docents at the Historical Society Museum.



The Casa Solarium.

Supplied dozens of historical photographs (at virtually no cost) to the Chamber of Commerce and Heritage of San Clemente for the recent coffee table book to benefit Casa Romantica.

Presented a “Nixon in San Clemente” exhibit at Casa Romantica, in conjunction with the Nixon Library.

Helped sponsor Casa Romantica's recent large and successful grant request.

Presented thousands of dollars in direct donations to Casa Romantica.

Distributed more than 900 textbooks free of charge to local third graders on the history of San Clemente entitled “From Fishcarts to Fiestas.” This is an ongoing program.

Spearheaded the listing of San Clemente as a “Preserve America City” working with city officials, resulting in the availability of thousands of dollars in Federal grants for historical preservation, city signage and way finding.

Helped to enhance historic downtown San Clemente by sponsoring the adoption of the Main Street program by the Downtown Business Association, a program of the National Trust for Historical Preservation.

Raised tens of thousands of dollars to fund the “Landmarks on Del Mar” tile mural project for the bulb-out pedestrian rest areas – a public art project envisioned

by Blythe Welton and Michael Kaupp, and in partnership with the City of San Clemente and the Downtown Business Association. (The artist is preparing the tiles now.)

Presented “The Ole Hanson Story” at the Ole Hanson Beach Club, a founders-era black and white silent film of the early construction of San Clemente in the 1920s in conjunction with the Friends of the San Clemente Beaches, Parks and Recreation Foundation (film compliments of the Hanson family.)

Provided historical photographs for the Dorothy Fuller exhibit at Gallery 104 last year, and donated a number of photographs for auction at the Dorothy Fuller benefit at the Casa Tropicana.

Hosted the Conference of California Historical Societies' convention in San Clemente, injecting tens of thousands of tourist dollars into the local economy.

Continues to educate the public about San Clemente's culture and early history via news articles, photographs and seminars to service clubs, including a recent “sold out” presentation at Casa Romantica Cultural Center.

Contributed to Downtown's current Visioning and Strategic Plan document.

Worked with the City to enact its recent Landmark Ordinance, a “vital few” priority.

Coordinates with nearby historical societies to help preserve regional historic resources, such as Dana Point's Doheny House.

Continues to make available hundreds of historical San Clemente photographs to the public through the Frame House on Avenida Del Mar.

Continues to inform and educate the public about the city's heritage via its Community Booth at the monthly downtown Village Art Fair and other events.

Sponsors an annual City Council Candidates Forum for the education and benefit of the community.

Today's Historical Society wants to thank those who came before – those giants who worked so successfully to save the unique heritage of our Spanish Village by the Sea.