



# Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

## March 2017 Newsletter

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## Richardson House Restoration

By Joe Catalano



*Shed at the back of Richardson House, showing deterioration.*

*Lizzie's Trail Inn to right. (photo by Maggie Ellis)*

While some people may think that Richardson House was moved next to Lizzie's Trail Inn to create a "museum compound," it actually housed various Lizzie's employees, as well as the laundry, tools and the beer and wine storage for Lizzie's in the shed at the rear of the house. The house had been moved from its original location around the corner on Mountain Trail Avenue, but very early on, and was an integral part of the Lizzie's operation.

Together, the buildings are what remain of a larger facility that served the trail and the camps, hotels and sanitariums up the mountain. A sketch by the late Maurice Orme, who grew up in the Richardson House, notes a barn, a storehouse and corrals for the pack animals in what is now the city park along Mira Monte Avenue.

This part of Sierra Madre's earlier history is well documented in Michele Zack's national award-winning book, *Southern California Story; Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre*. The SMHPS has a few copies left for sale, if you want to find out about this in more detail.

The shed attached to the back of Richardson House was built in the 1930s out of pretty crude materials. There is plenty of value in preserving examples of great architecture and craftsmanship, like the Gamble House, for instance. But it is long ago since preservation was an elitist movement, and it also has become very involved with culture and memory. That is, *your* history, whatever it is. Your history includes these humble buildings that figured so importantly in the settlement and early development of our area.

True restoration of an historic building is an act of will. It involves research and investigation, specialized methods to preserve actual original materials where possible, use of some archaic building methods, and patient duplication of what's no longer in existence or able to be re-used. In a professional historic restoration project, very little comes from a big-box lumberyard.

Why? First, because the historic building *itself* is the most important artifact in a museum setting. It needs to have the maximum amount of actual historic material in it, and whatever absolutely needs to be replaced, must be replaced with great authenticity and faithfulness to the original means.

Secondly, these restoration methods are employed because the common notion of "making something new that looks like..." is just "Disneyland," and not the real history itself. Preservationists consider it disingenuous at best. After all, the purpose is to preserve and present the history itself.

That said, there are instances in which preservation architects will "smuggle in" some modern methods or technology to help restore or protect the building, but where it won't be noticed by the public. Some of this will have to be employed in restoring the shed.

A while back, Rod Spears, John Capoccia, Vince DiMarzo and I carefully removed everything that was non-historic from inside the shed, like the gypsum wallboard installed during the 1980s. This exposed all the real historic materials and details, and also exposed (even more) deterioration than was seen previously.

(continued page 4)

## President's Message

### The Cost of Restoring the Back of Richardson House

It's happened to all of us: We find we have some major home repair in front of us and we think, lordy lordy, how am I ever going to pay for this? You bring in the professionals to see how much it's all going to cost. You have plans drawn up. That's where we are now with the restoration of the back of Richardson House.

In 2015 the city, who owns Richardson House and Lizzie's, and the Historical Society, who donates as much as possible to their maintenance and improvement (the city has more urgent infrastructure matters to fund) added up the costs in order to submit a grant application to the California Cultural and Historical Endowment. At that time, the value of a comprehensive project was projected to be \$100,000 dollars, and the grant application was for \$50,000, the amount of outside funds needed. It should be noted that this application was not only for the restoration of Richardson House, but also for the creation of a retaining wall behind the two museums that would protect them from a possible mudslide coming from the very high and precipitous hillside that looms over them. A channel to divert rain water away from the north side of the museums was also included. That channel has recently been completed by the city, and has been effective during this heavy rain season. It should also be noted that the amount of funds requested was assumed to be more than necessary by an unspecified amount. It is well known that construction projects usually cost more, and take more time, than estimated. Things always come up.

At the time of the grant application, the city pledged \$5,000 in

funds to the project, plus \$7,000 worth of permits, environmental filings & documents, and public works crews, making a total city pledge of \$12,000. The Historical Society pledged \$20,000 (that pledge still stands). The architect, Historical Society Board Member Joe Catalano, who specializes in preservation of historic buildings, and structural engineer Rod Spears very generously volunteered their services worth a total of \$18,000. So that makes \$25,000 in cash and \$25,000 in in-kind services. That brought the need for outside funding down to \$50,000, the amount applied for.

Unfortunately, the grant application was not successful. The project stalled as Joe, its Historical Society lead, had to undergo heart bypass surgery (he's fine now!), and the city was deep into the severe budget crisis that has since been ameliorated somewhat by the passage of the UUT measure.

It is now two years later and prices will have changed. Also, the \$100,000 value of the project covered three distinct tasks, so while the numbers do not reflect the cost of the restoration of the back of the Richardson House alone, they do give an idea of the size of the figures that are in play with a project like this. There has been turnover in the city offices, and it is unclear how much support the city could offer at this time.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that a great deal of money will need to be raised to restore the back of Richardson House, which is greatly deteriorated and unsafe for use. The Historical Society is eager to grab the crank on the motor of this project and get it revving again.

*Maggie Ellis, President*

## Membership Report

We are very happy to welcome back Jack & Nancy Gebhardt, who had been members in the past. And welcome to new members Ward & Louise Calaway!

Now that we're past the halfway point in our Historical Society

year, memberships are half price! That means that membership for an individual is just \$10. Do you have a friend you'd like to give a membership to as a thoughtful present?

*Maggie Ellis, Membership Chair*

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### 2017

<b>March 12</b>	Wistaria Festival booth
<b>March 16</b>	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
<b>April 20</b>	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
<b>May 6-7</b>	Art Fair booth
<b>May 18</b>	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
<b>May 27</b>	Mt. Wilson Trail Race booth
<b>June 15</b>	Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:00 pm
<b>June 17</b>	Lizzie's Chicken & Ravioli Dinner and Annual Meeting
<b>June 30</b>	End of SMHPS year

## Board Report

**December 2016 and January 2017:** The Historical Society is very fortunate to have the Hart Park House made available to us the third Thursday evening of each month. That's when we hold our board meetings, but, if we have programs planned, we take advantage of that scheduled availability to hold them at that

time. As it turned out, our December holiday program, the old Sierra Madre postcard slide show and cookie feast, used the December timeslot, and our January program, Michele Zack's talk about the TB epidemic and Sierra Madre, used the January one. For that reason, no board meetings were held those two months.



### Sierra Madre Memory The Red Cars and Snow in Sierra Madre

by Gloria W. Mooney

In regard to the trips on the trolley to L.A. with my grandmother, we rode the old Red Car from 129 N. Mountain Trail, the terminus of the Pacific Electric Railroad, which dated back to 1906, stopped in 1950. The main station in Kersting Square was a handsome little building. On the night in 1949 of the heaviest recorded snowfall in Sierra Madre, which blanketed the town with 3 to 4 inches of snow, my sister took me up to Kersting Square where the whole town was deliriously celebrating – SNOW!!

Do you have a memory story? Send it to MaggieEllis04@msn.com.

## 2016-2017 Board of Directors

### Officers:

President	Maggie Ellis
Vice President	Amy Putnam
Secretary	Pat Karamitros
Treasurer	Richard Mays

### Committee Chairs:

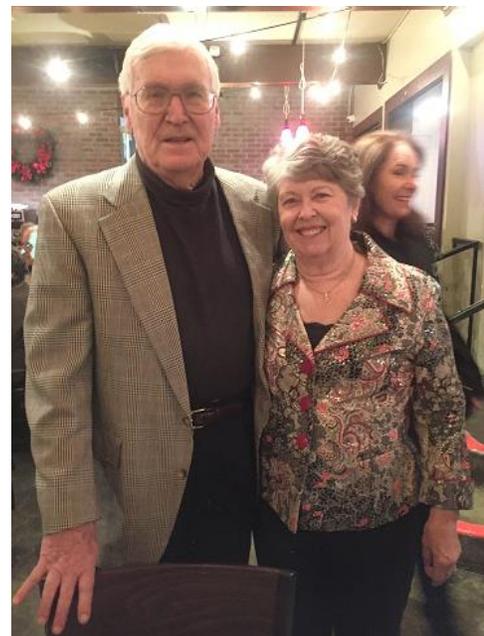
Archives	Casey Seyb
Education	Leslie Ziff
Facebook	Jan Wiles
Membership	Maggie Ellis
Museums Curators	Norma Bachwansky
	Mike Manning
Newsletter	Diane Sands
Oral History	Louise Neiby
Ways & Means	Christel Chang
Website	Maggie Ellis

### Directors at Large:

Joe Catalano  
Teresa Chaure  
Matt Malley  
Joan Spears

### Non-Board Members:

Library Board of Trustees Liaison Rod Spears  
Board Development Judy Webb-Martin



Rod and Joan Spears at the January event honoring them as Citizens of the Year. Joan is a member of our board, and Rod is our Library Liaison. This honor is well-deserved and the Historical Society counts itself extremely fortunate to have their help and support.

[www.smhps.org](http://www.smhps.org)

[SMHPS@outlook.com](mailto:SMHPS@outlook.com)



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

## Richardson House Restoration (continued)

Most of this is in the floor and lower walls. This is because the shed was built with very piecemeal footings, with some wood down in the dirt, and with more soil washing in under the floor over time.

So the design task will be to design new footings that will prevent the recurrence of this, and which also will not be noticeable. Then all the woodwork can be restored. This may sound "upside-down" to some, but it's not that unusual given the specialized working methods of preservation professionals. This will be the biggest hurdle in restoring the shed.

On a different issue, someone asked recently about what to do about rotted floor boards. Restoration does not include having to keep unsafe structural materials. They will be replaced, but the replacement boards will be an exact match, if necessary by shopping at salvage yards or having new ones milled to the correct size. Generally speaking, all deteriorated structural wood will be replaced, matching the original exactly. On a building of this age, rarely does matching wood come "off the shelf" from a big-box lumberyard.

Finally, the big question that gets asked is, "Why not just tear it down and start over?" Lizzie's and Richardson House are now legally designated historic buildings, and as such are subject to very high standards under various laws for protection and restoration work. A few years ago, before the buildings actually became legally "historic," a group of concerned and interested members of the community undertook rebuilding that saved the

buildings, especially Lizzie's, from complete dilapidation and loss. We should be very grateful to all of them for this effort; however they did take some liberties that are now outside of the legal restoration standards required by law. These laws, way too complicated to go into in this article, lead one to use *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings*, and *The Preservation Briefs* published by the National Park Service.

If the shed were actually so dilapidated that it needed to be rebuilt in its entirety, *The Standards* and the *Preservation Briefs* would be required to be followed carefully in the design and the craftsmanship, as the article has described earlier on. These start with the requirements to investigate thoroughly in order to keep the actual historic materials and restore them wherever possible, and then to apply very high technical standards for the replication of the deteriorated elements. If nothing is salvageable, then these standards apply to the entire rebuilding.

These standards are grounded in Federal law and the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)*, and come down to review and enforcement by our Planning Commission. To me, however, as a qualified *Historic Architect*, under the Federal Guidelines this is simply good guidance for doing historically authentic work.

Remember that the buildings themselves are the most important historic artifact.



*Richardson House, circa 1870  
(courtesy Sierra Madre Archives)*



*Richardson House, 2017  
(photo by Louise Neiby)*

**(More photos of the shed behind Richardson House can be found on Page 6)**

## A History of Richardson House

By Chris Bachwansky

(excerpted from her history of our museums for our website, [smhps.org](http://smhps.org))

John Richardson came to the Sierra Madre area in the early 1860s and applied for, and was granted, a patent to develop 150 acres as a ranch. By 1864 his ranch was up and running and as early Sierra Madre developed he became a fixture in the community. He built two houses. The one we know as Richardson House is believed to be the second. It was a modest two-room place with an all-purpose main room and a small bedroom. The house was built by hand, without the luxury of power tools, but John put a large porch across the front, perfect for capturing the breeze and relaxing on a summer's evening after chores were done.

It is believed the structure was originally sited on Mountain Trail and later moved to Mira Monte Ave. At some point it was finally moved across the street to the north side of the street, where it now stands. John left the house and surrounding property to his son Levi, who sold it to N. C. Carter. Eventually the Caley family owned the house. Lizzie Stoppel lived there when she operated Lizzie's Trail Inn. SMHPS member Maurice Orme said, "Lizzie slept in

the front bedroom, and kept her still in the living room and did most of her living up at the restaurant." Today you can still see the trapdoor in the floor where she hid the "hooch" in the event of a raid! Maurice, who lived in Richardson House in the late '30s and through most of the '40s when his family operated Lizzie's Trail Inn, had the back bedroom as his own. It is believed to have been added to the house, along with indoor plumbing and the bathroom, sometime in the '20s. Later, in the '30s a utility room and storage shed were built at the back of the house, giving us the footprint we know today.

After Lizzie's closed, the properties fell into disuse and were finally acquired by the City of Sierra Madre, along with the land where the pack station had been. Through the efforts of the SMHPS, along with help and support from the entire community, our on-going preservation efforts continue to provide a doorway to Sierra Madre's past, all made possible by generous support from our volunteers, members, and friends of the SMHPS.

## A Day at Lizzie's Trail Inn

Every Saturday, from 10:00 to noon, Lizzie's Trail Inn is bustling. Here's some activity from one recent Saturday.



*Docents and friends on the porch.  
Left to right: Charlie Bell, Bob Vicek, Jason Johnson, Jay Whitcraft, Terry Terrill, Mike Manning, Dr. Bill White*



*Ready to welcome visitors: Museums Co-Curator Norma Bachwansky (left) behind the counter of Lizzie's with Education Chair Leslie Ziff (center) and loyal volunteer Sue Orme.*



*Dogs visit too!  
Bud Switzer (left) along with Charlie Bell and Toby*



## Archives Update

By Casey Seyb, Archives Chair

Michelle An is moving onto a fantastic career with the National Archives. I can't think of a higher honor than managing the preservation of our country's information resources.

A core challenge of working in archives and special collections is balancing preservation with user access (as opposed to public libraries, where access is available to all and multiple copies are often available).

How does one preserve rare and sometimes fragile information items in an archives or special collections environment while continuing to provide access to those items in perpetuity? And this challenge is burdened further with the need to consider any access risk to privacy, confidentiality and copyright law for many items.

*Library archivist Michele An (center) at her going-away party. Our loss is the National Archives' gain – she's leaving for a wonderful opportunity there. Standing to her right is Ryan Baker, Director of Library Services.*

It certainly helps to have protocol standards and rules but individual situations can arise that will not fit into the guidelines so cleanly. These situations need to be taken case-by-case, ensuring that specific needs and goals are met without cutting corners.

This is my goal as an archivist in my professional role, as Archives Chair for the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society Board of Directors and as a volunteer with the Sierra Madre Public Library in the Local Archives. I aspire to ensure that appropriate care is given to the items even while they are being utilized as a resource. Otherwise, it's just storage of 'stuff', right?!



## TB Epidemic and Sierra Madre

Presented in January by Michele Zack

There was a big audience for Michele Zack's fascinating January talk, with slides, about the great TB epidemic at the turn of the last century and its huge impact on the development of Sierra Madre.



*A large audience listens intently to Michele's presentation*

*Michele Zack signing a copy of her history "Southern California Story; Seeking the Better Life in California." Sue Orme is to her right. We sold out of the copies available that evening, but you can purchase a copy at the library or Arnold's Frontier Hardware, and it's available at Vroman's too - or look for it at the Historical Society booth at upcoming community festivals.*



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society  
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 www.smhps.org



Museums Co-Curator Mike Manning has been creating signage for our museum displays, adding histories he has carefully researched. Here he is with his sign for an Indian metate.

**SIERRA MADRE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY**  
**P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202**  
**Membership / Donation Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Membership Level</b> | <b>Specific Donations</b>                 |
| ___ \$20 Individual     | \$ _____ Sierra Madre Historical Archives |
| ___ \$25 Family         | \$ _____ Oral History Program             |
| ___ \$5 Student         | \$ _____ Museums                          |
| ___ \$30 Contributing   | \$ _____ Richardson House                 |
| ___ \$60 Patron         | \$ _____ Lizzie's Trail Inn               |
| ___ \$100 Supporting    |   |
| ___ \$500 Lifetime      |   |

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Please make check payable to SMHPS.**

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society is a 501(c)(3).  
 Your contributions are deductible within the limits of the law.  
 Thank You.

**Yes, I would like to be a volunteer for the SMHPS.** \_\_\_\_\_