



*The dedication of the Junipero Serra Museum, the first home of the San Diego Historical Society, July 16, 1929.  
©SDHS #10311-5.*



*The San Diego Historical Society now shares the Casa de Balboa with the Museum of Photographic Arts and the San Diego Model Railroad Museum. Courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society.*

## EXPLORING SAN DIEGO'S PAST: FIFTY YEARS OF *THE JOURNAL OF SAN DIEGO HISTORY*

By Kathleen A. Crawford

George W. Marston, a local businessman and civic leader, joined other notable San Diegans to found the San Diego Historical Society in 1928. Marston, the first president of the organization, hired William Templeton Johnson to design the Junipero Serra Museum (1929) on Presidio Hill. For over sixty years, the Serra Museum housed all operations of the San Diego Historical Society, including its library and research center.

In January 1955, the San Diego Historical Society published the first issue of this journal. The Board of Directors did not want "just another pamphlet." They wanted a chronicle of "those valuable bits of the region's history and lore."<sup>1</sup> *The San Diego Historical Society Quarterly* (1955-61), *Times Gone By* (1961-66) and, finally, *The Journal of San Diego History* (1966-present) exceeded their expectations. By the 1970s, the *Journal* had become a distinguished publication in the field of local, state and regional history with a circulation of over 3,500.

Jerry MacMullen, Executive Director of the San Diego Historical Society (1954-64), insisted that the Society needed a first-class publication.<sup>2</sup> At the time, the Society "was supposed to consist of about twenty-five members. Once a year they would meet and have tea and talk about Father Serra and Mr. Marston and then they would go home until the next year." MacMullen explained, "Well, you can't run a show that way." He replaced "an atrocious publication called *Historics*, very badly mimeographed," with *The San Diego Historical Society Quarterly*.<sup>3</sup> The first issue included articles such as "San Diego in One Easy Lesson" and "Casualties of 1954" which described the destruction of three historic homes.<sup>4</sup>

In 1965, Executive Director Ray Brandes (1964-65) and Curator Ben Dixon decided to give the publication a new title: *Times Gone By: The Journal of San Diego History*.<sup>5</sup> They were frustrated, however, by



Dr. Ray Brandes excavating ruins at the Mission San Diego de Alcalá with Curt Harper; 1969. Rt. Rev. Msgr. James T. Booth, pastor of the church, watching. ©SDHS, UT-85:F9212, Union-Tribune Collection.

---

**Kathleen A. Crawford** is a Lecturer in History at the University of San Diego and at San Diego State University. A former Education Coordinator at the San Diego Museum of Man and Assistant Curator at the San Diego Historical Society, her research interests include San Diego history and architecture. She is currently working on a book about San Diego's historic buildings and architectural history.



James E. Moss, Executive Director of the San Diego Historical Society, 1969. ©SDHS #UT-85:H4711, Union-Tribune Collection.

the financial limitations of the Society. Brandes' desire to make the publication more visually attractive, while maintaining the overall quality of the scholarship, remained an issue throughout his tenure. He left the organization in the fall of 1965 to teach at the University of San Diego. Mrs. Lester (Elvira) Wittenberg (1966-67) replaced him Executive Director and chairman of the board. She edited three issues of the *Journal* with the assistance of Tim MacNeil. By the end of 1966, the publication had been renamed *The Journal of San Diego History*. Two editors, Hal Enger and Rita Larkin, handled the publication responsibilities for the next two years.

During the 1970s, Executive Director James Moss (1969-79) restructured the San Diego Historical Society and turned *The Journal of San Diego History* into a scholarly publication. He edited the *Journal* himself and recruited volunteers such as Barbara Marsh, a Mission Hills resident, to copyedit. David Weber, at that time a history professor at San Diego State University, helped him

organize an advisory board of established scholars with expertise in California and/or San Diego history.<sup>6</sup> He encouraged Iris H. W. Engstrand, University of San Diego professor, to join the Board of Editors. She proved to be a key member of the group, giving countless hours of support in the form of editing, researching and proofing articles. Together, they solicited articles from scholars from diverse backgrounds with expertise in California history. They also encouraged students to write on local history topics.

Thomas L. Scharf, a young and enthusiastic graduate student from the University of San Diego, joined Moss's staff as assistant editor and, later, editor (1979-90). He solicited manuscripts, contacted reviewers, edited the articles, picked up and delivered manuscripts to proof-reader Barbara Marsh and final copy to Neyenesch Printers, and hand-stamped the addresses on 2,000 issues.<sup>7</sup> Moss and Scharf debated the pros and cons of using a "slick" magazine format. They decided, instead, to adopt a format similar to that of many quarterly historical journals. They filled colorful issues with photographs from the *San Diego Union and Evening Tribune* files. The *Journal* combined scholarly articles with general-interest pieces to attract a growing audience of San Diego readers.



Tom Scharf, 1982. ©SDHS #82:13834-21.

Moss also reorganized the Society's membership directory, reviewing all files and determining which members were still alive! He created a membership package with benefits designed to attract new members, particularly young people. The print run of the *Journal* increased from 2,500 to 3,500 during his tenure. In addition, Moss and

other board members raised the profile of the Society by attending meetings of the City Council and the San Diego Board of Supervisors. They held an annual birthday party for the Society in which speakers offered humorous, often satirical, glimpses into San Diego's past.

Moss also acquired a vast and important collection of photographs from the Title Insurance and Trust Company (later Ticor Title Insurance).

He convinced them not to give all of their photographs to the California Historical Society but, instead, to donate some of them to the Society, in particular, photographs from the San Diego Title Insurance and Trust Company. He felt that the Society had both the staff and the expertise to handle this large collection. Ticor photographer Larry Booth and his wife Jane were offered staff positions, thanks to the generosity of Dr. Richard Bowers. Together, they worked to preserve thousands of old negatives and glass plates and to make the collection accessible to researchers. Their photo essays and guides, many of them published in the *Journal*, remain an important historical resource.<sup>8</sup>

Moss's plans for a historical museum were realized in 1982 when the Society moved its archives and collections from the Serra Museum to Balboa Park. Four years earlier, in 1978, a disastrous fire had destroyed the Balboa Park Electric Building, the former home of the San Diego Aerospace Museum. The Aerospace Museum moved into the 1935 Ford Building, making it possible for the San Diego Historical Society to take over the majority of the newly-rebuilt space. The Society, led by Director Richard Esparza (1980-1987), set up archives, museum galleries and meeting rooms. The remainder of the building, renamed Casa de Balboa, was devoted to other museums.

Scharf, meanwhile, stayed at the Serra Museum where he continued to edit the *Journal*. He added many new features, including book reviews and special issues devoted to single topics. For example, the Villa Montezuma issue still sells today.<sup>9</sup> He and Iris Engstrand also compiled the first index covering the years 1955-1975. For the first time, readers could access the considerable body of scholarship that had been developed over twenty years. Scharf also

made the decision to switch to Crest Offset Printing Company in National City, a small, family-run firm founded by Doyle Blackwood. Twenty-five years later, Doyle's son Barry Blackwood continues to print the *Journal*, using the latest in pre-press and print technologies.<sup>10</sup>

Phillip Klauber, a member of the pioneering Klauber and Gould families and an executive at San Diego Gas & Electric Company, was an important supporter of the *Journal*. He served on the board of the San Diego Historical



Jane and Larry Booth, 1980. ©SDHS #81:9202.



Phil Klauber (second from left) with Director Richard Esparza (left), Richard Levi and Phil Gildred (far right), 1984. ©SDHS #OP 10647.



Bruce Kamerling, 1983.  
©SDHS #OP 16488.

Society, among other organizations, sharing his extensive knowledge of San Diego with editors, city leaders, executive directors and historians. His memos were affectionately known as “Klaubergrams.” He suggested topics for articles, caught errors missed by staff members, and provided other information that helped to create a successful *Journal* each quarter.

Bruce Kamerling, Curator of Collections, also contributed his considerable scholarly expertise to the *Journal*, writing many articles on the history of art and artists in San Diego.<sup>11</sup> A noted painter, sculptor, art historian, and author, Kamerling worked at the Society from 1977 until his death in 1995. He successfully restored and furnished Hebbard and Gill’s Marston House for use as a public museum. He also wrote *One Hundred Years of Art in San Diego* (1991) and *Irving J. Gill, Architect* (1993), both published by the San Diego Historical Society.<sup>12</sup>

In 1983, the Society founded the Institute of History to encourage students, scholars, and other interested historians to write articles on San Diego history. The Institute offered, and continues to offer, cash prizes for the most outstanding work on various aspects of local history. It has led to a number of publications by graduate students and others in the *Journal*.

In 1990, Tom Scharf left the San Diego Historical Society to take a position as Director of Publications at the San Diego Zoological Society. He left the *Journal* in good hands. Kamerling and Gregg R. Hennessey, Book Review Editor, collaborated on the special issue devoted to the Marston House, published in the summer of 1990.<sup>13</sup>

Richard W. Crawford, Society Archivist, served as editor under Director James Vaughan (1988-1994), Acting Director Debra Casho (1994-1995), and Director Ann Bethel (1995-1997). He publicized the Society’s archival holdings, encouraging researchers to make use of materials tucked away on the library shelves. Court documents, personal letters from pioneer San Diegans, diaries and other sources were highlighted in *Journal* articles.<sup>14</sup> He worked closely with the editorial board to enhance the quality of scholarly articles. Vince Ancona proof-read material while Jill K. Berry designed a number of beautiful issues, including “Visions of Paradise: The Selling of San Diego.”<sup>15</sup> Crawford identified and published photographs of San Diego held in other collections, including the Huntington Library and the Bancroft Library. He also worked closely with Crest Offset Printing.



Rick Crawford, Supervisor,  
Special Collections, San Diego  
Public Library, 2005. Photo by  
Molly McClain.

Gregg Hennessey resumed his duties as editor in the summer of 1999 when Crawford left to take a position at the San Diego Public Library. He continued to edit the *Journal* until the Spring 2003 issue, working under Directors Bob Witty (1998-2002) and John Wadas (2002-2005). During his tenure, the *Journal* began publishing a list of the Society’s recent acquisitions, including books, posters, scrapbooks, the Marston family china and a 1942 WAVES uniform.<sup>16</sup> He also contributed several articles on George W. Marston and his legacy.<sup>17</sup>



*Institute of History, April 28, 1984, Point Loma Nazarene College. Pictured are some of the paper winners and honored authors. Center, front: Eleanor Neely. First row, left to right: Harrison Doyle, Mary van Dam, Ruth Doyle, Sally Bullard Thornton, Kathleen Crawford, Clara Breed, and Horace L. Dodd. Second row: Ronald V. May, Laura Young, Joseph L. Howard, and Richard Reilly. ©SDHS #84:15146.*

Dennis Sharp, Society Archivist, took over the editorial responsibilities in the summer of 2004. A lack of funding, however, allowed for the completion of just one issue highlighting the architectural collections, published in the summer of 2005.<sup>18</sup> Because of staff commitments in other areas, the San Diego Historical Society created a partnership with the University of San Diego in 2005. History professors Iris H. W. Engstrand and Molly McClain serve as the co-editors. Colin Fisher, University of San Diego, and Dawn Riggs, California State University, Fullerton, serve as book review editors.

*The Journal of San Diego History* is now the longest running chronicle in San Diego's history. In recent years, it has expanded its scope to include Southern California, the Southwest, and the United States/Mexico borderlands. Over the past fifty years, the *Journal* has accumulated an impressive range of material for use by future generations. It continues to change and improve in order to fulfill the vision of its founders and to meet the needs of twenty-first century San Diegans.



*Greg Hennessey. ©SDHS #82:13608-1.*

## NOTES



1. "Our Own First Edition," *The San Diego Historical Society Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (January 1955), 1.
2. MacMullen, born in San Francisco in 1897, covered the waterfront as a reporter for the *San Diego Union* and *Evening Tribune*. A raconteur, a sailor, and well-known maritime historian, MacMullen published several books on West Coast maritime history. He also encouraged a group of San Diegans to obtain the *Star of India* for use as a floating museum of naval history and, later, served as the president of the San Diego Maritime Museum. The MacMullen Library and Research Archives at the Maritime Museum houses his personal collection of books and manuscripts. See Trudie Casper, ed., "Jerry MacMullen: An Uncommon Man," *The Journal of San Diego History* (hereafter *JSDH*) 27, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 260-276.
3. The *Historics* had been printed on an old mimeograph machine discarded by the City of San Diego. MacMullen explained that the former director "John Davidson found it out in the trash at Twentieth and B. John was very careful about spending the Society's money. I suggested right away we get out some acceptable kind of a publication. But John argued against it saying, 'Oh, no, no! That's a perfectly good mimeograph; mimeographing is good enough...' But I kept on arguing about it. Finally, Don Driese, who was on the publications committee said, 'Look, if we're doing the job at all, let's go first class. First class, or don't go at all. Either a suitable publication or drop *Historics*.' And so the committee reluctantly decided to go ahead and that's how the *San Diego Historical Society Quarterly* came about." Trudie Casper, ed., "Jerry MacMullen: An Uncommon Man, Part II," *JSDH* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1982), 28-29.
4. *The San Diego Historical Society Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1955). The *Quarterly* was the work of the three staff members: Jerry MacMullen, director; Ben Dixon, curator; and Fred Reif, who did everything else.
5. Brandes was a descendent of the Machado family of San Diego. He served as Executive Director from July 1964 to October 1965. Dr. Ray Brandes, interviewed by author, September 2005.
6. David Weber is now the Robert and Nancy Dedman Professor of History at Southern Methodist University and director of the William P. Clements Center for Southwestern Studies. The author of more than 20 books, he was knighted by the Spanish government in 2003 in recognition of his scholarly work on Spain's influence on the New World.
7. Thomas Scharf, interviewed by Dr. Iris H. W. Engstrand, September 2005. Moss remembered the many kindnesses extended by Neyenesch Printers, a San Diego-based company founded in 1899. At the time, printing costs were high due to the typesetting process. Neyenesch donated thousands of dollars in free services. James Moss, interviewed by author, September 2005.
8. Booth co-authored what became known as the "bible" of photographic preservation: Robert A. Weinstein and Larry Booth, *The Collection, Use and Care of Historical Photographs* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977). See also Larry Booth, "Wartime San Diego," *JSDH* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 197-220; Larry and Jane Booth, "Images from Our Past: The San Diego Title Insurance and Trust Company Historical Photographs Collection," *JSDH* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 83-135; Larry and Jane Booth, "Do You Want an Exposition? San Diego's 1935 Fair in Photographs," *JSDH* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 281-297. Other guides to SDHS's photographic collections include Rebecca Lytle, "People and Places: Images of Nineteenth Century San Diego in Lithographs and Paintings," *JSDH* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 153-171; Gregory L. Williams, "Guide to the Photograph Collections of the San Diego Historical Society," *JSDH* 44, no. 2 (Summer 1998).

9. *JSDH* 33, nos. 2 and 3 (Spring/Summer 1987).
10. Crest Offset Printing Company is located at 921 Coolidge Ave., National City, CA, phone (619) 479-3831.
11. Publications by Bruce Kamerling include "Anna and Albert Valentien: The Arts and Crafts Movement in San Diego," *JSDH* 24, no. 3 (Summer 1978), 343-66; "Theosophy and Symbolist Art: The Point Loma Art School," *JSDH* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1980): 231-55; "Like the Ancients: The Art of Donal Hord," *JSDH* 31, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 164-209; "Painting Ladies: Some Early San Diego Women Artists," *JSDH* 32, no. 3 (Summer 1986): 147-91; "Early Sculpture and Sculptors in San Diego," *JSDH* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 149-205; "How Ellen Scripps Brought Ancient Egypt to San Diego," *JSDH* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 73-91; Kamerling, "Modern Perspectives: Three Women Artists of the 1920s and 1930s," *JSDH* 40, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 83-129.
12. Kamerling sat on the City of San Diego's Historic Site Board from 1983 to 1988 and served as a trustee of the Balboa Art Conservation Center from 1981 to 1993. An honorary life member of the Save Our Heritage Organization, he served four years as a director including one term as president. He died on October 17, 1995, after a long illness. *JSDH* 40, no. 3 (Summer 1994), 83.
13. *JSDH* 36, nos. 2 and 3 (Spring/Summer 1990).
14. Richard Crawford, interviewed by author, September 2005. Crawford solicited a series of articles on local archives, including: Geoffrey B. Wexler, "A Few More Pieces of the Puzzle: Collections Documenting San Diego History at the University of California, San Diego," *JSDH* 37, no. 1 (1991): 53-67; Richard W. Crawford, Susan A. Painter, and Sarah B. West, "Local History Materials in the Research Archives of the San Diego Historical Society," *JSDH* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 129-49; Mary Allely, "Local History Materials in the California Room of the San Diego Public Library," *JSDH* 37, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 215-29; Lyn Olsson, "A Wide Range of Collections at San Diego State University," *JSDH* 37, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 273-83; Craig Arnold, "Collections of the Jerry MacMullen Library at the San Diego Maritime Museum," *JSDH* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 51-63; Suzanne J. Dewberry, "San Diego: Historical Resources of the Federal Government in the National Archives – Pacific Southwest Region," *JSDH* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 113-128. See also Richard Crawford, "Local Public Records and San Diego History," *JSDH* 47, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2001): 9-17; Dennis G. Sharp, "Local Public Records and San Diego History: An Examination of Additional Uses," *JSDH* 47, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2001): 19-27; Dennis G. Sharp, "Guide to the Public Records Collection of the San Diego Historical Society," *JSDH* 47, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2001): 29-102.
15. *JSDH* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1995).
16. "Historical Society Accessions – 1999," *JSDH* 45, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 260-67; "Historical Society Accessions – 2000," *JSDH* 46, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 192-201.
17. Greg Hennessey, interviewed by author, November 2005. Hennessey had written his master's thesis on George W. Marston while he was a graduate student at San Diego State University. See Gregg R. Hennessey, "George White & Anna Gunn Marston: A Sketch," *JSDH* 36, nos. 2 and 3 (Spring/Summer 1990): 96-105; Hennessey, "Creating a Monument, Re-Creating History: Junipero Serra Museum and Presidio Park," *JSDH* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 136-63.
18. *JSDH* 49, nos. 3 and 4 (Summer/Fall 2003).