

# HERITAGE

Volume 37 No 3

A Publication of the Tustin Area Historical Society

May/June, 2012

## SPRING PROMENADE WAS A HIT

What a great day it was to be in Tustin! After months of preparation on the part of the Promenade Committee, the Society is always excited as the event approaches, wondering what the day will bring and hoping we did everything we could to make it successful for our visitors. This year, not only was it as successful as it always is, it was a truly spectacular Promenade with features we've never had before that proved wildly popular. Lindburgh McPherson was tapped to be the committee chairman and with his extensive experience in non-profit fundraising along with his many contacts in the community, he was able to pull in and coordinate new elements and raise our advertising to new levels, which resulted in the most well-attended event in years.

We knew that having two trolleys would be appreciated, and everyone absolutely loved them, especially the horse-drawn one. While the horse's progress wasn't quite as rapid as Al Ricci's motorized Old Town Trolley, the ambience was unsurpassed. An unexpected crowd-pleaser was the May Pole dancing, courtesy of Tustin High School's dance team. Since none of us is enough of a senior to remember that activity well, the dance team coordinator did quite a bit of research



*Greta Toscas, Grand Prize winner in the Promenade's Opportunity Drawing, accepts her \$600 check from Gretchen Whisler, TAHS president. Also pictured are Robin Fry and Margaret Pottenger.*

into it, and the performances were captivating. Libby Pankey kindly, enthusiastically even, volunteered her lovely front lawn for this event, sitting front and center for each performance.

The homes were wonderful, as was the musical entertainment (another new addition for us) at each one, again courtesy of Tustin High. All the teens were great to work with, and they and their advisors enabled us to look like we've been doing this venue for years!

If you weren't able to attend this year's Promenade, we anticipate the same level of excitement next year; we're already looking forward to it and already making plans. Hope to see you in May, 2013.



*On the left: Libby Pankey, Lindburgh McPherson and Gretchn Whistler with Tustin High School May Pole dancers.*

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The Tustin Area Historical Society  
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Tustin, CA 92781

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## Museum Hours

Every Tuesday and Thursday

9 am – 2 pm

First and Third Saturday  
of each month

12 pm – 3 pm

Open to Visitors  
Admission is Free

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a wonderful Promenade we had this year! Your 2012 Promenade committee did an outstanding job, keeping with the tradition of Promenades of past years but also adding a breath or two of fresh air—such as two beautiful red trolleys, one horse-drawn (what a charming way to travel between the homes) and one motor driven (riders on this trolley were given a wonderfully informative narrative by Cynthia Cashner, who, along with her driver, never took a break), and a colorfully ribboned May pole with two show-stopping demonstrations by Tustin High School's awarding dance team! Speaking of Tustin High, their music students entertained in various venues throughout the day which lent such a special touch to everything! And we had great vendors, a lovely quilt show, and a vintage car display as well as six beautiful homes and two gardens to enjoy. So many volunteers spent tireless hours both leading up to and including the entire day of our event, which helped make this our most successful Promenade to date! Thank you to *everyone* involved!

All the proceeds go to our Museum to maintain and preserve the historic artifacts and data we have, and to keep our museum tours, History In A Box and Mobile Museum presentations ongoing for Tustin's third grade classes.

At our last general meeting on May 21, our annual JoAnn Bollesen Art Contest winners were announced and their colorful art was displayed for all to see. We have many artistic 3<sup>rd</sup> graders here in town, and our judges had a difficult time as they reviewed so many wonderful entries. Congratulations to the winners!

Your board will take a brief hiatus until August, when we will again convene to make plans for upcoming activities in the fall. Unofficially at this point a tour to Arden, Helena Modjeska's Historic House & Garden, will be one of those activities. More information to follow! Our next general meeting will be Monday, September 21.

Hope you all enjoy a fun, relaxing, and safe summer. Thank you again for your valued membership!

*Gretchen Whisler*

## ONE OF OUR OWN IS HONORED

Everyone involved with TAHS has a fondness for history, and the time we volunteer is time well spent, as all of us will attest. Nevertheless, it's gratifying to be singled out for our effort, and our president, Gretchen Whisler, was so honored as TAHS Volunteer of the Year at the Tustin Community Foundation's luncheon, held at Wilcox Manor on May 4<sup>th</sup>. In addition to holding the reins of the Society, she is a tireless booster of our programs, and has become indispensable as our community outreach. Atta girl, Gretchen! Your award is well-deserved.



TAHS Volunteer Gretchen Whisler is right front. Margaret Pottenger, TAHS board member and Soroptimists' Volunteer of the Year is hiding at back right.

# ROOTIN' TOOTIN' TUSTIN – REALLY?

On the internet, you'll find a site called Rustin' in Tustin, and for many who grew up here from 1900 to 1955, that, in retrospect, was what it felt like. Freeways were a few years in our future, Hwy 101 was still the best route to the beach and south to San Diego, and the wider world largely passed Tustin by. The *Los Angeles Times* probably thought of us as a vast wasteland of farmers and ranchers - if they even thought about us at all. But our sleepy anonymity was brought to a sudden halt 60 years ago this month by a bank robbery in Old Town; even the *Times* took notice.

It was June, 1952, and the First National Bank of Tustin was about to close for the day. A man walked into the bank with a paper bag, approached the window of teller Frances Logan, leveled a .38 caliber revolver at her, and told her to quietly tell the other employees that they were being robbed. Cashier G O Bixler walked up to the window and was told to put all the bank's cash into the paper bag, while President C.A. Vance was ordered to "Sit down and shut up!". With the money now in the bag, the employees were ordered into the vault, and the robber sped out the door to his car on Main Street. What he didn't know was that following a similar bank heist in 1950, a Tustin local had loaned Bixler a carbine, the same model he had used as a forward observer in Italy during WWII. As soon as the robber had

cleared the building, Bixler grabbed up the carbine and fired from the bank's door as the car began to pull away. That first shot missed its mark, but the second and third shots didn't. These, fired through the back window of the getaway car, entered the robber's head, and the car slowly drifted across Main Street and into the curb.

The town was agog with the goings-on, and both the *Times* and the *Register* articles did their best to titillate the readers, even publishing a press photo of Bixler and Sheriff Roy States, along with the bleeding and very dead bandit slumped in the car's front seat. Amazingly (especially these days), no arrest of Bixler occurred and no grand jury was convened, but there *was* a bit of a hue and cry from people concerned that perhaps the poor man was only trying to get money to feed his family. An *L.A. Times* article made short shrift of that, however, as soon after the incident they revealed that the man had been a member of a larger bank robbery gang operating in Colorado. The gang had been captured there, but this one had managed to escape from his cell, coming west to ply his chosen trade. That was the last bank heist for many years in Tustin, and the town soon returned to its normal bucolic ways, but there are still many in Tustin, children at the time, who recall all the hoopla of being in history's spotlight, if only for a short time.

## Accessions:

<b>Marshall Sparks</b>	Walnut box stencils
<b>Stephen Gould</b>	Photo of James Harvey Gulick
<b>Roy Poucher</b>	Tustin History Ephemera
<b>Violet Archer</b>	Vintage tools
<b>Jack Callahan</b>	Vintage tools and tool box
<b>Raymond Aguilera</b>	Photos; Packing houses

## MEMBERSHIP COUPON

Join the Tustin Area Historical Society and keep your newsletter coming. Please send your dues or an additional gift today. Ask a friend to join!

### ANNUAL DUES:

(Please check one)

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(OC Historical Comm.)

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## ART IS FOR EVERYONE

At the start of May's General Meeting, Joe Sprekelmeyer took great pleasure in announcing this year's Joann Bollesen Art Contest winners. Third-grade students from every elementary school in the District are encouraged to submit their best artistic renderings of Old Town Tustin. They've already been exposed to the town's history by classroom teachers supplemented with a tutorial and our History in a Box program. Some have taken field trips to the Museum, where part of the class walks through the Old Town residential district while the other is guided through the Museum by docents. Selecting the winning art is grueling, as all the entries are outstanding efforts of style and color. Thanks to each of the wonderful teachers, Mrs. Cameron, Mrs. Gibbs, and Miss Mahor, who found time in their schedules to encourage these budding artists.



*1st Place, Ziran Qi, Peters Canyon Elementary; 2nd Place, Max Zimmerman, Benson Elementary; 3rd Place, Andrew Trankiem, Peters Canyon Elementary; Special Award, Elise Carlin-Jones, Tustin Memorial Academy*