

THE METEOR



Historic Preservation Society of Santa Clara
Harris-Lass House Museum
Winter Edition – November 2026

Photos with Santa Event Returns to Harris Lass Museum

The largest beneficiary of proceeds from the annual Santa Clara Home Tour is the Harris Lass Museum. Although the Museum is **not** on this year's tour, as a bonus and an appreciation for the Tour, on **Sunday**, **December 6th only**, from 12 Noon to 2 PM, Santa Claus will be visiting the Harris Lass Museum.

Home tour ticket holders, members of the community, and families with children of all ages will be welcomed free to see the first floor of the Harris Lass House and to have a picture taken with Santa as he sits in the parlor, near a beautifully decorated Christmas Tree, greeting visitors. Cookies will also be available in the Barn.

For more information, email info@harrislass.org or leave a message by calling (408) 249-7905 or check out the Museum's website at: https://harrislass.org/events/.



Santa Claus with the volunteers, December 7, 2025

Special Guest at Movie Night

On Friday evening, September 25th the Harris Lass Museum hosted the most successful 'Movie Night in the Barn' program since the pre-COVID era with about 30 people in attendance. Board member Eve Peacock set up and provided the laptop that projected the movie onto the movie screen in the barn. Kimberly Williams and her husband set up chairs, checked people in and helped with starting the movie, and Mark Kelsey helped with publicity to the Old Quad Residents' Association.

The movie shown, ***Heart's Delight: An Orchard Story*** tells the story of the Messina Orchard Farm in San Jose, narrated by Marilyn Messina, a descendant of the orchard founder. Betty Zonia, an Old Quad resident who planned to attend is a good friend of Marilyn Messina and with the encouragement of event chair, Mary Hanel, invited and persuaded Marilyn Messina to come to the program. Marilyn not only introduced the movie at the beginning of the program but stayed after to answer numerous questions about the making of the movie, the 'Valley of Heart's Delight' era in Santa Clara Valley, and how she achieved National Historic Landmark recognition for what remains of Messina Orchard located on N. Capitol Ave. in San Jose near Mabury Road. Marilyn also made a generous donation to the Harris Lass Museum which she thought was a lovely house and property.

For those who missed Movie Night but would like to watch the movie, view it on YouTube at this web-link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BvXI_kYbwM . It runs about 40 minutes.

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Quarterly BAHHM Meeting Comes to Santa Clara

In the Harris Lass Tank House Gift Shop, on sale for $5, are copies of the latest edition (19th, c. 2025) of a booklet titled: **Bay Area Historic House Museums**. The booklet serves as a guidebook to numerous House Museums throughout the San Francisco Bay Area (North Bay, Peninsula, South Bay, and East Bay).

The house museums, including the Harris Lass Museum, that get a listing in this publication all belong to a group called **BAHHM** (https://www.bahhm.org/) that meets quarterly to share information on projects and programs, and to exchange ideas for promoting better community awareness of the value of preserving house museums as historic resources in the seven-county Santa Francisco Bay Area. For the first time in more than 15 years, the Harris Lass Museum Board hosted the most recent quarterly BAHHM meeting which was held on October 12, 2026. Representatives came from places such as the Luther Burbank Home & Gardens in Santa Rosa, The Johnston House in Half Moon Bay, the Shinn House & Arboretum in Fremont, the Ravenswood Historic Site in Livermore, the McConaghy House in Hayward, the Joel Clayton House in Clayton, and more.

The visiting representatives first checked in at The Woman's Club Adobe in Santa Clara where Stan's Donuts, grapes and beverages were served and a business meeting featuring a great exchange of program ideas and docent recruiting methods was shared. This was followed by a Vintage Hat Show program featuring many hats from the Harris Lass Museum collection narrated and modelled by Lorraine Blackburn, a long-time collector and expert on vintage hats. Box lunches from Zanotto's Rose Garden were served. Following all of this, everyone proceeded to the Harris Lass Museum for tours of the House, Barn, Summer Kitchen and Tank House Gift Shop. All visiting dignitaries had a great experience and enjoyed touring the Harris Lass property, examining our 'Gadgets Galore' exhibit, and shopping in the Tank House. Some said they would bring others to tour Harris Lass Museum in the future!

Santa Clara Historic Home Tour 2026

The Historic Home Tour is a delightful long-running Santa Clara holiday tradition. It is scheduled for Friday, December 4th from 6 pm-10 pm and Saturday, December 5th from 12 Noon -5 pm. Last tour begins half an hour before closing.





Four private homes plus the Headen-Inman House Museum (shown above on the left) at 1509 Warburton Ave (at Don Ave.) will be on the 2026 Tour. The private homes are in the Old Quad or Park Court/Hilmar neighborhoods of Santa Clara. In the Old Quad area, architectural styles include a 1913 Prairie-style house and a 1905 Classic Box-style house (shown in the photo above on the right).

Early Bird tickets can be purchased at the discounted rate of $25 through November 14th. After that tickets will sell for $30. For online ticket orders go to the website, https://sc-hometour.com/. Customers will receive an email receipt with additional tour details.

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Beautiful Day for Annual Flea Market

On Saturday, October 10th the Harris Lass Museum hosted one of its most successful Flea Markets on the Lawn and Grounds thanks to the hard work of event chair, Sue Harper (with assistance from Board member Carol Lucero), a nice variety of vendors, and help with publicizing the event. Ana Vargas-Smith created a beautiful flyer for the event that was posted on Facebook, at the public libraries, and sent digitally by Mark Kelsey to the Old Quad Residents' Association. Thanks also to Gift Shop manager, Alma Guillot for organizing the clearance merchandise from the Gift Shop at a table and bench outside the Tank House Gift Shop. Most of this merchandise was sold at bargain prices! Stan's Donuts were available for purchase at the refreshments table where visitors could also buy coffee, other beverages and popcorn. The weather was beautiful, so it was a pleasant day for both vendors and shoppers to enjoy the beauty of the Harris Lass orchard and gardens.



Recent donations to the Harris Lass Museum:

1. Kohner Family Donation

At a Santa Clara County Historical & Genealogical Society (SCCHGS) 'Sunday Social' event at Central Park Library, the Genealogy Society Librarian gave to Harris Lass Board member Mary Hanel a package with four small artifacts that was sent to the Society but believed to be more appropriate for display or use at the Harris Lass Museum. The package was sent from Montana from the great-granddaughter of Max Kohner, who was a beloved Santa Clara Mayor, who died in office having served as Mayor from 1928-1933. The items in the package had belonged to his daughter Rose Kohner Rose who was a teacher from 1915-1919 in the Santa Clara Grammar School resigning, as was the protocol in that era, when she married in 1919. Similar to Lass Family items on display in the Museum, the contents of the package included her School Song Book, a chalk holder used by music teachers to draw the lines of a music staff on a chalkboard, a Vintage curling iron, and a Victorian buttonhook, the tool used to secure button-up shoes.

These items, associated with a prominent early 1900s Santa Clara family, will be accepted for use as artifacts that can be handled by visitors and used for demonstration purposes when schoolchildren visit.

2. Henry Harris Deed for Sale of Ranch Property in Milpitas dated Dec. 24th, 1862

A couple of years ago thanks to the donation of a cabbage slicer to the Harris Lass Museum from Margaret Ma and her Renzel family relatives we learned some facts about Henry Harris and his ranch property and friendship with members of the Alviso family in Milpitas. Margaret also turned up evidence that after he sold his Milpitas ranch and bought land in Santa Clara he also became what the Census takers of the late 19th century termed a "capitalist" loaning money to others --including to Conrad Renzel to set-up an early grocery store in San Jose.

Now, thanks to Richard Zeman, a former Old Quad resident who collects historical documents pertaining to Santa Clara County, the Museum was sent a digital scan of the deed from the time that Henry and Mary Harris sold their ranch property in Milpitas.

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To see the full-color edition of this newsletter, view it on the web at www.harrislass.org

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The museum is located at 1889 Market Street in Santa Clara (west of Winchester).

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We are on Facebook, Instagram & YouTube