



# *The Monterey* **MANIFEST**

*The official newsletter of the Monterey State Historic Park Association*



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## **A Message from our President** *by Lee Henderson*

The MSHPA board is pleased to report progress on a number of fronts. The drainage project for the First Theatre has been completed; see the before, during, and after photos of the drainage project (p. 2). This work should alleviate the previous issues with mold and flooding. Quotes for the fire suppression upgrades will be in the works shortly, and ADA upgrade contract plans should also be going out to bid soon.

By early 2021, you should also be able to view a narrated drone video on the MSHPA website that encompasses the Adobes of Monterey within the State Park. We anticipate that this video will provide a brief view of the adobes and their history that will encourage visits once the pandemic is over. Mimi Sheridan, our unofficial MSHPA Historian, is putting together the narrative text. So, despite the COVID19 pandemic, we are making progress on projects, particularly using digital formats and working with our partners at State Parks to accomplish our long-term goals. We are hopeful that the Custom House store will reopen next summer, but precisely when will likely depend on an efficacious vaccine and its distribution.

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MSHPA, along with our State Park partners, is looking forward to a “return” to the new normal with online programming taking on a greater role in communication and delivery of content, particularly for education. These digital formats will enable us to continue to reach schools and complement Los Ninos and similar programs that would ordinarily be in full swing this year. We also look forward to hosting Christmas in the Adobes in 2021; our marketing “upgrades” developed by Nicollette Eason-Trottier will be instrumental in getting out the word.

Harish Joshi rejoined the board this spring and serves as the membership chair. We will enhance our membership efforts and feature our digital additions that give us options for the future to attract members.

We all hope you are safe and looking forward to the new year despite the pandemic which all of us hope to see in our rearview mirror sometime in 2021.



Top left-before, bottom left-mid, bottom right-after completion

P.S. I wish to acknowledge Arlene Krebs who edited the first draft of 2 of the 5 sections of the Save Americas Treasures grant proposal. Although her edits may not have survived the 2 subsequent rewrites of the proposal, her efforts are duly recognized.

## Casa Soberanes- The house with the blue gate

By Mimi Sheridan, MSHPA Board

Of all buildings in the Monterey State Historic Park, one of the most mysterious is Casa Soberanes—the House with the Blue Gate. It sits high above the prominent corner of Pacific Street and Del Monte Avenue, surrounded by a somewhat forbidding wall. On the exterior, it is an outstanding example of the Monterey Colonial style, of sturdy adobe construction with a cantilevered balcony and red tile roof. Its interior reflects its long history as a family home. It has adapted to changing needs over the years, but still retains its distinctive historic character.



Pacific St view



Blue gate at entrance



Back garden view

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Rafael Estrada, warden of the Custom House, built the large home in 1842. He and his wife Concepcion, sister of Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado, lived here with their nine children. In 1860, the Estradas sold the house to his cousin, Ezequiel Soberanes. He and his wife Maria Ignacia had 12 children. Not surprisingly, they expanded the house with a shed-roofed addition with an indoor kitchen on the rear.

In 1896, their oldest son, Ezequiel, Jr., inherited the house, living here with his wife Dolores and their twelve children. According to the Historic Garden League, he was a gardener at the San Carlos Mission and planted decorative and kitchen gardens at his home. Some of his plants, including a pepper tree and a large grape vine, flourish today.

In 1922, Jean Booth, who later married Rueben Serrano, purchased the somewhat run-down house. They embarked on a major restoration and remodeling project, which included replacing the packed earth floors and adding, for the first time, an interior staircase. They substantially reconfigured the interior, combining small bedrooms to make larger, more modern rooms. Notably, they enlarged the kitchen, updating it with the latest appliances of the 1930s, which are still there.

Jean Serrano also devoted great attention to the large front and rear gardens. She built the Carmel stone walls for privacy and planted a unique terraced garden with beds edged in abalone shells, wine bottles, and pieces of whale bone.

In 1941, William and Mayo Hayes O'Donnell began to rent the house. Mr. O'Donnell was associate publisher of the Monterey Herald. His wife was a legendary local historian who wrote a regular newspaper column on local history, "Peninsula Diary," for many years. She was also a devoted champion of historic preservation. In 1954, she donated the Soberanes Adobe, which Jean Serrano had deeded to her, to the Monterey State Historic Park. She retained the right to live in the house until her death in 1977. Two years later, it was opened to the public.

Today the house showcases the furnishings and other items that the O'Donnells collected on their world travels. Particularly notable is the art collection, because of her close friendships with local artists.

Casa Soberanes is a star feature of the annual Christmas in the Adobes, and can also be visited virtually through the videos found at [www.casasoberanes.com](http://www.casasoberanes.com). The unique and peaceful garden is open every day.

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## Art selections from the Mayo Hayes O'Donnell collection, Casa Soberanes

By Francisca Bravo-Lazaro, Senior Curatorial Maintenance Aide

Monterey State Historic Park is home to a diverse array of art and artists including a large collection of California art which is a key theme in the collection of artwork in the Mayo Hayes O'Donnell collection at her home, Casa Soberanes. *Cat* by Chiura Obata and *Treeless Landscape* by Xavier Martinez, both on display in Casa Soberanes, are unique examples of the diversity present in this collection.

Chiura Obata was a gifted Japanese sumi (ink) artist who migrated from Japan to the USA in the early 1900s. Obata became a distinguished professor of art at the University of California, Berkeley but was relocated in 1942 to the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah where he, his wife, and children were interned due to Executive Order 9066 following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. During his internment, Obata established an art school for children living at the relocation center where he and his students painted about life at Topaz War Relocation Center.

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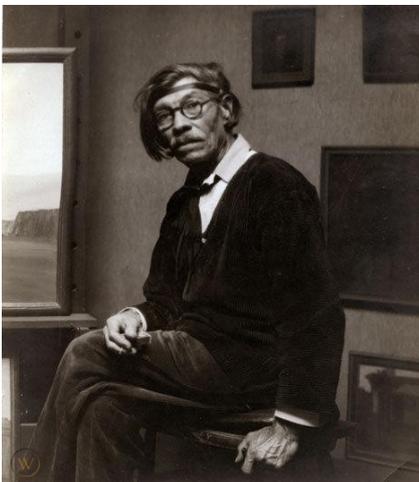
Obata and his family were released after 11 months of internment when he then returned to his position at UC Berkeley. One of his sumi pieces titled *Cat* (see below) is currently displayed in the library of Casa Soberanes and portrays a tiger-like cat painted in simplistic yet elegant ink form. Most recently, the Smithsonian American Art Museum exhibited works by Obata in their exhibition titled "Chiura Obata: American Modern" that ran from November 27, 2019 through March 13, 2020.



Professor Obata painting, 1944

Chiura Obata, *Cat*, c. 1935. Donated by Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

Xavier Martinez was a mestizo Mexican artist of Purepecha ancestry whose paintings helped shape California's art scene. Martinez studied in Guadalajara, San Francisco and Paris; however, his active participation in the Bohemian Club in San Francisco helped shape his art into tonalism, a prominent style of painting in the Bay Area. *Treeless Landscape* (see below), currently exhibited in the Sala of Casa Soberanes, reflects this style of art. During his time in California, Martinez was a manager and juror of a gallery at the Hotel Del Monte, staff of the California School of Arts and Crafts in Berkeley, and participated in a variety of community activities. Martinez's impact and importance within the state of California was so highly respected that when he passed in January of 1943 in Carmel, CA, the California State Legislature suspended activities in his honor; the first time a California artist was honored in such a way.



Portrait of Xavier Martinez

Xavier Martinez, *Treeless Landscape*, Donated by Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

## Volunteer Coordinator's Corner by Erica Hedlund, Interpreter I



I think I can speak for us all when I say 2020 was not the year we expected. A new year and a new decade, I'm sure many of us woke up on January 1st unable to predict the drastic changes that would happen in our world in just a few short months. We may all be feeling a little more adept at navigating COVID-19, but it still feels strange trying our best to keep 6 feet of social distance, doubling back to the house or car because we forgot our mask, or wishing we could give a loved one a hug without fear. If anything, 2020 has reminded us that life is unpredictable and full of unexpected events that we could never plan for, but these are the events that shape our lives.

In fact, the entirety of my time working for parks has been a series of unpredictable events, so it is fitting that I started my job as Interpreter here at MSHP never thinking that just 2 days later, Monterey County would officially "shut down," closing down our park's normal operation and driving us to adapt our operation to the challenges of a pandemic. This pandemic has affected every facet of our operation including tours, the school program, summer programs, special events, museum operations, and the volunteer program.

Because of this, I have not had the privilege to work with a lot of you or get to know you all, so here is just a little bit about me and the path that led me to MSHP and how you can help move the volunteer program forward as we head into 2021.

I am originally from Bridgeport, CA, a small town along scenic Hwy 395 between Lake Tahoe and Mammoth. Growing up in such a beautiful place in the Eastern Sierra, it would be hard not to love nature since I was surrounded by it constantly. I grew up spending a lot of time outdoors where I was constantly studying rocks, wildflowers, insects and wildlife around me. I also developed a love for history and historic buildings from a young age as many of the buildings in my home town are historic, including a 140 year-old house which my grandmother still calls home. I grew up going to State Parks, National Parks and any place of interest of which Bodie and Mono Lake were the most frequently visited since they were right in my "backyard." I studied psychology and history at the University of Nevada, Reno where I received my B.A. My initial career path was as a behavioral therapist for children and adolescents on the Autism spectrum. After many years of working with both typically developing and atypically developing children, I decided to work a summer at Bodie State Historic Park with the intention of working seasonally in summers and continuing work with children for the rest of the year. Instead, I worked and lived in Bodie for 3 years with duties including giving historic talks and tours, helping to run the school programs, and manning the kiosk and museum. Working in State Parks led me to Monterey as a ranger. I have grown to call Monterey home over the past two years and have enjoyed learning about the coast and Monterey's exceptional history. Working in parks has allowed me to have a career that fulfills all of my passions of history, nature, and education.

And now looking towards the future... as we head into the New Year, there are a few things I need your help with during this time to ensure our success as a team as we move forward!

**--Surveys-** Please complete the survey sent to your email address that I have prepared to help me gauge when and what capacity each of you would feel comfortable in returning back to volunteering at MSHP.

**--Updating Volunteer Information-** Many of you have been long-time volunteers meaning that some of the information we have on file for you may no longer be up-to-date. Please complete and email back any forms sent to you.

**--Refresher Trainings-** As we head into the New Year, be prepared to receive information on opportunities for refresher trainings. This is the perfect time for us all to brush up on the services we provide to the public as well as ensuring our own ongoing learning.

My email address is [Erica.Hedlund@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Erica.Hedlund@parks.ca.gov) so please keep an eye out for me in your inboxes!

Thank you for your patience and support during this time and we can't wait to see you back at the park!

## Christmas in the Adobes- then and now

by Toy Bryant and Jan Houser, MSHPA members

Thirty-seven years ago (1983), Toy Bryant (MSHPA treasurer) was asked by ranger Martin Brown if MSHPA could sponsor an event that he would call Christmas in the Adobes. He had seen luminarias at an event in Arizona and thought that would work really well in the old adobes of Monterey. The board said yes and Toy and ranger Paula (the 1st woman ranger in California) organized the event. The first year there were only a handful of houses—Larkin, Casa Soberanes, Custom House, First Theater, Pacific House, Stevenson and Colton Hall, and ran as a 3 day event - Thursday, Friday and Saturday. All food and alcoholic drink punch were donated by local businesses. The attendance was better than expected, and thus began a December tradition. After the first year, there was no alcohol and most of the food was made by volunteers.



Twenty years ago, Jan Houser started helping at CITA. At first Jan was a volunteer at Cooper House and eventually with Kathy Miller, she became house volunteer coordinator. Jan, with Kathy and her sister Jill, took care of supplies and fund raising. Cooper Molera adobe and all the State Park buildings were lit with candles, and no one knew that there was electricity in Cooper Molera. For drinks, Cooper volunteers warmed apple cider over an old wood burning stove while Casa Soberanes volunteers made hot chocolate over an old gas stove. One year, members of the National Trust came to CITA. When they saw candles burning in their historic house, they mandated that there would be no more real candles at Cooper due to fire concerns. The next year fake candles were tried but they gave off insufficient light. It was very, very dark, so the volunteers used flashlights to show people around. The following year, old fashioned lamps and other lighting were purchased since there actually was electricity at Cooper. A couple of years later, all the State Park buildings used only fake candles. The stoves at Cooper and Casa Soberanes were also closed down, but refreshments were then donated: free coffee from Pete's and Horchetta from a local vendor.

The past years have seen expanded openings of other buildings with music and dancing at various venues. Period attire and holiday decor continue to add to the ambience of the event, which has occurred on Friday and Saturday evenings typically during the first full weekend in December.



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Ticket Sales have seen big changes as well. In the early years, customers would call their order for tickets to a State Park telephone line, and then the tickets would be mailed to the customers. Cooper Store would sell tickets from mid-October until the night of the event. During the nights of the event, tickets would also be sold at Cooper House, Larkin, Casa Soberanes, Pacific House and a book store downtown. Last year, we went "high tech" using Eventbrite and sold tickets at the Custom House store starting in mid-October, as well as during the nights of the event at Custom House Store, Pacific House, and Casa Guiterrez.

All of us know that 2020 has been a strange year. Sadly, there will be no Christmas in the Adobes this year but if all goes well as we emerge from the COVID 19 pandemic, we will be back in 2021 even better than before. Hope to see you then!

**Looking forward to CITA 2021!**  
**We hope to have a detailed history of CITA**  
**in our fall 2021 edition of the newsletter!**

Share your memories, pictures, or your favorite CITA spot on Social Media. Tag us on Facebook @montereystatehistoricparkassociation or Instagram @MShpa\_Monterey; #ChristmasInTheAdobes

## Consider Joining, Renewing, and Donating for 2021

by Harish Joshi, Membership Chair

This is the time of the year when we send out invitations to renew your annual membership. This year, the plea comes with more urgency.

As you are aware, this is the year that COVID-19 struck. Our benefit store in the Custom House has been closed since mid-March, and we also had to cancel the Christmas in the Adobes event for December. Those two, along with donations in the collection box at the Custom House museum and your membership dues, constitute the bulk of our revenue. While we reduced some expenses because we could not hold children's programs this year, we desperately want to re-emerge from this closure and become active in the community once again. Besides that, we are also partly funding restoration of the First Theatre, which has been closed for a decade.

Please take a moment now to renew your membership. Furthermore, please consider making a charitable donation to allow us to continue our education and preservation efforts. The easiest way to renew or donate is online at [www.mshpa.org](http://www.mshpa.org).

### Co-editors:

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We welcome your stories  
and ideas.

Hope to see everyone in 2021



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