



SOUTH PASADENA
PRESERVATION
FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

May 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

- Letter from the SPPF President and Membership Info *page 2*
- Feature Article: *How Old is the Museum Building?* *pages 3-4*
- At the Museum *page 5*
- Renewal of Museum Lease
 - Museums of the Arroyo Day
 - Visits from Marengo 3rd Graders
- Upcoming: SPPF ANNUAL MEETING *page 7*

SAVE
THE
TILES

SPPF ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, June 26, 2025

6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

South Pasadena Woman's Club
1424 Fremont Ave.
South Pasadena 91030

Light food and drinks will be provided.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE RIALTO THEATER with Friends of the Rialto

The South Pasadena Historical Museum will be the site of events to celebrate the early history of this tremendous South Pasadena landmark. The museum will unveil a new display about the historic theater. Mark your calendar for these events on Friday and Saturday, October 17-18 and watch this space!

SOUTH PASADENA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

May 2025

~ Page 2 ~

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2024-2025

President

Jennifer Trotoux

Vice President

Museum Director

Jenny Bright

Secretary

Mark Gallatin

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Richard Helgeson

Dina Morgan

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Joanne Nuckols

Volunteer Museum Archivist

Collen Boken

CONSULTANTS

Peggy Christ

Bookkeeper

Lori Rusch

Art Consultant & Social Media

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Members:

As thousands in and around South Pasadena are now aware, SPPF nearly lost its lease on the old Meridian Ironworks building after 40 years of faithful community service. Please see page 3 for more detail about SPPF's history with this ongoing project.

We previously reported that the City agreed in September to continue negotiations toward a new lease. Those efforts were successful, and we **entered into a two-year lease for the building in mid-December**. Two years is an uncomfortably tight horizon for museum planning. If you value the museum, do not hesitate to talk us up and remind the City Council members of our value to the community. We, too, must do a better job of promoting our efforts, so we intend to report to the Council on a regular basis to maintain their awareness of what we are up to at 913 Meridian Ave.

We need your volunteer assistance as we expand our open hours to Saturdays from 11 am to 1 pm! If you are interested, please reach out to let us know at info@sppreservation.org (see p. 5).

Finally, please plan to join us at our **Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 26** from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the South Pasadena Woman's Club! All are welcome, whether you are a past, current, or future member. Please see page 7 for more about this year's program on historic tile and the dramatic revival of the historic clubhouse.



Jennifer Trotoux, SPPF President

MEMBERSHIP: SUPPORT US AND BE HEARD!

We welcome your annual membership at the following rates:

SENIOR/STUDENT:	\$25
INDIVIDUAL:	\$35
HOUSEHOLD:	\$50
SUSTAINING:	\$100
BUSINESS:	\$125



Begin or renew your membership online today at our website:

<https://sppreservation.org/membership/> (or use QR code above)

EARLY THIS FALL: Sustaining and Business members will be invited to a special reception at Wynyate, the magnificent 1887 landmark Victorian! Secure your invitation with your membership.

Thank you to our **Business Members!**

Cathy Billings, South Pas. Public Library

Kevin Bourland, Compass Realty

The Kutzer Company

Conrado Lopez, 2_L Studio

Mission Tile West

Dina Morgan

Stamps and Stamps

HOW OLD IS THE SOUTH PASADENA HISTORICAL MUSEUM BUILDING?

You may have noticed that the South Pasadena Historical Museum, located at 913 Meridian Ave. by the Metro station and the farmers market, is one of the oldest buildings in town. In fact, it is the oldest commercial building! But how old is it? **The Museum's archivist, Colleen Boken**, consulted period sources to see what can be documented about the date of its construction.

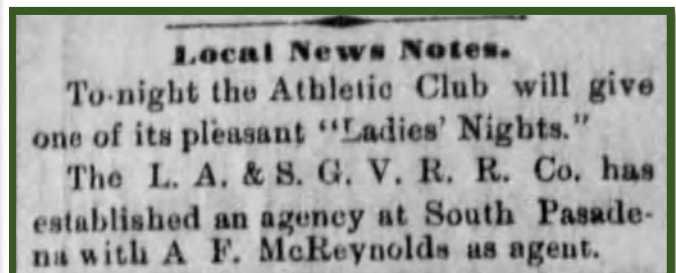
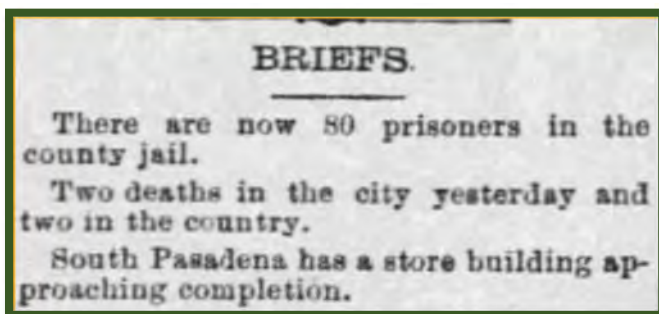
A good place to start to determine a building's construction date is often the National Register of Historic Places form (in this case, for the Mission St. Historic District) and the South Pasadena Citywide Historic Context Statement. Both state that the building was constructed in 1887, while other sources note an 1886 construction date. Since none of these cited a source for the information, however, we can't take these dates at face value.

Knowing that the opening of a new store would likely be a newsworthy event in the tiny town, a deep dive into the local papers would be a good way to find the earliest mention of the store.

This was an important moment in the development of South Pasadena, as the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad began service with a stop in South Pasadena adjacent to the future site of Mr. McReynolds's general store in mid-September of 1885 (per Jane Apostol, *South Pasadena 1888-1988, A Centennial History*, p. 25). The *Los Angeles Times* noted on January 26, 1886, that "South Pasadena has a store building approaching completion" (below left). According to the 1888 Sanborn Map, which shows the footprints of all buildings and notes their purpose, the now-museum building at 913 Meridian was the only store in town.

Mr. McReynolds's property was well-placed to take advantage of the proximity to the rail depot, allowing him to expand the scope of his business. The February 12th, 1886, edition of the *Los Angeles Herald* noted that he became an agent of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad Company (below right). This line would become the ATSF Pasadena Subdivision, and later the Metro A Line. The store must have been open when he became an agent, placing the date of the building's completion in early 1886.

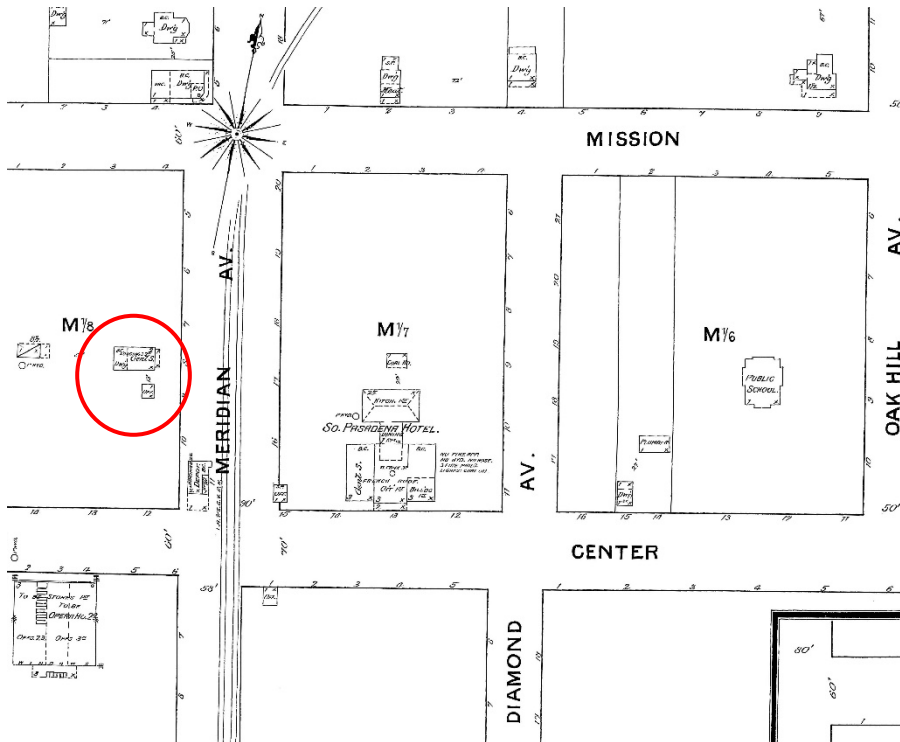
On September 5, 1886, when "McReynolds's store" next appears in print (*Los Angeles Times*), it was listed as the contact place for J. M. Graham, who served as "judge of election" for the upcoming Republican National Convention. *(continued)*



SOUTH PASADENA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

May 2025

~ Page 4 ~



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Pasadena, Sheet 13, showing the center of South Pasadena as it appeared in 1888. 913 Meridian Ave. is circled at left (with a tiny post office next to it). The railroad tracks are shown in the middle of Meridian Ave., prior to their rerouting behind the building to the west. Center Street was later renamed El Centro, and Oak Hill Ave. became Fairview.

A small public school building is shown centered on the schoolhouse block (bounded by Mission, Center, Diamond, and Oak Hill) and a hotel occupies the current site of the Golden Oaks apartments. Mission St. had yet to become a commercial thoroughfare and is shown with a scattering of residences. —ed.

From the newspapers, combined with information gleaned from the secondary sources, it seems reasonably clear that the store building began construction in late 1885 and was completed in early 1886.

Change and growth came quickly in these last years of the 1880s. Before the arrival of the railroad, Walter Raymond began building the Raymond Hotel and opened it in November of 1886. Less than two years later, in March 1888, South Pasadena was incorporated as a city. By June of that year, Aaron McReynolds's store was well established, carrying "a well-selected stock of drugs and medicines, books, stationary (sic), etc.," and he was "the enterprising agent for the [Los Angeles Evening] Express here."

By Colleen Boken, SPPF Archivist

Combining the functions of a grocery store, pharmacy, and bookstore, this building was versatile from the start. Over the years, it would serve as a school, lodgings, a church, an ironworks office, and now, a museum. Mr. McReynolds could not have predicted that his investment in this simple building would pay off for the community in such an array of uses over the next 140 years.

SOUTH PASADENA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

May 2025

~ Page 5 ~

AT THE MUSEUM

The **South Pasadena Historical Museum** was developed by the South Pasadena Preservation Foundation beginning in 1986, when the City of South Pasadena completed a thorough rehabilitation of the old Meridian Iron Works building (originally a general store built in 1886).

The Museum is a volunteer-led, community-based institution with a collection of archives and objects assembled from the donations of many donors.

Visit us during the Farmers Market on Thursday evenings, during community festivals, and – coming soon – during Saturday open hours!

Speaking of which...



...SPPF NEEDS YOU TO ASSIST WITH STAFFING THE MUSEUM ON SATURDAYS!

You don't need a deep knowledge of the history of South Pasadena. A passion for learning about the subject and a genuine enjoyment of interfacing with visitors will get you a long way. The shifts we be just two hours (plus short opening and closing time). Contact us at info@sppreservation.org!



LEASE COMPLETED WITH CITY IN DECEMBER

In mid-December, SPPF and the City of South Pasadena finalized a lease agreement that allows us to remain in the building to operate the museum for the next two years. We have resumed sharing the space with the Farmers Market to support their post-market operations.

SPPF has provided a use for the renewed building since 1986, when the City received a federal grant to support its much-needed rehabilitation. We have done all of the fundraising for operations, curation, and displays. We have provided decades of uncountable volunteer hours to do all of these things and also to open the museum and make it available to the public: individuals, community groups, schoolchildren, and amateur and academic researchers.

In May, we will once again welcome all of the third graders from Marengo Elementary for a field trip to the museum! We hope to add Arroyo Vista third graders, whose campus is also within walking distance. Please be in touch if you're able to help us arrange such a visit.

Below: Current and former board members and supporters at City Hall for the September hearing regarding the museum lease.



SOUTH PASADENA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

May 2025

~ Page 6 ~

HERE COME THE THIRD GRADERS!

On May 13 and 15, five classes of Marengo Elementary School 3rd graders went out on a walking expedition through South Pasadena's historic places, culminating in a visit to the South Pasadena Historical Museum. SPPF board members and volunteers entertained and educated close to 150 students and chaperones with a tour of the museum's exhibits and significant themes such as traditional life among the Tongva, South Pasadena's early inhabitants, what you'd find in a general store (the original use of the building), the Santa Fe railroad, Cawston's Ostrich Farm, Route 66 – what DIDN'T we talk about? * At right, SPPF VP and Museum Director Jenny Bright amazes the crowd with a demonstration of the green glow of uranium glass.



The museum office, once impassable, is now a clean and organized workspace.



Brian and Jenny Bright assemble new cases and repair walls upstairs.

MUSEUM GRANT

In September, we reported about our emergency planning site visit funded by the California State Library for the protection of museum collections throughout the state. SPPF applied for a grant through the same program, and we were awarded \$14,000 for improvements to museum storage, window and electrical repairs, and security lighting upgrades.

This type of support for small museums like ours is critical: it promotes the preservation of community history resources on a local level and adds to the community experience. We were grateful to have the opportunity to participate.

SOUTH PASADENA HISTORICAL MUSEUM JOINS IN THE FUN ON MUSEUMS OF THE ARROYO DAY!

On Sunday, May 4, SPPF participated in a local event that has long been a favorite for lovers of historic places: Museums of the Arroyo Day, now in its 35th year.

This was our first time participating, and we were proud to see the South Pasadena Historical Museum join the ranks of the other museums featured on this free access day: Heritage Square Museum, the Lummis House, Los Angeles Police Museum, the Gamble House, and the Pasadena Museum of History.

MOTA DAY
Sunday, May 4, 2025
Noon - 4pm



It's Fun and Free.
What Will You Discover?
museums of the arroyo .com


The Gamble House


Heritage Square


The Los Angeles Police Museum


Lummis Home


Pasadena Museum of History


South Pasadena Historical Museum

SOUTH PASADENA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

May 2025

~ Page 7 ~

UPCOMING EVENT

SPPF ANNUAL MEETING AT THE SOUTH PASADENA WOMAN'S CLUB

THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2025

6:00-8:00 p.m.

Light dinner and drinks provided

Program (see below)

All free of charge!

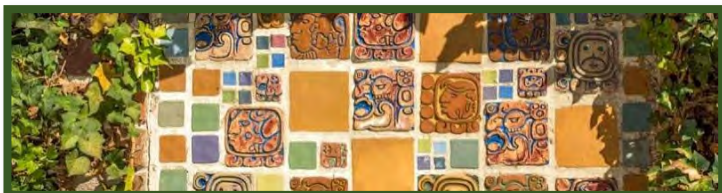


Thank you to our event sponsor, Mission Tile West!

Do you remember last year's annual meeting and what a pleasure it was to be in the South Pasadena Woman's Club's wonderful historic building, many of you for the first time? When you come back this year, you will see the incredible transformation that the Woman's Club has undertaken over the past several months to restore the historic character of the building's interiors. These changes make the clubhouse an even more attractive venue in town, and they allow us to see how historically sympathetic design refreshes a historic property. See a sneak peek at right! This work compliments the tremendous work done on the exterior of the building, including extensive wood repairs, a new paint scheme, and a redesigned, accessible approach to the main entrance.

On the agenda: a review of SPPF's activities over the past year and a look toward the future. We'll also elect new board members, including a new president.

Best of all, we will **celebrate BATCHELDER TILE** with a brief talk about the history and context of this local treasure (do you have it on your fireplace? Houses of all sizes in South Pasadena do!) and the incredible efforts of the organization **SAVE THE TILES** that was formed for the skillful rescue of historic tile installations that were, in so many cases, the only features left from houses that burned in the Eaton fire. Stanley Zucker and Cliff Douglas of Save the Tiles will tell their story of community-based preservation in action!



Transformation in progress at the South Pasadena Woman's Club.



South Pasadena mason Cliff Douglas removing an Altadena family's treasured fireplace tile.



Photos above and near left: Allen J. Schabin, Getty Images. Far right: Pasadena Museum of History