



VIEW FROM THE VILLA

2008 YEAR IN REVIEW

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DEAR FRIENDS OF THE VILLA MONTEZUMA,

WHAT A YEAR! NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO REMEMBER OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2008 AND TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE MAGNIFICENT VILLA MONTEZUMA.

Your organization (the Friends of the Villa Montezuma, Inc. [FOVM]) has had a very busy, successful year promoting, protecting, and preserving the Villa.

- We worked with THREE Executive Directors of the San Diego Historical Society (SDHS) this year. David Watson left in January, Linda Canada served as Interim Director from February through July, and we welcomed David Kahn as the new permanent director in August. Our thanks to all the help offered by Linda Canada, an amazing person who loves San Diego history and who held the February 2008 SDHS Trustees meeting at the Villa. And we're delighted that David Kahn accepted the Executive Director role, since his extraordinary experience and museum background will be of great benefit to the SDHS. Thank you to all the SDHS Directors!

- The Villa has always been associated with music, and this year the Villa got the star treatment by local San Diego band *Louis XIV*. (If you've not heard of them, your kids or grandkids probably have!) The band could have picked anywhere for the publicity shots for their new CD released in January 2008, but



Louis XIV publicity photo by Jennifer Tzar

they wanted to be at the Villa Montezuma. They made special arrangements and conducted a photo shoot in our beautiful Villa, complete with a New York photographer flown out especially to capture the quirky mystery of the house and of the band! Some may think that this photo is a bit risqué, but we don't think Jesse Shepard would mind the promotion of his home to a younger generation!

- At our Annual Meeting

in April we met in the beautiful Lizzie Armstrong House on 19th Street in the Sherman Heights Historic District. Thanks to owners Dale and Robi Robison for opening their home. We thanked outgoing FOVM Treasurer Sean Shiraishi for his years of service, and welcomed FOVM Board member Todd McKerrow to his new role as Treasurer.

- The FOVM continued to foster successful partnerships with organizations that appreciate the Villa Montezuma, like the San Diego Chapter of the *American Society of Appraisers (ASA)*. As part of its ongoing educational program for ASA members, the ASA focused attention on the Villa by hosting the *2008 Connoisseur Series on Victoriana*, with special speakers at the monthly ASA meetings. In February Julia Zgliniec spoke on Victorian quilts, in March Georgie Stillman discussed the Victorian home interior, in April our Vice Chair,

Pamela Bensoussan, explained early California painting in San Diego at the turn of the last century, and in May JoEllen Cole presented extraordinary Victorian jewelry. We thank our friends at the ASA for their generosity and support to our cause to restore and reopen the Villa, and we appreciate the new FOVM memberships from these events.

- The Villa also has friends at the *American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)* and with various other firms around town. Thanks to good friends like Phil Kern (Bureau Veritas), Mick Williams (Shaw Environmental & Infrastructure), Mike Ruth (HDR Engineering), Clayton Judy (RAD Construction), and others for looking for opportunities to help the Villa with donations of time and talent in 2009!

- Phil Kern's father, the late George T. Kern, was an architect and artist who loved painting San Diego's architectural heritage. It is George Kern's sketch of the Villa that graces the 2008 FOVM Holiday Card. (And this is only the notebook sketch! If you know the owner of the large watercolor done from this sketch, please let us know.)



Watercolor sketch of Villa by George Kern, circa 1985

- The FOVM has given at least one presentation on the Villa each month. (The talk to the Victorian Ladies Society was such fun because they all dressed in period costume!) Let us know if you have a group that would like to learn more about the Villa. We're always interested in sharing news of the Villa with others!

- Tours of the Sherman Heights Historic District to benefit the FOVM have been well attended, and we'll do additional promoting of the tours in 2009. The tours are on the first and third Sunday of each month at 1:00 p.m. (unless interrupted by a holiday). Reservations are required, and if you're bringing a large group we can personalize the tour to match your specific interests. FOVM members get a complimentary tour with membership; for all others, it's only a \$10 donation. Consider bringing some friends and buying a FOVM t-shirt (also a \$10 donation) to support the cause!

- Grant writing is fun! Ok, maybe not, but it's something at which we're getting much practice. We're delighted that we were awarded a grant to replace the backyard fencing at the Villa. Work on that will begin in the spring. We also thank Council Member Ben Hueso and his staff (Ana Molina-Rodriguez and Raquel Marquez-Maden, in particular) for their strong dedication and push for the Villa to be a priority on the City's list for important structural repairs.

- Speaking of grants, the FOVM is delighted that the State grant of \$50,000 to the SDHS is being used to waterproof the Villa tower and prevent future leaks. This work is ongoing, and that's why you can currently see scaffolding up around the tower. Thanks to preservation architect Paul Johnson and the restoration team at Home Restoration & Remodeling of San Diego for the great work being done.

- On November 1 and 2 we had another lovely *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) celebration in the Sherman Heights Historic District (the 14th annual event). Thanks to Gabe Selak of the SDHS for creating a beautiful altar for Jesse Shepard/Francis Grierson. We had several thousand people attend, and we're thrilled that so many folks have become FOVM members after the event.



2008 *Dia de los Muertos* altar to Jesse Shepard/Francis Grierson by Gabe Selak of the San Diego Historical Society

- Do you watch KPBS? Did you see Elsa Sevilla's *Historic Places* segment on the Marston House and the Villa Montezuma in November? Between all the *Dia de los Muertos* activity, your Chair, Louise Torio, was happy to take Else on tour of the Villa and show off our beautiful museum. We received so many e-mails and calls after the many television airings, expressing the hope that the Villa can be open to the public again soon. It was great fun to show how lovely the Villa is, even if we were under construction with all the work on the tower! We're hoping to get a digital version to post on our website (www.VillaMontezuma.org).

- Mayor Sanders has also been supportive of our work to restore and reopen the Villa, and David Jarrell, City of San Diego Deputy Chief of Public Works, has been working closely with the FOVM. With Dave's attention focused on the Villa, the City accomplished a major event this fall: Parsons Technology was hired by the City and a complete structural assessment of the Villa was done in October, with the final report just in. This assessment looked at the Villa from top to bottom, and the estimate for foundation repair was where we thought it would be – at approximately \$1,000,000. Now we have a basis to apply for grants and to raise funds. We will be doing more work in 2009 to raise the money needed to redo the foundation and stabilize the chimneys.

- The FOVM has been working with staff members from the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) for a long time. The downtown redevelopment area stops at I-5. The Villa is just on the other side of I-5. CCDC staff members recognize the importance of the Villa and realize the museum is an amenity for those current and future residents of the East Village. So we have CCDC's support in helping us with some funding to fix the Villa foundation. CCDC's contribution can then hopefully be matched with other grants. This by no means will pay for all we need but it will be a step in the right direction. Ben Hueso, Dave Jarrell, the FOVM, and SDHS representatives will work closely to best maximize any funding to get construction plans done for the Villa foundation.

- Your FOVM Board now has an elected official serving! Pamela Bensoussan, Vice Chair of the FOVM and an arts, antiques, and textiles appraiser by trade, was elected to

City Council in the City of Chula Vista, CA. Pamela was sworn into office on December 2 for a four-year term. Congratulations, Pamela! And we can never have too many friends in public office in San Diego County to help us with the Villa restoration!

YES, WHAT A YEAR! SOME OTHER THANKS ARE IN ORDER:

- To City of San Diego Council Member (and now Council President) Ben Hueso, who grew up with the art and educational programming at the Villa and learned to play piano there. Thanks for the incredible support, Ben!

- To Dr. Clare Crane and Mrs. Kay Porter and all those who share their expertise on the FOVM's Advisory Committee. We learn so much from your experience!

- To the hardworking FOVM Board (current members Pamela Bensoussan, Sarai Johnson, Linda Mosvick, Pita Ruiz, and Todd McKerrow), thank you for all the service. To FOVM members Shep Wickham, Loch David Crane, Paul Johnson, and Steve Veach, thanks for your dedication.

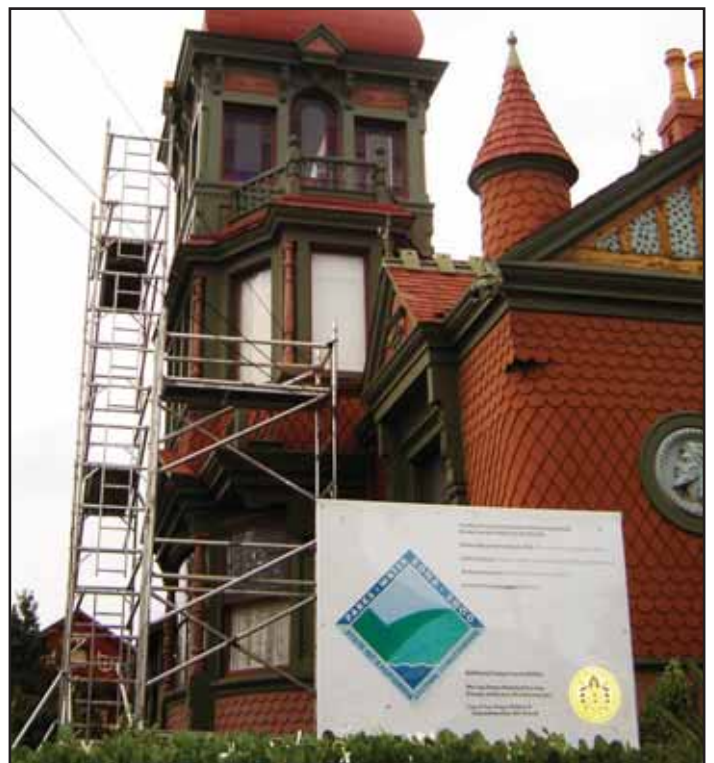
- To the amazing SDHS staff members, especially Tori Cranner, Gabe Selak, and Nicholas Vega, who do the work of many people (literally!) but are endlessly supportive, upbeat, immensely knowledgeable, and always there for the Villa.

- To all our FOVM members and those working so hard for the Villa, and to those making additional donations in this tough economic time, thank you! As always, your donations are tax deductible. (The FOVM is a 501-c-3 nonprofit organization.) If you would like to make an end-of-year donation, please contact us at friends@villamontezuma.org.

In 1887 the Villa Montezuma attracted creative people who loved history, art, music, and literature. Today the same thing can be said of those who support the work of the FOVM. If you know someone you think we should know who can be of help to the cause, or if you want to volunteer for to help on a committee, please send an e-mail or give us a call. If you have friends that should become Friends of the Villa, considered giving them the gift of membership in the FOVM this holiday season. And if you love historic houses and Valentine Tea, then save the date for Saturday, February 14, 2009, when the Villa Valentine Tea Fundraiser will be held at the beautifully restored William Hollington House, located just a few blocks from the Villa (details, times, and cost coming in January).

Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season and a lovely New Year,

Your FOVM Chair, Louise Torio



Villa tower waterproofing, December 2008