How the Kellogg House Found Its Forever Home at HMOC

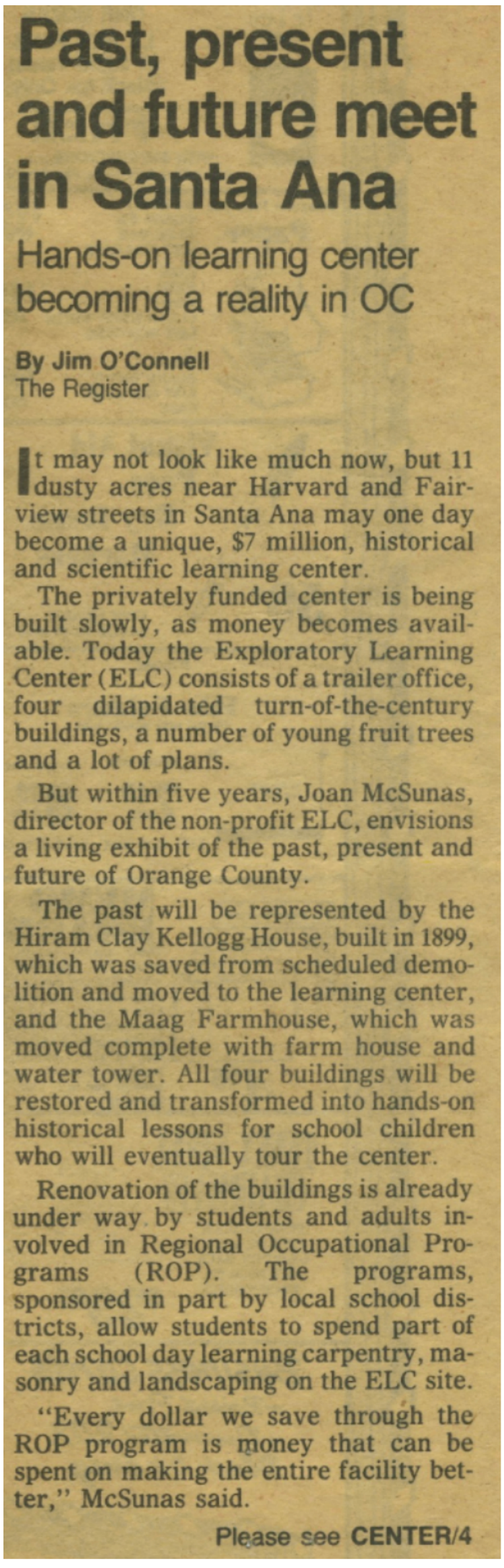
An interview with Alice McCullough

written by Dr. Amanda VanDenburgh, President of HMOC Board of Directors

Alice worked for city of Santa Ana from 1975 to 1985. Her position of Grants Coordinator involved the acquisition and distribution of federal and state government block grants. A requirement of these grants was that the majority be spent in financially challenged cities. Up to 30% could be used to assist nonprofit organizations, providing services to citizens and seniors with low-to-moderate-incomes. By 1980, federal grant money funded approximately 30 nonprofits, as well as other projects such as street and housing improvements in low-income neighborhoods.

In early 1980, Dr. Mary Nolan (who worked in the Special Services and Enrichment Activities department of the Santa Ana School District), visited Alice's office. Dr. Nolan stated that students in other districts enjoyed a variety of field trips. However, Santa Ana students could not, due to lack of funds for busses and entrance fees. She said there was some vacant land on Fairview – owned by the federal government. The government leased the land to the school for 10 years (of which 6 remained). At that time, it was being used as a parking lot for busses and trucks. She told Alice about her idea: if a historic house could be purchased, moved to the vacant lot, and renovated, then the parents in the district could be docents. Students could tour the house to learn about Orange County history. Dr. Nolan inquired if grant money was available for this enterprise. The answer from Alice was an enthusiastic "yes!"

Alice then contacted the President of the Santa Ana Historical Preservation Society. He thought the proposal was wonderful. In addition, he suggested the perfect house, located at 122 Orange Street. The original owner, Hiram Clay Kellogg (1855-1921), was an architect who built the house in 1898.



Past, present and future meet in Santa Ana

Hands-on learning center becoming a reality in OC

By Jim O'Connell
The Register

It may not look like much now, but 11 dusty acres near Harvard and Fairview streets in Santa Ana may one day become a unique, $7 million, historical and scientific learning center.

The privately funded center is being built slowly, as money becomes available. Today the Exploratory Learning Center (ELC) consists of a trailer office, four dilapidated turn-of-the-century buildings, a number of young fruit trees and a lot of plans.

But within five years, Joan McSunas, director of the non-profit ELC, envisions a living exhibit of the past, present and future of Orange County.

The past will be represented by the Hiram Clay Kellogg House, built in 1899, which was saved from scheduled demolition and moved to the learning center, and the Maag Farmhouse, which was moved complete with farm house and water tower. All four buildings will be restored and transformed into hands-on historical lessons for school children who will eventually tour the center.

Renovation of the buildings is already under way by students and adults involved in Regional Occupational Programs (ROP). The programs, sponsored in part by local school districts, allow students to spend part of each school day learning carpentry, masonry and landscaping on the ELC site.

"Every dollar we save through the ROP program is money that can be spent on making the entire facility better," McSunas said.

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The structure is unique because the interior has several features reflecting Kellogg's interest in ships. Most prominent is a mast, salvaged from a San Francisco ship, stretching from floor to ceiling in the center of the two-story house. The spiral staircase surrounding the mast features a landing, which is reminiscent of the bridge of a ship. From this vantage point, one overlooks the oval dining room. And the circular opening in the attic floor, through which the mast extends to the roof, suggests a crow's nest.

The Kellogg family had moved to Pomona and at one time rented the property but it was now vacant. The President believed they would be extremely interested in having the house preserved as a museum. Alice then spoke with family members to express interest in the purchase and relocation of the residence. The family expressed excitement about the prospect of saving their historic home for educational purposes.

The house originally had a basement which, unfortunately, could not be salvaged. Due to the extremely sandy soil of the proposed site, a basement could not be physically constructed. It was in the basement that Mr. Kellogg's architect table was located. Above it, in the front porch, were small glass squares. On the underside, the glass squares formed a point. This directed the light in such a way that no shadows were cast on the table. Visitors can still see the top of some of these glass squares in the porch. There is also a display in the architect room on the second floor of the residence.

The Kellogg family generously donated their house. The city council approved the project and $50,000 of grant funding. It would cost $25,000 to move the house to the location on Fairview and an additional $25,000 for plumbing, electrical, and other rehabilitation costs. In 1980, the move was accomplished in one night from 8 pm to 6 am. Two men took turns sitting on top of the house, holding a wooden board to lift electrical wires out of the way as the house passed under them. All along the way, people lined the streets to watch the house being relocated.

The federal government then allowed the Santa Ana School District to purchase the property. The District built a school on a corner of the site and gave Heritage Museum a 70-year lease for the remainder of the land. Once the house was relocated, it could not be taken off the blocks until a government official from Sacramento performed an inspection. (The state must inspect school properties.) Almost 9 months past until the inspection occurred. The Kellogg house was then lowered onto the foundation.

The following year, the Orange County Combined Corporate Volunteers and the Junior League of Orange County completed the restoration and furnishings; the residence opened for tours in 1985. Heritage Museum applied to be a nonprofit organization and a Board was assembled to oversee the growth of the Museum. One year later, the state responded to a labor crisis in the agricultural industry by funding the planting of new orchards. Alice wrote a grant which provided funds for the cost of 30 orange and lemon trees as well as planting labor.

For the first 10 years, the Museum served mainly Santa Ana students, although sometimes tours from other school districts occurred. Kellogg house is now utilized for hands-on education for nearly 18,000 Orange County school children each year. The students also experience other educational areas, such as a Blacksmith shop, a natural area, a produce farm space, and a farmhouse (the Maag house). In addition, a variety of other activities, such as weddings, formal teas, and special-interest weekend fairs are celebrated in this magnificent edifice amidst picturesque grounds.

Alice is still actively involved at Heritage Museum, serving as a member of the Board of Directors, volunteering at events, and supporting Museum staff.

Thank you for 40 years of friendship, Alice!