

Returning to the Howe-Waffle House Once Again – Our 4th Annual Victorian Holiday Home Tour!

Santa Ana Historical Preservation Society is so pleased to ring in the holidays with our 4th annual Victorian holiday home tour. As in the past, we will combine creative forces with several Santa Ana neighborhood communities, businesses and friends of the museum. Each participating group selects from one of our 13 locations within the house as well as 2 locations outdoors to decorate in their own version of the holiday spirit – all to showcase our beloved Dr. Willella Howe-Waffle house.

Each year, we are just amazed with the group's dedication, passion and creativity in decorating their chosen room. They come in with a theme, a plan, joyous workers, ladders, plastic bins full of holiday décor, lights and energy! After hours and hours of work, the rooms slowly transform into holiday magic! During the day the decorations are lovely, however at night is when everything just sparkles – the holiday spirit is truly enhanced with all the shining bling, glitter, twinkling lights and abounding colors of the holiday!

Here is a list of some of our participating groups and friends. If you know of these groups or persons, please come visit and show your support!

Wilshire Square Neighborhood Group, Fairhaven Memorial Park and Mortuary, The Vogel Victorian, Johnson and Fernandez Interior Design, Heritage Museum of Orange County, Rotary Club of Santa Ana, SAHPS Décor Committee, Lynn and Mackenzie Warner, Trish Campbell and Jammie South.

What better way to kick off the start of your holiday season with a visit to our house to share the spirit of the season and to walk through this 1898 historical Victorian wonderland! In addition to seeing the decorated house you will enjoy light refreshments and a holiday craft the make and take. We hope to see you all! Happy Holidays!



Again, we are so very excited to combine creative forces with our Santa Ana communities and prominent local organizations to showcase our beloved Dr. Willella Howe-Waffle house in magical holiday splendor!



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Special thanks to contributors

*Alexandra Noyes, Jessica Basciano, Maxine Schmidl
and Pauline Halloran*

To contact the newsletter editors, please call and leave a message at (714) 547-9645.

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A Note from the President

This summer has been a busy one at the Howe-Waffle House. Open Houses at both the House and the Fire Museum, and outreach at events off-site, have kept us lively. Volunteers, both new and experienced, have helped immensely with some of our highest attended days. I cannot express how grateful I am for their willingness to give their spare time to our organization.

Phase 2 of the exterior House renovation is almost complete. The scaffolding is down and we are thrilled with the new paint colors. Next up, the carriage barn and gazebo to finish the job.

2025 has been a year of growth for our organization, and we are looking forward to an amazing 2026. If you have not been by lately, join us at one of our next Open Houses. Give us a follow on social media to keep up with the most current events.

Speaking of special events, our local neighborhoods and organizations are going to outdo themselves decorating for our Victorian Holiday Home Tour this year and tickets are already selling at a record pace. Be sure to get your preferred day and time for this magical event! And thanks again for helping to preserve history in Santa Ana.

Jessica Basciano
President, SAHPS

Murder Mystery Night

- Alexandra Noyes

On April 26, a murder happened at the Howe-Waffle House. An interactive murder mystery dinner party, that is! Guests enjoyed a pasta dinner, and then rotated through the house in teams, speaking to costumed cast members and gathering different kinds of clues.

We were surprised to discover that several guests had so much fun at the last one that they returned, despite knowing whodunnit, and we were delighted to find out that a teen guest in a glamorous gown had chosen to attend this instead of prom.

At the end of the evening, after the dramatic reveal, three guests who had solved the mystery were randomly selected to receive mystery-themed prizes.

Howe-Waffle House Renovation Report

- Maxine Schmidl

You may have noticed the Howe-Waffle House lately surrounded by a matrix of scaffolding and shrouded in a black net. I'm happy to report that the second phase of our massive renovation and painting project is nearing completion.

Like a butterfly the Howe-Waffle House will soon emerge from its cocoon repaired, restored and with a beautiful new coat of paint, ready to delight visitors for the next hundred years.

This phase of our project focused on the second floor of the house which required extensive replacement of shingles on the dormers and other wood elements too damaged to repair. Our contractor for the second phase, McIntyre Construction, came to us highly recommended by Hyra George of Millrock Restoration, who retired after completion of the first phase of the renovation. We are grateful for Hyra's beautiful work and for her help finding Gary McIntyre, the perfect person to complete the project.

Our new paint scheme consists of five colors carefully selected by our Décor Committee. It pays homage to some of the original colors of the house

including two lovely shades of green. A rich purple and soft violet update the look, highlighting the Queen Anne details, and fresh khaki trim completes the new palette.

We are very grateful to Behr Paint Company, a Santa Ana based company, for donation of all the paint and primer for the second phase. Our special thanks to Drew Hatcher of Behr Paint Company for his work to secure this generous donation.

Welcome to the Kickin' Crab

- Maxine Schmidl

What does the new Santa Ana location of the Kickin' Crab and the Howe-Waffle House have in common? No, not that they both sound delicious! They are located in buildings that at one time were slated for demolition by local government authorities. Both survived that fate to go on to have useful lives through adaptive reuse. The University of the Built Environment in the UK describes adaptive reuse as the use of existing buildings in a different capacity than their original purpose. Reusing allows elements of their appearance, design, cultural heritage and historic significance to be maintained while serving a new function.

You are probably aware of the history of the Howe-Waffle House (HWH), now the headquarters of the Santa Ana Historical Preservation Society (SAHPS), which began as the dream home of Drs. Willella and Alvin Howe. The Kickin' Crab building also began life as a private residence for local physician Dr. Julius A. Crane. Originally a massive brick classical structure, it was purchased in 1910 by Stephen W. and George S. Smith to serve as a mortuary. Contactor Chris McNeill, who constructed the old county courthouse, remodeled the structure with the graceful neo-classical elements seen in the present design, including the colonial revival rotunda. The Smith-Tuttle Mortuary went on to become a Santa Ana landmark and the oldest continuous business in the City.

In 1977 the Orange County Board of Supervisors determined that the building was in the way of the new Transit District parking structure plan and, in order to make way for its destruction, declined to acknowledge the building's historic significance. At the time I was a new County employee hoping to pass probation. I had also recently met Adeline Walker, founder of SAHPS, which was established to fight the plan to demolish the HWH. It seemed to me that the planned destruction of the Smith-Tuttle Mortuary building was history repeating itself and that there had to be a better answer.

A friendly reporter for the Los Angeles Times suggested I tell the story to his editor in hopes of running an article on the doomed building. I was happy to tell the story of the Smith-Tuttle building but I couldn't be quoted without risking my new job, so I referred him to the Historic Preservation Committee of the Orange County Branch of the AIA, which made clear that the mortuary building was an important part of the history and culture of Santa Ana. 🧐



On March 11, 1977 a headline in the Los Angeles Times read "Elegant Relic Marked for Destruction." A local radio talk show host asked his listeners to call the Board of Supervisors in protest. Calls and letters overwhelmed the Board offices. Soon the Santa Ana First Federal Bank came forward with a plan to purchase the building and convert it into their downtown branch. And so, the demise of the Smith-Tuttle Mortuary building was averted

and the Howe-Waffle House and Smith-Tuttle Mortuary buildings remain fine examples of the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in downtown Santa Ana.

2025 SAHPS Open House Events



We hope that you will come and visit us. Each month we proudly feature a different theme. Each **open house is different...** and that is exciting!

Ticket Prices:

\$10.00 Adults

\$8.00 Senior/Members

\$5.00 Students K-12

Tickets can be purchased online at santaanahistory.com or at the door.

Tour Times: 11:15am, 12:15pm, 1:15pm and 2:15pm

The tour includes tea and cookies served in the dining room.

Membership Dues

Wow, the end of the year came and went so quickly!

It's always a busy time for all of us with holiday celebrations and ringing in the new year. What often gets overlooked is payment of your SAHPS membership dues. However, it's not too late – please send in your payment ASAP. Your dues help in so many ways to keep the doors open at our beloved house. Thank you.

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