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# LOS GATOS

MAGAZINE

## THE GOOD LIFE COLLECTION

Bruce Canepa  
Best New Restaurants  
Wines of the Highlands

## DISCOVER LOST GATOS

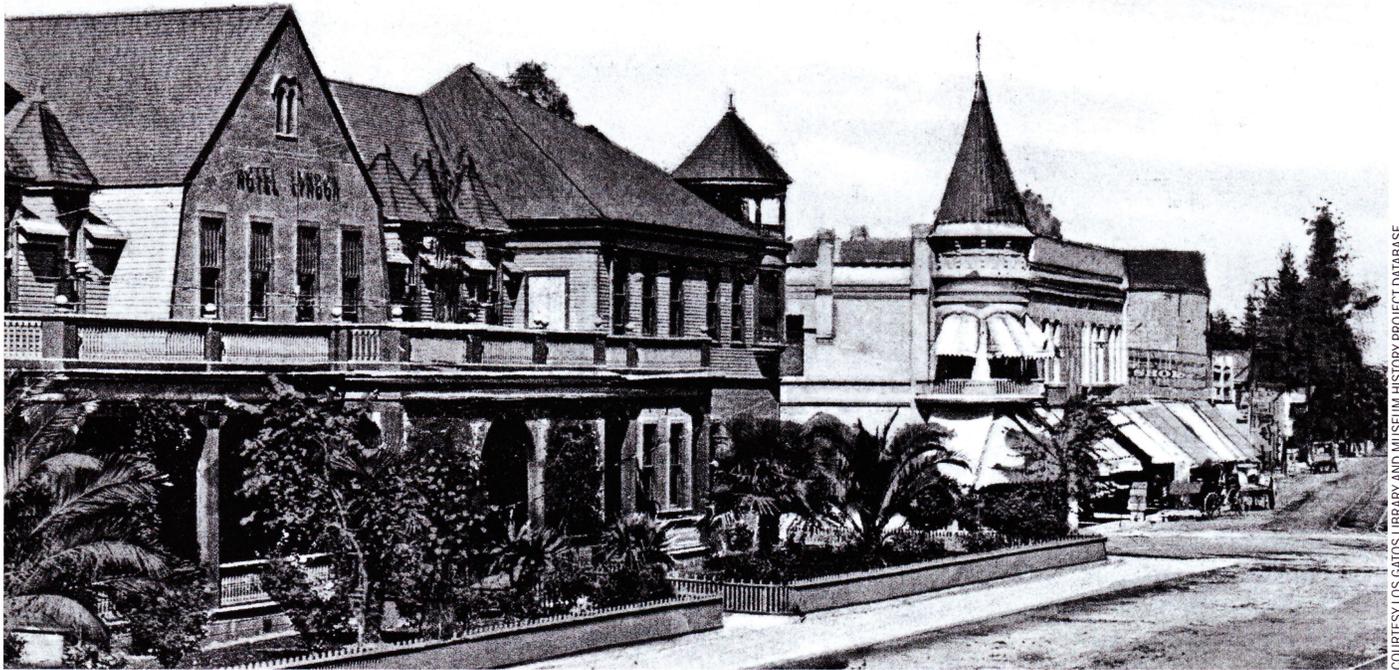
The time-traveling  
history app

# FLORIBUNDA

AUTUMN ARTS BURST  
INTO BLOOM

{FLOWER COUTURE at NUMU}





COURTESY LOS GATOS LIBRARY AND MUSEUM HISTORY PROJECT DATABASE

A postcard shows the trolley tracks on Santa Cruz Avenue, the lavish Hotel Lyndon and the Hofstra/La Cañada building with its familiar “witch’s hat” turret. The hotel’s two palm trees still stand in front of Willow Street Pizza.

# Local Historypalooza

An app that brings Los Gatos’ past alive

You’re standing on the corner of Santa Cruz and Main in Los Gatos, phone in hand, ear buds in. You look like hundreds of other people who have stood at this corner with similar gear – only you’re not texting or Instagramming. In fact, you’re actually looking around, seeing the past emerge from the present as you listen to the strains of “The Entertainer” and a narrator describes Los Gatos at the turn of the 20th century, when orchards bloomed and grand buildings lined the town’s main avenues. You are rocking the Discover Lost Gatos app.

Conceived as a way to inspire historic preservation, the user-friendly app consists of three easy (3/4 of a mile or less) walking tours that can also be enjoyed from the comfort of a Bar-calounger. The stops, which you can read or just listen to, tell entertaining stories about existing landmarks, like the rags-to-riches tale behind Mary Coggeshall’s mansion (now home to Palacio Restaurant) or landmarks past, such as Chinatown or the sumptuous Hotel Lyndon, the latter demolished in 1963, leaving only two palm trees. Old photos help bring it all to life.

“Everyone knows about Paul Revere and Lexington, but very few people know and really appreciate the remarkable history behind Los Gatos and the surrounding area,” says app developer and former software executive Alan Feinberg, who moved with his wife to Los Gatos 26 years ago from history-rich Concord, Mass.

One of Feinberg’s favorite stories is about John Bean and “Silicon Valley’s first startup.” Bean, a successful inventor from the Midwest, moved to Los Gatos in 1883 and bought 10 acres in what is now known as the

## LG SCENE

Almond Grove. An insect infestation in his orchard drove Bean to invent a high-pressure insecticide sprayer that transformed the orchard industry and eventually formed the basis of the Food Machinery Corporation, now FMC, a multi-billion-dollar enterprise. “You realize that this area has an entrepreneurial culture that goes back to the 19th century,” marvels Feinberg.

Feinberg says Discover Lost Gatos was just an idea kicking around in his head until a chance conversation with former Los Gatos mayor and ardent preservationist Sandy Decker convinced him to act on his dream. “She instilled in me the importance of doing this and the risks of *not* doing this,” he says.

Decker, the driving force behind getting the town’s original commercial district listed on the National Register

of Historic Places, notes that “this is the tool to take history into the future.”

“Young people today are used to being informed by an app or Google,” she wrote us in an email. “This app will inform and entertain. ... It’s a delightful way to experience the history of a town that battles to hold onto the memory of its unique and fragile historical legacy.”

Decker introduced Feinberg to local historian Peggy Conaway Bergtold, a retired librarian and author of five books on Los Gatos history, and the game was on. Once Bergtold heard the concept she became enamored with it, recalls Feinberg, and the project “grew and grew and grew.” Bergtold researched and wrote all the historical information on the app.

“Without Peggy it would have been me just writing a few stories. But Peggy

was instrumental in creating a historically accurate information and text.”

Discover Lost Gatos, available for free on iTunes, is “a gift to the community” from its three creators, a reminder that without conscious intent, history gets shunted aside.

“What happens if people in Los Gatos stop caring about history?” Feinberg asks. “My fear is if we don’t instill a sense of historic preservation, then many of these buildings might go the way of the Hotel Lyndon.”

—Traci Hukill