



Represent Los Gatos: Oral History Project and Initiative

Purpose

The Local History Room of the Los Gatos Library holds a collection of historically valuable documents that help to tell the story of the Town of Los Gatos through primary and secondary sources. Included in this collection are a series of family histories, with firsthand accounts of the Town since before incorporation through today. A quick assessment of the collection demonstrates that many of the stories collected in the Local History Room are told by or represent the White and European families who have lived in or owned property in the Town of Los Gatos. Given our knowledge of the history of Los Gatos and the documented Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese, Latinx and Black communities that have been present in this Town since its founding, there are clear gaps in this collection. The stories told about these communities are largely centered on their interactions with White residents and are not often told by the communities themselves. For that reason, it is our mission as a memory institution to record, preserve, and make accessible the stories of these communities which are underrepresented in the Local History Room collection.

Archives hold power in the ways that they are used for historical research and the ways in which they provide a general understanding of the history of a community. When the only primary sources available in an archive are created by a specific group of individuals, only one story is told and considered to be the official record of history. Without the purposeful inclusion of diverse stories in an archival collection, the history of the people of color who have lived in, contributed to, and built our Town is lost, leaving us with an inaccurate portrait of our history as a Town.

The Los Gatos Library is proud of the Local History Room collection, and simultaneously understands the importance of representing all members of the community in order to tell a complete history of the Town of Los Gatos.

To properly describe and provide access to the history of the Town of Los Gatos, we are making a sincere effort to collect the stories of Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) who live or have lived in our Town, from before its official incorporation through today. We approach this project with the understanding that the history of archives in general has not been favorable to BIPOC communities. BIPOC individuals are rarely invited to tell their own stories, and instead the stories of their families, friends and communities are told by those in power. Without the inclusion of BIPOC stories, there is no complete history of any community. We ask that the community share their stories so that future generations will have access to a more complete history of our Town.

Scope

We are asking the BIPOC community of Los Gatos to tell their own stories. What it means to tell your own story is left to the discretion of the individual.

The most effective way to gather and preserve these stories is through an oral history project. An oral history project collects memories, personal stories, and information of general historical significance

through a series of recorded interviews. This can include: stories of current life in Los Gatos; past experiences living in or visiting Los Gatos; stories passed down from ancestors about life in Los Gatos; or any other information about your life or the lives of your family or the community as a whole and their experiences in Los Gatos. These interviews will be recorded through audio and/or video with the consent of the interviewee, and then transcribed, uploaded to an accessible online platform, preserved and maintained by Librarians at the Los Gatos Library, and made available for free for historical research.

It will be made clear to all participants that by offering their stories to the Represent LG Oral History Project, they may be referenced in the future by students, researchers, Town staff, and the general public.

Action Items

- 1) Release a call for participation to the community.
- 2) Coordinate with participants and schedule oral history interviews.
- 3) Complete oral history interviews.
- 4) Transcribe and index recordings. Upload original recordings with transcriptions to online platform to make available to the public.
- 5) Organize back-up storage for original files to ensure no recordings are lost.