



DATE: January 27, 2019

AGENDA ITEM #5

TO: Historical Commission
FROM: Sean K. Gallegos, Associate Planner
SUBJECT: Margaret Thompson Essay Contest

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the Margaret Thompson Essay Contest Packet

DISCUSSION

The Los Altos Historical Commission and the Los Altos History Museum sponsor and manage the Margaret Thompson Essay Contest. Children from grades three through six are invited to participate in the Margaret Thompson Essay contest through their schools. Essays are written covering a specific theme. Each year hundreds of essays are judged by community members. Certificates are awarded by the Historical Commission at an ice-cream social in the garden of the Los Altos History Museum and prizes are awarded by the City Council.

Winners at each grade level receive \$50 for first place, \$30 for second place and \$20 for third place. All entrants receive a certificate of participation. In addition to individual prizes, the school with the most winners will be awarded a trophy.

The information required for entering the essay contest includes the following handouts: Cover Sheet, Essay Prompt, General Instruction for Teachers, and the Rubric for Scoring, which are provided respectively as attachment A, B, C and D.

Attachments

- A. Essay Contest Cover Sheet
- B. Essay Contest Overview Sheet
- C. Essay Contest General Instructions for Teachers
- D. Essay Contest Rubric for Scoring



**Los Altos Historical Commission and Los Altos History Museum
36th Annual Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest
3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Graders**

2020 Theme – “Peek into Your Past!”

Essay Contest Cover Sheet

Please PRINT the following information.

STAPLE THIS COVER SHEET ON TOP OF YOUR ESSAY.

Have your parent read and SIGN the statement below.

Essays should be no more than 300 words.

Essays are due to your teacher by Friday, March 6, 2020.

Include a COPY of your photograph with your essay.

PLEASE NOTE: Essays NOT containing this Cover Sheet will NOT be judged.

Full Name (first and last): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

School Name: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher’s Name: _____

Parent Release:

By signing the following release, I give consent for my child’s essay to become part of the collection of the Los Altos History Museum and to be used for community enrichment such as exhibits, programs and research.

I understand that by submitting this essay, I declare that I have full legal right to transfer custody and title of this essay. I hereby transfer such custody, title and interest, including copyright and trademark, willingly, unconditionally and without reservation, to the City of Los Altos. I hereby consent to the unrestricted use of the information in furtherance of the mission of the Los Altos History Museum.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Date: _____



**Los Altos Historical Commission and Los Altos History Museum
36th Annual Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest
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2020 Theme – “Peek into Your Past!”

Background:

A photograph can capture a moment in time and preserve it for future generations. Photos help us remember special occasions, loved ones, and family traditions. J. Gilbert Smith, an orchardist who built the 1905 Smith House at the Los Altos History Museum, was also a photographer. Mr. Smith and his wife, Margaret, enjoyed traveling around California photographing the natural beauty of our state. A few examples of his photography and cameras of the time will be on display in the upstairs gallery of the Smith House from mid-January through early spring. If you wish to visit, the Museum and the Smith House are open Thursday-Sunday, from 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Do you enjoy looking at photographs of when you were young? Have you seen photos of your parents, grandparents or other loved ones from years past? Were those photos in color or in black and white? Are these photos in frames, in albums, or on your parents' cell phones? How do these photographs help to tell your family's story?

Writing Prompt:

Talk with your family about some of the photographs you have in your home. Ask about the various stories that are behind these photographs. Think about the family photos you have seen and select one old photograph of your parent, your grandparent, or other family members from previous generations.

Begin your essay by telling us about this person or persons and their relationship to you. Write about the story or stories you learned when choosing this photograph. Tell us why this photo is important to your family history. How are you similar to this person and how are you different? In conclusion, what is the most valuable information you learned from connecting with this photograph?

As you write, use interesting vocabulary and communicate your ideas in a creative manner. Please attach a **COPY** (not the original) of this photograph to your essay.

Win Prizes

1st Place - \$50 2nd Place - \$30 3rd Place - \$20

3 Winners Per Grade Level!



Los Altos Historical Commission and Los Altos History Museum
36th ANNUAL MARGARET THOMPSON HISTORICAL ESSAY CONTEST
For 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Graders

2020 Theme: “Peek into Your Past”

General Instructions for Teachers and Principals

- 1) READ the attached prompt and rubric before you discuss this contest with your students. You may wish to photocopy both the prompt and the rubric for your students to refer to as they write their essay.
- 2) **IMPORTANT INSTRUCTION: A COVER SHEET WITH PARENT RELEASE and SIGNATURE is required.** Remind your students that the COVER SHEET **MUST BE STAPLED** to the top of the essay.
- 3) READ the grading rubric to the students. This rubric is used to judge the essays.
- 4) When you receive the completed essays from your students, please put them in a large envelope. Please label the envelope the “MARGARET THOMPSON HISTORICAL ESSAY CONTEST.”
- 5) **Student essays** are due to classroom teacher by **Friday, March 6.** LASD essays must be returned to the LASD Asst. Superintendent’s office by **Tuesday, March 10.**
- 6) Private school/home-schooled essays must be returned to the History Museum by **Tuesday, March 10.**
- 7) **Prompt, instructions, and rubric are also available on the following websites: Los Altos History Museum, Los Altos School District, and the City of Los Altos.**
- 8) Essays will **NOT** be returned. Please ask students to make a copy before they turn in their essays.

All essay participants, their parents, teachers, and principals are invited to attend an Ice Cream Social on **May 12.** The Ice Cream Social will on the History Museum Patio at 6:00 p.m. Prizes will be awarded for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners of each grade level, 3rd-6th. The 25th Anniversary trophy will also awarded to the school/schools with the most winners. **Following the ice cream social,** winners will be recognized at the City Council meeting starting at 7:00 pm. The City Council meeting is televised on cable TV and via streaming video online at www.losaltosca.gov/citycouncil/online.

A note of appreciation from the Los Altos Historical Commission and the Education Committee of the Los Altos History Museum to participating teachers:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this essay contest. We hope that you and your students find it enjoyable and rewarding, and that it encourages interest in the history of our community.



**Los Altos Historical Commission and Los Altos History Museum
36th Annual Margaret Thompson Historical Essay Contest
3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Graders**

**Rubric for Scoring
2020 Margaret Thompson Essay Contest**

There will be a total of 30 points possible for an essay. These points will be allotted according to the following criteria:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Beginning paragraph clearly identifies and supports essay prompt | 5 points |
| 2. Ideas | 10 points |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a clear focus • Use descriptive language • Provide relevant information • Communicate ideas in a creative manner | |
| 3. Expression | 10 points |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use grammar conventions (mechanics) effectively • Use interesting vocabulary • Use a variety of sentences | |
| 4. Organization | 5 points |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a sequential flow of ideas • Bring closure to your ideas | |