



City of Los Altos

2025 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATION

I am nominating Jon & Lois Baer for the 2025 Historic Preservation Award.

Describe the reasons why the nominee should receive the Historic Preservation Award and how the nominee meets the following criteria:

1. Demonstration of pioneering or innovative efforts in historic preservation or education.
2. Conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation.
3. Public Benefit received (educational, beautification, advocacy, etc.).
4. Impact on the City of Los Altos.

See attached

*If applicable, submit copies of letters of commendation or any other supporting documentation (not required). Attach additional sheets as needed.*

Nominated by: Phoebe Bressack Date: 4/21/2025

In order to officially submit a nomination for the 2025 Historic Preservation Award, please submit documentation supporting the nomination compiled into a single copy. Submit this documentation to the Historical Commission's staff liaison, Sean Gallegos, at [sgallegos@losaltosca.gov](mailto:sgallegos@losaltosca.gov). Materials may also be submitted at City Hall, 1 North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022. All nominations must be received by **Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 5:00 pm.**

Nominations will be considered at an upcoming Historical Commission meeting on April 28, 2025. The 2025 Historic Preservation Award winner will be recognized by the City Council with a proclamation at a future meeting.

## Los Altos Historic Preservation Award Nomination

I believe that Jon and Lois Baer should receive a Historic Preservation Award this year. Theirs has been a long and painstaking journey restoring Los Altos historic landmark No 1: the Adams Ranch house at 55 Pepper Drive.

Originally on a 30-acre apricot orchard, this 1906 Victorian had gone through many architectural changes, mostly unfortunate, including being divided into apartments during World War II. Slated for demolition in the mid-1970's, it was preserved by the passage of the Los Altos Historic Preservation Ordinance.

John and Lois purchased the property in 1997, and have devoted the ensuing years to painstakingly researching and restoring both the house and immediate landscape to their full Victorian beauty. Not only have the original exterior architectural features been preserved and/or restored where missing in accordance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation, but additionally, decorative interior fixtures and materials have also been sensitively used to re-create the look and feel of an elegant Victorian home.

With the completion of the front landscape and paving this year, Los Altos citizens can now enjoy seeing the full effect of the Adams Ranch house on Pepper Drive. Because our town is relatively young, there are few examples of historic buildings, much less such an icon of a lost time. This carefully restored home gives the town a chance to see a classic Victorian as it was long ago, a true architectural gift.

In addition, in the course of his own restoration project Jon has become a resource for other Los Altos residents seeking to preserve their historic houses, as well as working in committee to preserve the Griffin House on the Foothill College campus.

Phoebe Bressack

Los Altos Historical Commission, April 17, 2025

I am writing this letter to recommend Jon and Lois Baer for the annual Los Altos Historic Preservation Award. I have known Jon and Lois for the past 27 years as neighbors and friends.

Jon and Lois are passionate about the preservation of the history of Los Altos, particularly the architecture. If you have not had the opportunity to visit their grand, turn of the century home on Pepper Drive, you are missing out on an important slice of Los Altos History. Jon and Lois have meticulously maintained and improved both the interior, exterior and grounds of the house, returning it to its glory days and then some. They are a couple who truly appreciate the historical significance of a place and honor the original integrity and design. When they purchased their home about three decades ago, it was an eyesore, but they have turned it into the crown jewel of our neighborhood while saving an important piece of Los Altos history.

Jon was also involved in the movement to save the Griffin House on the Foothill College Campus and engaged and educated the whole community in this endeavor. He was also a part of the effort supporting the relocation and renovation of the Neutra House. Additionally, when a neighbor on Pepper Drive was selling her home, Jon recognized the historical significance of her beautiful Monterey Colonial home, and encouraged her to find a buyer who would save the house and not have it removed. To this day, that house is also preserved.

Our city is fortunate to have Jon and Lois Baer as community members who are committed to holding on to our town's historic buildings. Thank you for taking the time to consider them for this award.

Respectfully,  
Ann Wolff  
235 Marvin Ave  
Los Altos, CA 94022

STEVE MCCORMICK

121 Pepper Dr  
Los Altos, CA 94022

April 18, 2025

Mr. Gallegos  
Staff Liaison  
Historical Commission  
1 N. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA, 94022

Dear Mr. Gallegos:

I am writing in support of the nomination of our neighbors, Jon and Lois Baer, for the Los Altos Historic Preservation Award. I can't think of more deserving recipients.

My wife and I were immediately impressed with the historical charm of their residence, clearly lovingly maintained, when we moved into another Los Altos landmark house on the same street. We were even more impressed when we learned how much the Baer's had done to restore the house, including the interior – every little detail had been cared for. Our only regret was that views of the house from the street were shielded by overgrown vegetation in the front yard. When the Baer's completed extensive landscaping last summer, it opened the house for all passersby to see.

The house is of invaluable benefit for the Los Altos community. It is a living reminder of the historical orchard era of the town, enhanced by its proximity to the J Gilbert Smith House and orchard. Practically adjacent to downtown, the house is seen by many pedestrians throughout the year, especially on special event days. It serves as a reminder of the bygone days of Los Altos, and an inspiration for others to emulate what the Baers have selflessly done for their community and the future. They should be honored with the Historic Preservation Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Steve McCormick". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.

*Richard L. Blanding*

April 20, 2025

Dear Members of the Historical Commission;

I'm writing to suggest that you give Jon and Lois Baer your strongest consideration for the Historic Preservation Award this year. In my 58 years here on Marvin Avenue, I haven't seen a more complete and elegant restoration of a beautiful Victorian home than they have accomplished at 55 Pepper Drive.

You'll recall that the home was converted into 9 units during the housing shortage of World War II. I walked through the house years later, observed the bare copper pipes running down the upstairs hallway to the rooms, and saw the generally rough condition at the time. Since the Baers bought the house, they have meticulously brought it back to its original beauty, and today the home stands proudly as the lovely queen of the neighborhood. Inside and out, it is a real testimony to what can be done to bring back the unique elegance of a truly grand Victorian home.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Richard L. Blanding*

Richard Blanding  
21 Marvin Avenue

**Anita K. Enander**  
517 Panchita Way  
Los Altos, CA 94022

April 19, 2025

Ref: Application for Los Altos Historic Preservation Award to Jon and Lois Baer

Dear Historical Commissioners and City Council Members,

Historic Landmark #1, the Adams Ranch house, has the honor of being the first historic property recognized by the City of Los Altos. We can now honor the work of Jon and Lois Baer, who have spent the past 27 years restoring and rehabilitating the property, with the City of Los Altos Historic Preservation Award.

The nomination form gives the basic facts. It does not, however, convey the immense work and historic research applied to the rehabilitation and restoration of the home by the Baers. To say the home was derelict when they bought it is an understatement. It had been converted to sub-units, and some of the exterior features had been damaged or altered. The Baers undertook comprehensive research before beginning the long process of rehabilitating the property according to the Secretary of Interior standards. That research and extensive photo archive are their own resource and attest to the diligence of the Baers in seeking historical accuracy in their work.

Further, they have selflessly shared the knowledge developed through their own research with others who have helped preserve various properties throughout our city. Their impact reaches far beyond the rehabilitation of a single property.

Although the historic landmark designation would require only rehabilitation of the exterior, anyone who has been inside the home would notice the incredible detail in the interior – from the paneling and flooring to hardware and fixtures and furnishings. Stepping into the home is truly stepping back in time. All speak to the incredible effort and innovative approach to bringing the property to a condition – exterior and interior – that honor its place as an historic landmark.

I use the word “property” rather than just “house” because the two original palm trees that frame the front view fortunately were saved, and the yard restoration reflects much of the character seen in the old photos. The exterior rehabilitation of the front drive, entry, porch, and façade – together with the landscaping – allow the public to see the historic farmhouse much as it was more than a hundred years ago – decades before the founding of our city.

While horse and buggy and Ford Model T's no longer use the retained semi-circular entry to the property, those walking and driving past can savor the site of the home that was constructed 119 years ago and stands as a tribute to the earliest days of our community. Having recognized the importance of historical preservation by granting it #1 Historical Landmark almost 50 years ago, let's now recognize those who have invested decades of research, diligence, craftsmanship, and attention to historical accuracy by awarding the Los Altos Historical Preservation Award to Jon and Lois Baer.

Thank you for your service to our city and your consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

s/  
Anita Enander  
Former Mayor

Dressack  
21 Osage Ave  
Los Altos 94022

Mr. Sean Gallegos  
City Los Altos  
1 W. San Antonio Rd  
Los Altos CA 94022

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APR 21 2025

City of Los Altos