

The Santa Clara May Day (and Maypole) Tradition

The Santa Clara Historical Museum is committed to keeping old world traditions alive. Each year volunteers from the museum teach local school children the maypole braiding dance.

This tradition was done in the old world in the early spring to welcome warm weather and the growing season. Community members had to cooperate and work together to braid the maypole ribbons.

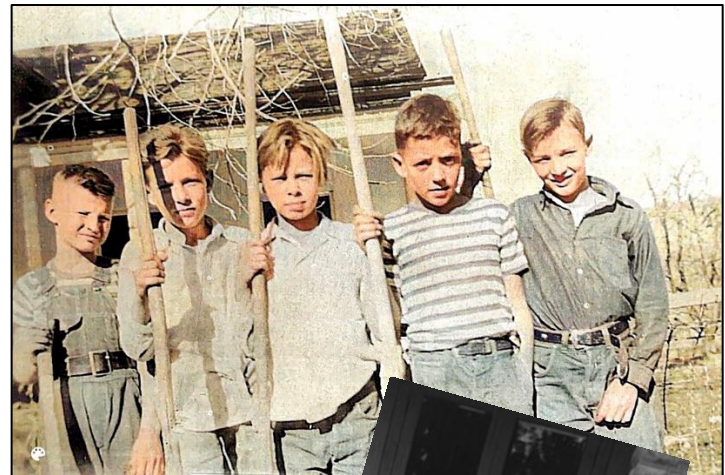


This symbolized and mimicked the real life dependence old world villagers had on each other to survive.

In Santa Clara, braiding of the maypole was an annual tradition, performed on May Day of each year (typically held the first Friday in May).

The day often began with the

students participating in cleaning the school and the grounds. The photo below shows five boys pictured on May Day 1944 while cleaning the school grounds. They are, from left: Paul Reber, Gary Wayne Graf, Ward Gubler, Wendell Gary and Sherman Hafen. The photo below shows girls sweeping the front steps of the school.



After the cleaning, parents would be invited to attend the program at the school, held up in the auditorium on the top floor of the building. Each grade would perform songs and dances. The older students always did square dances and patriotic songs were sung.

The program always culminated with the braiding of the Maypole. The 5th and 6th grade girls did the braiding, often wearing a new dress in the same color as the ribbon they held for braiding.



The afternoon of May Day celebration was spent on the playground with competition of sports activities including high jump, pole vaulting, races and games.

This day was a special day in our Santa Clara School!

