

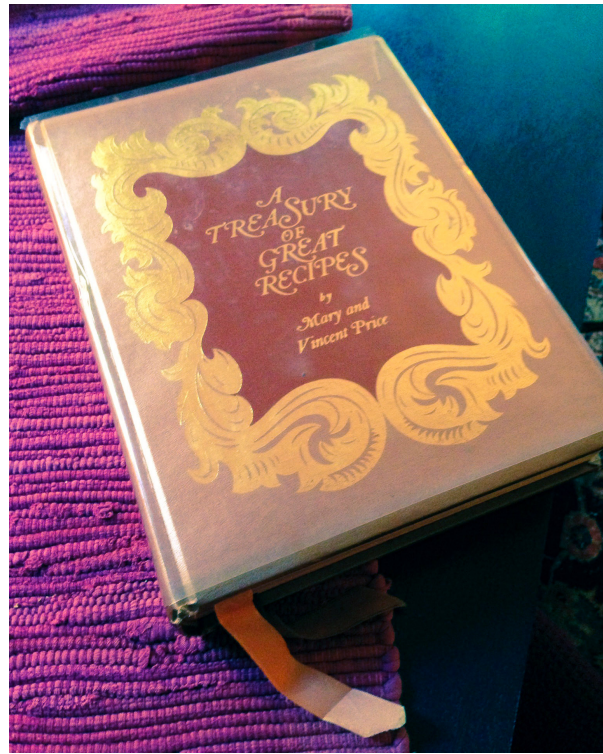
Field Guide to Coronado History:

Cookbooks & Bibles

By Bruce Linder

Occasionally a story is told of Coronado that holds a special resonance of both past and present; a story of families young to old; a story of circumstance and magic. One such story recently rose from our historical archives.

Cookbooks and bibles have been staples of home and family life in America for eons. They also hold the power to provide windows into orphic pasts. As treasured slices of home, they inevitably hold long lives and collect beguiling clues from the ages. Family bibles hold family histories and genealogies in great detail. Cookbooks radiate memories of events or people, traditionally with a woman's touch.



Treasured cookbooks are a depository of good feelings, of warmth, of successful gourmet adventures. They hold jottings in the margins in handwriting easily recognized of loved ones or informal notes that capture a happening. There are treasures from a favored aunt; one-of-a-kind recipes that live as family heirlooms; memories of childhood standing in the kitchen surrounded by warmth, energy, and fascinating aromas. Food and good wine classically provide the foundation for familial good feelings. They make us happy.

Recently a dusty cookbook arrived on our doorstep, sent by the San Diego Air & Space Museum with little ceremony except a note to look

on the books back pages for mention of “Coronado” and a picture of possibly a Coronado home.

The book was old but clearly venerated. Its pages were heavy and yellowed, inviting careful page-by-page turning and allowing the eye to catch hints of exotic recipe titles. The binding complemented its pages, sturdy and old-fashioned, the fore-edge was painted red, the front board decorated with swirls surrounding its title, “A Treasury of Great Recipes”.

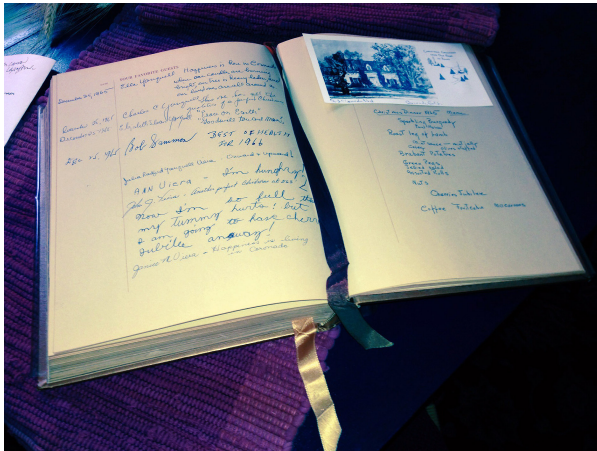
The book looked promising but professional archive processes require donations to meet the standards of CHA’s Collections Committee (community volunteers who must approve all accessions to our formal collection). In business-like fashion the committee searched for the owner’s name. None. The recipes were intriguing and, yes, pages held jottings from several people dated some fifty years prior. That morning was busy with many donations to review. After thorough deliberation, the committee voted seven donations into the permanent collection but rejected five others; the timeworn cookbook didn’t make the grade.

Later, CHA’s archivist Sarah Dickey picked up the cookbook to thumb through its pages. Air & Space did not desire its return but Sarah’s eye caught sight of the picture of the house in the back of the book. It looked familiar to her ... somewhere on Alameda Boulevard. A bit of detective work later, Sarah knocked on the door in the picture ... the door of Julia Viera’s long-time family home. Julia immediately recognized the volume as she held its weight carefully in her hands

Like so many others, navy orders had brought Julia’s family to Coronado – her father was Flight Surgeon in the old *Lexington* in the 1930s.

Three generations were represented in the hand-penned remarks gathered in the mid-sixties in the back of the book. The family sat at Christmas dinner, a moment in time, a moment when ferryboats still sailed punctiliously to Coronado. The warm notes formed a spectrum of family, a youngster’s “I’m hungry,” to a crowning thought that captured the moment best, “Happiness is living in Coronado.”

One final postscript to this warm family story: no one is exactly sure what whimsical path this cookbook took in its journey though time from a dining room table in the 1960s, away off-island, and then finally back to the same setting, the same walls, the same windows looking out to the same comfortable back yard. Julia thinks the entire odyssey was guided by the hands of her mother, who never would have given the book away in the first place ... and, if that is so, this becomes quite a different saga, but still a nice reflection of Those Times in Coronado.



*Come visit the Coronado
Museum of History & Art and
the archives of the Coronado
Historical Association for this
story and others.*

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