



HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Whoa, Nellie!





Exquisitely beaded black gown belonging to Nellie Hollister Jack.

The Honorable Nellie Hollister Jack

A descendant of Lt. John Hollister of England, Lucy Ellen Hollister known as "Nellie" born over two centuries later, shared traits through his descendants. Lt. Hollister went west to the colony of Connecticut and built his home in Glastonbury in the 1600s. Well educated, he became prominent, a large land owner, and active in his church. Heading west from Ohio to the new country of California, the same can be said of Nellie Hollister Jack of San Luis Obispo.

In 1806 William Wells, Chester Wells and John Hollister were the first of Hollister's descendants to leave Connecticut to head west. The three divided four thousand acres in the Northwest Territory creating Hollister's Mill. Joined by relative Elisha Wells the foursome built a gristmill and frame houses that became the Village of Hanover, Ohio, Nellie's birthplace.

John Hollister is credited as the main organizer in incorporating the village and bringing organized religion. Platting the village in 1852 is believed to have been done by his son, J.H. Hollister (Joseph Hubbard Hollister), Nellie's father.

Nellie's future husband R. E. Jack was her uncle's partner. Col. William Welles Hollister had a passion for horticulture and exotic trees and shrubs. He imported them from Tibet, Argentina, Korea and Japan for his home in Glen Annie Canyon in Santa Barbara. Nellie shared his passion by growing tree seedlings on her San Luisito Ranch then personally planted them all over the county, including Pozo, Edna, Paso Robles, Cholame, and at Cal Poly.



William M. McCarthy Photograph Collection, AC 96-07-08, 01:003, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, CA.
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Her passion created the now oldest designed landscape in the city. It's plausible that as a

voracious reader who kept abreast of trends she read John Claudius Loudon who introduced the term Gardenesque in his writings about parks. The Gardenesque style centered on an abstract base using plants that are not native to the area, keeping the plants well spaced from each other so they are recognized as exotic. Nellie's garden is now a park, so you can visit and see for yourself. Today the park's cedar and magnolia (Australia) and pomelo (Southeast Asia) are listed as city-designated heritage trees. Like Lt. Hollister's historic home, Nellie's is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The large lawn was used over decades by St. Stephen's Church where the Hollister's and Jack's have worshiped since its inception. As a member of the church's Ladies Aid Society Nellie baked cakes, including sponge cake to raise funds for the less fortunate.

In 1883 The Tribune wrote the Elegant Reception noticing that Nellie "distinguished herself" by inviting "her unmarried circle of young ladies and gentlemen friends." In 1888 the paparazzi of the day took note of her gown of "beautiful pink moire with glaze overdress" and "diamond jewelry" at the Grand Opening Gala of the Ramona Hotel.

Phoebe Hearst nominated the honorable Nellie Hollister Jack in 1915 to represent San Luis Obispo County at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition for her contributions to the building of her community, just like her ancestor, John Hollister.

By Marilyn Darnell. The History Center is grateful to Marilyn for her many contributions to local history. You can hear her discuss Nellie's husband Robert Edgar Jack on [this C-SPAN video](#).

Do you miss live local music?

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If you have any ideas of content you'd like to see, share it with us! And if you enjoy what we share with you, and if you are able to, would you please consider [supporting us](#)?

Thank you for being a part of our community. Everybody stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Thomas Kessler

Executive Director

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