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UCSB History Associates Lecture Highlights Victory Gardens -- Then and Now

When Michelle Obama transformed a patch of the South Lawn into a vegetable garden last year, she followed in the footsteps of another first lady -- Eleanor Roosevelt -- who did the same thing during World War II. While Obama's organic garden provides food for the first family and guests to the White House, its main purpose is to educate children about the value of healthful, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

In a program titled "Victory Gardens: Join the Garden Revolution!" the UCSB History Associates will revisit a time when national interest was focused on household agriculture. Rose Hayden-Smith, a doctoral student in UCSB's Department of History, will discuss the victory gardens of the past, as well as current national policy and models, and the way the local food-systems movement is addressing a wide range of challenges facing Americans today.

The program, which begins at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 7, is co-sponsored by the Goleta Valley Historical Society, and will take place in the History Education Center, located adjacent to the Stow House at 304 N. Los Carneros Road in Goleta. A tour of the Stow House and gardens and a reception will follow Hayden-Smith's talk. The cost is \$12 for History Associates and Historical Society members, and \$15 for all others. Reservations are recommended, and can be made by calling (805) 617-0998.

Also referred to as "war gardens" or "food gardens for defense," victory gardens were planted at private residences and in public parks during World War I and II to reduce the pressure the war efforts placed on the public food supply. Nearly 20 million Americans answered the government's call to provide their own produce. They planted gardens in backyards, empty lots and even city rooftops. Neighbors pooled their resources, planted different kinds of foods, and formed cooperatives, all in the name of patriotism.

Hayden-Smith, who is also a W. K. Kellogg Foundation Fellow and a nationally recognized expert on Victory Gardens and food policy in America, writes for Huffington Post and Civil Eats.

About UC Santa Barbara

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