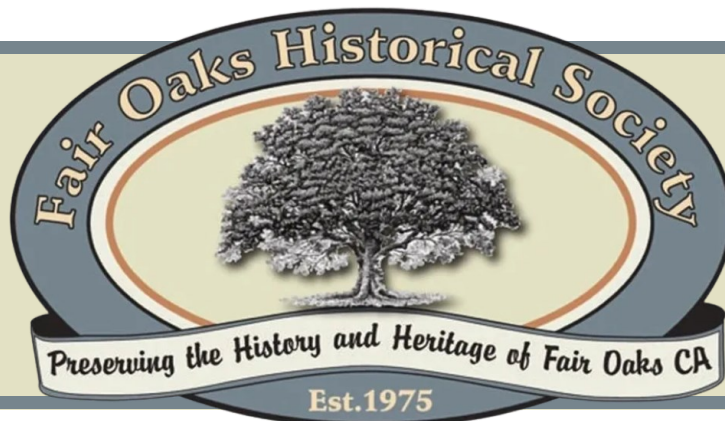


Something to Crow About



January 2024

Issue 147

QUARTERLY GENERAL MEETING

The January quarterly meeting will be held on January 23rd from 6 - 8 pm at the Faith Lutheran Church (4000 San Juan Blvd). Dinner will be our traditional potluck, so please bring a dish to share!

The guest speakers, **David** and **Gayle Woodruff** from the Tahoe area, will present a “living history” of George and Elia Whittell, who owned almost the entire Nevada shoreline of Lake Tahoe in the 1930s to 1950s. They were extremely wealthy, eccentric (they kept an African Lion and more for a pet), arrogant, and unique. Inadvertently, they helped keep a good portion of the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe from being developed (Cave Rock to San Harbor). Their story is both amusing and unbelievable. Come join us for a fun evening!

January 23, 2024 at 6:00 pm
Faith Lutheran Church
4000 San Juan Ave, Fair Oaks

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LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

By Claudia Thorne, President & Carolyn Spotts, Vice President

Dear FOHS Members,

Tickets for **Soup Night** (Friday, February 9th) are on sale now and are going fast. We have a few tables and some individual table assignments left, but predict that we will be sold out by the end of the month. Each ticket is \$35, or you can buy a table for \$280. We have a seating chart so you can choose your seat location(s). If you would like to purchase tickets, please call or text **Claudia** at **(916) 747-1535** or email her at: **cjthorn17@comcast.net**.

We will be accepting Soup Night **raffle and live auction donations** until the end of January. New items are greatly appreciated, gift certificates to your favorite restaurants, spa certificates, wine and spirits, baskets, wrapping materials, etc. And if you have an item that could be part of a theme basket, don't worry that one item could be too small for a donation. Please drop your items off at the **History Center**, open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10:00 – 2:00. You will receive a receipt with our Tax-ID number for your records. Thank you in advance for your donations!



planning and hosting our monthly **Welcome Hour** at the History Center. The event is the first Saturday of each month at 11:00 a.m., September – June. The event is free and open to the public.

With the end of the year fast approaching, many of us who have **IRA's** fall into the **Required Minimum Distribution** (RMD) trap. If you are looking to reduce the taxes on that distribution, please consider making a direct payment (**Qualified Charitable Distribution**) to the Fair Oaks Historical Society (a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization). Just contact your IRA broker and they can write a check from the cash portion of your IRA. Or some brokers will give you a checkbook so you can write a check. It's very easy to do and those QCD donations are **fully deductible from the taxable income** on your 1040-SR line 4b.



In the meantime, we wish you and your families a happy and healthy new year!

Claudia J Thorne, President
Carolyn Spotts, Vice-President



Switching topics, we'd like to recognize **Sandra Navarro** for





Fair Oaks Historical Society

(916) 844-7103

<https://fairoakshistory.org/>



The **FOHS 17th Annual Soup Night**

fundraiser will be held on

Friday, February 9th, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

at the Faith Lutheran Church – 4000 San Juan Ave.

Tickets are \$35 each or \$280 for a table.

Dinner includes bread, salad, soup, and cookies.

Raffle tickets are \$20 for the first sheet and \$10 for each additional sheet purchased at the same time.

Auction and raffle donations (*items of value*)
can be dropped off at the

History Center - 10340 Fair Oaks Blvd.

(open T, TH, SA 10 – 2) until February 3rd.

Donation forms for tax purposes will be provided.

Please contact Claudia Thorn at (916) 747-1535 or
cjthorn17@comcast.net for ticket information.

Welcome New Members

Randall & April Howard

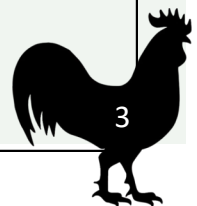
John Hermann

Terry & Harald Meier

Gail Basile

Diana Field

Melani Wilkie



THE DOCENT CORNER

By Bob Sours, Docent

The "Docent Bunch" extends a thank you to all our newsletter readers for your steadfast appreciation of the work that we do at the History Center. As mentioned in previous articles, Docents wear many hats. Most of our Docents also fill positions on the Board, in committee positions, and other volunteer work. Rather than a volunteer job, it's an opportunity to expand networking, knowledge, and social skills.

As the year ends, I want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to be a Docent at our History Center for another year. I am blessed to work with a first class cadre of educated people that enjoy sharing their knowledge of Fair Oaks. The Docents, along with our high tech buffs, research folks, management staff, and others are responsible for sharing all we know with visitors.

Joining the Fair Oaks Historical Society may be different for some than others. Some folks do not have the time to spend, but love history, share the benefits, and help to fund the Society. Still, a variety of opportunities are available for those who have extra time in their schedules, and would love to work on projects and meet new people.

This last year was memorable in many ways as the COVID pandemic wound down and the parks and recreation build-



We proudly fly our colors at the "docent hangout."

ing renovations ramped up. Our world was and continues to be in the middle of conflict, and difficulty, including natural disasters, government issues at all levels, and elections. BUT, in the midst of all of the above our Board of Directors met the challenge head on bringing our year end success above all expectations.

In closing, kudos are due to many. Our Society is sound financially, and a very experienced Board have been set in place to take the helm Jan 1st 1024.

ALL SAID AND DONE - A FANTASTIC JOB WAS ACCOMPLISHED - IN A YEAR OF STRESS AND FEAR TO BE BALANCED BY UNITY FOR ALL.

THANK YOU DOCENTS AT ALL LEVELS.

Thank You



Call for Volunteers: Museum Docents



and the benefit is that you get to meet very nice people and learn more about our little town.

Lately, the History Center has been quite busy from **Noon – 2:00 on Saturdays**. We normally have only one Docent available during this time, and that one person cannot always speak with all the visitors at once. So, **we are looking for volunteers** to help greet visitors and educate them about Fair Oaks history. It's just two hours,

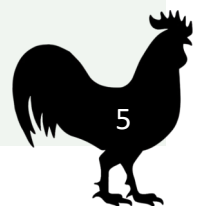
If you would like to help at the **History Center**, please send a message to **Chris Highsmith** at fairoakshistorycenter@gmail.com. Thank you!

50TH ANNIVERSARY PLANNING



The year **2025** will bring **many reasons to celebrate** in Fair Oaks. Not only will the Historical Society be 50 years old but Fair Oaks itself will be **130!!!** It was founded in 1895.

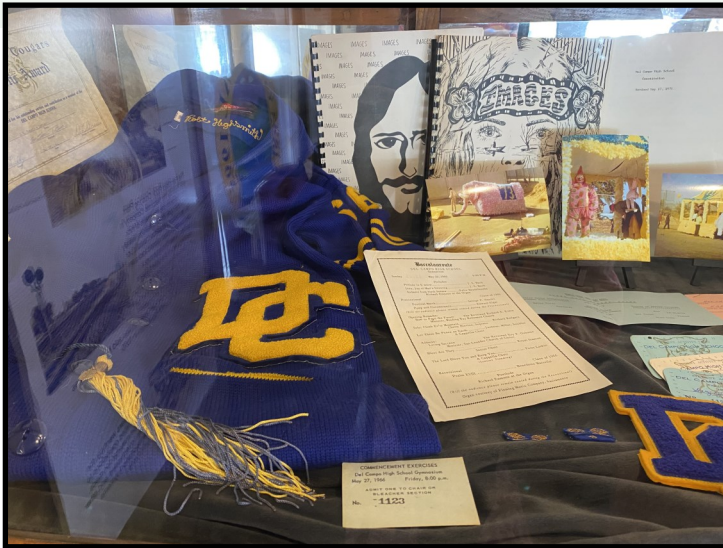
The FOHS Board would like to celebrate the Society's milestone and **Chris Highsmith** is leading the event planning. We have many great ideas but would like to hear from you! If you would like to be a part of the planning committee, **please join us** at the next meeting on **Wednesday, January 10th at 10:00 a.m.** at the History Center at **10340 Fair Oaks Blvd** (next to the Sunflower Drive-in).



WELCOME HOUR AT THE HISTORY CENTER

By Sandra S. Navarro, Welcome Hour Program Director

The Fair Oaks History Center's themed **Welcome Hour** program is held on the first Saturday of each month from 11:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon.



**Del Campo High School,
Class of 1973, 50th Class Reunion
October 7, 2023**





**Kitchen Gadgets of the
1940s and 1950s**
November 4, 2023



Beloved Classic Dolls
December 2, 2023





CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

DECEMBER 2, 2023



THE HISTORY CENTER

In the Fair Oaks Village

10340 Fair Oaks Blvd (next to the Sunflower Drive-in)

Regular Hours

Tuesdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Thursdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Saturdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Welcome Hour event

1st Saturday of each month

11:00 am - noon

Admission is FREE



WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!



FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Chris Highsmith, History Center Operation Manager

A few months ago, Bob Sours received a phone call that he handed over to me at the **Fair Oaks History Center**. It was **Ron Preece** and he wanted to know if we would like some pictures of Fair Oaks. I said we would and asked if he wouldn't mind writing a story to go with the photos. The story he wrote brought back memories for me of living on Laurel Oaks in a rented house that backed up to what was to become Madison Avenue. I remember watching the equipment grading the future avenue. As a kid, I collected soda bottles, and when I took them to Sunset Food Spot, I received some change back for turning them in. In the following narrative, Ron Preece shares a bit about the history of the northwestern area of Fair Oaks (an area we don't often hear much about).

THE PREECE FAMILY IN FAIR OAKS, CA

by Ron Preece



The Preece family (Harry, Katherine, and Ronnie) moved into a new home on the corner of Castle St and Palm Avenue in late 1955.

Almost everything north of Palm Ave was farmland. Kids in the area went to Harry Dewey Elementary School in the Bird Tract. I remember a few of my teachers at Dewey School. My favorite was Mr. McNaughton (Charles). All the kids liked him and learned a lot in his class, 6th grade. I remember Mr. Fox for 5th grade, Mrs. Karde and Mr. Villa. Some of us would eagerly volunteer for duty in the kitchen and lunchroom. The food then was all made from scratch and delicious, not like food the kids get today. All the land behind the school was vacant. I think it was the final land left from the original Dewey Farm. I walked to school quite a distance almost every day with no parental worry about troublemakers. Quite a difference from today. I have 8mm movies of my first dance at Dewey school. For high school the south-side kids went to La Sierra and the north-side went to San Juan.

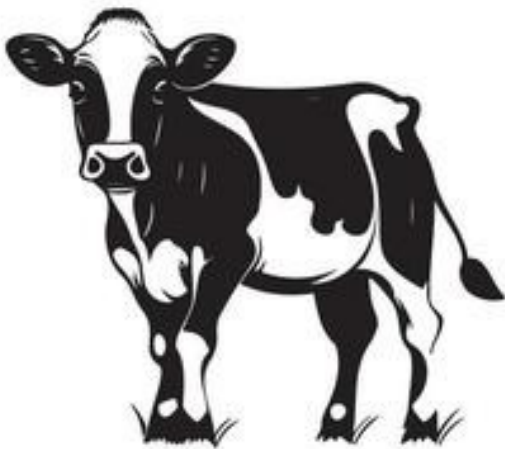
The Arthur Spiers family lived directly across from us on the north side of Palm Avenue. They had about 20 Holstein dairy cows, several thousand chickens and several acres of olive trees. Art's uncle, Olinto Succetti





Mr. McNaughton and Alfred J. Villa were two of Ron's teachers at Dewey Elementary School.

farmed several adjacent acres of oranges and a few other fruits. Art and Kay had four children, Art Jr., Jeff, Nick and Ruth Ann. His wife Catherine lived into her 90s. His mother, Clori, and uncle Olinto, lived in a big house toward the west end of their property. They all were very nice people and put up with me hanging around trying to help and learn as much as I could about the dairy business. For many years when a cow died Art would bury it on the north edge of his property near what became Madison Avenue. After houses were built in the area the Sheriff's



Office would get calls from residents who found bones when digging holes for plants. They thought the bones were human, but they were only Spiers' unfortunate cows. In the early 60's, Art began to divide his land into residential lots and built many of the houses still standing on the north side of Palm between Castle and San Juan. In 1965 our family left for acreage near Loomis. Art and his sons were the primary builders of our new home there.

Olinto was a tough guy. I remember when he was in his seventies we were working in the orchard. He was holding a spray gun connected to a compressor. It malfunctioned and the blast threw him many feet into the air. He survived as active as ever although a bit bent over. He told me he bought his land in 1917 for \$1 per acre. Many years later when suburbia took over, he made a handsome profit but, in the end, he could not stand to see his beloved orange trees removed for housing lots and he died not long after.

About 1960 a family moved into a very old house behind us on Palm Avenue. John "Frenchie" Collell and his wife Ida and their boys Jerry and Jimmy. Frenchie was a real story. He survived the Battle of the Bulge. An interview with him about his war service is on-line. He was a real-deal cowboy. He won several buckles as an all-around cowboy. He used to say he had broken every bone in his body since the war. I went hunting several times with



The Preece Family, continued

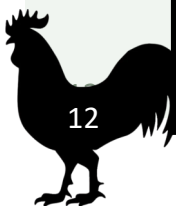
Frenchie and never saw a better shot with a shotgun. He was widely known as a master plumber and electrician. Shortly after they moved in, Frenchie began to disassemble the old house to make way for a new home. I helped him and we found that the house was several builds on top of each other. When we got to the bottom, we found that the original structure was a dirt-floored cabin. We found many square nails. I was too young then to realize that we had found a very historic site but looking back, possibly an original cabin in the area. I think it must have dated to the mid-1800s. In the end, Frenchie built a large, modern home. Frenchie died in his 90s in Salem, Oregon.

I remember when construction began on Madison Avenue. Most of us kids had great fun playing on the equipment and running in the trenches after the workers went home. I got the bright idea to make some money off the project, so I put our ice chest in my wagon and walked up and down the construction area selling ice cold Shasta soda to the workers. They liked doing business with a local kid and they got the soda at a bargain price. They told me the lunch truck operators didn't like the competition, but they left me alone.

My father was one of several volunteer parents who built the first two diamonds at Jim David Park. It was a hot Little League site.



The produce section the Sunset Food Spot.



At the corner of Sunset and San Juan there was a small shopping center including the Sunset Food Spot. My uncle, Bill Whitfield, owned it having bought it from the Villa family. Bill was liked by his customers. His wife, Louise, worked for several years at Stark's Rexall Pharmacy in downtown Fair Oaks. They lived on Renner Street across from the San Juan Dairy.

One of the first Dairy Queens in the area was on San Juan at Winding Way. They offered no food, but we sure went often for the ice cream. Back then, they were the only act for miles. There was a service (not just gas) station on each corner of Sunset and San Juan. You could get service for your car by a real mechanic. One station was Flying A, I don't remember the other.



Bill Whitfield (Ron's uncle) ringing out a customer at the Sunset Food Spot.

We always enjoy receiving photos and stories pertaining to the history of the Fair Oaks area. If you have something you would like to share, don't hesitate to contact the History Center.

Attn: Chris Highsmith
Fair Oaks History Center
P.O. Box 2044
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Email – fairoakshistorycenter@gmail.com
Phone – (916) 844-7103



COMING SOON TO THE HISTORY CENTER...

Welcome Hour 2024

A Lady's Hobby: Hand-Painted Plates of the Early 1900s

January 6, 2024

Be My Valentine: Children's Valentines from the 1940s and 1950s

February 3, 2024

Flatirons, Heavy and Hot!

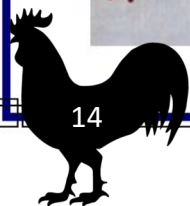
March 2, 2024



A Lady's Hobby: Hand-Painted Plates of the Early 1900s

**Saturday, January 6, 2024, 11:00 – Noon
Displays, Docents, History Center Store
Free Admission**

**10340 Fair Oaks Blvd., Fair Oaks, CA 95628
www.fairoakshistory.org**





Fair Oaks Historical Society Membership / Renewal / Volunteer Application

Name:	Phone - Cell:
Address:	Phone - Home:
Email Address:	
Emergency Contact:	Phone – Home or Cell:

Dues are collected on an annual basis in January. New members joining after October 1st shall be considered paid for the following year. Membership dues are: (circle one)

Individual \$20; Family (2 persons) \$25, Supporting (Business) \$50, Single Life Member \$200,
and Family Life Member \$275. Add \$5 to receive a printed copy of our newsletter.

By requesting membership, we encourage you to be an active participant to further the work of the Fair Oaks Historical Society. Please indicate your interest(s):

<input type="checkbox"/> History Center Docent <input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Collection preservation <input type="checkbox"/> Inventory record management <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Walking Tours <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Board Member <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Chair <input type="checkbox"/> Liaison Representative <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity \ Advertising <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media \ Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Tech \ Media <input type="checkbox"/> Other
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Signature: X	Date:
------------------------	--------------

Send this application with your check to:

Fair Oaks Historical Society
P.O. Box 2044
Fair Oaks, CA 95628



You may also use the PayPal system:

<https://fairoakshistory.org/join/join.htm>

Thank you for your support!

For questions, please contact Terry Clifton at (916) 501-4045 or FOHistory1@gmail.com.

Membership Coordinator use only:

Amount paid: \$

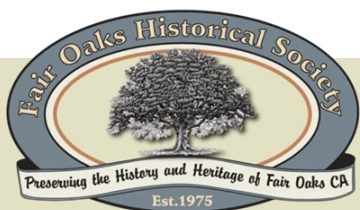
Check # or PayPal #:

Date received:



2024 HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Welcome Hour	January 6
50th Anniversary Planning Mtg	January 10
Executive Board Meeting	January 16
Quarterly General Meeting	January 23
Welcome Hour	February 3
Soup Night	February 9
Executive Board Meeting	February 20
Welcome Hour	March 2
Executive Board Meeting	March 19



Fair Oaks Historical Society
P.O. Box 2044
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: