

FAIR OAKS REMEMBERED . . .

A Souvenir of the First Annual

Fair Oaks Historical Society Dinner

MARCH 26, 1986



# How the Fair Oaks Park District Came About

## Fair Oaks Historical Society

by Harry J. Voth



Written by Harry J. Voth

It began about 1922. The village of Fair Oaks was still quite small, and there was a sizable open space on the east side of Howard Street, about one block square. Someone proposed to establish an auto-wrecking yard there, which other people in the community found most objectionable. Under the leadership of Lou and Orla Gerhardt, a drive was begun to save this piece of ground. The Gerhardts had retired to Fair Oaks after a lifetime as performers in the chautauqua Circuit and were very active in community life. The Fair Oaks Civic Club was organized and managed to collect about \$1,000, enough to buy the disputed tract. After a time the Civic Club disbanded, but to make sure that the land they had purchased did not again fall into private hands, it was deeded to the local grammar school district.

For more than 20 years this piece of land lay quiet and secure from exploitation. Then proposals began to emerge to put it to public use. There was talk of putting up a court building and, in response to one strongly made suggestion, Wadsworth P. Cacciari, an architect for the State of California, even drew a set of plans for a public restroom. Another thought was to develop it as a public parking area.

By this time the community had become even more attached to the little park in its center, and these proposals to despoil it created a great furor. A new Fair Oaks Civic Club was organized to handle this and other community problems. One very active member of the new club was Louis Rahlin, a retired naval Chief Petty Officer. He was a man of tremendous energy, who let nothing stand in his way. He conceived the idea of creating a park district, and, with the support of the Civic Club, almost singlehandedly carried the operation through the county agencies involved and the County Board of Supervisors. The Fair Oaks Park and Recreation District, made approximately co-extensive with the Fair Oaks Water (then Irrigation District), was enthusiastically voted into being by the people of Fair Oaks in 1945. Its governing body, as it still is today, was the County Board of Supervisors. The Park District Advisory Board, generally governs the District, but is appointed by the Supervisors and its actions may be countermanded, superseded, and mandated by the Supervisors.

The first meeting of the Park Board was held on December 2nd, 1945. They elected as officers E.G. Prowell, Chairman, Harry J. Voth, Secretary, and William E. Spangle, Treasurer. Floyd Hall and H. Dana Bowers were members at large.

The Park Board immediately began action to acquire title to the park in the middle of the village, and also to purchase the school building which is now known as the Community Clubhouse. The land was secured without cost, and the school building was bought for \$500.

The transactions were handled by Judge Narramore, but it was some time before the board acquired the deeds, for these were kept in the judge's safe while in process, and the safe was stolen. Much later the safe was found in the American River, at the foot of the Old Bridge. In the meantime the documents were reissued.

Early in the autumn of 1975, at the invitation of Peggy Fletcher, Park District Recreation Supervisor, about two dozen people assembled in the Arts and Crafts Center, Fair Oaks, to discuss the formation of an historical society. Reaction was favorable and it was agreed to meet again and organize.

On October 20, 1975, the group reconvened and heard a talk by Mr. Chuck Lucas, of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society. Drawing on experiences in forming the Lake Tahoe Historical Society, Mr. Lucas outlined the procedures necessary for organization, adopting a constitution, electing officers and designating their duties. He also outlined typical activities, establishing a museum, raising money, and enlisting community support.

After a social meeting in November, and another in December, formal action began on January 12, 1976. For officers the Society elected Harry J. Voth, President, Sue Roark, Vice-President, Dana Freet, Secretary, and Liesa Voth, Treasurer. Committee heads were appointed: Historian, Betty Bishofberger; Museum, Mae Dunham; Library, Robert L. Massey; Membership, Sue Roark; Publicity, Peggy Fletcher; Historical Sites, Rogene Carey.

An early money-raising device was the Fair Oaks Historical Calendar, illustrated with views of ancient features of the village, like the public school which is now the Community Clubhouse and an unpaved Winding Way. Calendars were issued for the years 1976, 1978, 1979 and 1980. Issuance had to be discontinued as production costs became prohibitive.

A standard arrangement at general meetings of the Society was a talk by someone who had lived in Fair Oaks. Thus, Al Fowler presented several albums of clippings and photographs starting in 1907, and told stories about the contents. Iva Rice Langness gave a talk on life in Fair Oaks from 1910 to 1920, illustrated with many photographs from that era. Cyril Thomas, former City Manager of Folsom, and Superintendent of the Natomas Company during the height of its dredging activities, told about the operation of those behemoth dredgers. Mrs. Vivian Saverian spoke about life in Fair Oaks in the 1920's. She was a junior and a senior at San Juan High School when 200 students were registered and there were no classes in languages, art, music. She reported they had "a marvelous time" Students came from Folsom by Pierce Arrow stages, which travelled daily over Greenback Lane.

But attendance at meetings began to diminish — to the point that it became embarrassing to ask speakers to address such small audiences. Today, the Society is virtually moribund. Only the officers meet — and that only occasionally. They are holding on in the hope that a renewed interest in Fair Oaks' exciting history will produce a new nucleus of people who can take over.

### NOTE

Dec. 2, 1945  
Fair Oaks Park District  
Formed

### NOTE

Dec. 9, 1932  
Disastrous Freeze Destroys  
Orange Industry





## The Great Oak

by Harry J. Voth



One of the features that must have influenced many people to make their homes in Fair Oaks, as it did me, was the huge oak tree (*Quercus Lobata*) that dominated the north end of Howard Street, near its intersection with Entrance Street. Off-hand, I would say the trunk was at least three feet in diameter and the crown upwards of sixty feet in height. It was probably a major landmark to all the early settlers, for it must have been a hundred or more years old when settlement began in the late 19th century.

In the early twentieth century, most likely in the thirties, the county road department decided that the tree constituted a traffic hazard even though it had no branches at eye-level. The decision was made that the tree should be removed. Fortunately, word got to Fair Oaks in time and when the county crew arrived they found a large group of women, led by Mrs. Guy Camden, sitting in a circle around the tree. The ladies refused to budge, so the foreman telephoned his headquarters and was told to bring the crew back to Sacramento.

Thus, the great oak was saved. However, the community remained alert for further attempts on its life. When the Fair Oaks Park District was formed, the County Board of Supervisors assigned specific responsibility for the tree to the Park District Advisory Board.

Unfortunately, what Man was not permitted to do directly he accomplished indirectly and unwittingly. One day, this writer, then a member of the Park District Board, while driving into the village, noticed that the great oak's leaves were wilting. He informed the District Superintendent, Larry Seifert, who went into immediate action. It was soon learned that the sewer pipe down Howard Street had sprung a major leak and flooded most of the drip area around the tree. Repairs were quickly made but it was too late; the tree had drowned. It wasn't the sewage; it was the water. Our valley oaks cannot tolerate much water around their roots during the growing season.

It was a sad lesson for all of us.

## Early Telephones in Fair Oaks

by Harry J. Voth



When I came to Fair Oaks some 42 years ago, the telephones were, by current standards, primitive, to say the least. Virtually everyone was on a party line; connections between parties were made by some one called "Central", or, more commonly, "Operator."

To make a telephone call, one left the receiver on the hook, turned a crank vigorously and then put the receiver to the ear. Pretty soon a voice would say "Operator" and one would state the number of the party to be called. Thereupon there would be a series of clicks and buzzes, after which a voice would say "hello" and the conversation would proceed.

One mandatory courtesy, before making a call, was to take down the receiver and ask, "Line busy?" Otherwise, if your line-partner had receiver to ear, he would be exposed to a nerve-shattering racket when you turned the crank. I neglected this precaution on one occasion and received an earful of invective plus comments on my ancestry as well as on my total lack of courtesy and refinement.

One of the nicer aspects of telephone service in those days was the feeling of neighborliness. I remember one day when, having carefully made sure the line was clear, I called the operator and gave her Lou Gerhardt's number. "He isn't home", was the reply, "I just saw him walk into George Payne's Service Station. Would you like me to call him there?" The operator's station was on the second floor of the building immediately across Howard Street from Payne's service station. She made the connection and my business with Gerhardt was completed without delay.

Speaking of neighborly telephone service, I am reminded of my Grandfather who was a country preacher in Southern Minnesota and, being a German immigrant from Russia, knew no English. In serving his church he travelled quite widely over that area. The telephone operators knew no German, but Grandfather had only to step to a public telephone, call the operator and say in his Low-German dialect, "yayftme Mahmuh" (Give me mother) and would be connected to his farmhome telephone without delay.

Alas for the "good old days" when life was simple.

**January 20, 1929**  
**Fair Oaks School dedicated at its present site.**

**January 1, 1951**  
**House and street numbers replaced rural route numbers.**

**January 19, 1907**  
**First Fair Oaks Bridge washed out.**

**February 11, 1920**  
**Twonnette Parker became Postmaster.**

**February 12, 1896**  
**First Post Office in Shelton's store.**  
**Leonard M. Shelton, Postmaster.**



## **"Pappy" Pine, A Fair Oaks Legend**

by Harry J. Voth



I came to Sacramento two days before Pearl Harbor to work for the state in what was called Defense Production Training. The program name quickly changed to War Production Training and my job began to look very secure. It was time to look for a place to live. Apartment dwelling in the city did not appeal to me. I wanted a place in the countryside and, by spring, week-end tours were a regular thing.

Driving up from Carmichael on Fair Oaks Boulevard, also known as H-Street Road, into Fair Oaks, I was enchanted, and when I came to that great oak at the north end of Howard Street, I knew Fair Oaks was what I had been looking for.

Before long I became acquainted with Lou Gerhardt, Ex-Chautauqua performer, now a real estate agent. Lou led me to a house overlooking Winding Way, where it comes down and follows Cozy Glen.

My closest neighbor, to the east, was an elderly gentleman, about 80 years old, with a fluent tongue. I never learned his first name, but everybody called him "Pappy" Pine. He appeared to be a real pioneer of California's gold-mining days. When Lou introduced him he called "Pappy" "the Biggest Liar in Seven States".

According to the story, Pappy Pine had competed in a major liars contest, and won first prize with the following story: he had been working away at his gold mining job, when he began to feel pains in his belly. The pain finally got so intense he was taken to a hospital. Before he knew what was going on a surgeon had taken a fistful of gallstones out of his gall bladder.

Pappy felt much better, but he had no idea how much the operation cost, and was sure it was far beyond his means. He was assured that if he would relinquish ownership the gallstones would be adequate compensation. Naturally cagey, he maintained title, which was fortunate, for his gallstones assayed at 20-carat gold and paid not only for his operation, but also for the house he was living in.

Pappy didn't stay very long. He was offered a job he couldn't resist: guardian of a gold mine in his favorite country, Fiddletown, in the historic foothills of California. I never heard of him again.

## **The Fair Oaks Swimming Pool Story**

by Harry J. Voth



Every Community is interested in having a swimming pool, however, to install a swimming pool is an expensive proposition and the first pools in a community are frequently attached to high schools and are therefore usually not available to the general public.

No one, therefore, was surprised when, shortly after the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District came into being, people began to talk about constructing a swimming pool in the Village. The matter was brought up several times at Park Board meetings. Most members rather liked the idea, but it quickly became clear to them all that there were three major obstacles: the cost, where to place the pool, and where to find parking space for the patrons.

A group under the leadership of Bob Massey called for a public meeting with the Park Board. There was much discussion of the pros and cons, sometimes acrimonious. But no ideas emerged for solving the identified problems. However, the Park Board inaugurated a program in which, under the direction of Mae Dunham, Fair Oaks children were taken by bus to various pools in adjoining communities. This helped somewhat to relieve the pressure for a local pool.

Some time later another group of pool-interested people was formed, with George Hauserman as chairman and Cay Cawley as secretary. These people presented a very formidable force and marshalled many arguments in favor of a pool, even trying to enlist community support by proposing to call it The Veterans Memorial Pool. However, the Park Board, under the leadership of Chairman Alden Brock, held its ground. Parking eventually stood out as the insurmountable problem.

Swimming in the American River had been a Fair Oaks institution for many decades. The main problem was that in summer the stream dwindled down to a trickle, barely deep enough for wading. Folsom Dam introduced a major change. Now a fairly steady if somewhat colder stream could be maintained and at a depth quite adequate for swimming in some places. Sacramento Bar, at the foot of Pennsylvania Avenue, was such a place and became very popular. The Park Board recognized both the value of this new facility and its dangers. Lifeguards were hired during the summer — as many as three on days of heavy use. Even so, there were several drownings of small children, because the size and irregular shape of the area made close supervision impossible. At least one drowned child was revived by the Fair Oaks firemen, who kept in close touch with activities.

As might be expected, word got around, and before long people from virtually all of northern Sacramento County began to come regularly and they practically crowded Fair Oaks residents out of the river. A Park District staff member made a survey one Sunday and found only about a half-dozen local people in a huge crowd. Taking note of this situation, the Park District pointed out to the County Board of Supervisors that, at considerable expense, it was making a major contribution to recreation for County citizens who did not live in the District and hence contributed nothing toward their enjoyment. The District Board asked for substantial recompense, which was furnished.

However, shortly after, County Counsel John Heinrich pointed out

**March 18, 1895**  
**Eastern Promoters purchase**  
**land for development**

**March 21, 1907**  
**Fair Oaks Bridge**  
**washed out**

**March 26, 1917**  
**Fair Oaks**  
**Irrigation District formed**



## The "Singing Cop" of Fair Oaks

by Harry J Voth



Many years ago, a young army recruit from the Ozark mountains, by the name of George Stinson, on leave from his camp, went to a nearby city in search of amusement. Quite by accident he wandered into a theatre where a grand opera was being presented. It was an ecstatic experience. He felt that he had come to heaven. Thereafter he made it a point to attend every opera he could.

Soon he was familiar with many operas. He bought recordings of operas and a phonograph on which to play them. He found that he could sing the entire arias, memorized many of them, and sang them whenever time and place permitted.

When his service in the army ended, Stinson came to California and joined the California Highway Patrol as a highway policeman. Riding along over the roads of Southern California on his motorcycle, there was much opportunity for singing, which he did with gusto. Before long he became known as "The Singing Cop", and people spoke well of his singing. Although his speaking voice was naturally a baritone, he had no difficulty in reaching the upper notes of a tenor. He was a dramatic tenor, not a lyric tenor.

Encouraged by the compliments he received, Stinson began to dream of an operatic career. But how was he to break into that exclusive field? When opportunity came he seized it boldly. The great operatic Soprano, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, happened to be riding in her chauffeur-driven car and he asked her if she would hear him sing. She obliged and was enthusiastic. He had all an operatic tenor needed: quality, range and "pitch" (i.e. he didn't wander off the scale). She agreed to be his mentor.

But there were many years of study ahead. His fellow-patrolmen offered to help finance his training. He spent a good many years in Italy under the direction of the masters. When he returned, he sang in the San Francisco opera and a number of other places. Then World War II came along and there was no time for singing. Stinson spent the war years as a military policeman in San Francisco.

Somehow, the war put an end to his operatic career. He rejoined the Highway Patrol and was stationed in the Sacramento area. He made his home in Fair Oaks. His singing was limited to concert work and local choruses, such as the Fair Oaks Rotary chorus. You always knew when Patrolman Stinson drove by in his Patrol car because he was always singing — from practicing scales to operatic arias, like *Celeste Aida*. He also gave singing lessons to local people, including this writer. Eventually he retired and moved to Florida, and Fair Oaks knew The Singing Cop no more.

**JULY 31, 1959**  
**Joseph T. Collins**  
**became Postmaster**

**JULY 1, 1896**  
**First water pipe laid by**  
**North Fork Ditch Company**

## The Fair Oaks "Community Services District"

by Harry J. Voth



When the Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District came into being, the community of Fair Oaks found itself with no less than four districts, each providing services and levying taxes. These were the Park District, the Irrigation District, the Fire District, and the Cemetery District — to say nothing of the School District, which was a horse of another color.

Concern was expressed in the community about duplication of services by these agencies, and especially about the possibility of two or more districts finding it necessary to levy unusually heavy taxes for some special project at the same time. This might lay a heavy financial burden on the citizens.

Recognizing the problem, board members of the four agencies held a series of meetings to deal with it. The first formal step was a Community Co-ordinating Council to make sure that each district board was kept informed of other boards' activities. Next came a realization that very considerable savings could be effected if the four districts were combined into one district with one governing board and one administrative staff to handle the fire, cemetery, water, park, and recreation functions in Fair Oaks. Plans were made to make the boundaries of the four districts identical.

When the time came for each district board to ratify the plan and then for the group to put it into effect, an insuperable obstacle appeared. The Irrigation District Board refused to take the required action and the plan came to an abrupt and total stop.

It was learned that the District Superintendent of the Irrigation District, Eric Fulton, had announced that if the consolidation was put into effect, he would resign at once. Fulton had run the Irrigation District for many years because he was the only person who knew where all the district pipelines had been laid. The only existing map of the pipelines was in his head. If he quit, the District would be in a terrible bind.

However, the idea of a Community Services District had caught the imagination of Fair Oaks citizen Louis Rahlin, who had already given us the Park District. He had enabling legislation introduced in the legislature to this effect. In the first year his bill was defeated, partly, at least, due to opposition from the League of California Cities and the comparable organization of California Counties. The next year the bill was adjusted to meet their objections and became law.

Today Fair Oaks is part of a Community Services District — The San Juan Suburban Water District. Anytime the people wish, they can add to the functions of this district any of the services normally rendered by a city. However, none of the functions that under law are required of a city need be placed on the District unless the citizens want it.

**JULY 1, 1903**  
**Rural mail delivery begins**  
**in Fair Oaks**



# Fair Oaks and Water

by Harry J. Voth

On December 24, 1844, Manuel Micheltorena, Governor of the Californias, granted Joel P. Dedmond the land on which Fair Oaks now stands — comprising 19,982 acres and known as the San Juan Grant. By the fall of 1895, this grant had been acquired by Clarke & Cox of Sacramento who appeared also to be owners of the North Fork Ditch Company. Under terms negotiated with Clarke & Cox, The Howard & Wilson Publishing Company of Chicago subdivided about 4,000 acres of this land, an area eventually called Fair Oaks, into small tracts and offered these for sale. The first "Home seekers" arrived in Fair Oaks about the middle of November, 1895. The primary concern of the early settlers in Fair Oaks was water — what else? During the first winter the source of supply was the nearest stream, from which water was hauled in barrels and tubs for household use. People living near the hotel had access to a 175-foot well, from which water was pumped by hand. Some used a yoke across the shoulders with a bucket at each end and carried water a quarter mile or more.

One story is that in June 1896 a water system was completed in Fair Oaks and irrigation begun. During the winter of 1896 several lateral pipe lines were laid. By the spring of 1897, about 1,000 acres had been planted to orchards. At the end of 1898 the developers, Howard and Wilson Publishing Company, who had sold 2,200 acres of land, were forced for various reasons to sever all business connections with the colony. It now became apparent that Howard and Wilson Publishing Company had failed in their promise to install adequate pipes and that further expansion of the colony must await additional supplies of water.

It appears that the interests of Howard & Wilson had been taken over by Clarke & Cox, who also had the water right to the North Fork Ditch Company. About December 1902, it was announced that R.G. Hanford had organized a company to assume the interests of Clarke & Cox in the Fair Oaks colony.

In the interim the Fair Oaks Development Company had been organized. Its life was short, but, in addition to bringing about a bridge across the American River and the construction of a railroad spur from the Southern Pacific line to the bridgehead, it also laid 2½ miles of 28-inch steel pipe from "the reservoir" to the outskirts of the colony, greatly increasing the efficiency of the water system.

On May 29th, 1903, The Fair Oaks Horticultural Improvement Association, at the largest meeting in its history, concluded that "... the best plan for the colony is to form an irrigation district ...". A committee was appointed to "see the company with a view to securing better service". "The company" was not identified and specific results of the committee's activities are not known.

On March 26, 1917, after a vote by the people, who also elected three directors, the County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution creating the Fair Oaks Irrigation District. The first Irrigation District Board meeting was held on March 27, 1917. On May 7, 1917, District Engineer, Stephen E. Kieffer, was instructed to negotiate with the North Fork Ditch Company for more water.

The North Fork Ditch has figured prominently in all of Fair Oaks history. There is speculation that it was originally dug to convey water for gold mining activities, possibly for the major operations carried on at Sailor Bar long before the dredgers came.

On July 10, 1979, the directors voted that "Irrigation District" was no longer descriptive of the facts and "Fair Oaks Water District" would be a more appropriate name.

# The BIG Freeze

by Harry J. Voth  
Fair Oaks Historical Society



In December of 1932, I was hitchhiking my way to California and had stopped to visit family friends in Dallas, Oregon. On Saturday, December 10, I rode with a friend in his car to Portland. Over the whole 60 miles we couldn't find a single functioning toilet. All had been destroyed by a very heavy frost. Ten years later, when I first came to Fair Oaks, I learned what that frost had done to this community.

One of the great drawing cards when the Howard & Wilson Publishing Company advertised for people to settle in Fair Oaks was the prospect of producing oranges. Before the year 1900 over 1,000 acres had been planted and it is reported that in its heyday Fair Oaks shipped out as many as 200 carloads of oranges per year.

The Big Freeze, as it is still called by those who remember it, was the same one that devastated the toilets in Oregon on December 10, 1932. It destroyed a great many of the orange orchards in Fair Oaks. It also destroyed the confidence of many of the growers. It takes years to bring an orange tree to full production. Who could know when the next big freeze would strike? What the weather has done once it can do again. Many orchards were torn out wholesale, and the ground planted to less sensitive crops. It was noted, at the time, that orchards at low elevations were especially damaged, while some in the higher areas suffered hardly at all.

As a matter of fact, it was forty years, almost to the day that the next big freeze came. It was probably not quite as bad as the one of 1932, but it did a lot of damage. Our 40-foot eucalyptus tree was so badly damaged it had to be dug out. A large tree of the acacia kind was killed outright. On the other hand, our orange trees, a Navel and a Valencia, survived.

The reports of damage to orange trees in 1972 were not as dramatic as in 1932, probably because the frost-sensitive areas had been denuded in the earlier freeze, while others, on hills, had survived and were still producing. Such an orchard was that of D.D. Dickson, located on a hill near Kenneth Avenue. In the 40's it was still producing delicious oranges, and grapefruit one could eat like an orange.

In 1896 there was a clearing of the land for oranges and olives at Fair Oaks, American River District, Heart of California. It seems like a sacrifice to slaughter the noble oaks, even for oranges.

**OCTOBER 8, 1908**  
**Fair Oaks Library Association**  
**formed**

**OCTOBER 23, 1907**  
**Fair Oaks Road**  
**Committee formed**



## The Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse

by Harry J. Voth

One of the first concerns of the new Fair Oaks community, of course, was the education of its children. By September, 1902, a new two-story school house had been completed. The contractor was Joseph Broadley, who had come to Fair Oaks from Brandon, Manitoba. His son, Robert Broadley, told this writer that his father refused delivery of any piece of lumber that had even a single knot in it and was meticulous in following the best construction procedures.

On September 11, 1902, completion of the new school was celebrated with a reception. People from throughout the surrounding country gathered, until the building was thronged. To quote a story in the Fair Oaks High School Advocate of that time, "Every countenance beamed with an excusable pride and joy — the former feeling prompted by the architectural beauty of the edifice; the latter by the fact that the new schoolhouse was finished and ready for occupancy." There were songs by a male quartet and three soloists. Addresses were heard from a County Judge, the County Superintendent of Schools, and the Principal of the new Fair Oaks school.

• For many years the building provided accommodations for all Fair Oaks Grammar School and High School students, but eventually it was replaced by San Juan High School on Greenback Lane near San Juan Avenue, and the Grammar School at the junction of Fair Oaks Boulevard and Winding Way, and itself fell into disrepair. However, it still served as a convenient meeting place for community groups.

Then came The Depression and, under President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, a project was formed to rehabilitate the old school. By 1937 the job was completed (The sign "WPA 1940" is still there.) The cupola and its bell were taken off and the structure was reduced to a single story with a basement below. Title remained with the Fair Oaks School District, which continued to allow use by people like the Fair Oaks Civic Club who needed a meeting place.

So it was until 1946. One of the first undertakings by the newly-formed Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District was to administer this building, which it acquired for the sum of \$500 in June 1949. But use as a community hall was deferred while a movie theatre was established therein and operated by Anson J. Longtin. It continued thus until the close of the war permitted the construction of a theatre, at which time the clubhouse was again available for community use. It was christened the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse by this writer who was then secretary of the Park District Board.

In 1902 a resident was quoted as saying, "Our roads are a source of wonder and bewilderment to every stranger who comes into the colony."



## Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hills

by Harry J. Voth

During World War II, as a patriotic duty, I would spend my weekends doing chores for farmer Wiley W. Dickson, off Winding Way, west of San Juan. I found myself cleaning out pig pens, assisting at castrations, pitching hay, and harvesting almonds, among other duties.

One day I was assigned to digging holes for fence posts. Imagine my excitement when I found particles glittering like gold in the dirt I dug up. Regretfully, I concluded it was nothing but fool's gold, pyrites or mica. I have since learned, however, what few Fair Oaks residents suspect: We are, truly, living on top of gold-bearing soil.

About 45 years ago some 22 acres in the northwest corner of Kenneth and Sunset Avenues in Fair Oaks, across from what is now Miller Park, were owned by a well-to-do San Franciscan named R.V. Dickson. The land was planted to oranges and olives. Mr. Dickson somehow became aware that, distributed throughout the soil of his property, was a quantity of gold in a flour-like state and possibly in quantities warranting recovery.

Being amply supplied with money, Mr. Dickson decided to try. His ranch foreman, Percy Daynes, built a big tank and settling basin. Dirt was removed by scraper from the hill-top, sometimes to a depth of 8 feet, and dumped into the tank. There it was subjected to treatment with a solution of chemicals which had an affinity for gold and thus separated it from the dirt, from which it was then washed in the settling basin. The waste water went into a well some 60 feet deep.

The solution of gold and chemicals was next fired in a retort, which drove water and chemicals away as a vapor, leaving only the gold.

The process, begun as an experiment, proved successful. But there was not enough gold in the soil to pay for the costs of production. After about a year of operation, the project was abandoned.

Still, it cannot be denied to us residents of Fair Oaks: There's gold in these our hills.

On January 20, 1929 the Fair Oaks school was dedicated at its present site.

In 1896 Mr. E.S. Smith wrote to a friend: "... I feel it is my duty to write you and beg that you come up here and go over to the Fair Oaks colony before you settle upon a location. A more beautiful country in the state of nature it is impossible to conceive of, and the climate is unsurpassed."





## Another Migrant to California



by Harry J. Voth

It is a good many years ago that John Henderson, then the Federal agent in charge of migrant workers' camps in California, was to give an important speech on the camp program to a large audience. His opening was a question: "How many of you were born in California? Show me your hands." Only a few, scattered, hands were raised. He began his talk, then, with "Well, fellow migrants," and went on with his presentation.

I, too, am a migrant, from Manitoba — the same province from which came the Broadley family which has played a major and honorable role in making Fair Oaks the fine place it is today. It was the time of the Great Depression. I was a Sophomore from the University of Manitoba, and could see no way of earning enough money to continue my studies.

So, in May of 1932, I loaded a knapsack with necessities and set off afoot for the south. Being a farm boy, I steered clear of towns and cities. I truly lived off the country. It was a firm principle never to spend money on food. Standard operating procedure was to go up to a farmhouse and offer to work for a meal. Rarely was I turned away. Many gave me food without having me work. Generally, people were very sympathetic. But I got to clean out cow stables, chop wood, hoe weeds, etc. Sometimes I sang for a meal — or for a ride.

Transportation was usually hitch-hiking on a major highway. I got out of a city or town as quickly as possible, and **walked**. I passed many hitchhikers sitting beside the road. I believed, and was told, that walking demonstrated seriousness and made people want to help. On the back of my knapsack I carried a large sign reading "University of Manitoba". This helped, too.

Sleeping accommodations were my own: a double Hudson's Bay woolen blanket my mother had given me and two rubber-faced army ground-sheets. One ground-sheet separated me from the ground; the other from the dew. Sometimes I laced them together for greater warmth. In case of rain, finding shelter was occasionally a problem. After I got used to sleeping on the ground, I found it impossible to sleep on a mattress.

I visited relatives in Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Montana and British Columbia; and called on friends in Texas and Oregon. A Texas friend taught me how to ride freight trains. In Oklahoma I worked in the hay and grain harvests (shovelled grain at 10¢ per 60-bushel load) and did some expansion work at the bottom of a 60-ft. well.

Leaving Oklahoma, I travelled to Texas, then to Colorado, where I climbed Pike's Peak. Then, via Montana, back to Manitoba for a short stay. In about two weeks of travelling I was in Western British Columbia, where an attack of impetigo protracted my stay. Christmas was spent with old family friends in Dallas, Oregon.

I spent New Year's Eve in the Helping Hand Mission in Ashland, Oregon. New Year's Day, January 1, 1933, I crossed the Siskiyou into California. I've been a Californian ever since. So what if I spent the next night in the Dunsmuir jail? It was cold.

**MAY 5, 1907**  
**New temporary bridge**  
**opened.**

**MAY 7, 1946**  
**Fair Oaks Rotary Club**  
**organized.**

**MAY 9, 1934**  
**Bert R. Hild**  
**became Postmaster**

**MAY 27, 1896**  
**Macadam Road planned: Sacramento,**  
**Fair Oaks, Orangevale, Folsom**

**AUGUST 23, 1926**  
**Fair Oaks**  
**cemetery district formed**

**AUGUST 11, 1902**  
**Fair Oaks elementary school**  
**dedicated**

**SEPTEMBER 2, 1912**  
**First track — laying tractor brought**  
**to Fair Oaks by Earl Ricketts**

**SEPTEMBER 14, 1927**  
**Hattie M. Miller**  
**became Postmistress**

**SEPTEMBER 9, 1954**  
**San Juan suburban**  
**water district formed**



# Congratulations 1985-86 Honorary Mayor



*Iva Langness*

## *From the Mayor's Desk*

*Iva Langness*

Good Morning!

The race for mayor during the past two months was a fun, exciting and worthwhile adventure for all four candidates involved. Before I don the robe of office and begin the challenge of the year ahead as Honorary Mayor of Fair Oaks, I would like to thank each of you. Your generous support of my venture into "My Town" politics is greatly appreciated.



You may ask "What does the Mayor do?" — I think not too much. But I encourage each of us to look into the betterment of our community. We know that our village is unique in itself, a blend of the treasured "old" and the uncharted "new". It is our duty to preserve the best of both.

There have been many changes and we anticipate many more — from the fire department of the past with its volunteers responding to a siren which signaled direction to go to fight the fire, to our present updated system with modern personnel and equipment . . . from the rural postal service when the carrier would take the mail and the bags of money to the train at the Folsom-Fair Oaks intersection . . . and back in time to the irrigation district with one superintendent, to the present Fair Oaks Water District with its modern facilities.

I think back to the first Fiesta in 1928 with everyone in Spanish costume. The young ladies of the Woman's Thursday Club made crepe paper shawls with deep fringe for all the ladies. The promoter, Mr. Rose who owned the electric company, and his grandson Al Linn installed lights at every corner. Mr. Rose built a large platform at the intersection of Toyon and Romona Streets, where he lived. All entertainment was performed there, followed by dancing far into the night. Then this year's beautifully planned Fiesta weekend. More groups were involved in the parade, there was plenty of good food, artful displays, a very professional talent show, great music, and the quiet of no carnival. This year I had the privilege of riding in the parade in a beautifully restored Auburn car, owned and driven by Dr. Kreth.

I could go on and on with thoughts of the Old and New, but we who live here should cherish and enjoy what we have in our friendly village.

**JUNE 1, 1907**  
**First issue of "Oak Leaves"**  
**magazine published.**

**JUNE 6, 1901**  
**First train run from**  
**Sacramento to Folsom**

**JUNE 30, 1896**  
**Water turned on in the**  
**new colony pipe system**



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

Marsha, the able Chamber of Commerce Manager, called me today and reminded me that the Honorary Mayor's article for the newsletter was due Tuesday of last week. Last week!!! Where did the week go?

August is State Fair time. I thought of the California State Fair when it was located way out on Stockton Boulevard.

I remember the magnificent Hall of Flowers. Such beautiful displays of color and design in flowers, plants and mini gardens. But then have you seen the dinner plate size Dahlias or the Cascade of prize winning Chrysanthemums in the local gardens of Al Baltus on Chicago Avenue?

Then the State Fair County Building with the displays of each county exhibits. In our corner of Sacramento County we no longer have the vast citrus orchards or row upon row of olive trees, each crop to be processed in our local packing sheds. The vineyards stretching over most of the area of Rancho Cordova, the second largest vineyard in the world, are no longer there. However, we enjoy beautifully landscaped gardens surrounding our attractive homes.

We now have lighted tennis courts, ball diamonds and picnic areas in our nine local parks. Then off we would go with full baskets of food for the day. We would always find a corner lawn to enjoy our picnic and watch the crowd.

If one would choose to "eat out" you could choose a local lodge or church-operated restaurant. When the occasion came up you could always choose the State Grange dining room. My father enjoyed a large bowl of homemade chicken dumplings on many such occasions.

I'm remembering our first local hot dog stand. It was originated and owned by Pop Bourne and boasted three stools. The stand was located under the oaks, about where the Chamber of Commerce office is located.

Then the State Fair Women's Building, with a large ladies lounge, displayed rooms filled with hand crafted articles. Here, in our town, we have many shops staffed by experts who will instruct us on old world crafts in modern fashions. Instruction includes the hand painting of Bisque doll heads, the sewing of fine seams, wall papering, tole painting or the creation and design of your own crafts.

Does anyone remember the strolling one man band who was always followed by active children visiting the Old Fair Grounds? Have you taken the time to enjoy the music in our local amphitheatre offered to us by our own park district?

I could not forget the street dancing or the display of fire works at the race track.

I could go on and on with fond memories but I'm loving today's world and "Our Town" is one of a kind. Enjoy it!



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

September is back to school time. I am not one of those people who had to walk three miles to school. I ran across the road, zipped into line in time to salute the flag of our country, then lined up to march into one of the four large rooms for class. There was one teacher and two grades to each room.

I think it's interesting to note that my mother and father also completed their grade school education in the same building. That building is now our Community Center.

When I was in the 8th grade I worked in the local telephone office. The telephone company was owned by Mr. Rose, and his daughter, Polly, managed the office. After school I walked over to the office to work a four hour shift at 25¢ an hour. We could keep track of whomever was "over town" by just looking out the window and we were often asked to do just that. The office was located in a large residence on the sloping hill just back of our amphitheatre. Today's telephone systems scare me.

September was and is the time to think about school clothes. We often went into Sacramento on Mr. Zurfluchs stage and spent the day. Lunch time often found us at the Farmers Market located on the corner of J Street. There you could have all the coffee or buttermilk you could drink for 5¢. Have you ordered a cup of coffee lately?

School makes me think of books and books make me remember the Fair Oaks library located at the triangle of Main, Temescal and California Streets. The same building now houses the local Park District Office. Same building, just different looks.

As for high school, San Juan High School, that is, we rode the bus for that three mile trip. Mr. Mark Smith owned a black Model T Ford with benches on the side and solid rubber back wheels and his son Lyall drove it. Later Mr. Sim Green owned a deep maroon color bus and it was driven by a very reliable senior boy. Students came from the Haggin-Grant area. Most of this is now known as Town & Country. There were also students from Folsom and Orangevale. Hazel Luther Morris owned and drove her own car to school. She was the only girl to own a car and drive it. Have you ever noticed today's school parking lots?

Today when I attend San Juan High School Alumni meetings my mind's eye plays tricks. I see budding thespians learning their lines to "Our Town," or an operetta in rehearsal, a basketball team in full uniform of black satin bloomers with white middie blouses ready for inner class competition. Look at today's sports attire.

I'm thrilled about today's Fair Oaks Theatre Festival, the Oakes Faire and concerts in the Community Center. The Plaza has lawn and trees and we have parks throughout our community.

School buildings, as do our lives, through the years change. I graduated from high school in a class of 32 students. Last year San Juan High School presented 294 diplomas.

Some changes I like, some progress I enjoy. All in all September is a busy and exciting month!



**AUGUST 7, 1900**  
**County Supervisors VOTED**  
**money for Fair Oaks Bridge**



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

October is the month when trees begin to show their bright fall colors, gardeners begin to plant their winter crops and Farmer Bob cultivates his famous "Pumpkin Patch".

Then I'm thinking Halloween and the bag of tricks. The apple bobbing and spin the bottle parties we had when I was young. I remember the town reaction when a farm wagon, intact, was discovered high

up in the grade school bell tower. Or the time Mr. Anwell Jones could not enter his real estate office in the Murphy Building. The door way was securely blocked by someone's outhouse.

Because of my interest in our community I attended the Directors Meeting of the Fair Oaks Fire Department on August 15, 1985. I listened to their report of the number of firemen and the budget in total disbelief.

I couldn't help but think back to the early 1930's and the volunteer firemen of those years. When a fire was reported Mr. Erich Fulton, the Water District Superintendent, would rush down to the signal tower on the corner of Fair Oaks Blvd. and Main Street and blow the siren. The number of blasts would indicate the direction of the fire.

If it were a night call, I know in our household, the volunteer would be up, trousers on and the car out of the drive before the volunteer was fully awake.

The first really big fire truck was a used weapons carrier purchased from McClellan Field and converted into a Fair Oaks Fire Truck. A ladies auxiliary was formed and the town celebrated.

Believe me, water pressure was an item in the year 1932. I remember when our home burned down on a hot August day. The siren blew, the firemen came in their fire truck, a canvas hose was unrolled and hooked up to a 2-inch hydrant on our front lawn. After a couple breathless waiting minutes a tiny drizzle of water came out of that beautiful 6-inch brass nozzle. The house burned as firemen, friends and relatives watched.

The fire engine was a converted Ford pick-up, and Mr. Fulton kept it in the Water District shed. Later and with a new engine, Bill Andrews kept them in the maintenance part of his Union Oil Station on the corner of Fair Oaks Blvd. and Park. The exact spot of today's Chamber of Commerce office.

In the middle 1940 years, George Payne was the volunteer Fire Chief. After a few years George and his two firemen were on the payroll. Lynn Roarck and John Vincint lived at the fire house and alternated 24 hour shifts. In due time George could count 49 paid firemen in his department.

You all surely read a daily newspaper and know about today's Fire Department. The dedication and service they give "Our Town" is worthy of our praise and support.



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

I do not know how to measure time without holidays and here it is Thanksgiving time. This month always comes between Halloween and Christmas, year after year.

One of my memories of the November month was the event of the Church Harvest Dinner. In about 1918 our colony was small and the uniting of the two local churches, Methodist and Presbyterian, was a major event. Of course everyone attended the Harvest Home Dinner.

The Presbyterian Church was where our Fair Oaks Crocker Bank is located. The front parking lot was shaded with magnificent Live Oak trees. On the south side of the church building a wide and long strip of lawn separated the Church from the Parsonage. The Vaughns lived across the street, the Gilmores up the hill and W.W. Hinseys down the street. If you were not related to almost everyone you at least knew them and they knew you.

But, back to the Harvest Celebration. The ladies of the Ladies Aid Society did the cooking and the men served. Long tables on saw horses extended the length of the large basement room. The tables were covered with snow white cloths and napkins and decorated with colorful Fall leaves, berries and, of course, pumpkins.

The following Sunday everyone brought their contributions to be given away. The harvest of field and orchards and the canned goods were wrapped in white paper. Everything was carefully placed in a stack in front of the pulpit. The stack grew and grew and we children were fascinated as to how high it could grow and not tumble. Shucks, it never did, and the service went on, and on, as usual.

I know the Harvest was given to those less fortunate than we. I never heard of welfare, but I'm sure there must have been some county method of helping others. But we lived out in the country and helped each other whether it was during the harvest or barn building.

In later years when Norman, my husband, worked for Sacramento County, he would tell me fabulous stories of Mary Judd and her welfare department in the basement of the County Court House. Mary ruled with an iron hand, a wonderful character of righteous disbursement and compassion.

At the beginning of this special holiday season some things change and some things remain ever the same. Who would change school plays of the Pilgrims first Thanksgiving? Who would not go up the hill or over the field to Grandmother's house for a holiday?

I hope this year you will be so blessed as to store special memories of this Thanksgiving for many a November month to come.



**OCTOBER 3, 1896**  
**First public school opened with**  
**40 students**

Mrs. U.B. Watkins, whose name still stands on Watkins Drive, was the first teacher in 1901. She taught in a two-room school at approximately the site of the Short Stop Store on Fair Oaks Blvd.



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

Christmas has always been a very important holiday in my life. However, I'm having a little trouble in thinking of a "now and then" story for this December issue.

Most Christmas festivities and the Order of Worship through the many years remain about the same, but the style of Christmas changes.

Warm fuzzies and Christmas cookies have their place always. But think about it if you're over 50 years of age or so. The hanging of the stockings for Santa to fill. A long black or brown one or even a new white one is a far cry from today's jeweled or beautifully designed knit stocking. An orange in the toe was no thrill for us; Uncle Bert had a whole orchard of them, but Brazil nuts and tiny, carefully wrapped gifts were our joy.

Our family always opened gifts near midnight when Uncle Bert returned from his shift at the railroad yards in Roseville. That was the only day in the whole year when my brother and I willingly took afternoon naps. Then Christmas day we were up early, off to Church, back home and off to Grandmother's for the family dinner. We could wear good clothes all day, very carefully.

Our community was small. We worked, played and worshipped together.

I'm thinking of the Christmas story presented by the Sunday School. Shepherds in someone's old bathrobe and angels trying to keep their wings straight. Yet this story is told and loved year after year.

I am fortunate to have grown up knowing in daily life two sets of grandparents. My maternal grandmother always wore aprons, special aprons for the holidays.

I wonder what she would think of today's grandmother at the festive table in a smart, red satin, trousered hostess gown? As I say you must be over 50 to think of this.

Today it's possible to quickly travel miles to see and hear the likes of the living Christmas Tree Choir. We volunteer to serve long lines of people who have no one with which to share a holiday dinner. We call across the world to share a greeting. I remember when it cost 10¢ to call Sacramento.

In our household we keep our tradition of Christmas Eve supper and exchanging gifts that makes this holiday such a special time of the year. I trust that you share the meaning and joy of a Blessed Christmas.

To sum it all up, Christmas is a very special holiday in my life!

Merry Christmas,

Iva Langness

P.S. Happy New Year too!



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

I've been thinking of New Year's celebrations of the years past in our community. One especially, "The New Year's Dance" at The Woman's Thursday Clubhouse, brings back happy memories.

When our colony was young the Thursday Club's New Year's Dance was the "in" social affair of the year and admission was by invitation only.

The clubhouse was located on the hill above today's Union Oil Service Station, which is located on the corner of Sunrise Avenue and Fair Oaks Boulevard. The club building was a large gray shingled, one story, edifice with all the dignity of our pioneer heritage. The main room, with its beautiful

floor, would seat nearly 300 guests. A stage for lecturers, plays, musicals or any entertainment of note, was always in use. There were dressing rooms and even a telephone in one of the cloak rooms.

The Director's Room had a small cast iron stove for heat and was used only when the Directors met. It was carpeted with a beautiful persian carpet, and had proper table and chairs for the meetings.

During the First World War the ladies invited the boys from the almost new Mather Field to the New Year's Dance. The young ladies of the Thursday Club's Auxiliary were also invited and all enjoyed.

In my early teens my family went into Sacramento to help ring in the New Year. K Street was closed to all traffic, that meant street cars, automobiles and horses. Everyone walked up and down the entire street singing in groups, greeting everyone and tossing confetti and serpentines at, on and down everyone.

Then there were the times of the church "Watch Night" gatherings on New Year's Eve. There were "Covered Dish Suppers" (Potluck dinners), games and songs that filled the time. To close one year and greet the next there was a service to give thanks for the year past and the year to come.

As 1986 approaches, I think I must get income tax material together, make reports and I may even try golf again.

I trust that this year has been as good to you as it has to me. And as Robert Brewster Beattie wrote:

*To leave the old with a burst of song,  
To recall the right and forgive the wrong;  
To forget the thing that binds you fast,  
To the vain regrets of the year that's past;  
To have the strength to let go your hold  
Of the not worthwhile of the days grown old;  
To go forth with a purpose true,  
To the unknown task of the year that's new;  
To add your gift of the worlds cheer,  
Is to have a happy New Year.*



In 1902 try B.&C. White Rose syrup on your cakes, 70 cents a gallon.

On January 28, 1918 ground was broken for Mather Field.



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

The February column for this "I remember when" is due and all I can think of is Valentines. I do not see any great change in that special day. There are, however, a succession of Valentine days in our lifetime. The early school years of a decorated box on the teacher's desk, high school with a "bought" Valentine for that certain person and after college hoping your husband won't forget the day (mine never did). Some things never change and I hope they never do.

What I would like to do in the next five months is to tell you about people, places and events for you to think of as you go about "Our Town".

Our bluffs sit majestically above the river and the lofty Sierras ring our valley and were true beauty to our early settlers. The township was carefully divided into ten and twenty acre tracts.

We no longer have abundant crops in the fields, nor the rolling hills covered with trees in full bloom nor acres of citrus trees. The devastating freeze in 1932 finished our Colony as a major citrus growing area. Now we have vast acres of roof tops and multi-traveled highways.

One of my fondest memories as a young girl in the Fair Oaks "Colony" is of the elegant ladies who passed by my grandmother's house on Fair Oaks Boulevard (across the street from where Jim Racy's Feed Store is today) in carriages pulled by beautiful, prancing horses on their way to "go calling" on friends.

I especially remember Mrs. Ruggles and her daughter, Roberta. As they made their way from their Chicago Avenue home, where Katherine and Henry Kroeger now live, down the Boulevard they presented a grand picture of prim and proper ladies in their one-seat carriage with a fringed top, while they tried to keep control of their beautiful, but spirited horses with a firm hand on the reins. The prancing horses just enchanted the image of these very correct ladies in their hats and gloves and other finery from my view from grandmother's front lawn.

They looked like a million bucks before a young girl knew what the word "class" meant. (I must confess that I think sometimes the world is a little less civilized with the loss of the tradition of social calling.)

Back to Valentine's Day: may you have a very special day with chocolate creams and diamond rings.



# From the Mayor's Desk

Iva Langness

In your minds eye let me rearrange the Fair Oaks Village for you with a stroll through town around 1916.

We will start from the intersection of Howard Street (Fair Oaks Boulevard to you) and Bridge Street. The Federated Church (Crocker Bank location) is behind us. Are you located and ready?

On our left is a small area with large boulders and live oak trees. Well traveled paths go over the bank (dirt bank not \$\$\$) to the highway.

Now you have walked to the tip of the rise and are standing by a row of eucalyptus trees. The Johnston's lived in that big white house on the hill with well kept lawns sloping down to the stately row of very old and beautiful eucalyptus trees. In the fall, the leaves would be raked into small bonfire piles along the street and all of Fair Oaks would be filled with a delightful fragrance of burning leaves and you knew fall was here.

Cross California Street on the west side and be impressed with the Victorian designed Murphy Building. Mrs. Murphy was a most influential lady in our town. Remember she kept alcoholic beverages from being sold in the Colony.

The Murphy Building housed a General Mercantile Store, an ice cream parlor with lace curtains, and a real estate office on the ground floor. In the middle of the building and up a very long flight of stairs was the auditorium and the living quarters of the Murphy family.

The spring floor was admired throughout the area and many a celebration and dance was enjoyed on that floor. The first San Juan High School was in the auditorium, lectures of culture, musicals and meetings were held in that hall. The Federated Women's Club began its long and noted existence there.

On the east corner of Howard and California Streets, the Slocum-Gore Bank. We still use the three original steps from the real cement sidewalk.

Look straight east and on the hill is an almost new, impressive school building two stories high. From the front of the school walk down a wide graveled path to a triangle with lawn, a white lath trellis and a rock and cement horse trough with running water.

But, back to town and its plaza edged with four foot palm trees and no lawn.

In May the school would have its May Pole Dance in the plaza. A little dusty, but we learned to "tie" the pole and correctly unwind it with our long pastel colored crepe paper streamers. Parents and friends would gather and enjoy the holiday spirit of the day.

I hope you enjoyed our stroll. I didn't mention the big open field with oak trees stretching from the ice house to Entrance Street where the packing plants and Uncle Immer Rice's Blacksmith Shop were located.

Or the big oak tree on the corner. In later years the County decreed that the tree was dangerous and should be cut down, but not before a town protest.

On the fateful day, Helen Ellis, sat in her wheel chair close to the tree and people gathered under its spreading limbs. However, the workers picked up the wheel chair and all, set it in the middle of the street and proceeded to cut.

Next month let's stroll through the 1930 years. Changes you wouldn't believe!



On September 11, 1902 a reception was held at the school house in honor of the completion of the new building. Every countenance beamed with pride and joy. Mr. Slocum, President of the Board of Trustees presided. A male quartet consisting of Messrs. Holst, Slocum, Breer and Jones performed as did other local talent.



# Lulu "Ma" Ferguson 1882-1976

Mrs. Keith Copeland

*A Tribute to the Originator of the Fair Oaks Easter Egg Hunt*

One of the early pioneer business owners was Mrs. Lulu Ferguson, who with her husband, Harry, came to become the owners of Fair Oaks Hardware, located at Fair Oaks Blvd. and California Ave. in 1927. The business had formerly been owned by the Ike Skidmores. Mrs. Ferguson was known as the "Dean" of Fair Oaks business people. She admitted to the fact that Gladys Jackson had been in business when the Fergusons came to Fair Oaks — but no other person or storekeeper antedated her. Lulu had not been in business long before everyone in Fair Oaks was affectionately calling her "Ma" Ferguson or "Fergie".

She was best known for her sponsorship of the annual Easter Egg Hunt. It was in 1927 that "Ma" was instrumental in beginning the First Fair Oaks Easter Egg Hunt. She and her family were active in the Tennis Club. At this time the Tennis Club had some extra money in the treasury. "Ma" suggested that an Easter Egg Hunt for the children in the community would be a worthwhile way to spend the money. After asking for help, they had 32 dozen eggs to start the project.

That was only the beginning — for years "Ma" and her friends cooked and colored as many as 90-100 dozen eggs a year for the Hunt. At the same time they were busy soliciting and collecting prizes for the event.

For the next 20 years "Ma" continued the Easter Egg Hunt. This became an annual event except during the war years when it was discontinued for a short time. Some people thought it to be unpatriotic to use eggs so freely for such an occasion.

After the war, approximately 1943, the Clipper Club took over the hunt for a couple of years "Ma" remained in the midst of it all. The Fair Oaks Volunteer Fire Department then took over the sponsorship, but "Ma" Ferguson was always asked to be chairman of the event.

After retirement, in 1959, she moved to the Arden Park area of Sacramento to live near her daughter and son-in-law, Lulu and Ted Robles. Even then the F.O.V.F.D. would send a car to escort "Ma" Ferguson to the annual hunt so she might "oversee" the activities. She had a special love for all the children and these times meant much to her — the thoughtfulness of those firemen was cherished by her.

Lulu Ferguson was ever an ardent supporter of business in Fair Oaks. Coming to Fair Oaks in 1927, she and her husband opened the Fair Oaks Hardware Store. They raised and educated five children here. In 1944 Harry "Dad" Ferguson died. At about this time Mr. and Mrs. George Conkey who had the variety store on the corner of California Avenue decided to sell out. Seeing an opportunity to expand, "Ma" talked over the idea with Ted and Lulu Robles and the three of them decided to go into a partnership and combine the hardware and the variety stores. For many years she presided at the counter, always in a kind and loving way — making many lifelong friends. She enjoyed watching the youngsters grow up. Ted Robles also played a role in Fair Oaks history as he was a former teacher and then was principal of the Fair Oaks Elementary School (1926-29).

Mrs. Ferguson was always active in community life. She participated in the following organizations:

Native Daughters of the Golden West	Fair Oaks BPWC
Daughters of Veterans of Stockton	Royal Neighbors
Fair Oaks Civic Club	Eastern Star

The Women's Group of the F.O. Federated Church

In 1976 "Ma" Ferguson's earthly life ended. The effect she had on others who knew her and experienced her loving, caring, and inspiring life shall be felt forever.

**April 15, 1931**  
**Name changed from**  
**Fairoaks to Fair Oaks.**

**April 27, 1948**  
**San Juan Chapter Order,**  
**Eastern Star established. No. 563**



The articles included in this booklet were written by Mr. Harry J. Voth, Honorary Mayor Iva Langness and Mrs. Keith Copeland. We appreciate their time, talents and sharing their Fair Oaks memories.

Mr. Harry J. Voth's articles were written for the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, The Enterprise, beginning in November 1984. An active member of the Fair Oaks Historical Society for many years, Mr. Voth has contributed greatly to the recording of Fair Oaks memories.

Mrs. Iva Langness became Honorary Mayor Iva Langness in May 1985. Since that time she has been sharing her Fair Oaks memories with The Enterprise on a monthly basis. We have strolled through the village, remembered Fiestas, and shared special holiday activities. Thanks for the memories, Honorary Mayor.

A special thank you to Mrs. Keith Copeland for sharing the history of the first Easter Egg Hunt in Fair Oaks.