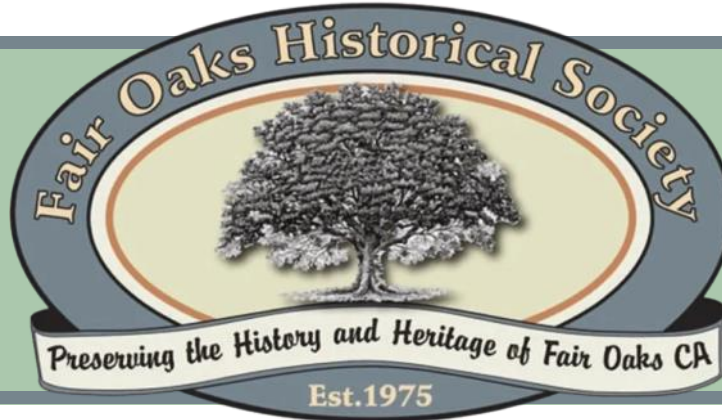




Something to Crow About



Spring 2026

Issue 156

QUARTERLY GENERAL MEETING

When: Tuesday, April 28th Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Where: Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse - 7997 California Ave

Bring a salad, main dish or dessert to share

Our guest speaker will be **Misha Sarkovich**.

See page 6 for more details about Misha.

*We will see
you there!*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Leadership Message..... 2
 What's Happening at HC 3
 Nardinelli's Hdwr 4-5
 Happenings in FO 6

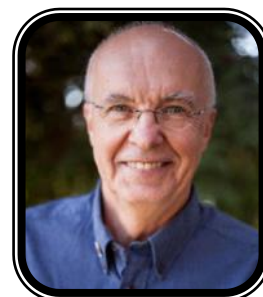
Membership Activity..... 7
 From the Archives 8-11
 In Memoriam 12
 Renewal Form 13
 2026 Calendar 14

LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

By Bud Beebe, President & Pete Schroeder, Vice President



Spring



As your newly minted Society President, I want to assure you that the Fair Oaks History Society will continue the course that Claudia Thorn and other past presidents have charted so well. The serious side of our charter is to preserve the history and heritage of Fair Oaks. At the same time, the fellowship and enjoyment will remain every bit as much a priority.

After all, isn't it the memory of the "society" in early Fair Oaks—the gatherings, the shared stories, the sense of belonging—that inspires us to preserve who we were and who we are?



Our History Center with its beautiful wisteria in bloom!

Things that keep volunteers busy include formal verification and documentation of all our historic Fair Oaks artifacts and pictures, serious "core" work. Others show up for booth duty at one of our public events or volunteer for projects needed at the History Center.

A couple of things we are just starting include development of a Fair Oaks Time Line and some oral history videos. People in their 80's and 90's were eye witness to places

and events of interest in Fair Oaks from the end of WWII through its transformation as a special island in a suburban setting. Our videos of several personalities of that older generation will begin in May with equipment and technical support from Meraki's videography studio.

Our website and archives document events of note that occurred in Fair Oaks, but we need a Time Line document that puts all that in easily accessed, chronologic order. We are building two of those; one will be a carefully researched and detailed time line document. And the other will be a colorful, simpler time line more suitable for story board presentation. One of our past presidents and prodigious contributor to our archives, Steve Abbott, tells me there is a set of six card file boxes that would be a perfect start for that timeline. I wonder if any of you know where those card files are? It would be of great help. I hope that you will join in on some of the things going on and enjoy the time with others.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE HISTORY CENTER



Anmarie inputting artifact information into CatalogIt.

Facebook Administrator Wanted

What: Oversee the FOHS Facebook page, keeping it up to date with events and managing Friend requests.

When: as needed. You can work from home!

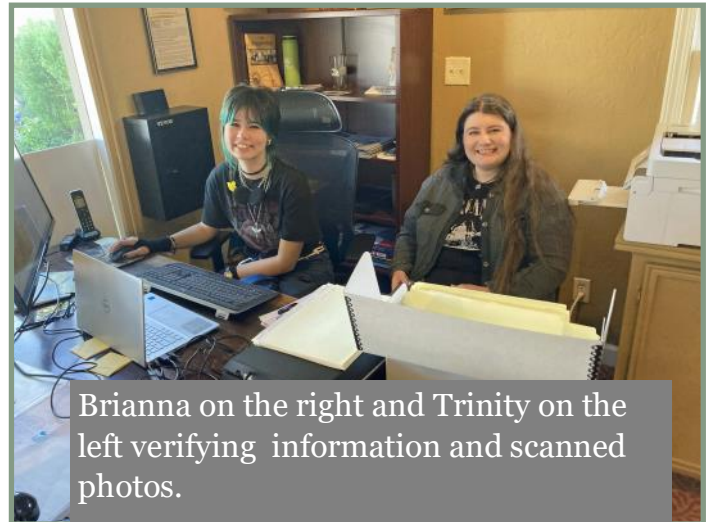
CatalogIt

Last year, our History Center transferred its archival collection from an Excel file to the CatalogIt archiving software. Following the migration, we began inventorying the collection and adding photographs of physical artifacts including hats, tools, and the Joseph Buffum travel trunk along with scanned copies of old photographs.

Visitors to the History Center will be able to explore the collection using our on-site touchscreen. A feedback form will also be available for visitors to note missing information or suggest corrections.

At the April General Meeting, we will be presenting a short demonstration, on the big screen, of our CatalogIt software and how it will be able to be used for research by visitors to our History Center.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this project, especially David Navarro for assisting with the implementation of CatalogIt, and the dedicated inventory team: Susan McIntire, Amanda Law, Anmarie Medin, John Thomas, Brianna Heigelmann, and Trinity Sanford (our Meraki High School intern). Excellent work by all involved.



Brianna on the right and Trinity on the left verifying information and scanned photos.

Visitors Want, hmmm, Something?

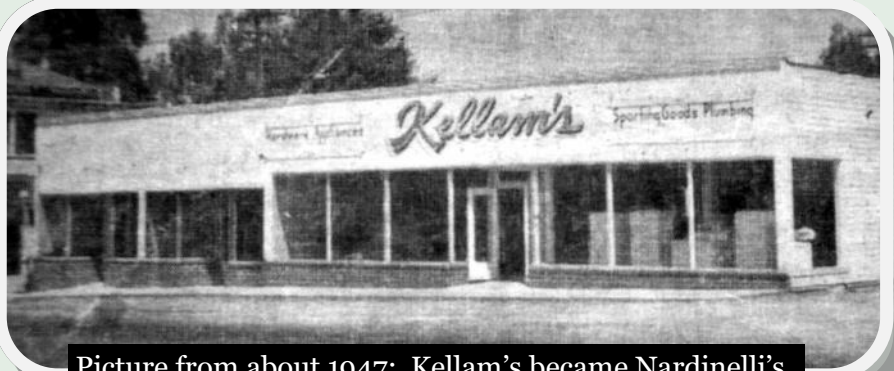
It has been a couple years since the History Center has had a display for merchandise. A few weeks ago, Sharmila LaPorte attended a FOHS Board meeting and asked how she might help out. With that, we now have a volunteer dedicated to reviving our merchandise display. As our “Merch Marketer”, Sharmila will design a new display as well as order and inventory new items. Thank you, **Sharmila LaPorte!**



Nardinelli's Oaks Hardware in Fair Oaks

Nardinelli's Oaks Hardware became the gathering place in Fair Oaks. Every day there was free coffee and the weekends included donuts. It wasn't unusual to be offered a free salami and cheese sandwich on a French roll, roasted in the toaster oven. Part of the ambiance was the result of dedicated customers and friends who came in daily just to visit, conduct informal political gab sessions, gossip or drink coffee. It was the social hub of the town where the locals would gather.

Everett Nardinelli and his uncle Clarence Quadro purchased Kellam's Variety Hardware in 1955 from Don Lang. Originally the store was a hardware, appliance, house wares and sporting goods store.



Picture from about 1947: Kellam's became Nardinelli's Oaks Hardware in about 1955, now it's the Biker Bar.



Within a short period of time, Everett bought out his uncle. The first thing he did was to sell everything that wasn't hardware related to match the image he wanted to create.

At the time he bought the business, there was an existing store in the Murphy building named Fair Oaks Hardware and Variety. The names of the two businesses were close and confusing for some but everything worked out. Problems did arise in the 1960s when the Fair Oaks Hardware opened in the Northridge shopping Center at San Juan and Sunset. That is when Everett changed the name to Nardinelli's Oaks Hardware to eliminate any confusion.

This picture from the 1960s was shared by Tom Nardinelli; it is a picture of his father "Everett" and his grandfather James Nardinelli standing in front of the Nardinelli Oaks Hardware.



Everett created not only a business that carried the merchandise you needed but also provided the information and know-how to go with it.

This was a family affair which included Everett's wife, Juanita, and his two sons Dick and Tom. Juanita would come every day accompanied by their poodle Jacque to bring Everett's lunch. Pacific telephone bills could be paid at the Hardware. Juanita took care of the telephone bill payments; she would add up the bill amounts, make deposits and mail to Pacific Telephone with a copy of the deposit. At age thirteen, Dick and Tom began working in order to learn the business. They would cut and thread pipe, stock shelves, dust and clean, fill paint thinner cans, replace handles for axes, shovels, posthole diggers and wheelbarrows. At the age of sixteen, they started waiting on customers; they worked Saturdays and during school vacations. This gave them an opportunity to see their father work with customers and to see how unique his business was.

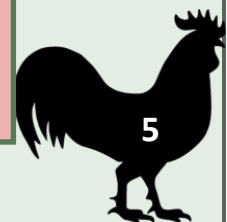
Everett was loyal to his customers and they were loyal to him. Many times customers would call him at home on a Sunday to open the store because they were in the middle of a project that couldn't wait until Monday. He never hesitated to help them out. Everett was a jovial, outgoing person of Portuguese/Italian descent. By his friends, he was considered the "Unofficial Mayor of Fair Oaks". This led to today's Mayor of Fair Oaks.

Everett sold the Hardware in 1976 to Ron Leonard. Ron wanted to continue with the name and traditions Everett started. In 1983, the Leonards sold the store to Dick and Jeanne Hill who continued the traditions, but called it Oaks Hardware. Dave Hill inherited the business when his parents died and he sold it to John Armstrong in 2011. This gathering place which existed for over 50 years was closed on December 5, 2012. The Nardinelli's Oaks Hardware represented a time and place that will never exist again in the ever changing world in which we live.



Oaks Hardware as it was in the 1990s
Popcorn and free chicken feed.

We love sharing stories from the past with our readers, If you have a memory, we want to hear about it. Just email it to Chris at FairOaksHistoryCenter@gmail.com



Our Speaker at the FOHS General Meeting April 28th, 2026



FOHS Member, **Misha Sarkovich**, will be the speaker at our upcoming Quarterly Meeting and Pot Luck. Misha is a long time Board Member of the Fair Oaks Water District.

Fair Oaks may sit on a river, but the water is way down there and your garden would be very thirsty without a reliable supply of it up at your house.

That's a lesson the first residents of Fair Oaks found out. A lot has changed since the days of wooden pipes and \$3 an acre water. Misha will walk us through the change and growth that has kept our water stable and cheaper than others around here.

He will also show the changes planned for the maintenance yard across and down the street from the History Center.

Please save the date! We'll see you at the Clubhouse at 6:00pm.

OUCH !

The History Center gets hit again

Hard to believe, the Fair Oaks History Center was hit AGAIN by a car. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the car only bashed in the side of our small tool shed, sparing the actual building.

On Friday, March 13, a Sunflower Drive-in patron managed to drive through the end of its parking stall, though an iron fence and down a four-foot embankment before coming to rest half way though our poor little shed.

The motorist's insurance will pay for repairs and paint. You ought to drop by 10340 Fair Oaks Blvd to take a peek.



Friends of Sailor Bar

Long time Fair Oaks Activist Randy Smith and Bud Beebe at the History Society's booth supporting the Fiends of Sailor Bar Play Day and dedication ceremony for the new picnic tables on March 21, 2026



Guest Speaker, Congressman
Ami Bera

Thanks to all who helped before, during and after the Celebration!

Membership Page

Welcome New Members

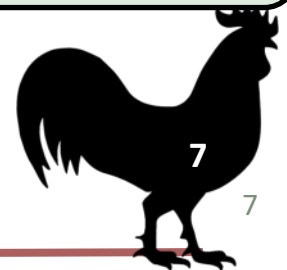
Judith Andrews	Sharmila LaPorte
Karen Blair	David Lynch
Carolyn Bramson***	Matthew Nantze
Cherry Brooks	Edward Outland
Russell Childers	Andrew Saunders
Barbara Collopy	Peggy Lee Sebeni
Jeff Damon***	Laura Sutton
Bill Dorer	
Brianna Heigelman	*** (Supporting)

2026 Renewals at the Patron Level (\$100 - \$149)

Bud & Kathryn Beebe
Terry & Sherry Clifton
Randall & April Howard
Rosemary Lamb
David & Sandra Navarro

2026 Renewals at the Supporting Level (\$50 - \$99)

Gwen Cooper	Karen Rosevear
Max Jones	Doug & Joanna Schwilk
Ronald & Franca Lingren	John & Ann Simmons
Jerry & Judy Long	Cleatta Simpson
Anmarie Medin	Karen Smith
Karen Miles	Bob & Maria Sours/Melendey
Barbara & Jerry Roper	Richard & Claudia Thorn



FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Chris Highsmith, History Center Operation Manager

From Vision to Vineyards: The Founding of the Fair Oaks Colony

The previous newsletter explored General Charles H. Howard and the influential publication *Farm, Field, and Fireside*. This article turns to a related but lesser known story: the complex and often turbulent beginnings of the Fair Oaks Colony. What emerged along the American River in the 1890s was not the result of chance, but of deliberate planning, ambitious promotion, and no small measure of perseverance.

A Growing Demand for Better Land

Following the success of *Farm, Field, and Fireside*, several agricultural colonies were established in North Carolina and Southern California. These early efforts revealed a growing demand among eastern families for higher quality farmland and better long term opportunities. In response, brothers Charles H. Howard and Oswald Howard, along with James W. Wilson, began carefully examining various regions of California for colonization potential.

By May of 1887, civic leaders in Sacramento had reached a similar conclusion. They worried that visitors from the East were merely passing through, failing to recognize what the region could offer. Valentine S. McClatchy urged the formation of a committee to evaluate the Haggin (also known as Rancho Del Paso) and San Juan land grants for possible subdivision into smaller, more marketable parcels. This group became known as the Improvement Committee of Twenty Six, sometimes referred to as the “Boom Brigade.” Among its members were McClatchy himself, David Lubin and Edwin K. Alsip.

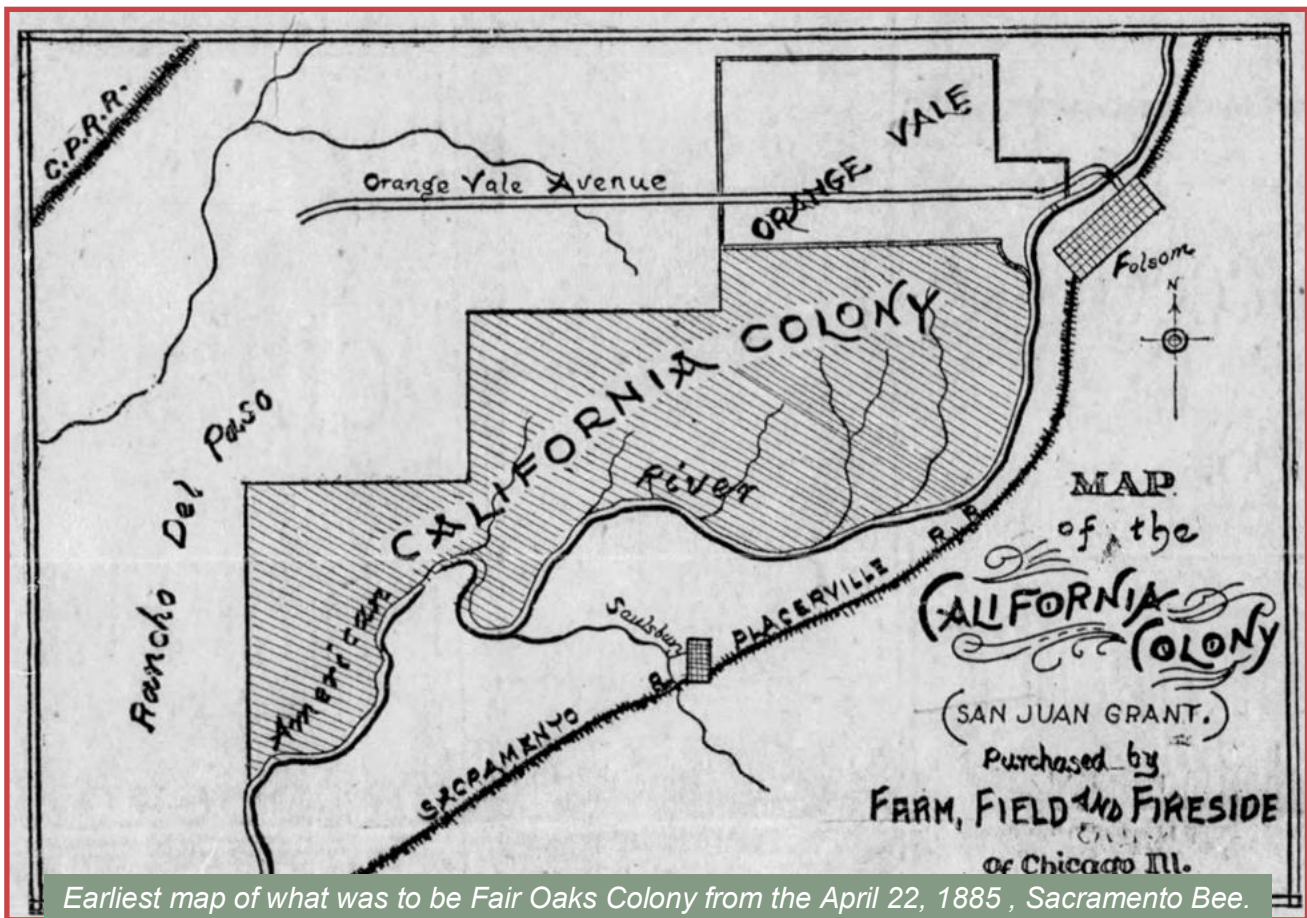
The following year, the committee helped establish Cardwell Colony, which later became Orange Vale. Like many early colonies, Orange Vale faced significant opposition; competing landowners maligned the project, fearing that its success might damage their own interests. Despite this resistance, the Orange Vale Company pressed forward without local endorsement, laying the groundwork for future developments nearby.

Promoting Sacramento to the East

In early 1895, the Immigration Committee of the newly formed Sacramento Chamber of Commerce resolved to promote the region more aggressively. Plans were made to send a traveling exhibit east and to host a display at the World’s Fair in Atlanta, highlighting Sacramento’s agricultural promise.

Around this same time, Edwin K. Alsip informed the committee that the Howard party was actively seeking to purchase a large tract of land near Sacramento. According to Alsip, the group had access to a list of roughly 8,000 potential colonists interested in settling in Central California. Howard and Wilson soon entered negotiations to acquire approximately 7,000 acres of land owned by Cox & Clarke for colonization purposes





Earliest map of what was to be Fair Oaks Colony from the April 22, 1885, Sacramento Bee. It also shows the area in Rancho Del Paso Grant that was not to be included.

Their efforts were aided by timely infrastructure developments. The Folsom Water Power Company's transmission plant was nearing completion signaling the availability of modern utilities. By April 22, 1895, the Clarke and Cox lands (comprising much of the San Juan Grant south of Orange Vale, north of the American River Grant) had been purchased. Negotiations for a portion of the Rancho Del Paso Grant ultimately failed.

To solve the irrigation challenge, the owners of the North Fork Canal, C. W. Clarke, H. G. Smith and A. N. Buchanan, joined with other investors to form an incorporated company. This company committed sufficient capital to expand and develop the water system, ensuring irrigation for the entire San Juan Grant. At the time, the North Fork Canal already supplied water to Orange Vale, but extensive new ditches and pipelines were required.

The First Investigators Arrive

On Tuesday, May 7, 1895, a party arrived from Chicago under the leadership of A. M. Hubbs, colonization manager for the Howard & Wilson Company. While a few participants were prospective buyers, the primary purpose of the visit was to finalize land transfers, sign contracts, determine subdivision plans, and prepare promotional materials.

Representatives of the Shoher & Carqueville Lithograph Company accompanied the group to create detailed illustrations of the tract and of Sacramento County. Edwin K. Alsip met the party at Truckee and arranged for a special sleeper car, which was later side-tracked at Newcastle. At five o'clock the following morning, the group was awakened and joined by K. H. Hawley and Valentine S. McClatchy for an early morning carriage ride through Placer County orchards to Orange Vale.



There they were welcomed by G. B. Katzenstein, manager of the Orange Vale Company, along with journalists and local representatives. After breakfast, the party toured the Orange Vale orchards and traveled across the San Juan Grant to the lower cherry orchard, near the present day Waldorf School, where Senator Frederick Cox greeted them and hosted lunch. The group later inspected the first section of land to be offered for sale before returning to Sacramento that evening.

Among the early purchasers were settlers from Kansas, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, each acquiring between 20 and 40 acres. These individuals represented the first wave of eastern families willing to invest in the new colony.

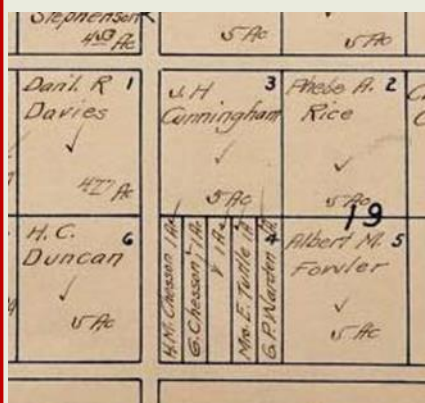
General Charles H. Howard arrived from Los Angeles several days later to finalize arrangements with Hubbs, Alsip, and local promoters. Surveyors and engineers were engaged to lay out both the land parcels and the irrigation system, a process that continued for several months.



Growth, Organization, and Incorporation

As preparations were made for monthly excursion parties of prospective settlers, McClatchy met with Southern Pacific president C. P. Huntington to secure special railroad rates for the Howard & Wilson Company. In November, the first major excursion party arrived at Fair Oaks, marking a turning point in the colony's development.

Fair Oaks Olive Growers Association property at Northeast corner of New York Ave. and Winding Way as shown in the 1899 Sacramento County Map book.



With homes under construction, orchards being planted, and new businesses opening, formal organization followed. Articles of incorporation were filed for the California Olive and Fruit Growers' Association of Fair Oaks. The association's directors included James W. Wilson, Charles H. Howard, Edwin K. Alsip, Robert H. Hawley, and Alfred Olsen. The company was capitalized at \$60,000, though only \$1,000 had been subscribed at the time.

By 1900, Charles Howard's son, Otis Howard, then treasurer of the association began selling off the remaining properties.

Otis McGraw Howard sold the Association 5 acres property split into 5 one acre parcels as shown above in 1917 Sacramento County Map Book.

The Alsip Scandal



In January 1898, Edwin Alsip transferred his one third interest in the Fair Oaks Colony to his wife and recorded the transaction. Within days, he disappeared. Until that point, Alsip had served as the local representative of the Chicago owners, handling land sales, collections, and financial accounting.

General Howard soon traveled west to address the crisis. Civil engineer S. E. Kieffer was placed in charge of the colony's operations.

Kieffer, who had already overseen irrigation construction and surveying for two years, was regarded as both competent and trustworthy.



When E. K. Alsip employed the first stenographer in the realty business in Superior California and the conservatives predicted that any man who was too lazy to write in long hand, would fail?

A little humor in a 1916 *Sacramento Bee* pertaining to Edwin K. Alsip.

Subsequent investigations revealed that Alsip had embezzled substantial sums from the company; he was found to be in default for between \$24,000 and \$26,000 and had also misused approximately \$20,000 in promissory notes belonging to the company. Many colonists later expressed the belief that the colony had suffered for some time due to Alsip's involvement.

The fallout extended beyond finances. Plans for an electric railway serving Fair Oaks and Sunset Colony collapsed when English investor H. F. Anderson withdrew following Alsip's disappearance.

The Foster Era and a Lasting Legacy

Eventually, the Howard Wilson Publishing Company and James W. Wilson sold their interests in the Fair Oaks and Sunset colonies to John B. Foster, the father-in-law of Charles W. Howard. Foster was widely regarded as financially capable and committed to reorganizing the enterprise. He acquired nearly all property connected to the colonies, excluding those entangled in Alsip-related dispute.

Following Foster's death in 1907, his son John McGraw Foster and grandson Otis McGraw Howard sold the last of the family's Fair Oaks holdings, closing a formative chapter in the community's history. The Fair Oaks Colony was shaped by ambition, innovation, missteps, and resilience. Its early struggles over land, water, finance, and trust, left an enduring mark on the community that still defines Fair Oaks today.



Fair Oaks today outlined in black.

Sources that were used were:
The Sacramento Bee,
The Sacramento Union, and *The San Francisco Chronicle*



IN MEMORIAM

Janet E. McWilliams

May 23, 1938 – November 18, 2025

Janet was born in Sacramento and lived her entire life in Fair Oaks. Janet attended San Juan HS, was a Deaconess at Fair Oaks Presbyterian church and graduated from Cal State University, Sacramento. She later received her master's degree from University of San Francisco. In 1957, Janet met and married Warren R. McWilliams Jr., sharing 67 years together, traveling with friends, playing bridge and devoting their time to their shared love of Fair Oaks.



Janet had a wonderful career in teaching for the San Juan Unified School District in both teaching and administrative roles. After retiring from the school district, she became an author of a nationally successful set of reading textbooks. Throughout her life, Janet was very active in the Fair Oaks community. She assumed many roles by serving in numerous organizations including Fair Oaks Inner Wheel, The Women's Thursday Club, Fair Oaks Historical Society, Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, Fair Oaks Theater Festival and was a founding member of the Fair Oaks Foundation for the Arts and Leisure. Janet had a passion for helping others and rarely turned down a opportunity to do so. Janet was also a member of Sigma Alpha Sigma and Delta Gamma where she made numerous lifelong friends.

Warren R. McWilliams Jr.

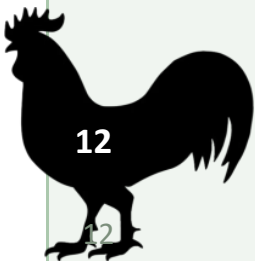
March 25, 1933 – February 11, 2026

Warren was born in Sacramento and lived his entire life in the Sacramento / Fair Oaks area. Warren attended San Juan HS and served his country in the Navy for four years as a mechanic on the Aircraft Carrier USS Oriskany.



In 1957, he met and married Janet Spellman. They shared 67 years together, traveling with friends, playing bridge and devoting their time to their shared love of Fair Oaks. After serving in the Navy, Warren began his long career in the U.S. Postal Service. He began doing odd jobs within the Post Office. He worked his way up to being a Letter Carrier and later a supervisor. He retired from the Post Office after 35 years of service as the Assistant Postmaster. Warren was very proud to have been retired longer than he worked.

Warren's real passion was service to his community. Warren served on the Board of Directors of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. He was a founding member of HART, the Hornet Athletic Round Table. The community of Fair Oaks is where Warren had his greatest impact. He took on many roles. Warren was a past president of the Fair Oaks Rotary club and has numerous Paul Harris fellows to his name. He was a past president of the Fair Oaks Historical Society. He was a member of the Fair Oaks Chamber of Commerce, the Fair Oaks Theater Festival and along with Janet, a founding member of the Fair Oaks Foundation for the Arts and Leisure and served one term as the Honorary Mayor of Fair Oaks. It is no coincidence that together, Warren and Janet earned the moniker of Mr. and Mrs. Fair Oaks.



2026 Membership Renewals are Past Due!

We make it easy for you to renew.
Use the form below and mail with your check or Pay Online.
Or just bring a check or credit card to the History Center.
Or bring a check or credit card to the next General Meeting.
Life Members do NOT need to renew!



Fair Oaks Historical Society 2026 Membership Renewal

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 at the 2026 Chicken Festival or after October 1st shall be considered paid for 2027. Membership dues are: (circle one)

Individual \$20, Family (2 persons) \$25, Supporting \$50,
Patron \$100, Benefactor \$150, Upgrade to Life Membership \$275
Add \$10 to receive a printed copy of our newsletter via Mail.

Signature: X	Date:
-----------------	-------

Send this renewal form with your check to:

Fair Oaks Historical Society
10340 Fair Oaks Blvd.
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-7114



You may also use our secure PayPal system: <https://fairoakshistory.org/join/join.htm>

Thank you for your support!

Memberships at or above the Supporting level will be recognized in our quarterly Newsletter.

For questions, please contact the History Center or FOHistory1@gmail.com.

Membership Coordinator use only:

Amount paid: \$
Check # or PayPal Date:
Date received:



2026 HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR

Annual Membership Renewals Are Past Due

Executive Board Meeting	April 21
Quarterly General Meeting	April 28
Executive Board Meeting	May 19
Executive Board Meeting	June 16
Quarterly General Meeting	July 28



Fair Oaks Historical Society
10340 Fair Oaks Blvd
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-7114

www.fairoakshistory.org

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: