Something to Crow About

Fair Oaks Historical Society

Preserving the History and Heritage of Fair Oaks CA

Est.1975

Summer 2026 Issue 157

Quarterly General Meeting

When: Tuesday, July 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 **Kim Huggett**.

See page 5 for more details about Kim.

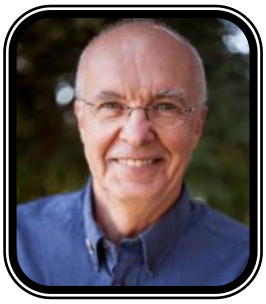
We will see you there!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Leadership Message 2
What's Happening at HC 3
Docent Corner 4
Happenings in FO 5
From the Archives 6-8
The Railroad Saves FO 9-11
Membership Activities 12
Membership Form 13
2026 Calendar 14

LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

By Bud Beebe, President & Pete Schroeder, Vice President



Summer

There's always something going on at the history center. A new exhibit in the big glass showcase features framed photographs recently retrieved from the venerable Del's Pizza where they had been on display for a couple decades. These are joined by some that Steve Abbot collected as well as a series of lithographs of Fair Oaks' earliest inhabitants. There's just something about side-by-side groups of framed photos that invites comparisons and new insights. Sometimes it's the main subjects that draw our curiosity and sometimes it's something else; a building in the background, a workplace setting with long ago machinery, or a horse with a U.S. military saddle that belies the peaceful family setting in the photograph.

We all have photographs that stir our memories. The next time you glance at one of those oldies, stop to look for details that reveal the way things used to be, tools that have no use today, buildings that were once important to Fair Oaks, or events that brought people together. Photos that have broad points of contact to Fair Oaks history are especially prized.

As I write this, it is early summer. The morning air is still cool but the afternoon will be too warm to sit outside comfortably. Days ahead will be even warmer; hot really but *dry* as they say. I wonder what the first settlers of Fair Oaks Colony thought about our summers. Most had been raised in the East or Midwest. Here, dusty days with no humidity would have been the norm, but hot. Was that better than a hot, humid day in a sixth story Chicago office, or in a sticky-humid Ohio corn field so heavy with noisy mosquitoes that you couldn't hear the corn popping? Surely, in Fair Oaks, they soon learned that the late afternoon rustling of leaves would mean a cooling Delta Breeze and a restful night's sleep.

Of course Fair Oaks nights aren't always cool in summer. That's why I'd bet that our Fair Oaks settlers would have loved the newly refurbished Clubhouse. The new insulation and air conditioning will make it just right for our July 28th meeting. The pot luck get together would be familiar enough to them, the bucket of KFC not so much. You can be there to enjoy all of this and Kim Huggett's presentation on local railroads. There's more about that on page 9.

I hope to see you at our *air-conditioned* Tuesday, July 28, meeting at the Fair Oaks Clubhouse. And I hope you've got a story to tell me about what you found in an old photograph.

Bud

Mr. Kim Huggett, who recently delivered an excellent presentation on the history of our very own Fair Oaks newspaper, will present at our General meeting later this month. This time, Mr. Huggett will share interesting stories about the railroad that ran through Fair Oaks. In his words...

"*my talk will be on the early days of the railroad and how it stimulated Fair Oaks' growth after the "excursionists" arrived in 1895 and found the promised railway to carry their oranges was miles away on the other side of an impassable river. That leaves room for subsequent meetings on further fascinating developments, such as the use of motorcars on the FO bridge line and a proposed railway extending north of town."*

It promises to be a very entertaining evening!

See you at 6:00 p.m. on July 28th in the Community Clubhouse.

Pete

WHAT'S NEW AT THE HISTORY CENTER

By Chris Highsmith - Fair Oaks History Center Operation Manager

The Fair Oaks Historical Society continues to verify our Archive Collection by using the Catalogit Software. We have added a couple more people to help us to inventory and verify our collection. Olympic Prunity is helping us this summer before she heads to Fresno State University to continue her major in History, Michael Schock who just earned his MA in History from Sacramento State University and Our Meraki High School intern, Trinity Sanford, has now graduated and is staying on to help us with the inventory. In August. We'll have Katherine Kuetzin for a few weeks between her Archival/Record Management Summer and Fall courses at San Jose State University. In the last couple of months, we received the Steve Abbott Collection donated by Larry Masuoka. The collection is also being added to the Catalogit database. In July, Steve Abbott will start helping us to ensure we have the correct information for the items in his collection.

Last April, the Fair Oaks Water District donated a 10-inch redwood waterpipe that was dug up in 1996 on Grand Avenue. It is on display at the History Center and will become part of the future display of water and Fair Oaks.

Since my time is mostly focused on inventorying our collection, setting up the new display has been delayed.

If you are interested in helping to organize and set up displays on a quarterly basis, please contact me at the History Center.

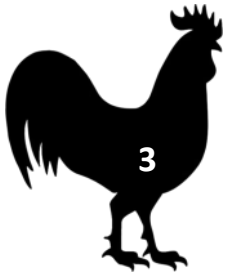
Attn: Chris Highsmith
Fair Oaks History Center
10340 Fair Oaks Blvd.
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
Email – fairoakshistorycenter@gmail.com
Phone – (916) 844-7103

Vol- unteer Needed!

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!



THE DOCENT CORNER

By Bob Sours, Retired Docent

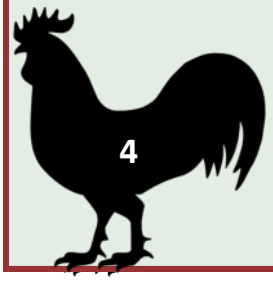
Hello members and friends with joy in my heart.

Probably most of you know I missed some activates that included my partnering with the newsletter.

With so much time on my hands, I've had time to think of the great things everyone has done with new ideas for the History Center and the wonderful job ALL of the folks have brought together with the Village updates.

So we can all say "*THANK YOU*". And "SO" now the real job has opened its door for us to use the benefits, buildings and experiences given to us to make our forefathers so proud of each of us. Let us all take advantage of our gifts.

NOW:
We are in awe of our new building; our emotions are settling down — we are ready to accept our place in the space grounded for self and community groups. As we members and leaders plan; what will our new mission include.



It is my thoughts and suggestions that we go outward and expand and multiply for our friends,

members and others joining, adding to our social means, seeking new ideas from groups like our own — basically to double our members towards growing new experiences and so on.

In closing today, it can be said — we should all be helping, sharing, working with others, molding a better society especially for those that fall by the wayside.

High tech and self motivation only is tearing away at the bones of humanity. Whereas family, social movement, helping thy neighbor all blends.

Let's move forward now with our organization to set yet another example. Our world now is more than ready for each of us.

Docents are a guide and example.
Let's all be a DOCENT.

Happy birthday to our nation —- "We the people".

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

Kim Huggett's *family moved from Southern California to Fair Oaks Village in 1965 and his parents owned a house at Main and California streets – former site of L. M. Shelton's general store and post office – for 51 years. He was the last editor of the San Juan Record, Fair Oaks' newspaper that ceased operation in 1980 after 47 years. His parents, Larry and Dorothy, were longtime members of the Fair Oaks Historical Society.*

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

Part time

Help Wanted

The Historical Society is fortunate to have a dedicated team of docents at our History Center — but occasionally we need a helping hand to fill in. If you've ever thought about giving it a try but worried about the commitment, here's good news: we're looking for a couple of volunteers who can cover part or all of a four-hour shift just once or twice a year.

It's a rewarding and easy way to help out. Interested? Reach out to

Chris Highsmith (916 505-6057)

Bud Beebe (916 633-4245)

or any of our docents.

Planning for Soup Night in February, 2027

Last year, as we were organizing our baskets, we discovered we were short on large baskets. In anticipation of our organizing for the event, we're asking members to start collecting large baskets and bringing them to the History Center, so we can store them for the February event.

Now is also a great time to start going through your cabinets and putting aside items to donate for the raffle or picking up gifts that are on sale that would be a great donation for the raffle.

We are always looking for volunteers to serve on our committee. If you are interested, please call or email me so we can put you on the event planning calendar.

Claudia Thorn - 9167471535
cjthorn17@comcast.net

We will likely have our first meeting in August and then continue a monthly meeting until our February event.

Thank you to all who have supported soup night. *The Soup Night Committee.*

At our last regular meeting, we thanked the Board:

David Navarro, Anmarie Medin, Bud Beebe, Lynn Steen, Claudia Thorn, Carolyn Spotts and Terry Clifton.

Saying thank-you to Past President, Claudia

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Chris Highsmith, History Center Operation Manager

San Juan Record Article - January 14th, 1954

The following article is about what Roy Bishop remembers about the early days of Fair Oaks. The current places, names and owners listed, reflect as they were when the article was written in 1954 and not the names and owners in 2026.

Roy and Lucy Bishop

According to the article, next to John E. Holst, the best source of information on those early days was Roy Bishop, who came here with his father, Percy Bishop, on May 12, 1896, just six months after John Holst. He was 13 years old then and remembered clearly how the tiny colony looked and lived. In September 1896, his mother and sister came from Elgin, Illinois, to complete the family unit in a newly constructed house on Illinois Avenue, since altered and now the Olin Brown residence. They lived there, farming ten acres of oranges, olives and almonds, until 1932, when they sold out to Jack Foley just a few months before the Big Freeze, when the mercury went down to 14 degrees for three mornings in a row, and most of the orange trees in Fair Oaks were killed.

"When we arrived in Fair Oaks," said Mr. Bishop, "There were no water pipes in yet. The lots were surveyed but no roads had been built and in many places there was barely room for a buggy to pass between trees on the rights of way. " The one landmark, in addition to the old hotel which later burned, was the Murphy Block (still standing, housing the Fair Oaks Hardware and Variety Store). It was built by Francis Murphy, a nationally known temperance worker, who lived there for a year and then moved away. Only later was it used for a store.

Roy Bishop remembered that, in 1896, his father gave him a 22 rifle and he shot 30 squirrels that first summer. The squirrels were so numerous that the farmers put poison in watermelons to kill them. Young Bishop worked in the fruit crops in Orangevale picking grapes, hulling almonds and dipping prunes. Orangevale was already nine years old then, having been founded in 1887, eight years before the Fair Oaks Colony.

The Methodist Church held services in a 15 by 30-foot tent on the U. G. Watkins place (on Watkins Drive) that first year. Later, in 1899, they built a church across the street, and it was the center of social life here. (Later converted to a residence, it is now the Hendry home, says Bishop.)

First official Fair Oaks School House

Another early landmark on Watkins Drive was the first Fair Oaks schoolhouse, which Martin Smith later bought and moved to his place on Winding Way for use as a packing shed. This was later converted to a residence. (Martsmith Avenue is named after Martin Smith.)

Martin Smith's Old School

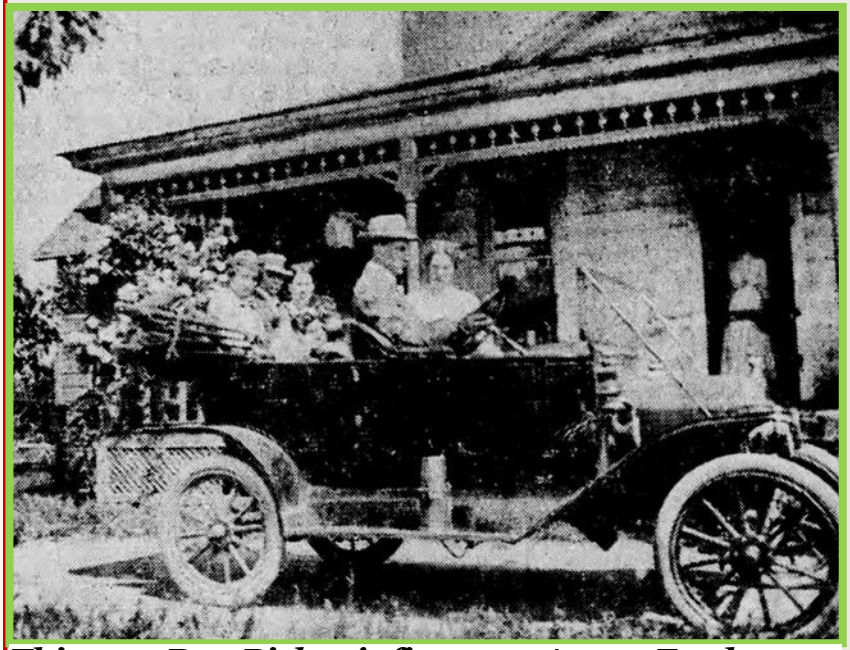
For years L. M. Shelton ran a post office in a little cage six feet square in a tiny store in his house on Sacramento Street. (Later the post office was moved to what is now the San Juan Fountain, on the Plaza.) This store, a blacksmith shop and the hotel made up the entire business section. The hotel, Bishop recalls, was a pretty crude affair; he stayed there two weeks and slept in a rough wall bunk. For a year or two, "East Fair Oaks" had a post office of its own; it was called "Pomelo," or grapefruit, and Horace H. Pierce was the postmaster. It was on the Pierce place, on Illinois Avenue, just two lots south of Sunset. Eastern Fair Oaks was booming in those days; the first big gold dredge had been built in 1899 on Mississippi Bar, near the Nimbus Dam Site.

Percy Bishop worked at hauling lumber from Roseville until C. H. Slocum established a lumber yard where Lang's Hardware stands today. First Bill Spangle, then Sim Green had an auto repair shop across from the present Record office. When it burned down, Green moved his shop to the Slocum lumber yard site (where it remained until George Kellam bought the property and Green went, an all-day trip, with the mud so deep on 12th Street that wagons frequently got stuck. Later, about 1920, he recalls that Arthur Webb drove his Chevrolet to Sacramento and created quite a sensation when he told of reaching the dizzy speed of 32 miles per hour on the unpaved road. "Bud" was considered quite a daredevil.

Wages were low in those days $2.50 a day for a man and team, with $1.50 a day for ordinary labor (from 7 to 6 PM). Making charcoal out of the oak stumps pulled out in clearing land was quite an industry, big pits 15x25 feet being used. The stumps were buried, covered with straw and six inches of dirt, with boxes for flues. They would smolder for weeks, and really made a "big smell," says Bishop.

The town's first telephone switchboard was on the corner now occupied by the Town House and was run by Perry Gum. The town had passenger service by train, however; there was a turntable at the railroad station across the river, to turn the cars around at the end of the line.

When the first Fair Oaks bridge washed out in 1907, the mail had to be brought over from the station in a rowboat. Two men (not local residents) drowned when the boat capsized and Jim Jones, the local rural mail carrier, escaped drowning only because he missed the boat when he tried to board it at that crossing.



This was Roy Bishop's first car. A 1912 Ford touring car cost $765 new, complete with bulb horn, taillights, etc. He drove this car for eight years and 73,000 miles. He remembers fixing five flat tires on a single Sunday. Roy Bishop sits proudly at the wheel, with Mrs. Bishop (then Miss Lucy Kellogg Adam) beside him. In the back seat are Roy's sister, Florence Bishop, Robert James (a cousin of Lucy's) and a friend. In the doorway but hard to see is Mrs. Edith F. Bishop, Mr. Bishop's mother.

In 1898, Charles Sheldon was the local minister, preaching in Fair Oaks, Orangevale and Folsom. Sheldon told Bishop of driving right into Folsom Prison one time to take pictures of the "chow line." Folsom was not a high security prison then. The prisoners would dynamite rock at 11am and 4pm daily, so regularly that local residents set their watches by it.

The building that is now Carpenter's Rest Home on Winding Way was built in 1899 by a Mr. Chase, who ran the Four Gables School for many years, until he sold the building to the Selbys.

The Bald Spot was used to pasture sheep as many as 3,000 at a time in those early winters. (Shades of the past: Just last Sunday a large band of sheep was seen out there.)

Mrs. Roy Bishop was born Lucy Adams in 1883 in Flint, Michigan, where her father was an M.D. She came to Los Angeles in 1902, attending business college there, and came to Sacramento in 1912 to become the private secretary of the State Engineer a post she held until 1923. She met Mr. Bishop through her cousin, who said she wanted her to meet "the man with the car."

They were married several years later, in 1920, and moved to Fair Oaks in 1923. After they sold their Illinois Avenue place in 1932, they moved to a house at Fair Oaks Boulevard and Pennsylvania, which they rented for 14 years from Dr E. H. Buffum. They moved to 5824 Gibbons Drive, Carmichael, their present home. Mr. Bishop did mainly orchard work through the years, except for brief periods as a carpenter, a stenographer, and a porter in a Sacramento hospital.

We always enjoy receiving stories about and photos pertaining to the history of the Fair Oaks area.

For more information,
contact **Chris Highsmith**
(916) 844-7103
or send him an email at:
Fairoakshistorycenter@gmail.com
Or snail mail to:
Fair Oaks History Center
10340 Fair Oaks Blvd
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

THE RAILROAD SAVES FAIR OAKS

BY KIM HUGGETT

They were called "excursionists," and arrived in Fair Oaks Village in 1895 drawn by the promise of verdant land for orchards and the promise of easy access to railroads for shipping. On the advertisements, the *Farm, Field and Fireside* Colony Department had the illustration of a heroic female figure as a chariot driver at the reins of four of the most famous train locomotive types of the time with the catch phrase, "We colonize the earth."

It was an advertisement effective enough to induce potential property buyers to examine the "Sunset Colony" land between Orangevale and the American River. But on arrival, they found the nearest railroad tracks were several miles on the other side of an impassible river.

The excursionists had been brought from across the Midwest by developers on the Transcontinental Railroad through Colfax and Sacramento, then to Folsom because there was no other place to get across the river. They took buggies and wagons through Orangevale before arriving at the south end of Main Street at the Fair Oaks Hotel, where facilities were rustic even for that time.

Many of these visitors were attracted by the promise of Fair Oaks land as prime for growing citrus and later, olives, with a processing plant based at the southwest corner of Sunrise Boulevard and Winding Way.

Of course, getting the goods to market was a prime concern, addressed by the developers' assurance, shown on the lot map, that there would be a bridge across the river and a rail spur to the Sacramento & Placerville Railroad that also connected to Latrobe and Folsom.

According to the definitive work, "A Century of Southern Pacific Steam Locomotives," by Guy Dunscomb, the Sacramento & Placerville Railroad company was incorporated in 1877 as a consolidation of the Sacramento Valley Railroad and the Folsom & Placerville Railroad. A 29-mile stretch had been running between Sacramento and Folsom since 1856. But in 1869, title was conveyed to three of the so-called Big Four of the Central Pacific Railroad.

These were the days of the wild west when it came to railroads, but the Big Four - Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins - always seemed to be in the background of California railway development since completing their eastbound segment of the Transcontinental Railroad.

From 1877 to 1888, the Sacramento & Placerville and the Shingle Springs & Placerville, along with nine other companies, were consolidated to form the Northern Railway. Most of these companies didn't even own locomotives or rolling stock but leased them from the Big Four. The main sources of cargo were timber from the El Dorado National Forest and fruit. Timber was hauled through Camino to Placerville over 65 miles of narrow gauge logging railroads.

When the Southern Pacific Railroad Placerville Branch opened in 1888, it hauled lumber, fruit, butter and other produce to Sacramento until 1986 There was also a thriving passenger service to and from Sacramento until the early 1940s.

That original Southern Pacific main line was where Fair Oaks history was made in 1901 when a two-mile branch was connected, mainly to haul fruit between a Southern Pacific Depot at the south end of the new Fair Oaks Bridge and a junction named Citrus near what is today Folsom Boulevard.

The main product from Fair Oaks hauled by these trains were oranges, at least until a killing frost in the 1930s virtually ended the town's life as a citrus producer. Eventually, the railroad concentrated on hauling crushed rock aggregate from adjacent the American River until the early 1960s.

As the olive industry petered out, passenger service persisted, largely because The Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, wanting to stimulate development in Fair Oaks, paid Southern Pacific $13,000 to assure three years of passenger service. It's uncertain how many trips a day were offered, but the Fair Oaks Citizen newspaper of 1911 says the contract was for eight. We know there were still at least two by 1921.

The first locomotive – No 1240 - pulling Fair Oaks' lifeblood citrus products was a 4-4-0, known as the American Type, so-called for its four pilot wheels in front, four large driver wheels, and no wheels beneath the cab and firebox.

The 4-4-0 type was famous in American history because two of these engines met at the Golden Spike Ceremony at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869 at the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Buster Keaton made his best silent film, "The General," with variations of these locomotives, recreating what was known as "The Great Locomotive Chase," during the Civil War.

Visitors can see these locomotive types at the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. Research at the museum also helped to follow the historic trail of locomotive No. 1240.

The locomotive had been purchased from the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Pennsylvania, transferred in pieces across the Transcontinental Railroad and assembled at the Sacramento railyard. It initially served the Northern California Railroad from Colfax to Sacramento as No. 4.

It was renumbered as No. 1240 to serve the Placerville-Fair Oaks-Sacramento line, and there are several photographs at the Fair Oaks Historical Society showing it at the Fair Oaks Bridge Depot.

Locomotives are famous in railway historical societies and tracking their fates can be a challenge for the researcher because their numbers often changed when they were acquired by different companies.

For example, after its life as No. 4 on the Colfax run, and No. 1240 on the Placerville-Fair Oaks-Sacramento route, the locomotive was transferred to the Sacramento Southern Railway, running to the Sacramento River delta and back from 1906 to 1910, as No. 1500.

The locomotive was then shipped north to the Oregon Coast Range country and became No. 70 in 1919 for the Valley & Siletz Railroad in Hoskins near Salem. It worked until 1922 hauling passengers and lumber on a 20-mile line.

When the lumber mill at Camino closed in 1986, operations ended between that site and Placerville and the track was removed. With the primary reason for the branch's existence gone, Southern Pacific operations between Folsom and Placerville ended in 1989, less than 18 months after the line's 100th anniversary.

Railfans can still ride stretches of that old railway thanks to two groups. Since 2010, the Placerville and Sacramento Valley Railroad nonprofit organization has operated train and motorcar rides, wine tasting trains, and an annual festival in Folsom. The pride of the organization is a rebuilt 1909 steam powered locomotive.

There are still opportunities to experience what it was like to use Sacramento area railways in Fair Oaks' formative years. In Placerville, the El Dorado Western Railroad runs open passenger cars and a caboose over the tracks in the spring and summer out of the towns of El Dorado and Shingle Springs. A portion of the abandoned railbed is now part of the El Dorado Trail that is paved between El Dorado and Camino. From the trestle over Weber Creek hikers and bicyclists can appreciate the effort it took to build such a bridge to keep trains from having to climb more than a 1 percent grade on the trip from the valley to Placerville.

In Jamestown off Highway 49, at Railtown 1897 State Historic Park you can ride an excursion train pulled by a steam or diesel locomotive through the Mother Lode.

Downtown Roseville has an overlook area for the largest classification yard west of the Rockies, where railroad cars are grouped together to form train units. Earlier this year, Roseville hosted Big Boy locomotive 4014, the largest operating steam engine in America.

And the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento has the 50-ton Central Pacific No. 1 "Gov. Stanford," a Standard American 4-4-0 shipped around Cape Horn in 1863 and reassembled in Sacramento. The museum's collection includes 19 engines dating from 1862 to 1944 and one of them, the steam locomotive Granite Rock, takes modern-day "excursionists" along the Sacramento River. It uses tracks of the former Sacramento Southern Railway where locomotive No. 1240, that once served Fair Oaks, completed its service in the Golden State.

SOURCE MATERIAL:

The San Juan Record, Sacramento Union, and Fair Oaks Citizen newspapers, Oak Leaves magazine; California State Railroad Museum; Placerville and Sacramento Valley Railroad Association; El Dorado Western Railway Foundation Association; "A Century of Southern Pacific Locomotives, 1862-1962," by Guy L. Dunscomb, 1972, Modesto, CA; Pacific Northwest Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society; Fair Oaks Historical Society.

Membership Page

Welcome New Members

Chris Houde
Randy Marx

2026 Renewals at the Benefactor Level ($150+)

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

Fair Oaks Historical Society
Membership / Renewal / Volunteer Application

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

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

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

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

☐ History Center Docent	☐ Board Member
☐ Research	☐ Committee Chair
☐ Collection preservation	☐ Liaison Representative
☐ Inventory record management	☐ Fundraising
☐ Educational Programs	☐ Publicity \ Advertising
☐ Interviews	☐ Social Media \ Communications
☐ Walking Tours	☐ Tech \ Media
☐ Special Events	☐ Other

Signature: **X**	**Date:**

Send this application with your check to:

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

You may also use the 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 at (916) 844-7103 or FOHistory1@gmail.com.

Membership Coordinator use only:

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

2026 HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR

Executive Board Meeting	July 21
Quarterly General Meeting	July 28
Executive Board Meeting	August 18
Executive Board Meeting	September 15
Chicken Festival	September 19

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

www.fairoakshistory.org

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To: