Something to Crow About

Fair Oaks Historical Society

Preserving the History and Heritage of Fair Oaks CA

Est.1975

Fall 2026 Issue 158

Quarterly General Meeting

When: Tuesday, October 27th 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 **Aaron Robertson**.

See page 4 for more details about Aaron.

We will see you there!

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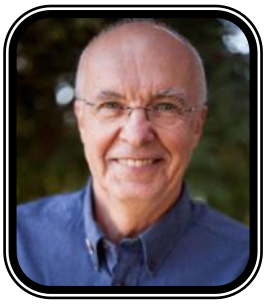
LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

By Bud Beebe, President & Pete Schroeder, Vice President

Fall



Times seem pretty good in Fair Oaks as Summer moves into Fall. History Society members used our end-of-August Ice Cream Social to talk about vacation adventures and catch up on town gossip.

These short get-togethers at your History Center are a good excuse to drop by and see what's happening. It's always nice to see you at the History Center and at this time of year you can take home all the acorns you want.

It's been noted that history is always in the making and right now it seems as though a lot of local history is being made pretty fast. The inescapable changes wrought by COVID are now viewed as a bygone era. After decades of a thriving Sunrise Mall, we now generally accept its demise, or more hopefully its nadir in a renewed direction. If the old PCA rock crushers have become a part of the American River Parkway, why can't Sunrise Mall become a university or regional sports center.

By the way, have you ever had to explain to visitors from the East Coast that the American River Parkway is for recreation and is not a toll road. The Parkway and the Bluffs are positive things that local citizen action has saved for our collective benefit.

Citizen action is often about dedicating a part of our time and energy, but sometimes it's money we collectively decide to spend. So, Hey… how do you feel about the $27 million we spent on Measure J?

The double hit of COVID and Village Park reconstruction seemed to last forever while they were happening. But now that all the things that Measure J produced have been open for a year, I feel pretty good about the outcome. How about you?

The wait for the Clubhouse reopening was agonizingly long, and yet, how long historically speaking was it?

1. The California Gold Rush lasted about as long as our seven year wait for a cleaned-up Clubhouse.
2. The U.S. involvement in World War II was "only" four years.
3. Pacific Coast Aggregates mined and crushed rock at Fair Oaks for about fifty years, comparable to the fifty plus years of Sunrise Mall.
4. The town of Fair Oaks has been here officially for 131 years.

The Dewey's and others were farming here before that. Humans have stood on what we call the Fair Oaks Bluffs for millennia: Each generation watching as the river flows below and telling their children about its secrets.

At our Ice Cream Social, I was listening to conversations. What I heard was the flow of local history…and its secrets.

Remember to join us Tuesday, October 27 th for our Fall meeting and Pot-luck dinner at the Fair Oaks Clubhouse.

Bud

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE HISTORY CENTER

Volun-
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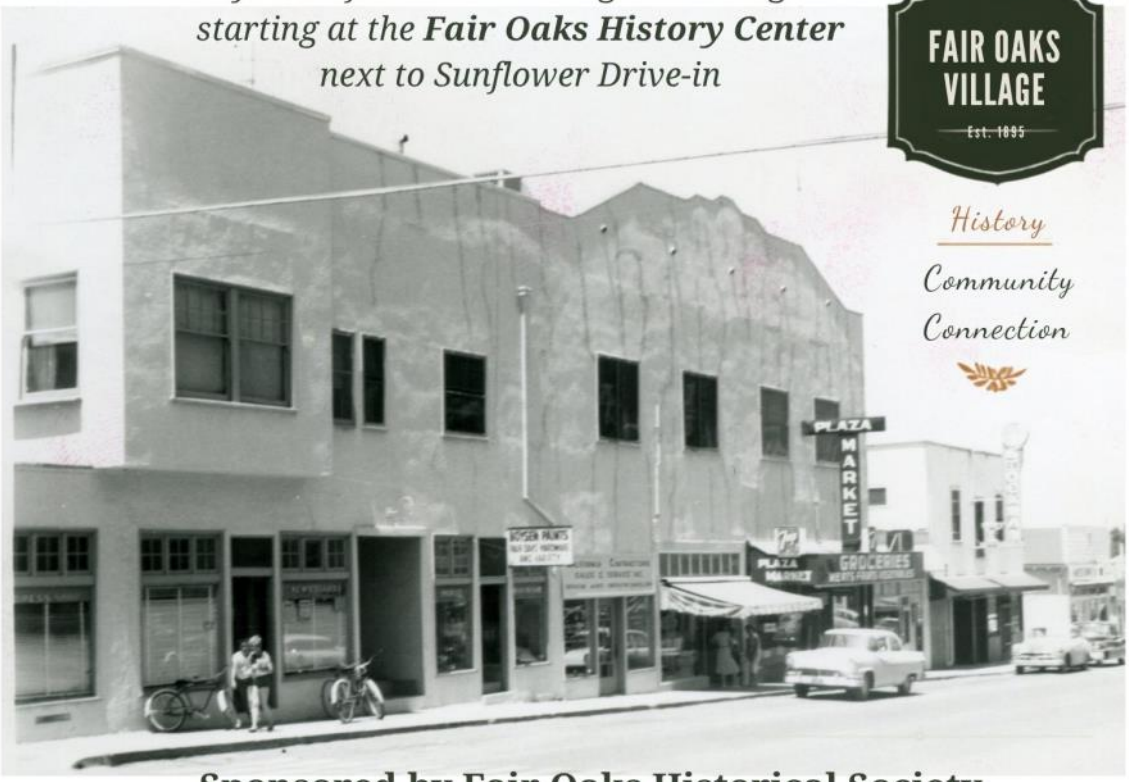
Fair Oaks Village

FREE HISTORY TOURS

*Join us for a walk through the village starting at the **Fair Oaks History Center** next to Sunflower Drive-in*

FAIR OAKS VILLAGE
Est. 1895

History
Community
Connection



Sponsored by Fair Oaks Historical Society

@ 10am on Saturday Nov 7

RSVP :
(916) 844-7103
Fairoakshistorycenter@gmail.com

Weather Permitting

Our Speaker at the FOHS General Meeting, October 27th, 2026:

Aaron Robertson, the new District Administrator for the Fair Oaks Recreation and Parks District will be our featured speaker.

He will be speaking about the historic priorities of the Parks District and his vision for the future.

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 February 13th, 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

Our next planning meeting will be on October 20th at 1pm. We are especially in need of volunteers to help with the salad preparation. The commitment is only for the day before and the day of Soup Night.

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

History Center Docents

The addition of two IPADs for use at the History Center has offered Historical Society volunteers some new capabilities and it allows us to standardize some of our routine needs at the History Center.

The IPAD cameras and portable internet capability can help with data entry tasks and faster sharing of image data. As you may have seen at a recent Quarterly Meeting, they are also a quick and easy way to make credit card purchases. In the above photo, History Center Operations Manager, Chris Highsmith left, shows History Center Docents, Laura Sutton and Margge Wood, how to record a credit card transaction.

Membership Page

Welcome New Members

Julie Circle (Benefactor)
Tarrel James and Kay Cunningham
Deborah Ondrika (Supporting)
Michael Schock

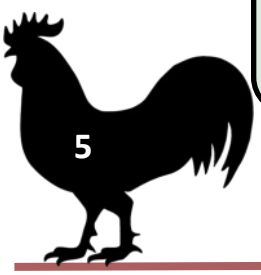
2026 Renewals at the Benefactor Level ($150+)

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
Peter and Sharon Sarellana
Doug & Joanna Schwilk
John & Ann Simmons
Cleatta Simpson
Karen Smith
Bob & Maria Sours/Melendey
Richard & Claudia Thorn



FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Chris Highsmith, History Center Operation Manager

San Juan Record Article - October 10th, 1944

The Fair Oaks East End Schools

[Note: In our last Newsletter, an article about the Bishops family mentions that the first building used as a school in Fair Oaks was moved from Watkins Dr. to Martsmith Way. Below is an article reprinted from the October 10, 1944, San Juan Record, that explains what happened to that schoolhouse and a nearby building on Winding Way that replaced it.]

[October, 1944]

We are indebted to Mrs. Floy L. Smith [Henry Martin Smith's wife] for the following report on the recent passing of a building intimately connected with the early day history of Fair Oaks, the old schoolhouse on Martsmith avenue.

Another of Fair Oaks's old land-marks passed out of existence last week when the old schoolhouse on Martsmith avenue was torn down.

When Fair Oaks colony was settled back in the eighteen nineties, the people, being anxious that their children had school privileges, formed a district and built a schoolhouse.

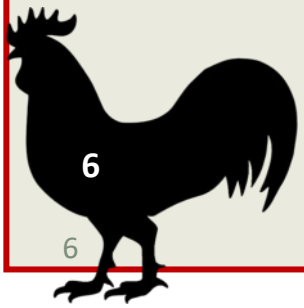
It stood not far from our present school, on the hillside across the street from Judge Narramore's home [at the corner of Watkins Drive and Fair Oaks Blvd]. It was built after the prevailing fashion of its time—a plain, one-roomed, rectangular wooden building—and it served its purpose until it could no longer hold the increasing crowd of children.

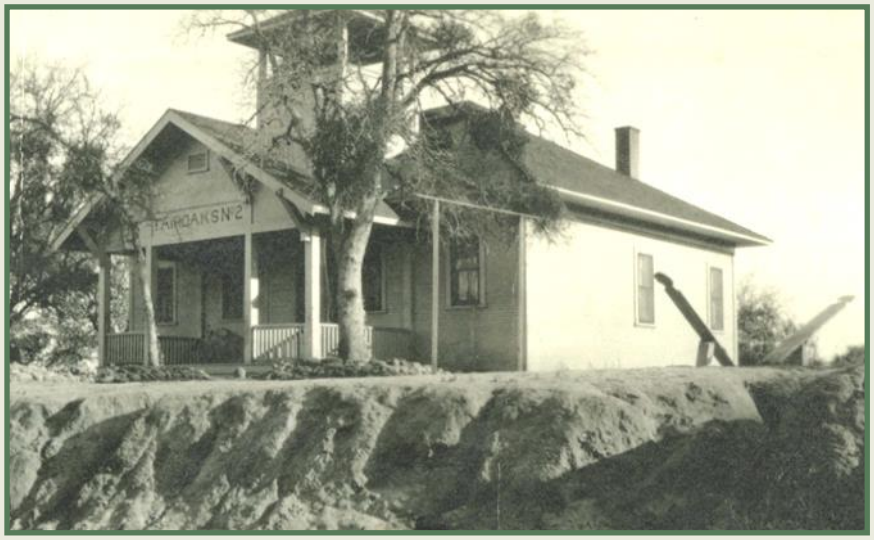
In 1902, plans were laid for building a large schoolhouse on the hill where our Civic Center [Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse] is now located, but the people living in the east end of the district objected to the cost of the new building since they lived too far away to receive any benefits from the school plus the roads in winter were almost impassable.

So, by way of a compromise, the old schoolhouse was moved in 1903 to the east end with the understanding that a school would be opened there to accommodate the children of that neighborhood. The following year Henry Martin Smith bought the land on which the house stood and later bought the building which was used for a packinghouse and hay barn.

With the building of a gold dredge on Mississippi bar, the population of that end of the district increased greatly and something had to be done for the children.

So in the fall of 1910 on a few days notice, the old schoolhouse was cleaned, some furniture moved in and the school opened with Mrs. H. M. Smith, as teacher,
taking two of her own small children with her.





Above is a photo around 1917 of the second east end schoolhouse that was built when the district needed a larger schoolhouse.

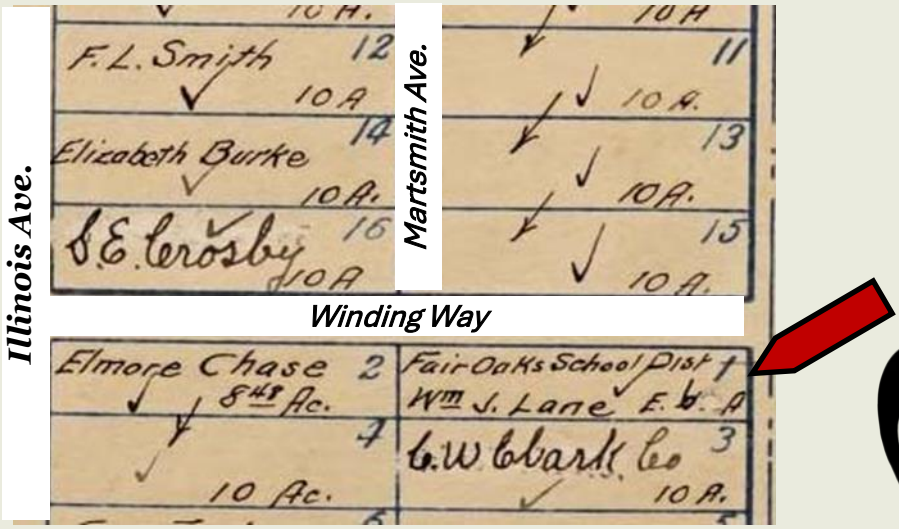
There were seven grades represented with an enrollment of 30, 17 of whom had never attended school before. Mrs. Smith taught the following year, also.

The next year the teacher was Miss Lillie Rusch (Mrs. Perry Gum) and a year later the school had completely outgrown the building, so it was transferred to a new house (now Mr. Selby's packing house) [across the street from Martsmith Ave. on Winding Way] where it continued until the advent of the school bus system.

So, the old house that had served two communities again became a fruit packing house and storeroom. For the past few years [before 1944], during the housing shortage, it has repeatedly sheltered families.

But it was growing too old and infirm to do that properly, so it seemed best to raze it and rebuild it into something more useful.

Below shows the location of the schoolhouse on Winding Way



FALLOUT SHELTERS IN FAIR OAKS DURING THE COLD WAR PANIC

BY OLYMPIA ELDRIDGE

[Note: Olympia Eldridge was a volunteer student intern at Fair Oaks History Center this past summer. Her work was mostly with our Catalogit team, but her interest was piqued when she learned that a home builder built some fallout shelters which still exist in Fair Oaks. This essay is a result her research. Olympia is now attending Fresno State University pursuing a History Major with emphasis on the Cold War Era.]

New Subdivision Homes Have Fallout Shelters

Fallout shelters, which also serve as a patio-porch, are a new feature of homes being built in the Frontier Greens subdivision by Robert P. Watt.

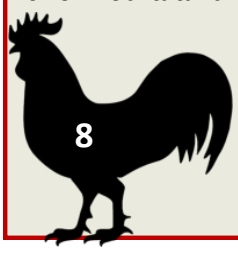
The shelters, according to Watt, are of concrete block and steel construction. They are 8 by 18 feet in size and, Watt added, can be utilized as a rumpus room.

Frontier Greens is on Kawanee Way off Winding Way in Fair Oaks.

Newspaper clipping about the newly constructed homes in Fair Oaks, specifically their inclusion of fallout shelter (Sacramento Bee, September 3, 1961).

As the Capitol of California, Sacramento is an important place. If you take into account its proximity to the late McClellan Air Force base (and other military centers) and the nuclear scare of the 50s and 60s, you get the perfect recipe for fallout shelters. Sacramento county housed over 130 bomb shelters according to a 1960s era county map, and Fair Oaks only had one listed public shelter in a Safeway (2415 Fair Oaks Blvd). Despite this or perhaps because of the lack of public shelters, Fair Oaks has four known private fallout shelters (currently non-active).

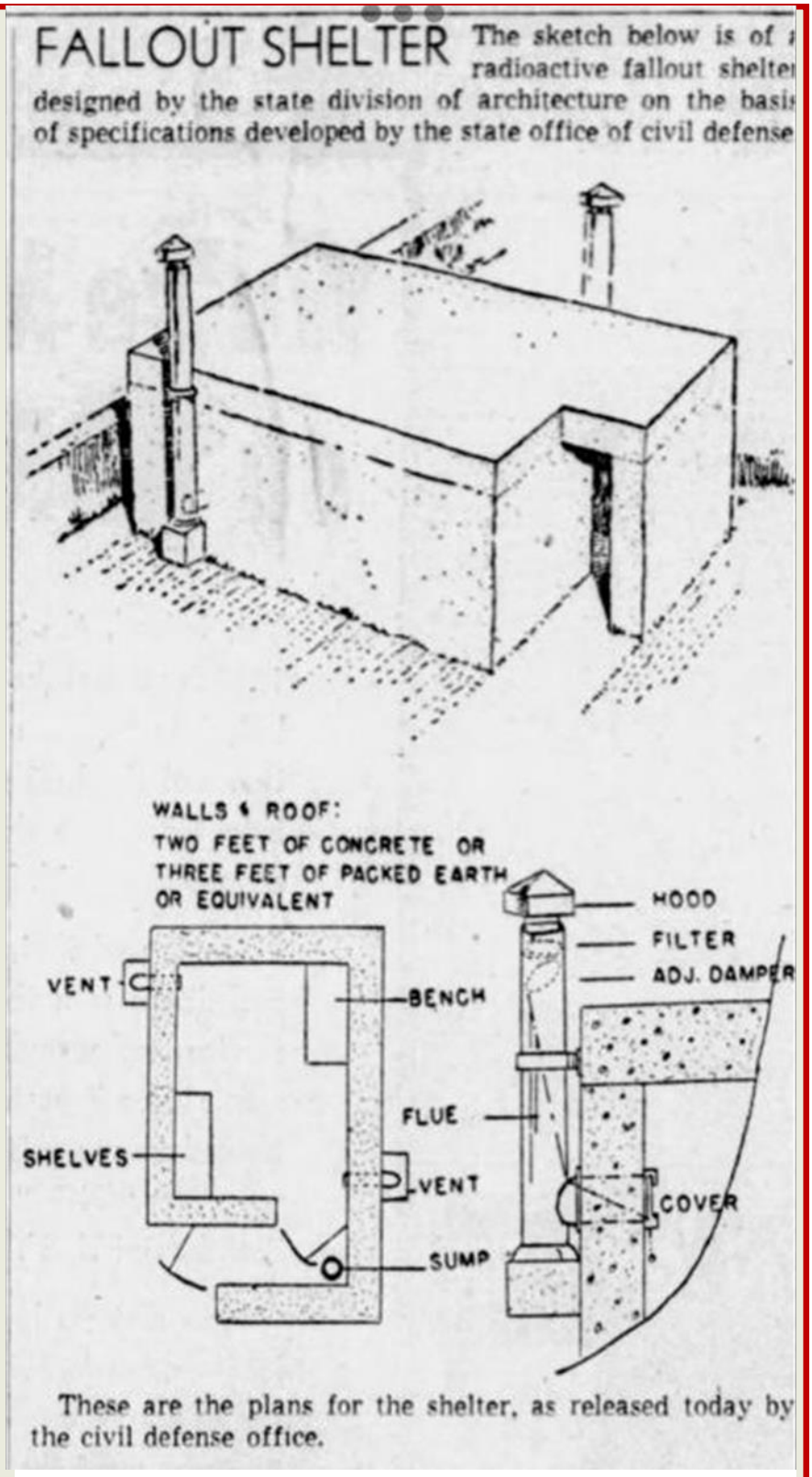
But why were residents of Sacramento so scared of a nuclear strike? Sacramento was thought to be a main target for the Soviet Union due to its status as capital and home of military power. According to Statistica.com, "In 2023, there were around 1.11 million active-duty U.S. Armed Forces personnel stationed within the United States. In that year, there were 156,418 U.S. Armed Forces personnel stationed in California, the most of any state. " This high concentration of military personnel along with the proximity of McClellan Air Force base (closed in 2001 due to downsizing of military bases after the Cold War) made Sacramento a logical target. This chance of attack was greatly magnified by the media and coverage of the nuclear arms race.



This race was mainly between the USSR and America, kicking off during the Second World War due to the discovery of fission (the process used in atomic bombs) and fear of German advancement. The Allies (mainly the US and Britain) launched heavily funded projects aiming to build a fission fueled bomb before the Nazi's could, employing Mutually Assured Destruction to make the chance of safety greater.

M.A.D. refers to an ideology focusing on multiple countries being armed with nuclear weapons, making each too scared to launch any for fear of retaliation and obliteration. This idea is often pointed to in pro-nuclear arming groups. But in the event the bombs do drop, what do you do? Shelter is the first step.

What is a fallout shelter? A fallout shelter is a short-term shelter for surviving the blast and fallout after a nuclear explosion. Fission is the splitting of an atom's nucleus. Atoms are made mostly of empty space but the nuclei in the center are impossibly dense. Fission splits this, releasing the power stored by the mass. E=mc^2 was proposed to explain the relationship between energy and mass where the energy an object stores equals the mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. According to this formula the energy stored in one atom could make a grain of rice jump, amazing when taking into account the trillions of atoms in a small amount of uranium or plutonium.



Above are plans for a basic fallout shelter showing the average makeup/layout (Sacramento Bee, March 31, 1955)

Every element has isotopes (same element, different number of neutrons) and some are particularly fissionable. Fission must be kickstarted by manually splitting an atom, but the key to power is the chain reaction. When one atom fissions, it gives off energy and shoots neutrons, hitting other atoms. The problem is some isotopes absorb these without fissioning. Therefore, less fissionable elements must be enriched with their more fissionable isotopes, such as Uranium 235.

When a chain reaction is obtained, you can power, or wipe out, an entire town. The blast would result in burns, with civilians in the epicenter being evaporated.

Luster gray glass walls, vinyl floor, and wood grain plastic laminated cabinets with stainless steel trim will keep maintenance at a minimum in this kitchen. Vinyl chairs can move outdoors for entertaining and Mrs. Blomberg can "children watch" the pool through glass walls.

Colors attain a new clarity in this glass enclosed house. In the living room matching California blue sofas dominate. A combination of Scandinavian furnishings is used in the game area and glass door walls open to the private street side patio.

Sacramento Home Restates Elegant California Living

By Mary C. Jackson

The Jerome Blomberg house, one of those opened to the public during Sacramento's Parade of Homes, presents a new concept for secluded home structure within the confines of a typical city lot.

Designed by architect George Murachi and decorated by Jon Siler, it tells a twofold story, stressing the use of glass, masonry and maintainance free building materials.

Basically a simple box rectangle, it is divided into seven rooms. In addition, there are work and play areas, three private garden terraces, a swimming pool and a complete underground fallout shelter.

White painted texture studded concrete blocks and tiles achieve classic Romanesque styling. In the wall completely enclosing the pool centered back yard, these have been sand blasted to an earth color and will need no further attention during the many years this home seems destined to provide pleasant family living. And punctuating the practicality of the block patterned carports is their continuation into a hobbies and service room, an area distinct from the family room it adjoins.

An effective use of imported French glass throughout enhances the precisely defined interiors, creating spaciousness as illumination is transmitted from one room to another. There is variety in the glass itself, walls and sliding doors varying from pristine clear to a grayed opaqueness and to a special hammered wire ornamental type.

In design and its use of the newest low maintainance building materials and furnishings, the Blomberg home sets the scene for elegant and secluded living.

In a room designed expressly for two young super active boys, there is a walnut combination desk and work table and cabinets with sturdy vinyl tops. Youth beds have natty, striped spreads and there are hanging shelves for sports gear. Wet feet will never mark the floor as it is covered with rubber carpeting.

Newspaper article discussing a home recently built in Fair Oaks containing a fallout shelter *(Sacramento Bee*, January *1, 1961)*.

Following this, radiation sickness would start to set in due to the fallout. Nuclear fallout is the elements produced from fission drifting down, immensely radioactive and dangerous. Radioactivity does not have a smell, taste, or scent. You can't see it, but if exposed for too long you will start to suffer from radiation sickness, which can lead to death. Acute radiation sickness can result in hair loss, weakness, vomiting, skin loss and other symptoms. If you do survive radiation exposure, you will also have a much higher chance of cancer in later years. The goal of a shelter is to prevent or mitigate those effects.

Advertisement posted in the *Sacramento Bee in 1961* for construction of an in-home fallout shelter.

A common shelter would have consisted of thick walls (usually concrete) used to block the radiation. The more layers of material you can have between yourself and the radioactive particles, the better. The radiation drops after two days, but it's best to stay as long as supplies allow. Radiation drops exponentially; by the end of the second week the radiation outside will have dropped to 1% of its initial level. Radioactive material emits Alpha particles, Beta particles, and/or Gamma rays. Alpha particles can be easily blocked due to how large they are, but Beta particles are much more dangerous; Beta particles would be the ones to do major damage because they are small enough to perforate your body. Concrete is commonly used because of its ability to block both kinds of particles and gamma rays. A zigzag shaped entrance is also used to reduce the radiation absorbed; the radiation resulting from a nuclear detonation is in the form of gamma rays which are blocked by dense materials. Maybe David Bowie was on to something with his labyrinth.

Once you have your concrete room built you should keep it stocked with enough non-perishable provisions to last your entire family at least 2 weeks. It's always good to have extra food so you have the option of keeping others outside of your family safe. Canned fruits and vegetables along with crackers and meat are popular choices along with MREs (Meals Ready To Eat (Rations widely used by the military)). Storefronts exist just for emergency rations, such as hiking or military surplus stores, but with a little research your local supermarket can stock your shelter just as well for a more reasonable price. Focusing on nonperishables like canned produce and meat along with carb sources such as hardtack or crackers will be your best bet for staying fed after the bomb drops.

The amazing thing that the shelters in Fair Oaks show about our residents is not their fear, but their love for each other. They spent hard earned money to protect their family against a then distant threat. The shelters reflect the value of family and community and how it prevailed over fear in a tense time. Never let fear of an uncertain danger distract you from the beauty of your life.

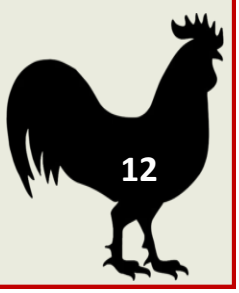
Now that you are a little more informed regarding nuclear science, I hope you can come away from this newsletter with a newfound appreciation for the field and your part in it. Take the time this year to tell the people close to you how important they are, and take steps to make our community even better!

If you would like to submit an article,
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

For more information:

https://www.kcra.com/article/decades-old-map-pinpoints-135-fallout-shelters-in-sacramento-county/12001221

(https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/nuclear-explosion-radiation-emergencies.html#:~:text=Radiation%20levels%20are%20extremely%20dangerous,as%20long%20as%20one%20month.)



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	October 20
Quarterly General Meeting	October 27
Executive Board Meeting	November 17
Executive Board Meeting	December 15
Executive Board Meeting	January 19
Quarterly General Meeting	January 26
Soup Night 2027	February 13

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

www.fairoakshistory.org

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