



# Fair Oaks Historical Society

Newsletter – January 20, 2015 # 112

**MEETING, Tuesday January 27 6:00**

At the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse 7997 California Avenue

**POTLUCK MEETING Dinner line forms at 6:30**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Joe Dobrowolski**

- Our history center was open 3 days a week during the whole year. We continue to get visitors and we are changing our displays. The outside of the center has looked great, thanks to those who have volunteered for one month to care for the Center.
- This year our officers have agreed to serve a third year... their final year. We need to start looking for others who will serve.
- The presentations at our 2014 quarterly meetings were really excellent. And this month's presentation will continue the precedent.
- It's a new year and your annual memberships are now due. See the last page of this newsletter or pay Tel Labelle at our meeting. Included in this newsletter is the proposed budget for 2015.
- The board has proposed to give a \$1,000.00 award to a high school senior. Pat Vogel will be leading that effort.
- The board approved the life membership for Susan Cabodi Roper

## **WHAT'S NEW AT THE HISTORY CENTER Jim Pearce**

We recently discovered two boxes of oral history videos. The first was done in 1991 and contains short (5 minute or so) interviews with some of the "old timers":

In addition to having this video on the new display unit down at the History Center, we've copied it to several "loaner" DVD's you

can sign out to take home and view it. We also have made a number of DVD's for sale for \$10.00.

The second video we discovered was started in about 2005 but never completed. It contains five longer (half-hour) interviews with Sarah Goller, Bill Hinsey, Janet & Warren McWilliams, Dick Jeffrey and Lois Frazier. We haven't converted the movies to a DVD but we'll be working on that. In the meantime, the video clips are available on the big screen down at the history Center.

Bill McPhail

Carl Monson

Sara Vincent Goller

Robert L. Smith

Bob Massey

Marge Dave

Temperence Smallwood Weinrich

George Payne

Dick Gilmore

Warren McWilliams

Lois (Haverman) Frazier

Katherine (Haverman) Netherton

Elsie (Haverman) Murphy

Dick & Jeannie Hill

Iva Rice Langness

Gayle Anita

June Melvin





## Granddaughter of one Fair Oaks Founders - George E. King.

Elizabeth King Steele, age 94, died November 14, 2014.

Elizabeth was born in 1920 to Kenneth King and Genevieve Ballou King.



Elizabeth's father, Kenneth King, was the son of George E. and Jessie King of the original "Chicago Ten." The group that came West to establish Fair Oaks. George was one of the first to move here in 1898 when he built his grand home they named "Kingswold" He became a Director and Vice-President of the Fair Oaks Fruit Company as well as President of the Almond Exchange of Fair Oaks. He was a member of the Chicago-Fair Oaks Association. He and Jessie were part of "The Chicago Club", that

first group of 13 pioneer families who settled the area.

"Kingswold", with its fine gardens and large orange orchards, was considered one of the most beautiful and attractive estates in Sacramento County. Around 1958 the house was demolished to make room for a housing development. The home and acreage was located on the site of the current Earl Legette Elementary School on Kenneth Avenue. One of the original "Kingswold" palms and several olive trees can still be seen. Kenneth Avenue was named after Kenneth King.

Kenneth, Elizabeth's father, arrived with his parents as a young boy attending the grade school in Fair Oaks but attended high school in Sacramento.

George King's wife Jessie, was loved and well known, serving as a leading member of the community and President of the Woman's Thursday Club in the years from 1904 through 1914. She was very socially active and one of her best friends in Fair Oaks was Mrs. Ruggles, a close neighbor.



Jessie

Shortly after 1902 when the cemetery opened, George bought the King family plot located near the entrance gate of the Cemetery. The King family is buried in the Fair Oaks Cemetery: George, Jessie, Kenneth and now Elizabeth along with her husband Frank Steele. Several other King family members are buried there.

After George's death, Jessie moved to Sacramento where she died in 1934. Elizabeth spent her childhood in Sacramento and she was 14 when her Grandma Jessie died

Elizabeth King married Frank Steele whom she met while attending Yuba College in Yuba City, California. After a 1941 wedding in Reno, the couple settled in Colusa California, which was Frank's home town. In 1947, Frank Jr. was born followed in 1948 by twin daughter's Jean and Jane. The family moved to Susanville, California in 1962 where Frank owned and operated Steele's TV & Appliance. Elizabeth worked alongside him until she got a job with the Lassen County Welfare Department as a Case Worker. Frank and Elizabeth moved to Southern California in 1969 where he worked for the Dept. of Consumer Affairs. They eventually made their way back to the Sacramento area residing in Elk Grove for 30 years.

Frank died in 1999 and Elizabeth continued to live on her own until the last six years of her life.

Elizabeth's greatest joy came from her family and the love of playing the piano which she'd done since she was a child. Her grandfather Ballou taught her piano since he was a music teacher with the Sacramento School District during the 1930s. She was still playing tunes by memory up to age 92. Through the King side of the family, she is distantly related to Hawaii's famed music composer Charles King ... known for writing the "Hawaiian Wedding Song"



Frank & Elizabeth

## **THE DEVASTATING FREEZE OF 1932. By Ashton Smith**

The destructive freeze of 1932 is an event well known and marked by Fair Oaks history buffs and long time residents. To make matters worse, it struck at a time when the community and the nation was struggling with the effects of the great depression. A number of the residents living in the Fair Oaks and Orangevale area in 1932 recalled these days and nights of worry. One of Fair Oaks' earliest residents, John Holst





remembered much from this period. He exclaimed "I don't believe I would be far wrong if I remark that it was the most disastrous occurrence that ever happened in the entire history of Fair Oaks". Holst emphasized the importance of the citrus business, and explained that "Those orchards were our livelihood, our chief interest, and always our great pride." Sunkist had a packing plant at the Fair Oaks RR Station across the Fair Oaks Bridge. Another old time resident, Earl



Beauchamp, remembered years before, when the citrus business was successful. He explained that "About three freight car loads down there was the average per day, for about six weeks". According to Holst "Before the frost, the Fair Oaks Fruit Company shipped out 150 train car loads of Oranges to the eastern states and about 50 carloads by truck and by freight to west coast areas".

For a number of days in 1932, starting around Thanksgiving, a bone chilling, windy ice came down from the Polar North. Holst recalled that radio reports were coming in, giving notice of the weather to come. Some attempted to try to save their trees by turning on the irrigation, to aid in keeping the exposed portions of the trees somewhat insulated, while others tried to pick as much fruit as possible. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, by December 9<sup>th</sup>, temperatures dramatically dropped down into the low 20s and high teens. These conditions were felt until Dec 15<sup>th</sup>. These chilly temperatures were unexpected and came much earlier than anticipated. Holst wrote that: "We awakened one awful morning to

find the lovely green foliage of our trees turned to dark brown. The branches drooped dismally and the trees appeared stark and dead. We were sick at heart. There was gloom and misery all over town". He also noted "The bark on many of the trees was split wide open." This freeze caused the citrus trees' fruit and leaf cells to burst, resulting in trees that look blackened, and dead. Farmers were told not to prune the trees for a while, just in case new growth emerged. Some had their orchards permanently removed while others simply waited and in some cases new growth was seen after many months. Unfortunately, the next freeze, two years later, killed off most of those remaining trees. Bob Massey, another Fair Oaks resident "estimated that 95 percent of the farmers got out of the



business following the 1934 freeze". The 1932 freeze and the one to come two years later finished off Fair Oaks as a great citrus growing area. Although the large scale citrus production was gone, the icy temperatures similar to 1932 were also felt in 1972 and again for a shorter period in 1991. As weather events like these continue to occur on occasion, those who experienced the winter of '32 tremble at the memory of the GREAT FREEZE.

## **PRESENTATIONS Trude Vasquez**

### **California State Governor's Mansion Memories**

The docents of California State Historic Governor's Mansion present an introduction and walk, through the history of this wonderful historic mansion.

The Mansion Memories Program will introduce an audience to the two private families and thirteen Governor's families that resided in the Mansion between 1877 and 1967.

Docents in "character" and period costume present a brief vignette representing many of the families. The vignettes are humorous, poignant and informative.

Audiences have commented that Mansion Memories

Program is a wonderful, educational and enjoyable visit to 90 years of California History.

The full program with participating Docents and volunteer runs 45 minutes to one hour. It is fast paced, focused and historically accurate to the period of each vignette.





## SOUP NIGHT A GREAT PARTY

Our soup night was a financial, a social success and a great party: more open space; easier to get around and the presentation at the tables was elegant. All thanks to our soup night leader, Claudia Thorn, our soup chef Lynn Steen, our raffle chief Trude Vasquez, the other 13 chairs and the numerous helpers. We thank the many donors of raffle prizes and other items. We raised enough money to pay for the Center's attendant payroll and operating costs.

