



# *Fair Oaks Historical Society*

**Newsletter – April 2014 # 109**

**MEETING, Tuesday April 22 5:30**

**At the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse  
7997 California Avenue**

***POT LUCK THIS MEETING Dinner line forms at 6:30***

## **President's Message Joe Dobrowolski**

The January meeting was a both a tour and a meeting. Tim Carmichael and Carmel Comstock, the owners of the Straith House graciously opened their house for a tour by our members. The house is in wonderful shape and it was a singular experience for our members. After the tour we convened at the Club House for desserts and the normal meeting. Changes to the By-Laws were adopted.

In April we will have a talk on the Nisenan native peoples by Sheri Tatsch, PhD, a Nisenan expert who has taught at UC Davis, and Shelly Covert a Nisenan tribal leader from Nevada City. This will be a very interesting and exciting presentation.

**NEWSLETTER:** If you have email we would really like to deliver this newsletter by email. If you received this by US mail and have email please forward your email to me at [joesextra@pacbell.net](mailto:joesextra@pacbell.net) Those of you who receive the newsletter by US Mail **please add \$5.00 to the annual membership dues.**

**DONATION:** Carole Brewer, June Melvin's daughter, went through June's collections and memories. Carole collected several boxes of photos, books, event programs and a variety of historical items related to Fair Oaks and has donated them to the Society. We appreciate receiving these personal items of June's. June who died in 2010 was a founder and leader of the Fair Oaks Historical Society for decades. Below is a little bit of the Society's history in June's own words.

## **FOUNDING THE FAIR OAKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY by June Melvin**

It was always a mystery to June, being a history student for many years, why it was that Fair Oaks did not have a Historical Society. In 1969, when June was named California History and Landmarks Chairman for The Woman's Thursday Club of Fair Oaks, she arranged a Sunday afternoon silver tea in our local library in the hope of stimulating community interest in forming a local society. It was a beautiful affair, well attended with our Legislators and State CFWC History and Landmarks Chairman in attendance. Everyone seemed to appreciate the gathering but it ended there. She sought out and purchased a store display cabinet for historical exhibits and it was placed in the library, where it remained for quite a while.

In 1975, Mrs. Melvin scheduled an evening Section of The Woman's Thursday Club, well attended including: (1) J. W. Pugh, Manager of the local Crocker Bank and local Historian, (2) Mrs. Vivian Archer, author of a paper on Fair Oaks History, and (3) Mrs. Alice Jewett, from Davis, California, Region Director of the Conference of California Historical Societies. These people expressed interest in organizing a local Society but no one would take an office. Mrs. Melvin, was heavily occupied with the office of District President of the CFWC, so it was a young lady, Sue Roark, employed in the office of the local Park District that arranged for the Park District to sponsor a local historical society. Harry Voth was elected the first president, and held the office for three months. Then Mrs. Roark took the office, which she chaired for three years. There was a lapse of time when no meetings were held. Alfred McKenzie, local attorney, called meetings for a year and a half. The Society struggled to stay alive, having from five to ten people in attendance each time. June Melvin, now free from other obligations, was elected President, wrote a complete new set of By-laws, changing the meetings from monthly to quarterly and developed a pot-luck dinner agenda.

It has proven greatly successful with the average attendance of between 60 and 80 people. Mrs. Melvin held office for three years and the Fair Oaks Society has matured into a solid, strong, and positive influence in the community - pledged to preserve Fair Oaks history and heritage; to protect its future identity and work to bring about the temporary History Center, a repository for documents and memorabilia, and in time to be developed into a permanent location.

PS: *And here we are today carrying out the prescient vision of June Melvin*



1989 FOHS Meeting



1990 Opening of History Center @ cemetery

### **FOHS Members Volunteering At FOR&PD Park Day**



Thanks to the Fair Oaks Historical Society (FOHS) members who volunteered for the Fair Oaks Park District workday on March 22<sup>nd</sup> we earned back our "A" status with the park district. This means FOHS is now able to rent park facilities at a reduced rate. Our team was given the task of refurbishing one of the horse shoe pits at Fair Oaks Park. **Members volunteering were** Richard Jeffery, Lillian Jones, John Jones, Frank Wolf, Carol and Glen Crowther, Jean Rodgers, Barry Brown, Barbara and Stan Salzman, Rlee Pettingell, Claudia Thorn, Jim Wilcoxon, and Ken and Lynn Steen.

**Thank you!**

### **Soup Night Update - Claudia Thorn**

Mark *Friday, November 7th, 2014* on your calendar for our next Soup Night.

Tickets will go on sale at the July meeting so start planning and inviting your guests now as seating always sell out. Please help us with raffle items by contacting local businesses and inviting them to make a donation. Contact Trude regarding donations and be sure to complete a donation slip so we can be sure to thank our local businesses.

Regarding volunteers, we are looking for someone to volunteer to chair the Clean-up Committee. Unlike our other volunteers, these folks don't have to arrive until around 7:30 p.m. and if you aren't attending Soup Night you don't have to purchase a ticket. However, if you are attending we would love to have you chair this committee. Contact Claudia Thorn or Joe Dobrowolski

If you'd like to help with the Soup Committee please contact Lynn Steen. And once again, we are inviting our members to donate a case of wine.

Please contact the Vogels regarding your donation.

Last year we generated the most income ever. With your help, let's make this year even better.

### **Fair Oaks' Native Flora** by Ashton Smith

Fair Oaks' wild, native plants have been much appreciated by countless generations for their practical uses and for their diversity and mysterious beauty. Fair Oaks in the 1890s was described as a "natural park". Early resident of Fair Oaks, Grant Vail Wallace, who grew up in an 1890s described the area as having a "veritable botanical garden..." forming the most interesting and diversified native flora of which I know". The Native American Maidu Tribe or more locally, Nisenan, have and still utilize locally native plants for many practical purposes. For example, five Fair Oaks' fern species are used for basketry. Some species include: Bracken Fern (*Pteridium*

*aquilinum*), California Maiden-Hair Fern (*Adiantum jordanii*), Coffee Fern (*Pellaea andromedifolia*) and the magnificent Western Chain Fern- (*Woodwardia fimbriata*), which produces stunning 5-9ft fronds.

Lily family species include Soap roots and "Indian potatoes". The "Indian potatoes" include species like Blue Dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), Ithuriel's Spear (*Triteleia laxa*), and the late spring *Brodiaea sp.* The Indian Potatoe's starchy corms (underground stems) are eaten raw or cooked. Soap Root (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*), consists of an underground bulb which is crushed up, and is used to stun fish, with ease, to help to catching fish for eating. It is also used as soap lather. Soap Root brushes are made up of the coarse fibers that surround the bulb.

On these balmy spring days, one can still find, among the rolling blue oak studded hills of eastern Sailor Bar, cool shaded canyon slopes graced with ferns, Interior Live Oaks and Western Red Buds. High and dry hilltops are adorned with Blue Dicks, Ithuriel's Spears, Soap Roots, Blue Oaks and countless other woodland species that truly make Fair Oaks a "diverse botanical garden".



*Triteleia laxa* Ithuriel's, Spear blooms in Blue Oak Woodland/Savannah at Eastern Sailor Bar Park

### **Clean Up At the History Center**

On February 25<sup>th</sup> a few hardy souls, Warren Blomquist, Bob Vogel, Vicki Walter and Joe Dobrowolski turned out to trim the Wisteria, and side oak



tree and clean up the flower beds. Warren single handedly took out many of the chicken perches in the oak tree. The walk is now much cleaner. The group also hung the old barbershop sign. The sign, donated to the FOHS in 1999, was found in the attic at the cemetery district by Digger. It's now proudly hanging on the side of the History Center.



Warren cutting down chicken perches

### **Minutes of the July General Meeting - Vicki Walter, Secretary –**

The following were items from the minutes of the meeting:

- Lynn Steen our liaison with the FOR&PD requested signups for volunteers to work at Park District events.
- We recognized the passing of Wayne Saunders, a long time member and supporter.

- Lucy Stroms 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday party was announced.
- The By-Law changes were approved.
- Claudia Thorn updated us on the success of Soup Night.
- We had dessert.