



Fair Oaks Historical Society

Newsletter – April 20, 2015 # 113

MEETING, Tuesday April 28 6:00

At the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse 7997 California Avenue

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Joe Dobrowolski

- The presentation at our January meeting was interesting, historical and entertaining. Docents representing each of the Governor's wives who lived at the California Governor's mansion came out from behind the curtain to center stage and presented a vignette of the life of the Governor and family at the mansion. Thanks to Nancy White and Trude Vasquez for getting the troupe here.



-Lynn Steen coordinated The Society's participation in the annual Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District "It's My Park Day" event. This event was at Phoenix Field and there were many organizations participating. We also had a table set up to promote the History Center and Society. Participation allows the Society to get a cheaper rental rate for the clubhouse. Thanks to all the members who came out.



- 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.

Pete and Nancy White, Carole Melvin Brewer, and Marguerite Smart were approved for lifetime memberships.

WEBSITE Jim Pearce

Jim Pearce, Sally Dunbar and Ashton Smith have put up an amazing addition to the FOHS website. From the FOHS website page "Old Homes of Fair Oaks" there is a link "Link for Gmaps View" which will take you to a Google map of Fair Oaks . On the map are the locations of the old homes of Fair Oaks. Each icon location has a picture of the house. From the picture you can click to an article of the house. You have to take at least one look. Great job. <https://www.google.com/maps/d/view?mid=z1-sE1oFsIKU.kDj6y0TqF160>

WHAT'S NEW AT THE HISTORY CENTER

Our history center has been staying open 3 days a week. Ashton Smith, our attendant, continues to act as historian, host and guide. 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.

The History Center has a new display, developed by the



Pearces and Bruggers. The displays pictorially and descriptively layout the 4 transformation of the area: from one of the largest vineyards; to a gold field, mined by dredges to being one of the largest rock plants in the US and to today's Gold River.

On the video screen we continue to show the interviews from 2005 and 1991. DVDs of the interviews are available for sale for \$10.00. The old homes video also is being shown.

The aerial maps of Fair Oaks continue to draw interest. Can you guess in what year the lower of the two aerial photos was taken?

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Thanks to the work of Joanna Schwilk we have added a new display: women's dresses dating from the 1890's to the 1930s, as well as a few hats and shoes from the period. I'm told the red dress is unusual for its fine condition, age and that antique children's clothes are rare. These dresses are from the Society's Iva Langness collection as well as items from Schwilk's and Maloney's collections.



All of these items must be seen in person to be appreciated. Stop by at the History Center and enjoy the new displays.

Gene Schroeder is the grandson of Albert Fowler and Edna Marshall and had in his possession a daily hand written journal of his great-grandfather Albert Marshall who lived in Fair Oaks. Gene recently transcribed the hand written journals to text and he and his wife Georgia (both members of FOHS) put together a 6 volume set of their genealogy, photos and the original and transcribed journals. They donated a copy to the FOHS. Jim Pearce and Ashton Smith are reviewing the information for more insights into early Fair Oaks life. I suspect there will be much new information in those journals, told through the eyes of a man who lived here. Thank you Gene and Georgia for your work and donation.

The Firemens collection, a series of books of photos and documents of the volunteer fire department and the women's auxiliary was reorganized by Blanche Rosevear. It is now available for easy enjoyment.

HISTORIC TREASURES DONATED BY OLD TIME FAIR OAKS RESIDENTS

Ashton Smith



Just over a month ago, the FOHS received a most impressive donation: 5 neatly bound personal journals dating from 1905 to 1934. They belonged to early Fair Oaks resident Alfred Francis Marshall. Marshall was a carpenter, who was originally born in England in 1849. By the mid 1870's he came to the U.S. and settled in Holyoke Massachusetts. By 1905 Marshall and his wife Edna Ryder decided to come out and settle in Fair Oaks. Former Fair Oaks residents Gene and Georgia Schroeder graciously donated these journals. Gene Schroeder is the great grandson of Alfred Marshall. Over the course of



about six years, Schroeder painstakingly transcribed 5 journals of 1900s penmanship into a word processor. He then scanned the original text and printed both original handwriting and typed entries into six bound books. In addition to the journals, Gene and Georgia also donated a transit belonging to well-known resident and “old timer” Albert M. Fowler. Fowler, who was Gene’s grandfather, in the mid 1970s, claimed to be Fair Oaks’ oldest resident.

Marshall meticulously wrote entries everyday from 1905 –1934. Details in the journals include major events and tragedies throughout the early 20th century. The following are excerpts from a few of Marshall’s entries:

-San Francisco 1906 quake, “Wed. 18th Earth Shook at 5:10am. Much loss in Frisco”, “Thurs.19th Warming up sad news from Frisco. loss of life and property”,
-Freeze of 32, “Sunday Dec 11th 1932, We had 3 very cold nights first snow fell around San Francisco for many years. Saturday and last night we had killing frost”.

-“The Orange crop is ruined in this section. I am not feeling well. Not by any means” .

-Monday December the 12th “Another bitter cold night. Water pipe froze”.

-Tues 13 and Wed 14: “Still cold raw weather. Ice in shady places, Orange crop gone for sure”. Also included was the infamous Fair Oaks Bridge collapse and flooding of 1907.

However, the majority of the entries are limited to the happenings in the everyday life of Marshall in early 1900s, rural Fair Oaks. Marshall spoke of his day-to-day tasks working as a carpenter and constantly updated on the weather conditions and activities and welfare of his close friends and family. He continued his entries into his elderly days and up until he passed in 1934. These fascinating personal accounts are currently stored in the History Center’s small but growing library collection. Ashtom will gladly retrieve the journals and share them with anyone interested.

Old Homes of Fair Oaks

THE CORBITT HOUSE By Sally Dunbar, Old Homes Editor

7957 California Avenue, Fair Oaks



Whenever a Fair Oaks historic home comes on the market for sale, there is always a collective holding of breath that the new owner values historic preservation over the construction of a new Burger King. That breath holding occurred in early 2012 as new owners took title to the Corbitt House on California Avenue, immediately across from the Johnson House, just up from Plaza Park. Built in 1902 or '03, it is one of our early homes of Fair Oaks.

As it turns out, we needn't have worried. Globalvest Corporation, who purchased the home in January of 2012, has faithfully preserved the historic ambiance of the Corbitt House, with the help of Fair Oaks builder Steve Olsen.



With no foundation, rotted floorboards, resident chickens and a kitchen the size of a matchbox, they had no choice but to substantially rebuild, including a new foundation. "We called it The Birdcage for a while," said Globalvest Manager Steve Sogard. "You could see right through the studs to the outside." They rebuilt with the same floor plan, window placements, skylights, front elevation and roofline. They added a wing on the back for a modern kitchen, and a scenic deck under the gigantic Heritage Oak tree with a giant trunk. "We call it The Fairest of Fair Oaks", says Sogard, speaking affectionately of the tree.

While early photos document the home's birth between '02 and '03 (that's it, peeking out from behind the Murphy Building in about 1905), the Corbitt family was not the first occupant. The McMurray sisters, who owned a boarding house nearby and a number of other Fair Oaks homes, likely built it. The sisters appeared to have owned it in the 1910 census. Marcel and Amy Corbitt arrived in Fair Oaks from Tennessee in 1918, first living at the Boone Ranch on Minnesota Avenue, until purchasing the Corbitt house in 1921. They ran the first ice cream parlor in Fair Oaks. Upon selling the parlor, Marcell did carpentry work around the village, and in 1930 became the custodian of the Fair Oaks Grammar School until his retirement in 1955, when they moved to Illinois.

While the Corbitt House is on its own parcel, the home next door (to the left, at 7953) has always been included with its ownership. Prior to 1940 there were three homes on the two lots. Marcell tore down one, moved another, then built the existing home on the left for daughter Annie Mai Hall. Annie then lived in the left home (7953) while parents Marcell and Amy lived at 7957 – the current Corbitt House. Daughter Annie maintained ownership of both homes after her parents moved until 1980. For the next few years both homes were owned by the Withrow Partnership, until they were sold to members of the Raphael Medical Group in 1986, who ran a pharmacy in one home and medical offices in the other. This brings us to 2012 when Globalvest purchased both homes from the Raphael Group. Globalvest rents out the home on the left, and their private equity business is housed in the preserved Corbitt House.



PRESENTATIONS Trude Vasquez

Last month we had an excellent presentation.

At our April meeting we will have a presentation on the history of the Folsom Power House, to be given by Tom Boyd, a docent at the Folsom Power House.