

STCHS and Library News



From the President's Desk

Harriet Codeglia

STCHS exists because local residents of Big Oak Flat and Groveland believed that history and its heroes matter. Preservation of our buildings and artifacts is our purpose. Your membership and donations help us continue our mission of "Recording, Preserving and Protecting" our history.

Please renew your membership (an envelope is included in this newsletter) or log on to the STCHS website at www.grovelandmuseum.org. In normal times, STCHS would sponsor the wildly popular Wine Tasting Cruise on Pine Mountain Lake and the family fun day barbecue at the stables. These fund-raisers help us to raise money and awareness of our organization, and have brought folks together in delicious group events. Of course, in 2020, both events were cancelled. We have high hopes for 2021, but the health and safety of our guests and volunteers is of utmost importance.

The museum has been closed most of the year, but we look forward to reopening soon. Similarly, our speaker programs were cancelled and our History Resource Center (recently renamed the Bonnie L. Stevens History Resource Center) has also remained closed. The health and safety of our volunteers and visitors is of primary importance.

We all look forward to announcing our events and our museum reopening. We want to have another open house at the Gamble Block, to celebrate Living History Day. All our events happen because we have wonderful, dedicated volunteers. You too can help. Volunteers are needed to serve as docents, worker bees, and board members too.

So what is the good news? Our library branch survived severe County budget cuts and has reopened with COVID precautions and shorter hours. The STCHS website has been updated, thanks to super volunteer Scott Belser.

Our local pictorial history book "Groveland and Big Oak Flat" continues to sell via the website and mail orders. Do you have your copy yet?

Please visit our website www.grovelandmuseum.org and our Facebook page. We will announce events and our plans for reopening of the museum. Stay well, and Happy Spring!

The STCHS Logo

By Karen Davis

The STCHS logo is comprised of a rendition of the Longfellow Stamp Mill in Big Oak Flat by artist Irene Clark and a sketch of Hetch Hetchy Track Bus No. 24. Both are a significant part of the area's rich history.

As you may know, the Longfellow Mill burned to the ground May 13, 2008. The rare 10-stamp mill was first used in the mid-1800s. The Longfellow Mine, which borders the mill, is considered to have been the most productive gold mine in southern Tuolumne County. By 1899 the mine and mill had produced 24,200 ounces of gold. The 68 mile-long Hetch Hetchy Railroad was built to carry timber, supplies, workers and visitors to and from the O'Shaughnessy dam site. Based in Groveland, the railroad operated from 1917 to 1949.

Track Bus No. 24 carried passengers and/or mail and sometimes was adapted to be the foul weather troubleshooter car and snowplow. These track buses (as opposed to railcars) were self-propelled vehicles that ran on the railroad track. Each one had a wood stove on board to keep crew and passengers warm in foul weather. During his mail run in the early 1920s Engineer Ray Carne would often carry sacks of trout back from Mather to families living in Groveland. There were also times that the children of the isolated community of Moccasin were taken to the school's annual picnic at Mather on board Track Bus 24.

Friends of the Groveland Library in 2020

By Virginia Richmond

2020 is finally over and we won't miss it! Between the pandemic and the county budget crisis, it was a difficult year for your library. However, we did have some good news as well.

The best news this year was the voters' approval of Measure U which increases the TOT tax on visitors and will provide some additional revenue for roads, libraries, and parks, starting in July with the 2021-2022 county budget.

FOGL was busy, even virtually! We contributed \$2,000 to Tenaya Elementary School to purchase books for their classroom libraries. We also continued our support by contributing \$200 to the Stuff the Bus campaign to purchase school supplies in August. In March, our members volunteered to Dr. Seuss books to Tenaya grades for the annual Read Across America program. We also conducted a free writing workshop which started out in person transitioned to an online group.

Many people contributed this year to our memorial funds in honor of Michalene Martin, Karen Peterson and Dar Brown. We raised almost \$2500 which is being used to purchase new books for our library in their memory.

While the Book Nook was open, we hosted exhibits by talented local artists Liz Reinhold, Simonetta Spaccia and Don French. As of March 20, The Book Nook has reopened with COVID restrictions in place. After being closed for months, our library is now open with limited hours and appropriate COVID protocols:

- Tuesdays and Wednesdays from noon-4:00 pm
- Fridays 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
- Saturdays 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Please consider joining Friends of the Groveland Library. Dues are only \$20/family; your dues and donations help support the library and reading programs in the school and community. Plus you'll receive timely email information about all our activities. Please send your check and contact information (including email address) to FOGL, PO Box 43, Groveland.

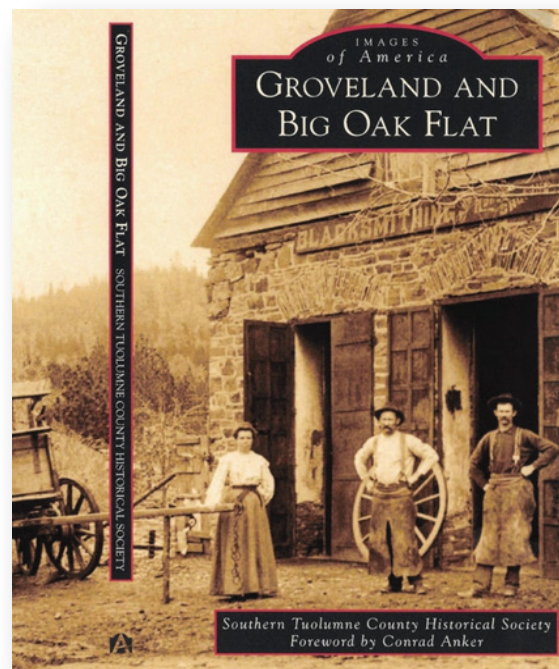
The BOOK

For months, a team of dedicated STCHS volunteers worked on creating a pictorial history book about Groveland and Big Oak Flat. Their efforts were accepted as part of the "Images of America" series published by Arcadia Publishing. STCHS received the published books in 2020.

The book covers Native American culture, mining in the Gold Rush and "hard rock" periods, ranching and farming and commerce to support the miners, the growth of tourism to Yosemite, the Hetch Hetchy construction project, and the development of Pine Mountain Lake. There are numerous historical photos of miners, townspeople and families, buildings in Big Oak Flat (such as the Wells Fargo Building) and Groveland (Iron Door Saloon), the Hetch Hetchy railroad and workers, and PML's early days. Each photo is selected to "tell a story" or illustrate an aspect of area history.

The book has been well received and is still available for sale even while the museum is still closed. It sells for \$21.99 plus tax, and can be ordered on the Museum website (www.grovelandmuseum.org) or via email gygmstchs@gmail.com or from our Facebook page. Do you have your copy yet?

Here is the image of the front cover:



It's time to renew



It's time to renew your STCHS membership dues! Enclosed in this STCHS newsletter is an envelope that you can use to renew your STCHS membership. You can renew by mailing in your dues, or online at www.grovelandmuseum.org.

Our membership categories include individual or family membership for \$25.00, Supporter for \$100.00, Sponsor (Business) for \$250.00, Benefactor for \$500.00 and Patron for \$1000.00. Each category has special benefits so look over the envelope and decide which category you would like.

In addition, there is a special box that you could check if you wish to make an additional donation.

Thank you for your continued support,

Catherine Santa Maria

Catherine Santa Maria
Treasurer & Membership Chair

Memorial Donations

<i>Donor Name</i>	<i>Memory Of</i>
<i>Kathy & Don Brown</i>	<i>Harold Wesley</i>
<i>Dick & Dotty Davis</i>	<i>Yvonne Mattocks</i>
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<i>Dick & Dotty Davis</i>	<i>Tom Connelly</i>
<i>Dick & Dotty Davis</i>	<i>Glen Awai</i>
<i>Dick & Dotty Davis</i>	<i>John Vaughn</i>

Iris

The native iris plants in outdoor rock exhibit area of the museum have spread and expanded and bloomed each spring, and have provided pleasure to those who walk up to our entryway.

I recently received a call from one of the wonderful Garden Club members, who asked if the club could thin some of the iris to plant in the garden of the jail. Of course I said yes and am delighted to spread the color around town.




Commemorative Patio Bricks

These personally engraved bricks are a lasting way to remember a birthday, anniversary, a special occasion, or a loved one, while showing support for the ongoing programs of STCHS and the Museum. They are set in the Memorial Patio to the right of Museum entrance. The patio is never closed!

Contact the museum at gygmstchs@gmail.com to purchase a commemorative brick.





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**Currently the museum is closed..
Contact STCHS via email or through our website.**



**GROVELAND YOSEMITE
GATEWAY MUSEUM**
Southern Tuolumne County Historical Society

Museum: 18990 Hwy 120 • Groveland, CA
Mailing: PO Box 180, Big Oak Flat, CA 95305
209-962-0300

Email: thegrovelandmuseum@gmail.com
Website: www.grovelandmuseum.org



A New Gift Helps Tell Our Story

By Kathy Brown

This granite marker commemorating the 1914 completion of the “Priests Hill Highway”, known to all of us as New Priest Grade, was placed near the bottom of the grade. It's removal date is unknown. The marker made its way back to our area in October when the Carlo M. De Ferrari Archives in Sonora gifted it to STCHS. Here is a bit of history about the “Grades”.

Travelers to Big Oak Flat, Groveland, and Yosemite must climb “The Grade,” a steep 1600 foot ascent connecting Moccasin at the bottom to the rolling terrain at the top. Named after Margaret Priest, proprietor of the early way-station and hotel at the crest, and a community leader, the “Priest Grade” boasts two different roads – “Old” and “New” – on opposite sides of Grizzly Gulch.

The first track up the hill was a steep trail on the south side. In the 1850s, early miners used it to travel to surrounding gold camps. The trail was so rugged that a replacement – the Grizzly Gulch Wagon Road (now the “Old” Priest Grade) – was built in 1859. Even in 1900 freight wagons could take two days to haul a heavy load from Chinese Camp to Big Oak Flat. The community began advocating for easier and faster road.

The need for a better road increased around 1900 with the arrival of automobiles that didn't have the power to “make the grade” – initially steam-powered vehicles called “locomobiles” and later gas-fueled cars. With a can-do attitude and remarkable community spirit, local citizens banded together to build a road without government assistance. In 1911 they surveyed a new route on the north side of the gulch. They donated labor, transport, and supplies and began construction, mostly by hand. They completed a rough 8 foot wide roadbed along most of the new route. Then the private project stopped due to problems in financing and gaining access from some landowners.

In July 1912, Sal Ferretti, county supervisor from Groveland, convinced other supervisors to fund the road's completion as a public benefit. In Oct 1912 the county highway was approved, and work resumed. By 1914 a 14 foot wide road, named Priests Hill Highway, was finished. It was widened in 1924, paved in 1925, and improved as State Highway 120 in succeeding years.

More than a century later, the road is still called “New” Priest Grade.



L to R David Lumsden, Joseph Raggio, Calvin Lumsden, Cornelius Alexander, Walter Coyle
Workers on New Priest Grade (Priest Hill Highway) 1913.



Harold Wesley

Charles Harold Wesley, known as Harold, was an active member of STCHS for many years. He passed away January 12, 2021 at the age of 88. Although Harold was living in Jamestown for the past few years, he was a long time resident of Groveland. In fact, he designed, engineered and built the motel in Buck Meadows. He and his late wife Ann (who died in 2014) were strong advocaes of STCHS and the Museum.

His contributions to the community remarkable. He volunteered in the History Resource Center, donated local photos to the STCHS archive, served on the STCHS Board of Directors, including a stint as treasurer before Excel, and was present to help in every event we sponsored. In 2005, Harold took on and completed the task of linking over 800 photos of headstones in the Divide Cemetery to their corresponding names in the cemetery.

He had a ready smile and wonderful wit. I can still picture him dancing at the STCHS Barbecue. The STCHS Board sends heartfelt sympathy to Harold's family and friends.



STCHS

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