



**McHENRY  
MUSEUM**  
& HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# MM&HS Museum Monthly

*A publication of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society*

**April 2024**

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## Meet a new volunteer: Kendra Fletcher



The 'Stanislaus Selections' in-museum gift shop bookstore has several new volunteers assisting guests now. This month we highlight Kendra Fletcher.

Kendra teaches literature and writing to students online from all over the world. She is currently in graduate school at the University of Oxford studying working toward a Master of Liberal Arts (MLA), which looks at history from the perspectives of philosophy, art, architecture, and literature. She is married to local dentist, "Fletch", and together they have a whole group of kids and grand-kids. She tries to play in the Pacific Ocean as often as possible, and is enjoying hopping over to England every few months as she works toward completing her degree.

## Cooking with California Olive Oil

In August of 2021 the story of the Sciabica olive oil family was shared here in *Museum Monthly*. As we celebrate local cookery in our featured article this month, we take the opportunity to highlight one of our most popular books sold at the 'Stanislaus Selections' in-museum gift shop bookstore: the cookbooks of Gemma Sciabica (1924-2020).

In January of this year, Gemma would have celebrated her 100th birthday. Gemma's ventures into cookbook authorship started in 1997 at age 73. Dan Sciabica told the MM&HS that his mother's books are the "bibles of cooking with California olive oil." Each book is inscribed with her signature quote: "Enjoy heart healthy cooking, olive you!"



**Local cookbook author,  
Gemma Sciabica**



# Cookbook cuisine celebrates county's culinary culture

by David Seymour

Locally, home cooking recipes enjoy a long community-shared history. Numerous small-scale cookbooks have been produced over time in Stanislaus County. One of the first records of publishing a local cookbook was the Presbyterian Church producing one, as mentioned in the September 9, 1910 edition of *The Stanislaus County Weekly News*. Numerous local churches, schools, hospitals, and other organizations have also published cookbooks as fundraisers over time.

The twentieth century generally brought about a trend for recipe columns in local newspapers. Cooking tips and new products appeared as journalism pieces in an effort to disseminate cookery knowledge. The Central Valley even had its own fictional cook/home economist during this time! This character debuted and was marketed for decades by McClatchy News as "Katherine Kitchen". She first appeared in *The Sacramento Bee* in March of 1934, and then for many decades later more locally in *The Modesto Bee* as well as in *The Fresno Bee*.

McClatchy's Katherine Kitchen was an idea who in practice was represented by various people's efforts over time. She evolved with appearances on radio spots, and later on television. By the 1940s cookbooks bearing the name 'Katherine Kitchen' also appeared. These were published to assist in sharing tips on rationing to combat national food shortages during WWII; recipes even included instructions on how to prepare and serve 'mock meat.'

Elaine Elliott (1921-2017) was one of the real-person faces of Katherine Kitchen. Elliott was based out of Fresno and appeared in Katherine Kitchen segments on KMJ-TV for several years. Cooking demonstrations were well known to the residents of Stanislaus County at the time as performed by Elliott ('Katherine Kitchen'), taking place at *The Modesto Bee's* headquarters at 'H' and 14th streets. Katherine Kitchen remained a periodic staple in *The Modesto Bee* until the early 1980s.

All the while, cookbooks county-wide remained popular as fundraising vehicles in their own right. On the shelves of the Stanislaus County Library's Special Collections room today, one can find a 1936 cookbook from Modesto's Washington Elementary Parent-Teacher Association; *The Newman Cookbook* as published by the Women's Improvement League; and *Le Petit Gourmet* published by the Memorial Hospital Women's Auxiliary, released in 1959.

The ladies of the Presbyterian Church have announced their intention of holding a handkerchief sale and bazaar on December 2d. They are planning to publish a cook-book, and include other attractive features

September 9, 1910 news clipping



Elaine Elliott, the one-time face of McClatchy's 'Katherine Kitchen'



Rhoda Sturtevant (1889-1985), Yvonne Young (1930-2001), Ivy King (1888-1970), and Teresa Gant (1901-1981), 1959's 'Le Petit Gourmet' organizers.



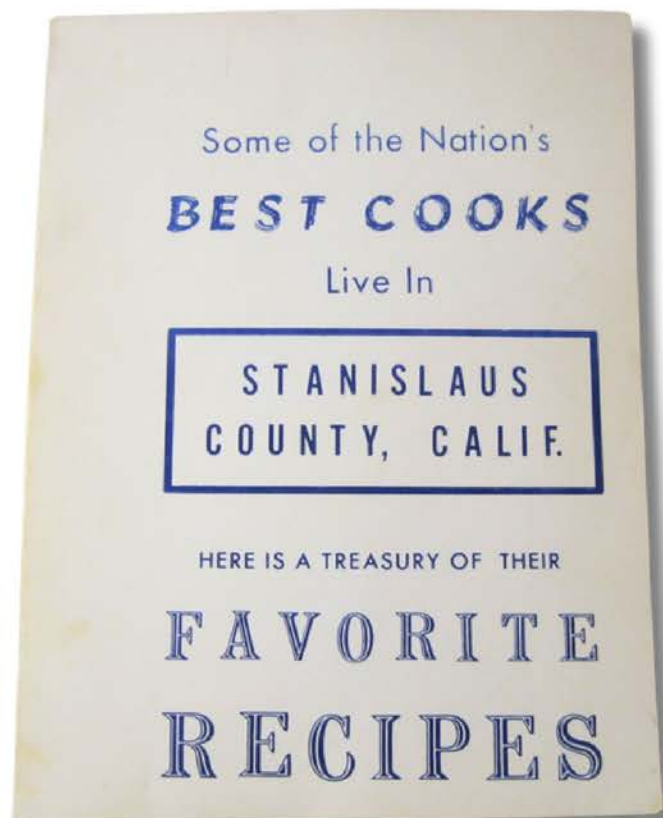
The latter contains Alice Downey Tillson's (1893-1973) recipes for Veal Paprika and Coq au Vin; her contributions were published as Mrs. Warren Tillson, attributing to a more common formal presentation for married women in documented writings at the time. Alice was the daughter of Thomas Downey (1859-1936), the first-ever high school principal in the county (at Modesto High) and the namesake of the now-Thomas Downey High School in Modesto.

It was just over fifty years ago that the Northern California chapter of the California Association for Neurologically Handicapped Children sought to create a general county-wide recipe cookbook. The nonprofit organization was comprised of a group of several dozen parents, professionals, and educators who assisted children with "handicaps" (the terminology of the day would now be characterized more as learning or physical disabilities) ranging from hyperactivity to severe physical impairments. The organization employed a professional fundraising operative out of Hayward to publish the book. In the spring of 1973, a mass phone canvassing campaign in Stanislaus County sought local recipes for the cookbook.

In 1974, the fundraising campaign led to the production of a cookbook which showcased recipes from contributing individuals across the county. The effort culminated with 6,000 local residents going to their mailbox one day to find an unexpected package. It contained a 268-page cookbook titled *Some of the Nation's Best Cooks Live in Stanislaus County, Calif: Here is a Treasury of their Favorite Recipes*.

Containing 1,100 recipes from local individuals, the cookbook was organized in a traditional fashion featuring selections of main dishes, desserts, and salads, followed by a smattering on miscellaneous recipes. Contained in this book are recipes which vary in representation of different cultures and heritages. The very first recipe is 'Green Chile Enchiladas' from Turlock's Erma Garcia (1915-2004). Mrs. Garcia was a teacher in the Ballico-Cressey School District of adjacent Merced County.

The book also shares a recipe for 'Clam Spaghetti' as submitted by Bonnie Weeks Cook (1923-2017), who appears as Mrs. Jeremy Cook in the book's print. She was the wife of Superior Court Judge of Stanislaus County, Jeremy Cook (1923-1982), who presided from 1969 to 1982. Mrs. Cook was known for her entertaining in their Turlock home, as shared by their daughter Robin in a recent interview. Robin does remember her mom making the clam spaghetti recipe because Robin's husband, Steve did not like it!



**The first large volume general Stanislaus County-wide cookbook, published in 1974. Two subsequent volumes would follow it.**



**Bonnie Cook in her Turlock kitchen**



*A historical aside: Bonnie Cook's great-uncle was William Henry "W.H." Weeks (1864-1936), the Bay Area architect who designed the original buildings of Turlock High School, the Carnegie Library (now Arts Center) in Turlock, and the McHenry Library (now Museum). A Victorian chair passed down by the Weeks family remains on display as loaned by the Cook Family in 'Stanislaus Selections', the in-museum gift-shop bookstore operated by the McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS).*

Former MM&HS guild president Diane Keller submitted one of her favorite dishes for the 1974 county cookbook as 'Broccoli with Cheese Casserole'. Wine-making family philanthropist Aileen Gallo (1914-1999) shared a dish she called 'Spoonbread Tamale Bake With a Southwestern Air.' Oakdale native and Modesto resident Mae Kriese (1922-2018) submitted a recipe from her Katherine Kitchen Cookbook in 'Beef Stroganoff Supreme.'

Among the entries for desserts is Joy Ferreira Dovichi's (1939-2021) of Modesto recipe for 'German Chocolate Cake.' Ceres' Carolyn Condit submitted 'Chocolate Sheet Cake,' a recipe she told us came from her mother, Mary Theresa Berry (1929-2021) of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Shirley Willms-McPhee told the MM&HS she does not remember submitting her recipe for 'Potato Cake' but it does appear in the cookbook! As published in 1974, Willms-McPhee credits Wilma "Dottie" Ramos (1907-1983) for originally sharing the recipe in the *Knights Ferry Centennial Cookbook* of 1948. Willms-McPhee says she continues to request this cake on her birthday each year still today!

Recipients of the countywide cookbook in 1974 were not obligated to purchase it but they were encouraged to send in \$5.95 plus tax to support the effort. In 1977, a subsequent cookbook was released as *A Treasury of Kitchen Know How and Outstanding Recipes from the Great Cooks of Stanislaus County*. The second cookbook contains a list of businesses from throughout the county which "are making copies of the Community Cookbook available without profit at their direct-from-the-publishers wholesale price of only \$1.87 each." Shortly thereafter, in 1979, came a third cookbook in *A Collection of Favorite Recipes from the Cooks of Stanislaus County*. All three were produced with the Hayward, California publisher.



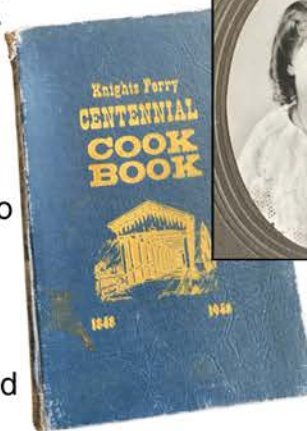
**Diane Keller, March, 2024**



**Joy Dovichi**



**Potato Cake recipe, above. Knights Ferry Centennial Cookbook, left. Dottie Ramos, right.**



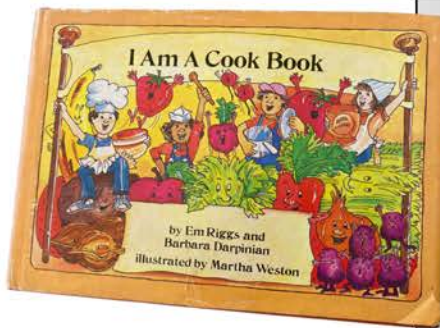
**Carolyn Condit, March 2024**



**Carolyn Condit & mother, Theresa Berry 2019**



Local cookbooks were not just published for the adults. In 1975, Barbara Darpinian Nelson (1933-2023), an educator for Stanislaus County Schools co-wrote a cookbook for children with the title, *I Am A Cookbook*. Initially, the book was only available for educators as part of a \$22.00 educational cooking kit, but in 1977 the book was published for the public. The MM&HS spoke to Barbara's daughter, Pam Perata, on March 27th of this year, on what would have been Barbara's 91st birthday. Pam shared that her mother's two biggest passions were children and cooking.



**Barbara Darpinian Nelson and the cookbook written to help teach local school-children.**



Encouraging locals to cook was something Stathe 'Steve' Angelo (1922-1988) and his wife, Irene (1923-2020), did for decades. They were the owners of Modesto's Angelo's Markets grocery store chain. A personal master of Greek cooking, Irene expanded her culinary skills while studying under famed chefs James Beard (1903-1985) and Julia Child (1912-2004).



**Steve Angelo**



**Irene Angelo & Jean Purvis**

Irene began teaching classes locally with Jean Purvis (1920-2005) at the Church of Christ, located at the corner of Orangeburg and College avenues in Modesto. She later continued to do so at her home in Del Rio until the late 1980s. Irene also maintained a friendship with local cookbook author Jo Dunbar Snow (1926-2022) who self-published *Keepers: Culinary Treasures from the Heart* and four sequels.



**Irene Angelo**



**Modesto Mayor Peggy Mensinger dishing up her dessert in 1987.**

In 1987, Modesto mayor Peggy Mensinger's (1923-2002) recipe of 'Mensinger's Cream Cheese Pie and Brandy Peaches' appeared in a nationwide publication, *The Mayors' Cookbook: The Favorite Recipes of over 300 Mayors Across the U.S.A.*



**Joan Bowen Cardoza authored these two community cookbooks.**

Modesto native Joan Bowen Cardoza was one day discussing recipes with her friend Deana Stock (1947-2005) and how she was inspired to cook by the *Modesto Presbyterian Church Woman's 1943-44 Cookbook*, particularly by a recipe called 'Chooey Cookies.' Joan's mother, Janice Holmes (1925-2019), had let her seven-year-old daughter prepare these cookies for a picnic, and her passion for cooking was born.





In 1999, Joan and Deana compiled recipes from the community whose ages ranged from twelve to ninety-three, and published *Friends & Memories: A Collection of Recipes*. Joan credits Deana for typing the entire book. Joan's goal was not only to publish recipes but to include stories of why this dish had meaning to the contributor. The cookbook includes Janice Holmes's recipe, 'Cardoza Grandsons' Pasta', which mentions how her grandsons "ask for and enjoy every bite." Carolyn Condit, a recipe contributor to the 1974 general countywide book, submitted 'Roast in a Crock' for Joan and Deana's 1999 cookbook. Carolyn told the MM&HS that she submitted this dish because "it is easy, very good, and you cannot mess it up!" The spiral-bound book exceeds 300 pages. In 2007, Joan published a second book with friend Gail Martin doing the typing and many hours of proof-reading, *More Friends and More Memories: Another Collection of Recipes*. This volume was larger than her first, coming in at 500 pages. Both editions sold out.

Possibly inspired by the already-then published *Legal Secretaries of Stanislaus County's* (publication date 1973), the staff of the Stanislaus County Courthouse released *Courthouse Cuisine* in 1996 in which all proceeds defrayed the costs of the annual Winter Dinner/Dance and Summer Family Picnic for courthouse staff. Organized by Cindy Avila, Denise Davis, Kathleen Espinoza, Dee Johnny, Shirley McPhee, Carolyn Stevens, Carla Teas, and chairperson Jeanne Tucker, the greatest supporter of the book was Superior Court Judge, Hugh Rose III. Judge Rose sat down with the MM&HS to offer his insight into the book and to share his love of cooking. He remains proud of his comical recipe for 'Elephant Stew;' it has only two ingredients – one elephant and two rabbits. The book was re-issued in 2001 to honor those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

To list every local cookbook published by specific community groups in Stanislaus County would encompass several volumes. That there has long been a passion for cooking and a tradition of sharing recipes and kitchen know-how county-wide remains unquestionable. Much recipe-sharing continues today across electronic platforms.

Edited by Keith Highiet



**Deana Stock**

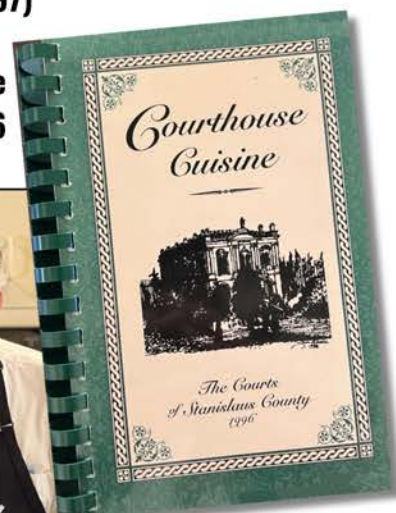


**Joan with her mother, Janice**



**Carla Teas, Hugh Rose III, Denise Davis, & Jeanne Tucker (1997)**

**'Courthouse Cuisine', 1996**



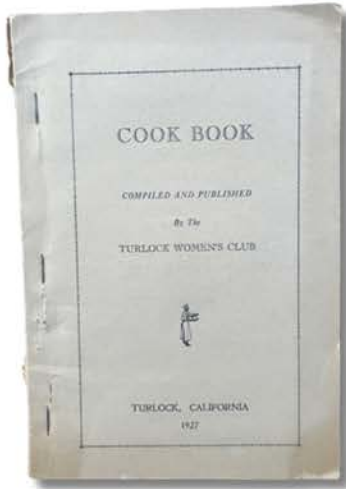
**The Honorable Hugh Rose III, March 2024**

**Star of stage and screen, Modesto resident Carol Channing (1921-2019) was given a copy of 'Courthouse Cuisine' upon appearing for Stanislaus County jury duty in 2004.**

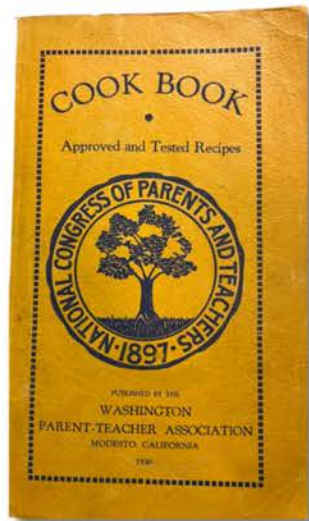




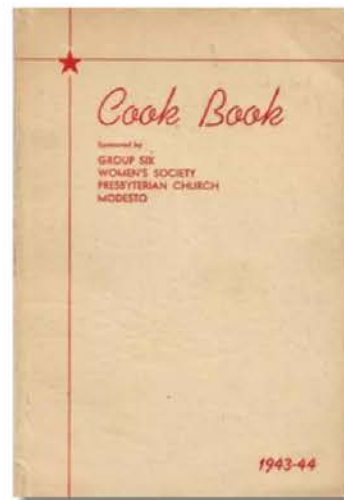
# More Stanislaus County-wide and selected community cookbooks



**Turlock Women's Club  
1927**



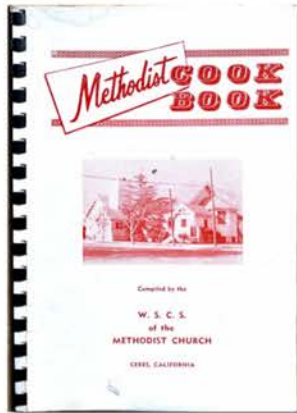
**Former Modesto  
elementary, Washington  
School, 1936**



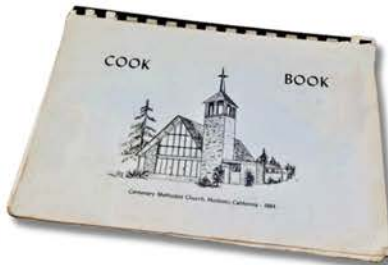
**Women's Society  
Presbyterian Church of  
Modesto, 1943 - '44**



**Memorial Hospital of  
Modesto Women's  
Auxiliary, 1959**



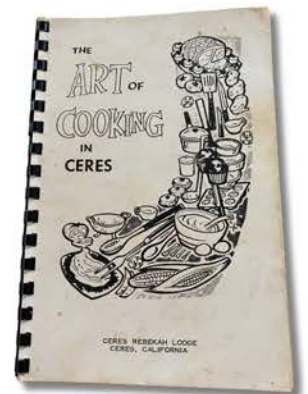
**Methodist Church  
W.S.C.S. of Ceres,  
1960**



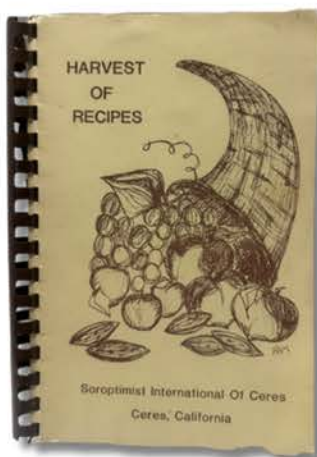
**Centenary Methodist  
Church of Modesto,  
1964**



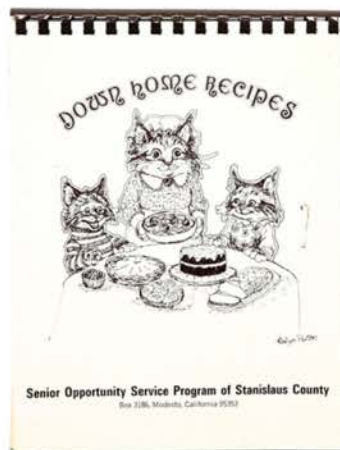
**La Loma Junior High  
School of Modesto,  
1966**



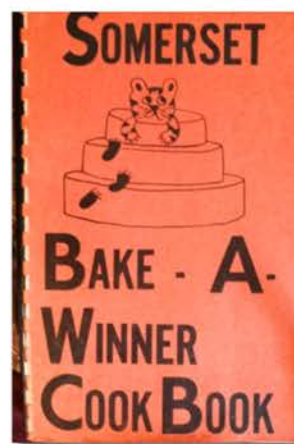
**Ceres Rebekah  
Lodge, 1970s**



**Soroptimist  
International of  
Ceres, 1970s**



**Senior Opportunity  
Service Program of  
Stanislaus County, 1970s**

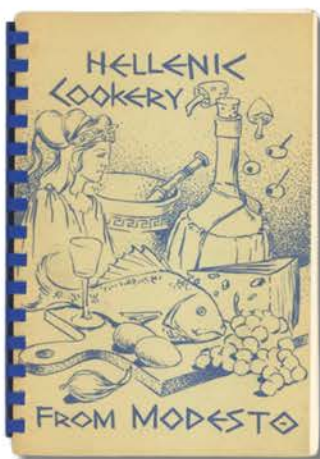


**Somerset Middle  
School of Modesto  
1973**

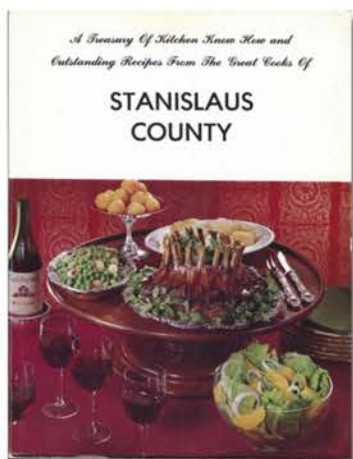


**Congregation Beth  
Shalom of Modesto  
1974**

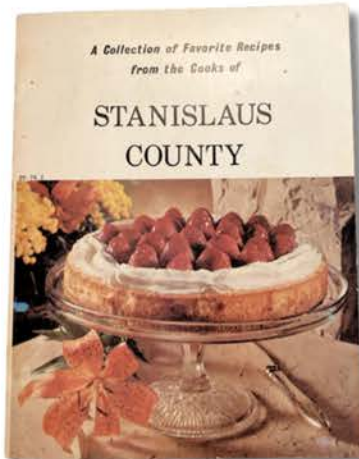




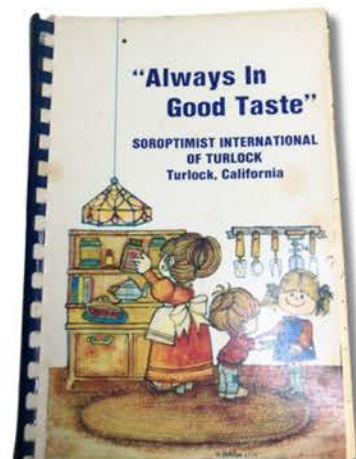
**Sisterhood Eletheria of the Greek Orthodox Church of Modesto, 1977**



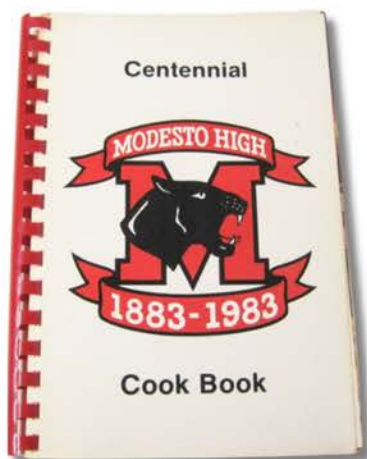
**Second edition of the Stanislaus County-wide cookbook, 1977**



**Third edition of the Stanislaus County-wide cookbook, 1979**



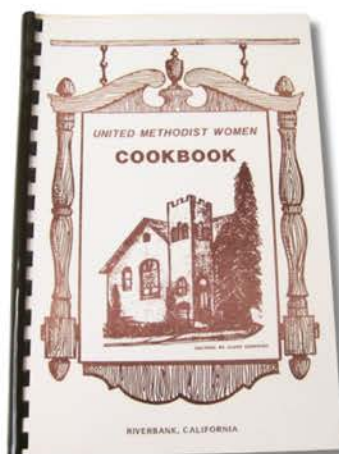
**Soroptimist International of Turlock, 1980**



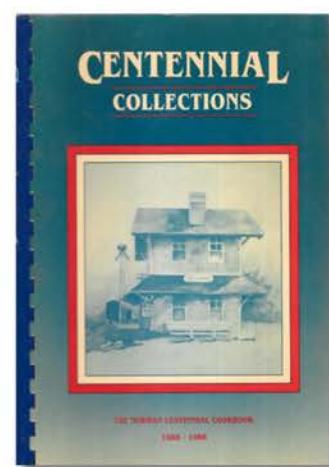
**Modesto High School Centennial, 1983**



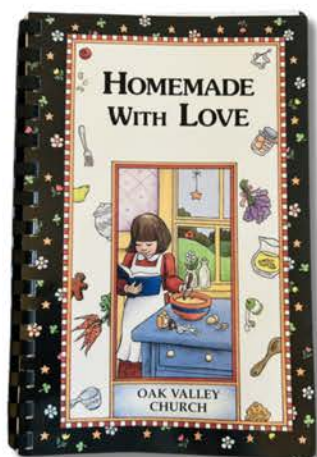
**Congregation Beth Shalom of Modesto, 1984**



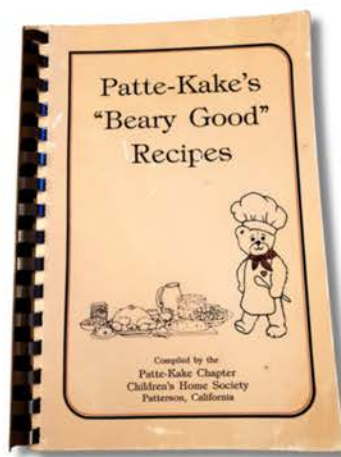
**United Methodist Church of Riverbank, 1987**



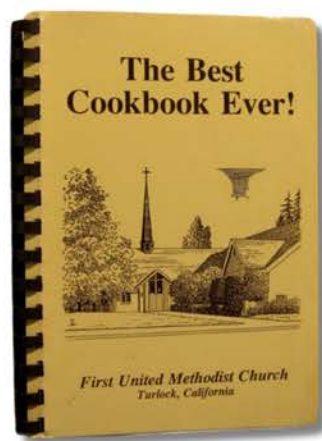
**Newman Centennial Cookbook, 1988**



**Oak Valley Church of Oakdale, 1998**



**Patte-Kake's Children's Home Society of Patterson, 1988**



**First United Methodist Church of Turlock, 1989**

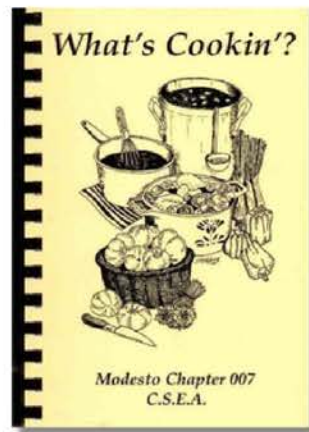


**Our Lady of Fatima - Modesto, 1991**

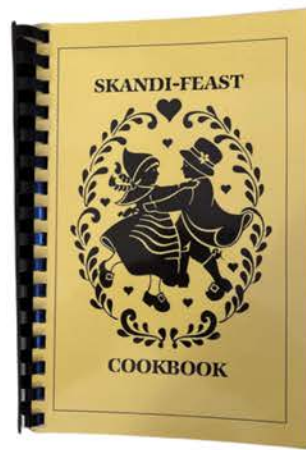




**Turlock Nursery School, 1992**



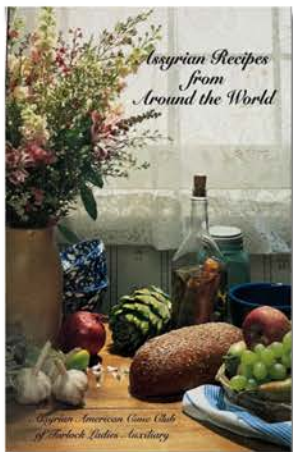
**Modesto Chapter 007 California Schools Employees Association, 1993**



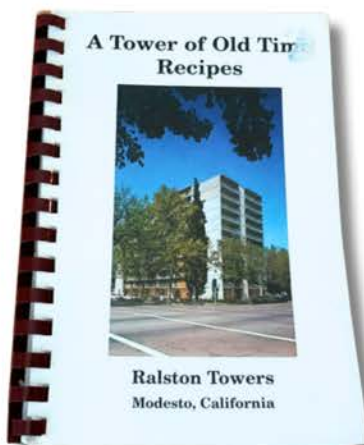
**Turlock Scandinavian Festival, 1994**



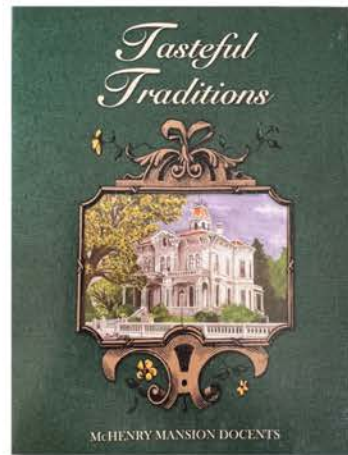
**First Presbyterian Church of Turlock, 1999**



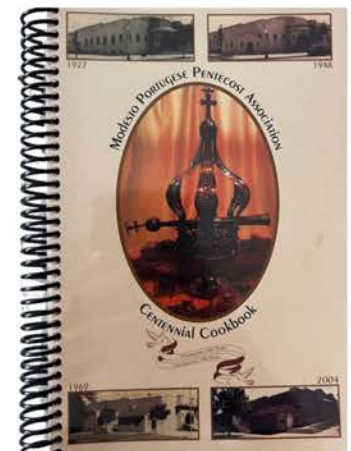
**Assyrian-American Civic Club of Turlock Ladies Auxiliary, 1999**



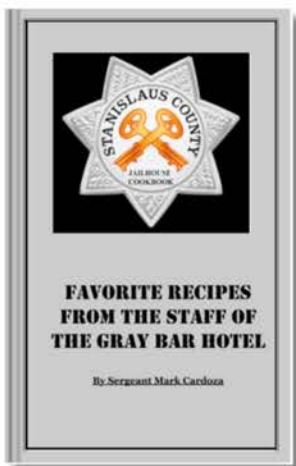
**Ralston Tower retirement community of Modesto, 2003**



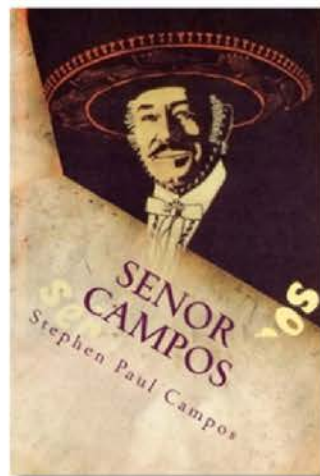
**McHenry Mansion of Modesto's docents, 2010**



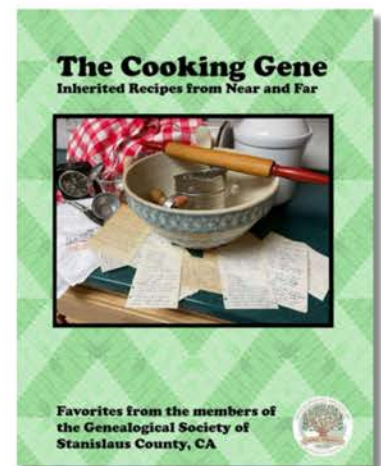
**Modesto Portuguese Pentecost Association, 2016**



**Stanislaus County Jailhouse Cookbook, 2017**



**Recipe books from popular local Mexican restaurants, 'Campos Foods' and 'La Morenita', 2017 and 2021, respectively.**

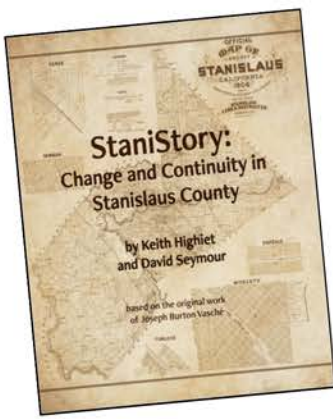


**Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County, 2022**

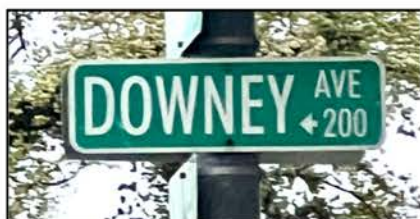
Information for this article came from various McClatchy Newspaper archives: *The Fresno Bee*, *The Modesto Bee*, and *The Sacramento Bee*. Phone and in-person interviews were conducted with Liz Angelo, Joan Bowen Cardoza, Carolyn Condit, Shirley Willms McPhee, Diane Keller, Pam Perata, Hugh Rose III, Bob and Nora Tumazi, and Robin Cook Wheeler. Photographs come from contributors, McClatchy Newspapers, and various online resources.



# MM&HS News • April 2024



- Initial copies of *StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County* are expected to be available for purchase by the end of April.
- Thank you to the MM&HS docents committee for contributing \$25 in the name of Barbara Grundy toward the printing of *StaniStory*.
- Thank you to Betty Ustach as the most recent MM&HS benefactor donor.
- Can you help us in further printing of our latest publication, *StaniStory*? We are seeking donations to help offset printing costs. Contribute today at [McHenryMuseum.org](http://McHenryMuseum.org) by clicking on on the 'support' icon.
- On April 13th at 2:00 p.m., MM&HS executive director David Seymour will present on the life of Mary Stuart Rogers, who was the featured topic of our March edition of *Museum Monthly*. He will include photos and anecdotes which not included in the article.
- On March 8th the McHenry McMobile Museum launched its 2024 season with a pop up visit at the Bethel Retirement Community of Modesto. The latest incarnation of the McMobile is the brainchild of MM&HS secretary, Christopher Nunes. In attendance was original docent from the McHenry Museum's 1972 opening, Lois Nish (age 101!).
- The McHenry McMobile Museum will appear at the Downtown Modesto's 'DoMo First Friday's' 2024 kick-off on Friday, April 5th in front of the Brendan Theatres on 10th Street from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- On April 20th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. the McHenry McMobile Museum will appear at the place it began, the annual 'Earth Day in the Park' at Graceada Park in Modesto.
- On Saturday, April 27th from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on Sunday, April 28th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., the McHenry McMobile Museum will make its second annual appearance at the Hughson Fruit and Nut Festival.
- We welcome former Stanislaus County Sheriff Les Weidman and former Sylvan Unified School District Trustee and local school namesake Betty Ustach to the Board of Directors of the MM&HS.
- On March 24th, the MM&HS launched *CemeTours*, a periodic historic touring of local cemeteries at Lakewood Memorial Park in Hughson. We thank Debbie Motty of Lakewood Memorial for arranging the event and Les Weidman for his presentation of the Peace Officer Memorial and its history. The *CemeTours* will announce its second tour location date soon.



## How a Street Got its Name: Downey Avenue in Modesto

Thomas Downey's name is synonymous with the high school in Modesto which bares it. However, a Modesto street also carries his name. In April of 1918, following his tenure as principal of Modesto High School, Modesto commissioner Charles 'C.D.' Swan (1866-1958) requested that Annie Street, which was originally named for Annie Waters Conneau (1848-1910), the mother of Myrtie Conneau McHenry Langdon (1878-1959) who had also lived on the street, be changed. Still today, Downey Avenue honors the educator's tenure as Modesto High's first principal.





## Get Involved Today!

The McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS) is the support organization of the McHenry Museum, your community museum. We bring Stanislaus County history to life!

### • Volunteer!

Our docents volunteer in four-hour increments to greet and guide guests and visitors during the museum's open hours. Our acquisitions committee explores and evaluates items for the museum to obtain and retain. Volunteer staff runs our in-museum gift shop book store, *Stanislaus Selections*, and help at the intra-County destinations where our *McMobile Museum* visits. There are more behind-the-scenes opportunities to help as well! Email [info@mchenrymuseum.org](mailto:info@mchenrymuseum.org) or send a message at [McHenryMuseum.org/contact](http://McHenryMuseum.org/contact)

### • Become a Sustaining Member!

MM&HS members are invited to our annual Summer Social annual meeting, and our December Soup & Sandwich supper. Donors who give \$150 or more are recognized on our website for their contributions. Join now: [McHenryMuseum.org/support](http://McHenryMuseum.org/support)

### • Get the Newsletter!

Discover more ways to connect to local history regularly with our free, monthly newsletter, featuring fresh articles on local history: the *MM&HS Museum Monthly*. It's the one email you'll look forward to opening each month! And its free! [McHenryMuseum.org/contact](http://McHenryMuseum.org/contact)

**Your participation helps bring local history to life.  
Get involved. Today!**