



MM&HS Museum Monthly

A publication of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society

December 2023

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A Call for Docents

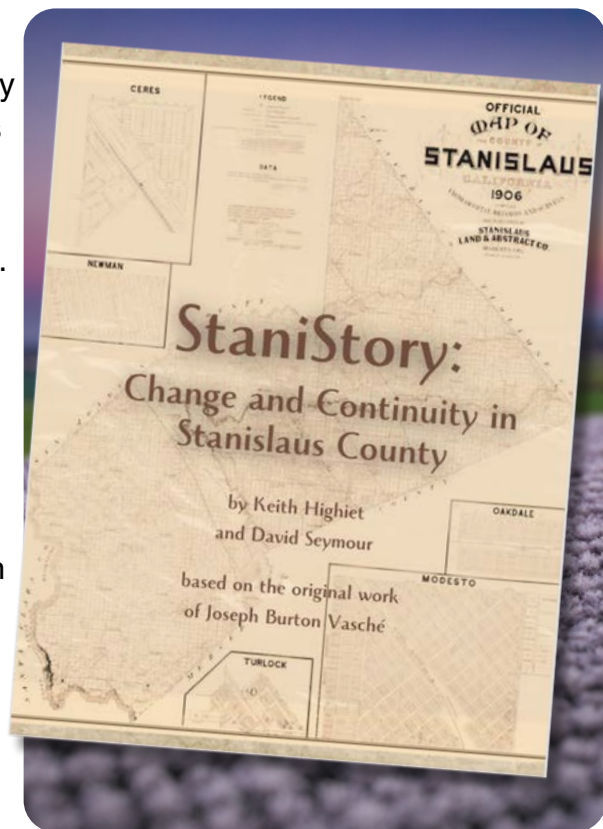
Did you know that the McHenry Museum is regularly staffed with volunteer docents who greet and guide visitors? Do you have just four hours each month to do help out?

Being a docent at the museum is a fun and meaningful way to give back to your community by engaging with locals and out-of-area visitors who are interested in learning more about our community's illustrious history. All docents receive a full training prior to actively volunteering. Docents volunteer in four hour increments at least one day per month. We certainly welcome those who give even more time as well. Are you interested? Email us today at info@mchenrymuseum.org, and thank you in advance.

StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County

This month, MM&HS releases *StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County*. This book is a survey history of the county, and is the first update in more than forty years to a local county-wide history curriculum. Created for third-grade teachers to guide their students through, the book is also appropriate for use by older learners (including adults!). The selection also includes post-reading assessments and activities.

Learning about local history allows students to develop a greater appreciation for where they live, thus providing for deeper meaning of their sense of self as it relates to their community. Gaining the ability to identify otherwise unknown connections to the area where one lives delivers better outcomes as students grow (even into adulthood). Through identifying patterns of change in comparison to constants throughout history, *StaniStory* helps learners build concrete stories which relate to their lived community experience.



By mid-month, *StaniStory* will be a free, downloadable PDF at McHenryMuseum.org/stanistory

Local educators enshrined elementary learners with Stanislaus history curriculum

by David Seymour

This month, the McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS) releases the latest cumulative historical summary of Stanislaus County in *StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County*. The new book (available soon as a free, downloadable document at McHenryMuseum.org) and its related learning activities, is intended for third grade teachers to guide their students through, but it is appropriate for older students as well (including adults). This latest version of a county-wide historical elementary curriculum comes more than eighty after the original publication, *Our County: A Story of Stanislaus*. To celebrate the moment, we share more about the people behind the original book: educators Margaret McFarland Annear (1886-1971) and Joseph Burton Vasché (1910-1962).

Annear's story actually dates to an earlier superintendent of the Stanislaus Schools system: Gordon Elmore, who had deep roots in Stanislaus County education in his own right. Elmore was born four miles north of Modesto in 1876, and his family settled near Salida. From 1899 - 1902, he taught at Hughson Grammar School. He then moved to Turlock, where he served as a principal and later as the supervising principal of the Turlock Schools system. He went on to the field of banking and served as the first city clerk of Turlock, following its incorporation in 1908. Ten years later, he ran as a candidate for county superintendent and won.

At the time of his election, Stanislaus County was mourning the death of Captain Edgar Annear (1884-1918). A Ceres native, Mr. Annear had attended the U.S. Military's West Point academy in New York. After returning home, he was elected as Stanislaus County's surveyor in 1906, and in 1909 he and Margaret McFarland were married. He is considered one of the key people responsible for the erection of Modesto's Seventh Street Bridge, which opened in 1917. Edgar resigned from his post in March of 1918 to serve for the U.S. in France during World War I.

He died suddenly upon his August 1918 return to America – in Hoboken, New York. That December, Superintendent Gordon Elmore appointed Mr. Annear's widow, Margaret, as a deputy superintendent of Stanislaus County Schools.



Joseph Burton Vasché



Margaret L. Annear



Edgar Annear

Mrs. Annear was born in Iowa, and had moved to Modesto in 1905. She was a graduate of Boston University and San Jose State's Teachers College. She earned a life diploma from the State of California in general administration.

In 1932, Gordon Elmore resigned due to health issues. His wife, Lourien Fuquay Elmore (1877-1946), who like Annear, worked as a deputy superintendent, was appointed his vacated position. This made Mrs. Elmore the second woman to hold the distinctive office. [Florence Boggs (1876-1945) was the first female superintendent, from 1903-1915.] Mrs. Elmore served in the role until 1939 when she, herself, resigned due to health issues. Margaret Annear was then appointed to the office. In 1941, Mrs. Annear appointed Joseph Burton Vasché (1910-1962) a member of her staff.

Vasché was an Oakdale native who graduated from San Jose State in 1931 and later received a doctorate in education from Stanford University. He taught school in Los Gatos, and later in Oakdale, before being appointed to Annear's staff. His first task under Annear was to research and write a history book on Stanislaus County for third grade elementary use.

He commissioned his younger brother, Arthur 'Stanley' Vasche (1920-1990), a commercial artist, to illustrate the book. By the end of the year, *Our County: A Story of Stanislaus* was released. The following year, an extended and more-in-depth version was written for high school students. Later, in 1950, the elementary book was re-released. Also in 1950, Margaret Annear published a new book for high school students, *A Brief History of Stanislaus County: A Source Book for Secondary Schools*. Without the help of Vasché, she relied on Modesto Junior College history professor Herbert Florcken (1892-1989) to write much of the text.

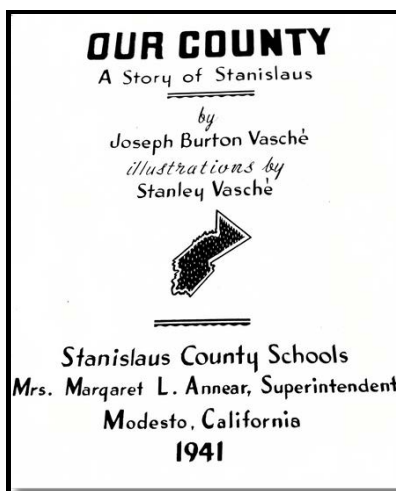
A few years after the publication of the first books, Vasché left for Washington State to become director of publications for that state's superintendent. He later became Washington's deputy state superintendent. In 1951, he moved to Colorado to become its first commissioner of public education.



Gordon Elmore



Lourien Elmore



Front cover of Vasché's 1941 landmark work.



Above: 1950 re-print

Below: Annear's 1950 high school edition



Also in 1951, Margaret Annear, who retired the previous year, ran for a seat on the Modesto City Council, being the first woman to pursue such a feat. She was not successful in her bid though.

A historical inaccuracy uncovered:

MM&HS has previously documented stories about the founder of the McHenry Museum, Heidi Warner (1925-2008), in which Mrs. Warner was inaccurately credited as the first woman to run for a Modesto city council seat. We have discovered through our latest research, though, that it was indeed Margaret Annear who was the first to do so.

In 1952, Vasché returned to California. He joined the California Department of Education in 1952, and helped start three state colleges in his position there. Then, in 1960, he was appointed as the first president of Stanislaus State College (now called California State University, Stanislaus) in Turlock. His time there was brief, though, as he succumbed to cancer in 1962.

Margaret Annear continued to stay active in the community. She led local groups for the Republican party, served as president of the Women’s Progressive Group, and organized the first Girl Scout Troup in Modesto. She died in 1971.

The work to educate the students of Stanislaus County on their local history carried forward though. In 1971, Vasche’s widow, Gertrude (1908-1997), teamed up with Modesto city councilwoman and future mayor, Peggy Mensinger (1923-2002), as well as founder of the McHenry Museum, Heidi Warner, to produce an updated version of the book. A further revision occurred in 1981, authored by Harry Bakker (1939-2023), Barbara McCullough (1932-2015), Marsha Zellman (1932-2023), Nanette Olson (1930-2003), and V. Ruth Smith, for the Stanislaus County Department of Education in cooperation with eleven local school districts. The 2023 book, *StaniStory*, was written by Keith Highiet and David Seymour, and was reviewed by the Stanislaus County Office of Education.

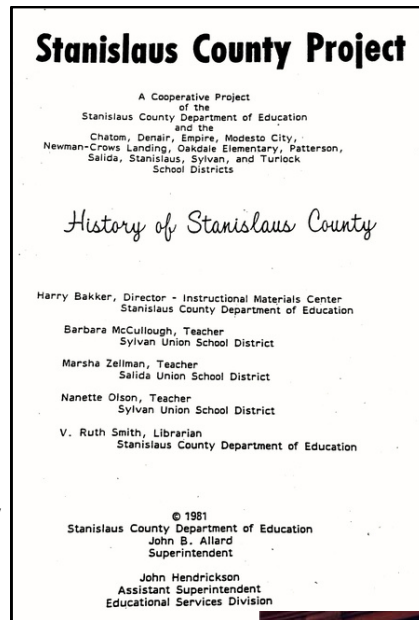
Edited by Keith Highiet



Margaret L. Annear’s 1951 Modesto City Council bid advertisement



Gertrude Vasché introduces the 1971 book



Title page from 1981 book

V. Ruth Smith contributed to the the 1981 book (November 2023 photo)



The Mud Bowl: 60 Years of Tradition

by Ken White



Some people spend Thanksgiving morning firing up the kitchen and preparing for the feast later that night. Others spend it knee-deep in mud.

The Mud Bowl is a football game we started playing on Thanksgiving Day, 1964. There was often a debate about the exact date we first played together, but that was part of the experience. Two groups of high school friends combined separate games of football into one. One bunch had played at Roosevelt Junior High. The other at Pike Park. After graduating from high school, we agreed to get together and play just one game. We did that because we enjoyed football and it was a way to see classmates who had been away at college. There was no place any of us would rather be on Thanksgiving Day than at the Mud Bowl. The combined game was moved to a tiny park near Dry Creek called Thousand Oaks, now Kewin, Park because it was a central location. A formal invitation was sent out each year. Paul Seideman and I were then responsible for calling everyone, and later emailing, to make sure everyone showed up.

We were certainly old enough to know better. But that never stopped us. The Mud Bowl was the one time of the year we could revert to being kids again – to refuse to grow up. Peter Pan had nothing on us. We could ignore reality for one day and dream of being a football hero.

Each guy wore the same “uniform” each year; a combination of college sweatshirt, gym pants, tennis shoes, and hat stenciled with the name of some professional sports team, vacation spot, or business.

The game day routine changed over the years. At the height of its popularity, we’d start with breakfast at the Sundial, then head to the field. My best friend, George Rogers, and I usually arrived together on that morning. The others showed up singly, or with buddies, carrying brown bags holding refreshments. It was always good to see everyone.

Over the years, a few had changed, sporting longer hair or less hair or wilder hair, beards, or moustaches. A few looked the same. Many had traveled long distances to get here. Their last names were as familiar to our little town as their nicknames were unique. Scott “Scur” de Camp, Dave “Pig” Swain, Roy “Roy Boy” Ridgway, Jeff “Putz” Highiet, Dave “Well” Wherry, Paul “Si” Seideman, Brad “Bo’re” Bassi, George “Jorge” Rogers, John “Middy” Crosby, Doug “Dougie” Highiet, John “Fast Johnnie” Machado, Don “the Dancing Bear” de Camp, Greg “Stein” Sutton, Steve “Big Cou” Couture, Barney “Hands” Eredia, Terry “Vanston” Shaw, Mark “Lanston” Peterson, Dave “Henniputz” Henry, Peter “Goat” Koetting, Shelly “Hollywood” Thompson, Kevin “Hoden” Clark, Frank “Pancho” Cannizzaro, Tom “T Honey” White, and Ken “Whitey” White.

Down on the field of play, we moved slowly those early November mornings, either from lack of sleep or too much partying at the banquet the night before. We wrapped body parts with athletic tape. A few others pulled on an assortment of ankle, knee, and wrist braces. We were young, but we had done some damage over the years in one or another organized sport. We took our bodies and our health for granted. We were bulletproof, after all.

A few parents, friends, girlfriends, and wives braved the weather and huddled under umbrellas. Terry and Don snapped photos with their new SLR cameras – a Pentax and a Minolta. On the sidelines and the field, we went through pre-game rituals – tossing the ball to warm up our arms, punting the ball, stretching, or running a few patterns.

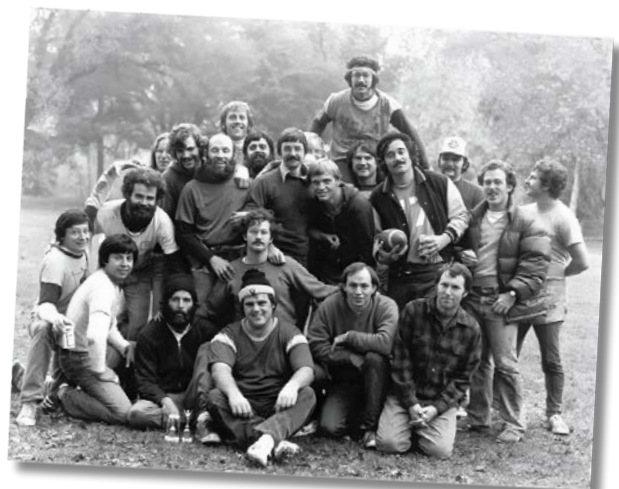
Arrayed under a nearby tree were several small, plastic trophies that would be voted on and awarded after the game, including best overall player (MVP), the best defensive, and best offensive player. The trophies resembled something you might have received in elementary school for reading the most books or winning the hoppy tax championship. Si, who I had first met at Roosevelt Junior High, had bought the trophies. Hanging from the same tree was a rubber chicken someone had purchased to award to the best “cheap shot” play of the day.



Early Games



Brad Bassi & Paul Seideman



1976

During warm-ups, there was talk of adding a few wrinkles. Barney said he could get some flags if we wanted to avoid being hurt, not that anyone would ever pull anybody's flag anyway. It was much easier to grab the flag and hold on, which was no different than tackle. We had played tackle originally before switching to two-handed touch. We had learned that holding trick playing flag football at Roosevelt each time we played La Loma and Mark Twain, the other two junior high schools in town. Terry suggested keeping statistics during the game to better decide who should get the post-game trophies. He also mentioned that he had a friend, who also played a football game in the mud, who held a banquet the night before at a local restaurant. That way girlfriends and/or wives could join in. At the banquet, we'd bring photos and other memorabilia to share and reminisce about. I was working in corporate communications at the time, so I was able to get footage from the local news stations – KCRA and KOVR – and put together a video to play at each banquet. Lyrics to a familiar song, like Simon and Garfunkel's Old Friends, were reworked and performed by George and my younger brother, Wendell, to fit the theme of that year's game.

Even though it was a bit morbid, and we were way too young, Si suggested doing a "Last Man's Club." He had seen an old movie about World War I flying aces, who kept a bottle of champagne for the last flyer alive to pop and toast the deceased. Most of the players were fine with adding this new ritual to the ongoing tradition, or illusion, as a handful of the parents and girlfriends contended. Jeff suggested making it a bottle of Thunderbird, brewed in a lab by Gallo right in our own back yard. Peter suggested doing T-shirts, or some kind of memento, to remember the yearly event. To make it "memorial," he said, and realized he meant "memorable." We all laughed and called him "Yogi." If any, or all of this happened, the Mud Bowl would become, and remain, quite a "memorial" event.



Tom White & Ken White



'A Muddy One'



Barney Eredia & Mark Peterson

Prior to the kickoff, Terry and Kevin marked off boundaries and end zones with bath towels, sweatshirts, or whatever was in the trunk or back seat, of someone's car. They argued as they went. The game was schoolyard rules. Two players, generally the ones who quarterbacked, picked teams. It was six-on-six or sometimes seven, everybody eligible. Live ball on kickoffs and punts, dead ball on plays from scrimmage. One running play for each set of downs. There were two markers for first downs. You could also get a first down with three completions.

On offense, although Terry had drawn up a few plays for our team on 3x5 cards, everyone went out, usually long, and tried to get open. On defense, it was man-to-man. Zone was much too complicated. Rushers had to count "one alligator, two alligator" before rushing. There were no penalties, unless it was too obvious to ignore, like a defensive back hitting a receiver before the ball got there, or a lineman crushing the QB after the ball was thrown. Even those were let slide because the other team would simply get revenge the next time we changed possession. The kickoff was around 10 a.m. There was a timer, usually a school test clock, to indicate the end of the first half and the end of the game, which was 12:00 or 12:30, or until we got tired, or too wasted on beer, wine, Yukon Jack, or something else. We took a brief half-time for more alcohol, photographs, interviews, trips to the restroom, visits with family and friends, and tending to injuries, of which there were many—teeth, ankles, and knees, with a couple visits to the ER. If it was raining hard, the game was sloppy. If it wasn't, someone might open a sprinkler valve to muddy it up. Of course, we haven't had a real Mud Bowl since 1995. There was nothing better on a dreary morning in November.

Two hours later, it was over. Trophies were handed out by the winners of last year's awards, which was also part of the custom. Scott awarded Brad the MVP trophy, Si gave Scott his best "O" award, T handed best "D" to Terry, and Jeff threw the "Cheap Shot Chicken" at Don. Wet, cold, and shivering, we gathered for the group photo that ended every gathering. Then everyone would head off to their family's turkey dinner before reconvening for more alcohol, the annual poker game that night, and the verbal sparring that accompanied a tireless recap of the entire game and endless discussions about life. We limped to our cars and home with shouts of, "See you tonight" and "See you next year."



**KCRA News Coverage
George Stallings & Bob Weidman**



Dave Wherry, Vanston Shawm Brad Bassi, and Dave Henry

The tradition continues today with sons, grandsons, friends, and acquaintances. Only two or three of the originals still play. We've lost a few of the long-time players along the way, all much too soon. Most of the others have long since moved away, don't come home for the holidays anymore, or got too old or slow to play. However, as long as there are two players still standing, there will always be a game. It is the longest, continuous Mud Bowl still being played in the nation. This year marks 60 years since these Boys of Autumn began gathering on Thanksgiving morning in the rain.

The Mud Bowl is, was, and always will be, about old friends. And like Thanksgiving, it's about family and tradition. On this one day, we were all together again. These old friends were boys once more. Just playing a game in the mud.

To see the greatest hits of The Mud Bowl through the years, go to:

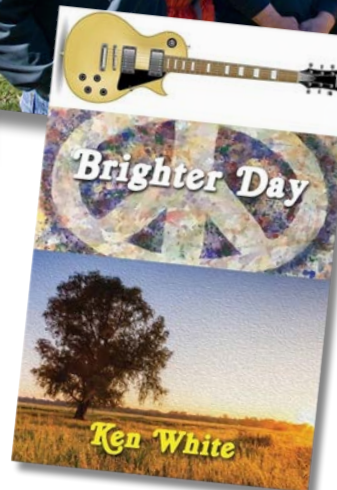
<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1DC1D27DE02B3FAD>.



'The Mudders' October 2022



This story was excerpted from *Brighter Day* by Ken White, which is available at *Stanislaus Selections*, the MM&HS' gift shop bookstore located within the McHenry Museum (open Friday's - Sunday's, 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.).



The Mud Bowl Display



**The Mud Bowl Reunion
November 18, 2023**



The Mud Bowl: 60th Game November 23, 2023



MM&HS News • December 2023



McHenry Museum
1402 I St
Modesto • 209-577-5366
mchenrymuseum.org

Visitors to McHenry Museum are invited to engage with the rich and diverse history of Stanislaus County. Guests enjoy the exhibits in an upbeat friendly setting, showcasing two hundred years of unique and storied local history. Owned and maintained by the museum promotes active community engagement as residents and visitors experience the exhibits to learn something new about the local history.



- The McHenry Museum was voted 'Best Museum in Modesto' for 2023 by the *The Modesto Bee* readership.

- The McHenry Museum is decked out for the holidays. On display in the temporary exhibition room is a collection of vintage toys, artifacts, and photographs from local holiday seasons of yore. The exhibit was curated by Wayne Mathes.

- The 'Stanislaus Selections' Museum Store is festively decorated. Stop by soon to pick up that perfect holiday gift.

- Next to the museum's General Store display, Wayne Mathes has curated a new permanent exhibit on the G.P. Schafer Company. Operating in Modesto from 1900-1927, this store was earlier opened by Jewish merchant Isaac Elias Gilbert (1836-1897) as 'I.E. Gilbert & Sons' from 1870 to 1900. The shop began as a grocery store, and evolved greatly over the next decades. Schafer purchased the store with his future brother-in-law, Oramil McHenry, in 1900.



George P. Schafer



- The Children's Holiday Craft Faire is scheduled at the museum on Saturday, December 2nd from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Admission is free, and will include crafts for children of all ages! The Stanislaus County Library will be hosting children's Story Time at the event. Join us - with kids!

- The MM&HS' annual Soup Supper and Holiday Sing-A-Long is scheduled for December 10th at 5:30 p.m. Invitations have been mailed. We ask for RSVP's by December 4th.

- The board of directors of the MM&HS met on November 28th.



It Happened When...

- On December 14, 1923, Stanislaus County residents awoke to the news of the deaths of two prominent Modesto citizens. In the evening hours of December 13th, George Wren, a realtor and the first mayor of Modesto under the 1911 re-charter, died at age 65 at his residence on Thirteenth Street. Twelve Hours later, George Schafer, of The G.P. Schafer Company, perished at age 54 at his home on Fifteenth Street. Schafer, was a member of the first city council under Wren.



- Remember the rain on Modesto's 'Holiday of Lights Parade' last year? It could have been worse. On December 1, 1973, with 4,000 spectators in attendance, hail began to pelt Riverbank's annual Christmas parade.



1973

- In December 2013, Duarte Nursery in Hughson celebrated its 20th season with the grand-opening of a new 75,000 square-foot greenhouse for shoppers to purchase their holiday poinsettia plants.



2013



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 or send a message at 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

- **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

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