

**McHENRY
MUSEUM**
& HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MM&HS Museum Monthly

a publication of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society

July 2023

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MM&HS' McMobile Museum joins July 4th celebration

The McHenry Museum was born on July 4, 1972!

In celebration of this day, and in conjunction with Modesto's annual 4th of July Parade, the McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS) will bring a patriotic parade-themed version of its *McMobile Museum* to the parade that day. We'll be set up on the steps of the McHenry Museum and the adjacent grassy area, exhibiting large prints and artifacts from parade days of yore.

MM&HS' executive director, David Seymour, will be one of the official announcers on the parade route, calling the parade on local radio station KWIN 97.7 & 98.3 FM.

Photo: MM&HS and Modesto Chamber of Commerce members on the steps of the McHenry Museum marked the 50th anniversary of the McHenry Museum, July 2022



Join or renew as a sustaining member of MM&HS now!



Your McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS) works year-round to increase ongoing robust and active engagement of our local community with the unique and storied history of Stanislaus County. Your support provides for ongoing collection, preservation, and recording of local history in benefit of the community today – and for future generations.

Our free-to-the-public activities directly benefit the residents of Stanislaus County. Our work to preserve local history has made an impact for more than five decades. We need your help to aid our efforts for the 2023 - 2024 year. Together, we bring to life our rich and storied local history.

Join us now in giving generously at McHenryMuseum.org/support to help engage and deepen the community's connection to local history.

Modesto's 4th of July Parade patriotic since 1874

by David Seymour and Keith Highiet

July 2023 MM&HS Museum Monthly *Feature Article*

First held as an outright parade in 1874, Modesto's 4th of July Parade is one of California's oldest operational Independence Day parades still taking place today. In 2024, the parade will mark its sesquicentennial (150th anniversary). As that date approaches next year, look at its illustrious history.

What really began as a regional parade first held in Modesto, the parade moved around to several nearby towns in its early years. Over time, it became more Modesto-centric, when other local municipalities held distinct parades as the Modesto tradition continued forward on its own.

A predecessor to the venerable Modesto tradition was a series of 4th of July parades held during the 1860s in now-nonexistent Tuolumne City (of Stanislaus County). Located a few miles east-southeast of today's downtown Modesto, Tuolumne City was a destination for shallow-draft steamboats on the Tuolumne River, mainly carrying wheat farmed in Stanislaus County to other destinations, and receiving imported goods. The creation of the Modesto train depot (station) in late 1870 made the nearby existing river shipping operations – and Tuolumne City entirely – obsolete. Many buildings from there were moved to the new village of Modesto.

Modesto's early July 4th traditions were nascent in 1871. They were spirited in 1872 when a "Grand Ball" was held at the Ross House hotel. Located across from the train depot, the hotel building had been cut in half and partially moved from its original site in the now-nonexistent Paradise City (of Stanislaus County), the nearest river town.

The year 1873 was a transitional one as residents held a "Grand Celebration" on July 4th. A brass band led a procession from the corner of Front (now 9th) and "I" streets to the new courthouse for its dedication that day. The statue of the "Goddess of Law and Equity" was placed to adorn the roof of the courthouse; Lady Justice now stands in the courtyard at the present-day courthouse (still the same site).

In 1874, the first "parade" was held. It was a procession of county pioneers. Former Modesto mayor and local historian Sol Elias (1868-1940)



Former California assemblyman John Thurman, 1983 Grand Marshal, and wife Julie. The field where the Modesto Nuts professional baseball team currently plays is named for him.

described it in his *Stories of Stanislaus* (available for purchase at *Stanislaus Selections*, the McHenry Museum & Historical Society's [MM&HS] bookstore gift shop located inside the McHenry Museum): "On this day the town presented a lively and cheerful appearance. The townsmen as well as the residents of the entire country-side zealously joined in doing honor to the historical episode. The homes were draped in the national colors. The spirit of patriotism was in the air."

Due to issues related to farming and other concerns over the next decade, the parade was on hiatus some early years after its 1874 debut. Notable pioneer James R. Briggs (1827-1906) served as Grand Marshal in 1884 (he's the first half of Modesto's mash-up named 'Briggsmore Ave'). In 1886, newly-elected assemblyman, C.C. Wright (c.1850-1906), presided as parade president; he would go on to author California's still-significant Wright Act of 1887 irrigation law. In 1889, Modesto did not host a parade because Stockton had planned a grand event, and train tickets were affordable for Stanislaus County residents to make the trek. In 1901 the county's parade was held in Oakdale, in 1904 it was in Ceres, and then Newman in 1906. Turlock served as the parade's host for several different years early on.

The Modesto Businessmen's Association, which was founded in May of 1912, organized Modesto's July 4th parade in 1913.

Story continues on following pages

This group later became the Modesto Chamber of Commerce, and continued the tradition of hosting the parade for decades to come. The parade's street route has changed over the years, but when in Modesto, has always remained downtown. In 1915, the parade passed by the then-new – and recently rededicated (in June of 2023) – Southern Pacific Depot on Front Street (now called Ninth Street).

The 1933 parade was particularly well attended, as California Governor James “Sunny Jim” Rolph (1869-1934) partook in Stanislaus County's festivities. The City of Modesto had two important reasons to celebrate in '33: the dedication of the Tuolumne River Bridge on the Golden State Highway (now known as the Ninth Street Bridge); and the dedication of 'Lake Modesto', which was created as a recreational spot on the Tuolumne River through completion of the city-owned Dennett Dam.

In 1934 (for the sixtieth anniversary of the parade), Stanislaus County residents marked their pioneer roots, and covered wagons lined the streets. An estimated 30,000 people attended that year. A parade took place in 1941, but World War II put a halt on parades after that year. The government sought a reduction in travel for 1942, and officials encouraged citizens to stay home for the 4th. It appears that the parade was on a war-related hiatus through 1945. In June of 1946, chairman of the parade Albert Pederson (1894-1976) called for entries for the parade, making a triumphant return.

By the end of the 1940s, the parade had established a new tradition with local prominent rancher Ed Mape (1894-1973) being Grand Marshal. Mape led every July 4th parade riding his horse thereafter through 1973.

The 1950s brought the first prominent voice to the parade. KTRB personality Cal Purviance (1920-2011) was its official announcer. Toward the end of the 1960s, the parade was in danger for its survival as there was no organization to take leadership to keep it going. In 1970, Mayor Lee Davies (1904-1988) appointed the Modesto Junior Chamber of Commerce ('the Jaycees') to oversee parade operations.

Cal Purviance brought his close friend Al Menshew



Some information and photos sourced from Modesto Bee articles, the McHenry Museum archive, Al Golub, and Loretta Menshew.

Early 4th of July parades in Modesto



(1930-2020) on as a second announcer in 1971. The duo was known as 'Cal and Al'. Loretta Menshew, wife of the late Al, shared that this simply started so that Cal could have a bathroom break during the parade, which sometimes ran up to three hours. Al Menshew launched the 4th of July Picnic for Modesto in 1974. Usually held at Graceada Park, it sometimes took place at Legion Park (now Tuolumne River Regional Park) for decades following the parades. Purviance and Menshew last announced together in 2000.

The 1983 parade marked the centennial celebration of Modesto High School. The school's first female yell leader and future city council person, Jenny Ketchum Kenoyer, rode on one of the main floats. The Grand Marshal that year was Assemblyman John Thurman (1919-1983), who waived to crowds from the backseat of a convertible, alongside wife Julie.

Al & Cal, July 4, 2000



1995



McHenry Museum's own floats in the parade over the years



McHenry Museum's float in the parade on its opening day: July 4, 1972



1982

"America, Up, Up, and Away"

AFTER THE PARADE

This year's parade theme is "America, Up, Up, and Away." The McHenry Museum of Art and History will be open from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. with an exhibit of special pictures of Modesto by Robert Gauvreau, titled "Yesterday and Today." Also, cake and coffee will be served in celebration of the Museum's 10th birthday. The Museum will be specially decorated for today's party.

The eighth annual Picnic in the Park has moved this year to Tuolumne River Regional Park. (See the back of this flyer for a map showing how to get there). The Picnic grew so big and so much fun that we moved to Modesto's newest and most beautiful park. It's on the banks of the Tuolumne River and if you ain't been there, you ain't seen nothing yet!

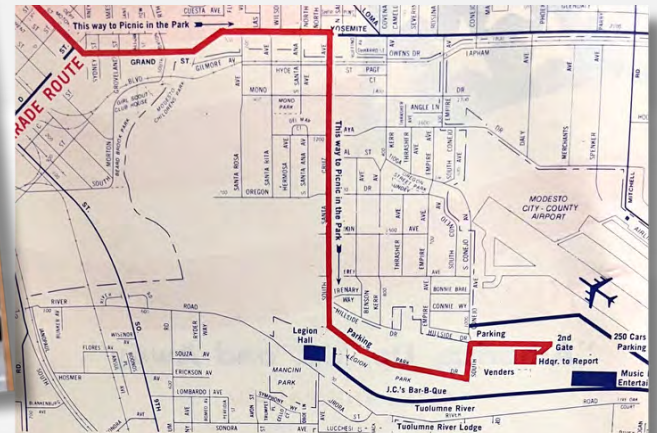
The Picnic started yesterday with lots of arts and crafts booths (good ones too!), food and refreshment booths (by the dozens!), and entertainment of all sorts. All the entertainment is free. There is country and western music, dixieland, swing, rhythm and blues, and top forty. We even have strolling barber shop quartets.

Dana Smith will be back again this year with his all new kids show. Our Picnic in the Park, like every year, is for all members of the family. From the littlest ones to grandma and grandpa; there is fun and entertainment for all.

After the parade, follow the map (or all the happy people) to Tuolumne Regional River Park for the eighth annual Picnic in the Park or take the free buses from either 17th and I or King Kennedy Center or call Dial-A-Ride.

When you reach the Picnic, look for the Modesto Junior Chamber of Commerce and their chicken B-B-Que. Say howdy and try their fabulous chicken with Chicken Al's special sauce.

Thanks to all who made this celebration possible. Especially the Modesto Jaycees, the VFW, the American Legion, Stanislaus Area Amateur Radio Association, Modesto Parks and Recreation, County of Stanislaus, Downtown Improvement District, Modesto Irrigation District, Chamber of Commerce, the City of Modesto, and especially the Fourth of July Committee.



Sunday		Monday	
Country Light	1:00	Country Light	1:00
Kenny Pierce	2:00	Kenny Pierce	2:00
Betty Bee & Don Ward	3:00	Betty Bee & Don Ward	3:00
Destiny	4:00	Destiny	4:00
Wild Mountain	5:00	Wild Mountain	5:00
Kent Hopper	6:00	Kent Hopper	6:00
Dalton Gang	7:00	Dalton Gang	7:00
Ark Haven	8:00	Ark Haven	8:00
STAGE II		STAGE II	
Rob Fragia	11:00	Rob Fragia	11:00
Melody Makers	12:00	Melody Makers	12:00
Hogin's Heroes	1:00	Gem City	1:00
Steve Seskin and Friends	2:00	Steve Seskin and Friends	2:00
Hogin's Heroes	3:00	Headliners	3:00
Steve Seskin and Friends	4:00	Gem City	4:00
Lil Big Band	5:00	Lil Big Band	5:00
Steve Seskin and Friends	6:00	Steve Seskin and Friends	6:00
Hogin's Heroes	7:00	Headliners	7:00
	8:00	Hogin's Heroes	8:00
STAGE III		STAGE III	
Dana Smith	1:00	Dana Smith	1:00
Melody Makers	2:00	Golden Squares	2:00
Dana Smith	3:00	Dana Smith	3:00
Melody Makers	4:00	Melody Makers	4:00

ENTERTAINMENT

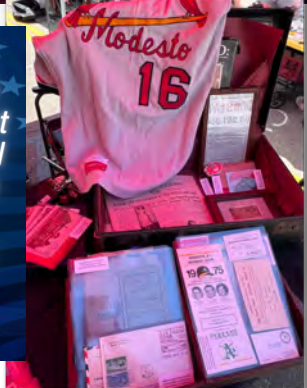
ENTERTAINMENT

1982 guide map to post-parade Picnic in the Park (red line)

MM&HS News • July 2023



MM&HS McMobile Museum at the annual Patterson Apricot Fiesta in June of 2023



· On June 3rd and 4th, the *MM&HS McMobile Museum* made its 'West Side' debut at the Patterson Apricot Fiesta. Thank you to Mike & Kim Cobleigh for allowing us to re-share their baseball-themed local items. Patterson-centric and general county items were also displayed. Thank you to volunteers Christopher Nunes, Ken and Johnna Bryant, Doug Nutson, and Ruby Rodgers for helping out this weekend.

· On June 10th, Executive Director David Seymour presented a *Second Saturday 'History Talks'* event on the *LGBTQ History of Stanislaus County* at the McHenry Museum, the topic of our June 2023 feature article. Surprise honored guests were Jo McCarthy and Connie McIlroy, who founded the *Stanislaus Gay Alliance* over forty years ago.

· We welcome new Patron sustaining members Harrison & Abigail Power.

· MM&HS's *Summer Social & Annual Meeting* took place on June 27th. We would like to thank, Carole Dovichi, Patty Heckendorf, and Pam DiFrancia for all of their hard work in planning the event. We also that the Village Butcher for the delicious food.

· Our summer 2023 donor campaign has commenced! We emailed and USPS-mailed out our annual appeal letter at the end of June. Join or renew as a donor member today at McHenryMuseum.org/support.

· On July 4th, the *McMobile Museum* will feature patriotic parade-themed local historical memorabilia on the steps and adjacent grassy area of the McHenry Museum before, during, and after Modesto's annual 4th of July parade that day. It's also the McHenry Museum's 51st birthday!

· On Friday, July 7th, the *McMobile Museum* will pop up at Downtown Modesto's *DoMo First Friday's* event in the evening.

· Mark your calendar now! A November 4th historical awards gala dinner is being planned. Would you like to participate? Please join our committee to nominate and award historically significant people from Stanislaus County. To honor and recognize their contributions in a celebratory way, we need a separate group of volunteers to organize the social evening, including a guest-optional table-setting program.



Jo McCarthy & Connie McIlroy

It Happened When...

· On July 4, 1933, Dennett Dam was named for outgoing Modesto Mayor L.L. Dennett (1867-1942). The American Legion (a US veterans association) had purchased land for the city to build the dam, creating 'Lake Modesto'. In conjunction, Herbert 'Herb' Ramont (1895-1980) and wife Hollis (1897-1979) optioned five acres to donate what became the adjacent upstream Legion Park. Ramont was a renowned developer; he created the 1930s La Loma subdivision. The dam first failed in 1935, and was removed in 2018.

· On July 4, 1973, *The Modesto Bee* reported on a program to educate the children of migrant workers. Operating at Von Renner Elementary School in Newman, it ran nine weeks over the summer of 1973, and was devised under the Regional Migrant Education Concept.

· On July 4, 2013, Colleen Stanley Bare (1925-2018) wrote a historical synopsis of Modesto Fourth of July parades in *The Modesto Bee*. She highlighted Oramil McHenry(1861-1906) chairing the festivities in 1899. Late Oramil's estate endowed the McHenry Library (now Museum).



1933

Herb Ramont

1973

Migrant School Doubles In Size

2013

Patriotism ran high in early Modesto

Little Modesto Village had been in existence for just 20 years when its residents celebrated the community's first Fourth of July. The colorful event established the patterns for years of future Fourth events that included the buses being draped in red, white and blue flags. People-packed carriages and wagons crowded into the village from all over Stanislaus County, with flags flying and firecrackers popping. The 10 a.m. parade was led by the



COLLEEN STANLEY BARE COMMUNITY

in Central Valley towns for the storage of wheat. Later, he became the founder of Merced and the builder of that area's first irrigation system. Patriotism ran high in those early years, and almost everywhere.

the ladies from Okidale on Oakdale Road, bringing them into Modesto amid the clatter of the participants and spectators." Parade participants included the Army adjutant general with his staff and the 6th Infantry Regiment of 300 troops from Stockton, Fresno, Visalia and Modesto. Patriotic exercises were held in a cleared Ninth Street square, followed by a military ball that night. The 1899 Fourth festivities, chaired

Photos from our Summer Social & Annual Meeting



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 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 with 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 receiving each month! And its free! McHenryMuseum.org/contact

Your participation helps bring local history to life.

Get involved. Today!