

StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County

an introductory letter and user guide for educators

December 2023

Dear Educator,

We welcome you to explore, share, and teach on the topic of local history with *StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County*. This book, including assessments and activities, is targeted for third-graders, but is also appropriate for use by older learners (including adults).

Learning about local history allows students to develop a greater appreciation of 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 own lived community experience.

StaniStory is designed to be a teacher-led, read-along textbook. Alternatively, it may be used as an instruction-only textbook or as a reference guide for select topical teachings on local history. The curriculum is structured as a time-line thematic survey of key events, people, places, and ideas which continue to influence our local area. We encourage you to use the textbook in its entirety OR the parts which are most appropriate for your particular classroom.

- There are four *StaniStory*-related downloadable PDFs at **McHenryMuseum.org**. Click on the ‘*StaniStory*’ tab to access:
 - **StaniStory: Introductory Letter for Educators**, a copy of this two-page letter.
 - **StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County**, the complete, free, digitally-formatted history of Stanislaus County (including assessments and activities). Students can download and read along with their classroom or home-school teacher using school-issued computers/laptops or personal electronic devices. The book may be printed out (double-sided is recommended) for an even more tactile student-use experience.
 - **StaniStory ‘Assessments & Activities’ ONLY** contains the student assessments and activities only (a repeat of those which are featured at the end of the complete *StaniStory* PDF). If you opt to utilize the electronic device-only option when exploring *StaniStory*, it is recommended that at least these ‘Assessments & Activities’ pages be printed out for student-use.
 - **StaniStory ‘Assessments & Activities’ ANSWER KEY (for educators only)** is for educator use only as it contains the answers to the assessments and activities.
- A printed copy of *StaniStory* can be kept as a reference in your school’s library. A printed copy should also be handed to instructors who are new to teaching third grade locally.
- Following the text of the book, there is a featured section on ‘Cities, Towns, and Other Communities’ in the county. Here, readers can find snippets of historical details about their particular local community within the county as well as that of others, and even of those which no longer exist.

- A ‘Glossary’ follows as the next section. It includes the **Key Facts** and Defined Concepts and Words (**bold** and underlined, respectively) referenced throughout the text.
- The ‘Appendix: Assessments and Activities’ at the end of the book (and also in the ‘Assessments and Activities’-only version) includes:
 - Two (2) sets of multiple-choice review questions: Part A (15 questions) covers content in the first part of the book; Part B (15 questions + a bonus question) covers content in the second part of the book.
 - A Crossword puzzle and a Word Search based on key facts and defined words from the text, mapping activities, creative/coloring content, and an interview/writing component.

Additionally, it is encouraged that teachers customize and/or create other interactive related content for their particular classroom. Please share with others – and with us!

The roots of StaniStory dates back to 1941. That year, Oakdale native Joseph Burton Vasché (1910-1962) was appointed to work under Margaret L. Annear (1884-1971), the Superintendent of Stanislaus County Schools. Mr. Vasché served as the director of research and curriculum and his first task was to write a history source book on Stanislaus County for third graders. By the end of his first 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. Vasché went on to become the first president of California State University – Stanislaus in Turlock.

The third grade book was re-released in 1950, as was an updated version of the high school book. The third grade book was then revised in 1971 by a trio which included educator Gertrude Vasché (1908-1997), city councilwoman and future Modesto mayor Peggy Mensinger (1923-2002), and McHenry Museum founder Heidi Warner (1925-2008).

A revision in 1981, called *History of Stanislaus County*, was a cooperative project with the Stanislaus County Department of Education and eleven local school districts; it was principally authored by Harry Bakker, Barbara McCullough, Marsha Zellman, Nanette Olson, and V. Ruth Smith. The 2023 title, *StaniStory: Change and Continuity in Stanislaus County*, was written by Keith Highiet and David Seymour for the McHenry Museum & Historical Society, and was reviewed by the Stanislaus County Office of Education.

A tour of the McHenry Museum is **free** and is the perfect complementary activity to accompany a reading and teaching of StaniStory. Check current operating hours at McHenryMuseum.org. **The museum offers free, guided school tours.** Field trips are often done in conjunction with tours of the nearby McHenry Mansion. Such group tours may be scheduled through the City of Modesto’s Parks & Recreation Department. Contact the museum at McHenryMuseum.org.

We hope you enjoy StaniStory!



Keith Highiet and David Seymour