



McHENRY MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY E-NEWSLETTER



by Athina Osmuss, MM&HS Executive Director



Words from Your Executive Director

Here we are at the end of August and still no end in sight to mask wearing and social distancing. With all the fires raging around us, it is hard to even see the light at the end of the tunnel.

On a personal note, my husband and I went 6 days during our heat wave, dangerous air quality and COVID without air conditioning. Needless to say, it was not pleasant and I think it thoroughly sums up 2020 for most of us. It did make us appreciate all that goes into making us comfortable here in the Central Valley. From swimming pools to air conditioning, it's hard to imagine life without them. Doing a little research, I learned that Charles Gates from Minneapolis, Minnesota, is credited for having built the first house with central air conditioning. He died in 1913 a year before his home was completed. Also, one of the 1st residential pools built was on the Vanderbilt Estate (known as the Biltmore Estate). Located in Asheville, North Carolina, the Biltmore Estates 178,926 square foot construction was completed in 1895 and includes a 70,000 gallon indoor pool. Visiting this estate is on my 'things to do after COVID' list. Do you have a list started with all the things you would like to do when COVID is over?

So many community Museums are having to close permanently but thanks to all of you, our members, your year after year continued support has enabled us to persevere. Thank you! We are so grateful to our volunteer docents who bring their passion of Stanislaus County into our ever-improving museum displays. Not only do we hope to continue our Second Saturday talks and family events like the Dickens Faire, but we also plan to create more events to grow alongside our community. Remember to renew your

membership today and consider a gift of membership for someone else.

We know how important it is for the younger generations to learn about all the different cultures we are lucky enough to have in the Central Valley. We were thrilled when earlier this year our baseball exhibit was enhanced by photos from the African-American Baseball League. These are the type of improvements that can inclusively tell our communities story.

During this tumultuous time in our history it has caused me to pause and consider if we are doing enough. Are we a Historical Society of equality, diversity and inclusion? What might that look like? In an article titled, *A Totally Inclusive Museum*, by Cecile Shellman, Shellman writes, "The point of inclusion—from the standpoint of becoming increasingly culturally responsive, responsible, aware, and competent—is to do less harm than we and others have done in the past—ultimately to do no harm." Shellman continues to point out, "Inclusion starts with self-reflection, with introspection...and it never ends." What a great opportunity for us to create a space for visitors to feel welcome, seen, and valued. Let's be more than just a building that stores old relics of the past. Let's become an active part of our community.

If you have an idea or know of someone who has contributed to the history of our community, we would gladly consider additional ideas and enhancements to our displays. Send an email to aosmuss@mchenrymuseum.org with your thoughts.

"My greatest hope is that we don't reach for normal, we reach for better." Michelle Norris

Modesto Junk Co carries on local family tradition for 100 years

Written by, Keith Highiet

In 1913, Alex Highiet immigrated to the US from Russia (now Lithuania) through Ellis Island. After arriving in Stockton to work at his uncle's junk-scrap yard there, he soon moved to Modesto through a marriage to Nettie Zeff. To earn money here, he worked as a peddler, collecting 'junk' scrap items (used rags, discarded animal bones, old newspapers, rubber, glass, and metals); with his horse and buggy, he sold these items for re-use or wholesale value. He bought property on 9th Street in Modesto to open a location to expand his growing enterprise, and established Modesto Junk Company at its present site in 1920.

During WWII, Modesto Junk Co aided the Allied war effort as a source for salvaged metal. Post-war, Alex's son, Harvey, took over the company and the recycling of scrap metal became the primary focus of the business. In the 1980s, Harvey's son, Jeff, began a modernization of the company and added large equipment and scrap processing machinery to efficiently handle more volume on the two-acre site. The Company continues to be run by Jeff, and now also by his son, Keith. Today, Modesto Junk Company receives scrap metals, e-waste, cardboard, lead-acid batteries, glass, and plastics, from the public and from businesses. These goods are processed and shipped as wholesale scrap products direct to processors and smelters worldwide.

The Company considers itself to be integrally intertwined with the history and the future of the local community. More information can be found online at ModestoJunk.com.

Event on Hold

We have had to put our Fashion show on hold but we still wanted to recognize the generous sponsors of the event:

Johnson & Associates CPAs, Inc
Ruthann Olson, Past President, McHenry Museum & Historical Society Docent Association
Clendenin Bird & Company, PC

Those of you who have purchased tickets please hang on to them for our future date!



Alex Highiet, photo provided by Keith Highiet



A recent photo of the façade of the original building which is still located on 9th and O Street, across from where the old Burge's Drive-In was located. This location had a front row seat to all of the action from the American Graffiti glory days of Modesto, Keith Highiet.

Dates of History

World War II began, Hitler invaded Poland
September 1, 1939
1st Labor Day (held in N.Y. City)
September 5, 1882
World Trade Center Attack
September 11, 2011
U.S. Post Office Opened
September 22, 1789



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