



## Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County

April 2023

Volume 45 Number 4

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April 16, 2023

7:00 P.M. Eugene Hart - "Salt and Snow, Lansford W. Hastings, the Donner Party and the Haste to Blame."

### Presidents Message

By Vicky Wolff

Spring is right around the corner! My daffodils have been in bloom since January and are still going strong. Usually they only last about three weeks, so I am very happy to still see their happy little faces smiling at me.

March is St. Patrick's Day and the wearing of the green. Green would be a good color to wear to our next meeting! The Murphy's Day Parade will be held in Murphy's on Saturday, March 18 so come early to find a parking spot. It is a great little parade and "The Gathering Society of Modesto" will be part of the parade with leprechauns and all. They have been doing this parade for many, many years. The streets of Murphy's are filled with vendors and Irish bands abound along with beer pubs and everything Irish. Murphy's has a lot of wonderful restaurants that serve corned beef and cabbage. If you are Irish or Irish for a day this is a must on your calendar. Get out of town and enjoy yourselves.

We will have a new brochure shortly. The brochure will be able to hand out to friends, neighbors or family to share our society with. We need to work on our membership this year, so hope you will help us accomplish my goal of 25 new members this year!

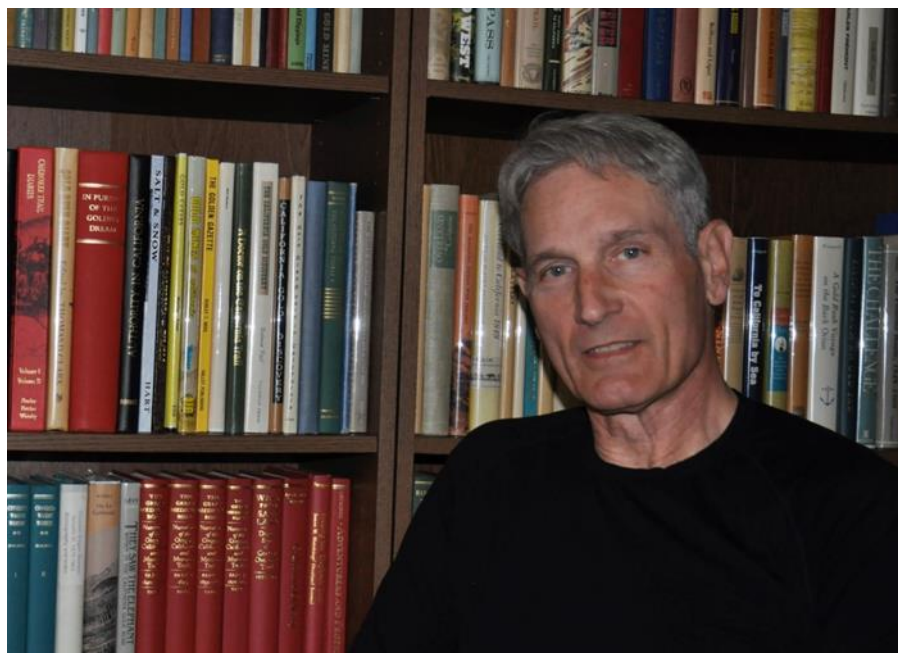
Have a wonderful St. Patrick's Day and the coming of springtime. See you soon!

### April Program

By Karen Souza

### Author Eugene Hart

Eugene Hart is a retired Social Studies teacher who lives in Merced. He wrote a book entitled "**Salt and Snow, Lansford W. Hastings, the Donner Party and the Haste to Blame.**" (ISBN 978-0-95592-6). The book is a **FASCINATING** discussion about how Hastings was blamed for the tragedy. It goes on to argue that Donner and Reed ignored what Hastings wrote and said. Mr. Hart self-published his book which sells it for \$40.00. Please join us to hear this amazing story. The book will be available to Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County members and guests for \$25 at the April monthly meeting!



“Salt and Snow” by Eugene Hart follows promoter and expansionist Lansford Hastings, author of the “Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California”, and his role in the opening of a new wagon route in 1846. His demanding cutoff started from Fort Bridger to the southern end of the Great Salt Lake, then west across the Salt Desert. The narrative also follows the Donner Party wagon train and the choices they made before, during, and after their unwise decision to take Hastings’ new cutoff. Because of their gambles and loss of time, they were eventually trapped in the snowy hold of the Sierra Nevada mountains which led to their last resort to survive: cannibalism. Lansford Hastings and his association with the Donner Party has been unfairly criticized for decades as the main cause of the Donner Party’s catastrophe. However, this book defends Hastings debunking many of the myths surrounding him and laying to rest his alleged personal ambitions and blame for the poor decisions made by the Donner Party headed by their de facto leader James Reed.

### Another GSSC Member Suddenly Passes

#### Stephen Angus Scott Shepherd

11 September 1950 – 13 March 2023

Steve was born to his parents Myron Dale and Ruth Lyndora (De Trow) Shepherd on the 11 September 1950. His parents preceded him in death. He leaves two sisters, Sandy Rowland of North Carolina, and Shelly Dedurk of New Jersey. Steve was an active member of the Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County, St. Andrew’s Society of Modesto, The Irish Gathering Society of Modesto, The Civil War Society, The Sons of Norway and various other community organizations.

He was an opera singer, who loved all genre of music, Steve was a voracious reader of history, arts and all information about the Celtic world.

Steve will be missed by all the people who were fortunate enough to know him.

“Those we love don’t go away, they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard, but always near, Still loved, still missed and very dear.”



## Photos from the March Meeting

By Heidi Armo

### Theme for Our March Meeting

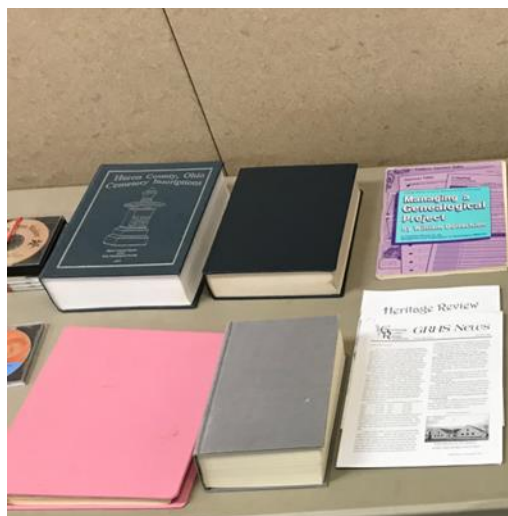


### Sandy Turner - Our March Program Presenter



### Avoiding Mistakes in Genealogical Research

### Some Irish Reference Materials Displayed







Some of our Lively Attendees

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## The Cooking Gene

We still have copies of the GSSC Cookbook: **The Cooking Gene**. Judy and Joyce would be more than happy to fill your order. We are now down to a limited number of our popular cookbook. The Board has set the price for the remaining copies at **\$20 plus \$5 for shipping and handling**. See our website [stanislausgenealogy.org/Publications](http://stanislausgenealogy.org/Publications) to order your copy.

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### Writing Group

Submitted by Joann McDonald

The next meeting of the writing group will be held at Joann MacDonald's home at 10:00 on April 13th. Please E-mail her at [JMastergardener@aol.com](mailto:JMastergardener@aol.com) to confirm you are coming.

and now Joann's Newsletter Contribution

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### Tracking Ancestors Through Records

by Joann McDonald

As genealogists we consult many types of records to try and give us a glimpse of what life might have been like for an ancestor. Some records would be considered a primary source while others would be considered secondary. Newspapers can give us clues of where we might need to look. I was looking for a relative in New York City. I found a death date for her and then saw where her husband and child also died the same date! I thought, "What might have happened?" It was December so I thought of cold and fire. I googled the word fire and the date for New York City. I was shocked with the results! An old abandoned icehouse had been set on fire by juveniles, fire department thought the fire was out. The fire rekindled about 11:00 P.M. at night. The tenement house caught fire, people were sleeping. The year was 1946 so most people didn't have phones. The nearest firebox was a block away. My ancestor perished along with her whole family. There were 37 deaths in all. I frequently turn to newspapers to give me an initial clue to what happened to a person.

I was helping a man at our local Family History Center who was seeking information on his ancestor who had committed murder and spent time in San Quentin Prison. He knew his great grandfather had spent some time in an orphanage due to the man's father's crime. When one is searching one has to also use collateral lines. The name the man had for the wife of his ancestor didn't seem to match with the account given in the newspaper.

I started by using the digital collection of California Newspapers available online. Much was reported in San Jose Mercury and other newspapers. Information gleaned was the man had killed his married stepdaughter in what seemed like a rage of anger. Her mother's name was given as Ellen. The daughter's name was Isabella and son in law's name was Joseph Lorenzo. The newspapers also told Ellen had gone back to using her maiden name of Clark.

Searching census records I found an Ellen Clark, born in Louisiana, on the 1860 census living in San Jose. Could this be his ancestor? Checking 1850 census for Louisiana two Ellen Clark's were found. Only one fit to be the same family living in San Jose by 1860. We now had parents names for Ellen (John and Anne Clark) and sibling (John born C 1841 in Ireland) and two sisters born in Louisiana (Mary and Jane). In the newspaper it was recorded that Ellen's sister had died the Friday before her daughter's murder. When checking for an obituary I found a Jane Kerr had died on Friday before the murder...Ellen had a sister Jane. Jane was of the age to be Ellen's sister.

Newspaper also stated that Isabella's given surname has been Castro. In on line Santa Clara County records a marriage was found for Isabella Castro married to a Joseph Lorenzo. Time frame matched the length of time she had been married according to the newspaper account.

Trying to trace the family of Ellen's brother John seemed a bit easier. He appeared on the census records and had an obituary as well as two notices of his death. His obituary says he was born Co. Mayo, Ireland.

1900 census for San Jose, Santa Clara, California told us his wife had eight children with three living. John's obituary in 1918 named those three children as William, Loretta and Edward. They were all deceased. Three grandchildren were named: Edward, Stella and Bert. I concluded the children were Edward's children. It was back to census record for 1900 to look for Edward and his family who were found living in San Francisco. Now we knew the name of Edward's wife Lena. Stella and John were with the family but no Bert and additional children Edward and Harry. Some additional sleuthing led to an obituary for both Harry and Edward. Harry died while the family was still living in San Francisco and Edward died in San Jose. Bert was really Albert born C 1903. His draft registration for World War II gave his birth date. Also next of kin was his brother John. By the 1910 census Lena has a new husband George Wilson! It can be estimated that her first husband died between 1903-1907 (California death records do not begin until 1-July 1905 and we have San Francisco earthquake and fire also to contend with. We don't know when she moved with her children back to San Jose. She is listed in the City Directory of San Jose for 1907 as the widow of Edward Clark.

A search was again made through Early birth records for Santa Clara County. Births of Edward and Lena's two oldest children were found. No given name but we have to assume the children were Edward and Stella. Lena's maiden name is possibly Revees. It was spelled two different ways.

Lena Clark Wilson died in 1914 in San Jose. Newspaper records show John and Albert will have a guardian appointed. Stella must be old enough not to need one? When her grandfather died a married name of Thompkins is given for her. In searching records the correct name is Thompson!

Sadly, Stella died in 1921 leaving three daughters and a son. In 1920 her brother Albert is living in her home. Albert can be traced through the census up until 1950 (most recent census to be released). He died in 1965 in San Francisco. Stella's girls are not located on a census. Her son Claud lives with his father. Albert's obituary gives married names for three nieces (names don't match Stella's daughters). It can be speculated they were adopted or taken in my relatives? Woman with these names appear in the newspapers. One has a daughter who gets married. Grandfather Charles F Thompson is listed. Stella's husband remarried and lived until 1976. One of Stella's daughters died in 1985 and mother's last name is Clark and father's name is Thompson and her birthdate matches birth in the California index....the mystery of the Thompson girls names still needs to be solved! We know John is alive in 1942 as he also registered for the draft of World War II. Address on draft card matches address given by Albert of his next of kin. John has a wife by the name of Ruby. They both disappear from the City Directories of San Francisco. We have no death date for Ellen Clark but the newspaper of 1894 records she is near death due to a hemorrhage of her stomach.

One can find a lot of information by reading newspapers and getting birth, death and other online records. One just has to sleuth. Many answers are still needed for a complete picture of this family.

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### FREE BEGINNING GENEALOGY CLASS

By the Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County and the Modesto Library

SATURDAY APRIL 29, 2023 AT 2 PM

In the **Makerspace Room**

STANISLAUS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

1500 I STREET MODESTO, CA.

Come learn how to get started on tracing your family history and get the basic forms to keep your findings organized. Members of the genealogical society will be available for help and the Special Collections Room will be open. Learn about the Genealogy Books available in the room for research.

RSVP to [jackie.niemeyer@prodigy.net](mailto:jackie.niemeyer@prodigy.net)

### Meet Your Directors

By Joyce Hickman

### Introducing Amy Mowery

Amy Mowery has been a member of the GSSC for about 8 years. Recently her son Sean Mangas has become an official member. This past year Amy became a Member at Large for the GSSC. She started researching her family tree in 2010, after being inspired by the TV show "Who Do You Think You Are".

Amy prefers to use Ancestry over Family Search because it is easier to monitor the tree and she likes the features of DNA relationships. While researching her family lines of: Mowery, Hauver, Tucker, and Maxwell, she discovered thru DNA testing that her ethnicity is: Northern European areas of Scotland, England, Ireland, Norway, and Germany.



Five years ago, Amy joined the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), currently she serves as the Historian for the Turlock Chapter, and in the past as Secretary. It is necessary to research in order to be part of the DAR; which she has enjoyed finding four Patriots that have served in the Revolutionary War. Her other research has taken her back home to Stanislaus County, California. Amy discovered that she is the 4th generation that has lived in Stanislaus. Her Paternal Great Grandfather George Hauver came to this county in 1904. Her Maternal 3x Great Grandfather Alonzo H. McKellips came to California in 1850 to mine for gold and later served as a Californian Union soldier in the Civil War. Alonzo lived out the rest of his days in California. He was the 1st of her 6th generation to have lived in California.

### Bev Graham and Jay Mirza

by Roxie Ferrari

I had the opportunity to have lunch with our past president Beverly Graham and Jay Mirza.

Bev has been in medical recovery over the last 6 months. By the grace of God, she is of great spirits and her quick wit is still so funny. She is gaining strength daily and intends to get her mobility restored. She has physical and occupational therapy sessions strengthening her day by day.

Bev resides at Dale Commons 3900 Dale Rd #144 Modesto, CA 95356 and would love to have visitors. I have her permission to publish this information, so please call her at 209 765 8996 or email [baglady@sbcglobal.net](mailto:baglady@sbcglobal.net).

I took this picture of our dear Beverly and those beautiful blue eyes.



Years back Julius (Jay) Mirza and Millie Starr attended the Salt Lake City library during a GSSC research trip. He is grateful to Millie Starr for jump starting his research ability while they were at the family history library. Jay donated \$500 this year to fund the memorial scholarship in Millie's honor. Our board has authorized this contribution and we thank him for his generous tax-deductible donation toward such a notable member of our society.



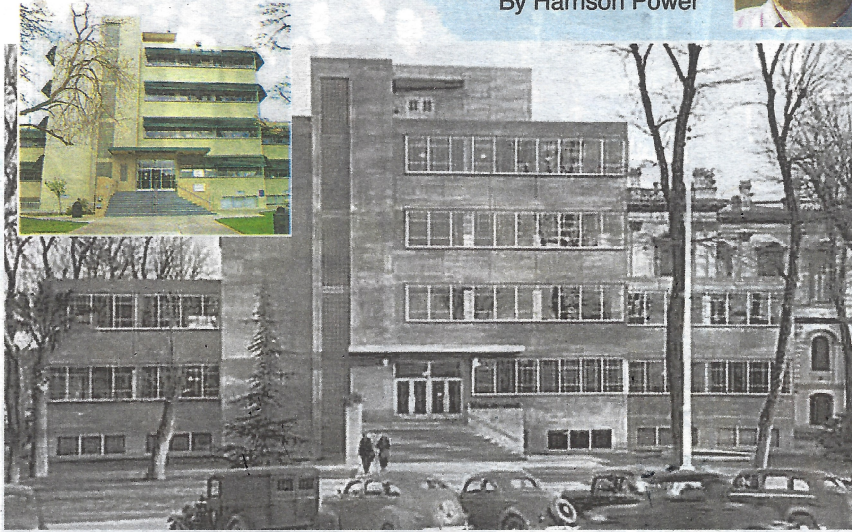

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 Chris Murphy [chrism@spwg.com](mailto:chrism@spwg.com)  
 Harrison Power [hpower@spwg.com](mailto:hpower@spwg.com) GuestViewCrew



# County Hall of Records

By Harrison Power



Facing I Street between 11th and 12th Streets stands the former Stanislaus County Hall of Records, a longtime focal point of downtown located on the grounds of the Courthouse. Though it can appear to be an extension of the 1960 Courthouse complex, it actually predates the current courthouse by many years and marked significant investment in the Modesto area toward the end of the Great Depression. As progress on construction of the new Stanislaus Superior Courthouse continues, the community and civic leaders have a chance to re-commit to this significant local building with planning for long-term downtown redevelopment underway.

Completed in 1939, the Stanislaus County Hall of Records was celebrated by the Modesto Bee as an “ultra modern structure built for roominess and efficiency.” Completion was only made possible due to federal New Deal funds granted to the County, with federal dollars accounting for roughly one third of total construction costs. Built next to the original Victorian-era courthouse, it expanded record storage capacity and consolidated county administrative offices. When it opened to the public, the Hall of Records was home to the offices of the Board of Supervisors, Clerk, Recorder, Assessor, Auditor, Treasurer/Tax Collector, Superintendent of Schools, District Attorney, Surveyor, and Purchasing Agent.

The Hall of Records was designed Russell

Guerne DeLappe (1897-1955), son of a well-established Modesto doctor who graduated from UC Berkeley and went on to become a prominent architect of civic and administrative buildings throughout California. The Hall of Records is one of only a few remaining sites in Modesto designed by DeLappe, and it has come to be lauded as the first International Style county building in the entire State. DeLappe’s intent with the design was to maximize utility over ornamentation, which is line with modernist architectural design and accounts for the rather imposingly modest façade.

The Hall of Records is a physical connection to Modesto’s earlier years and is an architectural jewel that adds immense value to the story of our City and County. Designed by a Modesto native, this structure deserves a new lease on life as court operations eventually consolidate and move to their new 10th Street home. With the completion of the new Stanislaus Superior Courthouse expected in the next two years, the opportunity for Modesto to preserve and repurpose this historic property in the heart of Downtown must be seriously considered as we aim to create a vibrant Downtown where Modesto’s heritage meets future needs. **To learn further about the Hall of Records, you can visit the Modesto Art Museum’s website to read more!**



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c/o GSSC, P. O. Box 1352, Modesto, CA 95353-1352

Email: [gssc-founded1968@gmail.com](mailto:gssc-founded1968@gmail.com)

Telephone: 209-529-9430 (Vicky Wolff)

GSSC web page: <https://stanislausgenealogy.org>

The newsletter is posted at this website, along with other interesting society related items.

General meeting: 7:00 p.m. on the 3rd Thursday of each month, except July and December at the  
Trinity Presbyterian Church at 1600 Carver Rd., Modesto, CA.

Board meeting: 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month, The Secret Garden, 2401 E Orangeburg Ave.,  
Modesto, CA.

2023 Officers		2023 Standing Committees	
President	Vicky Wolff	Acquisitions	
1st Vice President	Karen Souza	Audit	Board of Directors
2nd Vice President	Jackie Niemeyer	Budget	Roxanne Ferrari
Corresponding Secretary	Martha Carter Bhatti	Four Generation Charts	Julie Condrin
Recording Secretary	Pam Atherstone	Historian	Heidi Arno
Treasurer	Roxanne Ferrari	Membership	Joyce Hickman
Director at Large 1	Joyce Hickman	Memorial Day	Membership
Director at Large 2	Amy Mowery	Mentor	Joann McDonald
Director at Large 3	Joann McDonald	Newsletter & Website	Lewis & Logan Ruddick
Director at Large 4	Martha Carter-Bhatti	Nominating	Membership
Director at Large 5	Julie Condrin	Planning	Officers & Board
Past President	David Wolff	Programs	Karen Souza
		Publicity	Vicky Wolff
		Queries	Colleen Norby
		Research & Publication	
		Refreshments	Joann McDonald
		Seminar	
		Special Collections Room & Workshops	Jackie Niemeyer
		Social Media	Pam Atherstone
		Sunshine	Martha Carter-Bhatti
		Trips	Heidi Arno

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We have 66 members for 2023

[website GSSC](https://stanislausgenealogy.org)



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