



MOORPARK MEMORIES

Fall 2015

Moorpark, Ventura County, California

President's Message

Looking at the calendar one sees that Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Moorpark and Thanksgiving have been closely entwined since the early 1900's. I was reminded of this earlier in October while leading one of the Historical Society walks around High, Bard and Charles Streets.



On this particular Saturday morning walk several of the ladies from the Moorpark Woman's Fortnightly Club joined our group. The ladies are very proud to be the oldest service club in town. We discussed in front of the original Fortnightly clubhouse on Charles Street how those industrious ladies of the early 1900's built and then paid off their mortgage. Norma Gunter relates this tale of hard work in *The Moorpark Story*, which she wrote in 1969. For those who do not have the book, copies are for sale in the Moorpark Chamber of Commerce office on High Street.

In 1910 the club started planning for a home, in the spring of 1911 the hardworking ladies were able to pull together enough cash from their charging for seamstress work to start a clubhouse. Mr. Wicks, as in Wicks Road, sold the ladies the land which they then mortgaged to obtain a construction loan for the building. Thus, from the dollars earned by their hard work sewing, the ladies were well on the way to having a clubhouse.

Thanksgiving was fast approaching and the ladies were getting close to being finished with the construction. However, they were short on funds and needed a plan to come up with more cash. so they could finish. Given the fact that the ladies were all good cooks, they decided to sell turkey dinners over the course of the Thanksgiving weekend.

Over the holiday, a total of three separate dinners were prepared in the little clubhouse on Charles Street which fed the entire fledgling community of Moorpark over the course of that weekend. The ladies were so excited, as had they collected close to \$100.00 from the three meals and were able to pay off the mortgage. Talk about pulling together for the common good!

Turkey dinners continued to be big fund raisers in town for many decades. The historic old Methodist church on Charles Street, now the Baptist Church, as well as the "new Methodist church" (1951) on Third Street, have served many turkey dinners. The Methodist ladies would have lines around the building, with folks waiting for close to a hour for a hot turkey dinner with mashed potatoes, dressing and gravy. Growing up in town I have many fond memories of Minnie Davis and her famous turkey dressing being served to hungry crowds.

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Serving Moorpark for over 35 Years!

The Moorpark Historical Society, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1979 and our main focus has been to keep the history of our city alive via our walking tours, yearly membership meetings, high school scholarships, and partnerships with Moorpark schools. We are currently working to archive the Society's historical photos, ephemera, and memorabilia. We are also reaching out to others in the community who are willing to donate, loan, or allow us to reproduce and catalog their historically significant photos and objects from our city's past. One of our greatest challenges has been finding a suitable building to house our collection and also serve as a historical museum for the community.

We welcome the participation and support of the community in our endeavor to keep the history of Moorpark alive!

History of Moorpark's Turkey Industry

Most people living in Moorpark today are not aware that our small city was once a hub of turkey production in the United States. Moorpark resident and businessman Marvin Paige began his turkey operation in Moorpark around 1934. He started with a small processing plant and slowly improved his facilities until he had the most modern establishment of its kind in Southern California. Each season, about 300,000 turkeys rolled off the line of Mr. Paige's plant at the rate of 2,000 per day.

From 1944 to 1956, Moorpark turkeys were shipped to all parts of the country to grace holiday tables, each one bearing a label that read "Moorpark, California." It was estimated in 1951 that Moorpark turkeys would serve Thanksgiving dinner to 8,000,000 people.

In September of 1948, Dennis Johnson moved to Moorpark with the goal of relocating his poultry business from the San Fernando Valley. Moorpark had everything that Dennis was looking for— sandy soil, close proximity to highways for marketing his product, and

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President's Message (continued)

I can remember my Mom clearing tables of dirty dishes, while my father, and in later years, myself, washed dishes next to the Sunday school rooms in tubs of boiling soapy water. Everyone was making sure the hard working chefs could keep dishing up hot plates of turkey dinner. And, remember, there was always a choice of homemade pie for dessert. The memories of the wonderful aroma of home cooking drifting down Third Street are vivid in my mind.

We have included Minnie's Church Turkey Dressing recipe so each of you can have a taste of Moorpark history this Thanksgiving. Many thanks to the Fort-nightly club for saving this recipe and printing it in the cookbook that they sold several years ago.

Everyone here at the Moorpark Historical Society wishes all of our friends who wish to preserve the history of our community a most happy and safe holiday.

David Schwabauer, President

Membership Update

The Moorpark Historical Society wishes to thank the following new and renewing members for their 2016 memberships

Builders Circle

Dee and Roy Talley Jr., Sponsor
Jodi and Greg Cutler, Donor

Business and Professional

Diane Galvin and Stephen Hornyak, Professional
Lynda Rummelhoff, Professional

Basic Membership

Frank DePasquale
Terri and Dale Doria
Thomas Duck
Jim Garrett
Sharon and Clint Harper
Sunny and Bob Landegger

Basic Membership (continued)

Suzy and Dean Lesiak
Pamela Rossi
Mary Rydberg
Bruce Thomas
Dan Waldman
Teresa and Michael Williams
Joe and Dottie Kelley

The Moorpark Historical Society wishes to recognize the the following members for monetary donations

General Donation

Mary Schwabauer

On the occasion of Mary Schwabauer's 89th birthday, the Schwabauer and McMahan families wish to make a donation in her honor.

History of Moorpark's Turkey Industry (cont.)

a reasonable price. Mr. Johnson partnered with Dick Peterson and also employed the Kerr brothers, Allen and Jack, who would later branch off into the turkey business for themselves. Dennis and Dick's bird count would eventually reach 250,000 birds per year.

It took great know how and experience to handle a large number of turkeys on these ranches. Portable tent brooder houses had to be set up and moved quickly if needed. Each turkey had to be vaccinated yearly for fowl pox and Newcastle. If even one bird were to come down with one of these diseases, the whole population could be wiped out.

Large scale turkey production in Moorpark had all but disappeared by the late 1960s but large scale egg ranches, like Egg City, continued to flourish in town.



Dennis Johnson's extensive poultry ranch was located where Los Angeles Avenue dead-ended into Spring Road, where McDonalds is located today. The photo above shows his facilities prior to the construction of the 23 Freeway.

Calendar of Events

January 30, 2016

- Annual Membership Meeting– All Historical Society members are welcome to attend! ***(please see our webpage for additional information)***



Moorpark Historical Society

Post Office Box 662

Moorpark, CA 93020

www.moorparkhistoricalsociety.org

Motto:

“Preserving the Past for the Future”

Board of Directors

David Schwabauer	President
Linda Plaks	Vice-Pres.
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Patti Reuter	Secretary
Chris Childers	Director at Large
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Membership

Please complete and mail in the attached membership form to join or ensure your membership is up to date!

Donations

We are working to preserve photographs, ephemera, and historical memorabilia that relate to the history of Moorpark, Epworth, and Fremontville. Donations are always welcome and we provide a mobile scanning service for those who would like us to come out to obtain copies from their collection. **Contact us** on our website if you have a donation or if you would like us to scan your historic Moorpark items!

Church Turkey Dressing

Minnie Davis

1 loaf of white bread, cubed and
toasted

½ loaf of wheat bread, cubed and
toasted

3 cups prepared cornbread

1 cup finely chopped onion

3 cups chopped celery

½ cup chopped parsley

3 teaspoons poultry seasoning

½ teaspoon black pepper

½ cup melted butter

3 cups turkey giblet broth or canned
broth

6 eggs, beaten

Be sure bread is toasted until thoroughly dried out. Crumble the baked cornbread into a large bowl with the bread cubes. In a skillet, sauté the onion and celery in butter. Add to this the parsley, eggs, pepper, poultry seasoning and chopped giblets (if you have them.) Salt and oil the turkey cavity generously before stuffing. Roast according to stuffed turkey timetable.

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