Welcome New Member: 
Sandy Turner

Letter from the President

Fellow Members,

As we were putting the final touches on the June 25 Reopening/Memorial Wall Dedication event, some local vendors had occasion to come by the Museum. One of the comments made was one that we have often heard - “I have lived here for many years, but have never visited the Museum.” This is usually said along with remarks about how interesting the place is. We like to hear the compliments, but hope more locals would “discover” the treasure that is their local Museum.

One explanation may be that folks don’t feel like tourists in their own hometown, so they don’t do “touristy” things like visit museums or other local places of interest. At home it is a lot easier to think in terms of doing it later. If you have children, consider exposing them to some of their local history. The point I want to make is “don’t put off visiting your local Museum for too long.”

As our volunteers return, we are almost back to our pre-Covid operating schedule. The Museum is now open from Tuesday through Saturday. Come down and see our new exhibits for yourself and consider bringing visiting friends or relatives by the Museum for a little taste of local history.

We will do our part to encourage your future visits by holding more events like our recent Dedication/Memorial of June 25.

Chuck Holland

Origin of the Metal Doors

The metal doors, which now hang in the Museum Courtyard on either side of the memorial wall, were offered to the TCHS by the Southern Tuolumne County Historical Society in 2016. It took a number of years before the doors could finally be moved by the County to Sonora. County Facilities stored and later installed the doors.

The doors were originally hauled up Old Priest Grade by a mule team around 1850. They were installed on a building that was located across the street from the Gamble Block in Big Oak Flat.

(See page 4 for the completed project.)
Hugh Furneaux—"Shepherd of the Hills"

By Pat Perry

Hugh Furneaux was born on April 9, 1849, in St. Johns, Newfoundland. He was educated in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at the Pine Hill Seminary, which was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. In 1887, he and his wife, Catherine, and their young son immigrated to the United States, where Rev. Furneaux attended Princeton theological Seminary before beginning his career as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church.

Furneaux’s first area of service was southern New Mexico and Arizona. Many of the towns he served were mining towns known for being ‘wild.’ In 1890, at a meeting of the New York Presbyterian Missionary Society with the local missionaries to determine if there were as many preachers as there were rations and supplies being requested, the Secretary was surprised as he called roll by the response “I am here.” He looked up to see a tall, strongly built man striding down the aisle—fully bearded with long hair, dressed in a flannel shirt with corduroy pants stuck in heavy boots to which were attached a jingling pair of spurs. Around his waist was a belt full of cartridges, and by his side an ivory handled six-shooter, the whole outfit shadowed by an enormous wide-brimmed hat. Furneaux had ridden sixty-five miles through Apache country to attend the meeting. Minus the ivory handled six-shooter, this was the ‘outfit’ Furneaux continued to wear during much of his ministry.

By 1906, Furneaux’s ministry took him into California, working amid the mining camps in the Sierra Nevada. At this time, he was known as the Sky-pilot of the Church. In July 1913, the Reverend arrived in Sonora, where he began his work as a missionary prospector in the logging camps of Tuolumne (County?) under a commission from the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions in New York. Then in October 1917, Rev. Furneaux was released by the presbytery from the Sonora church and stations and limited to what was called the Grub Stake Parish. The Grub Stake Parish included eight San Francisco Hetch Hetchy Camps, one North Lake Eleanor Camp, four camps of the West Side Lumber Company, four camps of the Standard Lumber Company, the Madary Saw Mill Camp at Merrill Springs, plus residents who lived in or close to these areas. Furneaux also received a prospective honorarium of $600 per annum for life from the pension board and $600 from the Presbytery of San Joaquin to help support him in his work.

By May 1918, Furneaux was based at Big Oak Flat and had received the title “Shepherd of the Hills.” His two burros, Pipe Organ and Bagpipe, were now part of his visits. Pipe Organ carried the frying pan, coffee pot, and supplies. Bagpipe transported the blankets and the supply of newspapers, magazines, and other such items distributed in the camps.

In 1923, Furneaux had become the minister at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church (Church of the 49ers) in Columbia, as age and family ties kept him out of the hills. Still, in 1924, he could be found traveling throughout California trying to raise funds for the Church that was in serious need of repair. In Glendale, Furneaux appeared dressed in his flannel shirt and working breeches, Pipe Organ and Bagpipe by his side.
Re-Opening of the Museum & Dedication of the Brick Memorial Wall

On Saturday, June 25th, the Museum and History Research Center were officially re-opened. The event, which took place in the Courtyard and inside the Museum to highlight the new exhibits, was a long-overdue tribute to Angela Brown, who passed away in 2019.

President Chuck Holland shared stories about Angela, stating that the brick memorial wall, first conceived in 2015, was Angela’s legacy. The Columbia Volunteer Militia began the program by marching in with the flag and ended the program by leading guests to the flag pole in the front of the Museum. The Militia raised the flag and fired their muskets in honor of Angela.
The Mission of the Tuolumne County Historical Society shall be to discover, collect, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the history of Tuolumne County and the State of California.