

Draft Report

To: Grass Valley City Council
From: Grass Valley Historic Commission
Date:
Re: Quarterly Update

Before we jump into the main topic of this report, the Historic Walking Tour program for the City of Grass Valley, I'd like to provide you with some tidbits of items the Commission continues to work on. Your input is valued and appreciated.

Landmark Submittals:

The Commission, with leadership from Commissioner Poston and assistance from City staff and Landmarks Commission members Zimmerman and Martini, has submitted for approval the Walsh Mill and Main Street Firehouse applications to the Nevada County Landmarks Commission. When approved, we will provide draft wording to the Council in order to get a bronze plaque in production and decide on its placement.

Nevada County Landmarks Commission:

Many members of the Historical Commission attended a recent meeting of the Nevada County Landmarks Commission. We felt it necessary for them to hear about our projects and for our Commission to hear about the Landmark's direction.

Jewish and Catholic Pioneer Cemeteries:

Within the City limits, two pioneer cemeteries exist which we believe need historical display signage in order for residents and visitors to learn about esteemed the local Jewish and Catholic early pioneers whose remains lie in these hallowed grounds. The Commission, with assistance from both Fr. Estrella and Jedidiah Watson, are working to provide narrative signage highlighting the history and noteworthy internments of the 1853 Catholic cemetery on South Church St., as well as the 1856 Jewish cemetery on Eureka Street. We hope the City Council finds this a worthy undertaking and supports our efforts.

Grass Valley Citizen's Star Award:

The Historic Commission is in unanimous support of honoring two of Grass Valley's most influential citizens: Peggy and Howard Levine. We are working diligently to move forward this nomination to the City Council through the gathering of support letters and a nomination overview as outlined in the City's Star Guidelines.

Grass Valley's Annual Historic Award:

As presented at the last quarterly update, the Commission would like to recommend the adoption of an Annual Historic Award. The Commission has adopted the following wording.

“Awarded annually by City Council, on the recommendation of the Historic Commission, to a person/persons or business who has enhanced and/or preserved the historical significance of the City of Grass Valley whether through writing, research or physical enhancement.”

We hope the Council would adopt the aforementioned criteria and be willing to purchase a commemorative plaque to be displayed in City Hall to honor these annual recipients.

To jump start this award, the Commission would initially recommend.....

The Grass Valley Historic Walking Tour (incorporating murals, homes and businesses)

Our presentation intends to cover the vast array of options so that the Council can fully understand the myriad of choices in providing the public a complete, historic experience. We look forward to your direction on each aspect of this year-long project. This is a brief conceptual outline. More in-depth information of each topic, along with a line item budget and timeline, will be presented upon direction from the Council. Here are the individual aspects of our proposal.

Golden Pasty: The centerpiece of the walking tour will be the Golden Pasty. In order to gain people’s attention to the historic nature of this community, we recommend the bronzing of an enlarged Cornish Pasty to be prominently displayed on Mill Street. The pasty has become our unifying global image (attached—the *New York Times* article about Grass Valley and its beloved pasty, 2024). We need to celebrate it and enhance that image. An accompanying plaque will tell the story of this tasty treat and urge locals and resident to “rub the pasty for good luck” (which will keep the pasty golden in tone). We believe locals will bring friends to Mill St. to partake in the tradition of “rubbing the pasty,” learn of the history of the town while all the while patronizing the local merchants. The role of public art in enhancing businesses is well documented and we believe the Golden Pasty as a first piece of tangible art - both historic and contemporary for Mill Street - is a perfect fit.

Walking Tour 4 x10 inch Cover Stock Overview: Near the Golden Pasty will be a walking tour “leaflet” which will describe the three tours available: homes, murals and downtown hub. The leaflet, through proper design, will be incorporated into the Golden Pasty display. The leaflet will also highlight monthly free walking tours along with the Heritage Home booklet and

other local historic reading available at Cornerstone Books or the public library. The Commission will design and produce the leaflet with Council approval.

Use of Storymaps for Mural, Homes and Downtown Hub: Currently, City staff over the years, has incorporated the Heritage Homes of Grass Valley directory and the existing Murals Tour onto the “Storymaps” platform. We support the notion of using this platform to place the downtown hub walking tour. Since this is not an application, it does not need any registration nor downloading so it will be easy to access on a Smartphone. Users will choose which tour they intend to take and will find the location using Storymaps. (Staff will now display the Storymaps platform)

Locators - both physical and virtual: The biggest question, in our opinion, is about the physical placement of “markers” that would provide the public an historical insight into the downtown hub of specific buildings. We believe that within the Mill/Main area, around 20-25 buildings need some form of recognition. Here are some of the choices, or a combination of all four, could be used:

- a. Using Existing Drainage Grates:** Installing historical information on signage which is imbedded into the sidewalk concrete is not a viable nor an aesthetic solution. Recently though, the Mill Street improvement project installed a long, contiguous street level metal drain system. The metal panels are 20 inches apart and are easily removable (See attachment). The Commission believes that one section of grate in front of the historic building could be replaced with a similar piece of fabricated metal which would briefly describe the history of the building.
- b. Placement of Signage on Buildings:** Another possible solution is to approach building owners to see if they would be willing to have a permanent sign placed on their property, briefly discussing the history of the site. This solution could also be used in combination with the drainage grates. Those sites not having drainage grates (specifically Main Street) the use of affixed building signage could be used.
- c. QR Codes:** Another avenue for information could be the inclusion of small QR codes placed in participating business windows. The code would allow users to gain access to a more in-depth historic explanation of the building.
- d. Brochure:** Beyond just using a Smartphone to partake in history, The Commission also believes that a tangible Walking Tour pamphlet is necessary to reach all audiences. The Commission will develop a tri-fold historic walking tour pamphlet which will be available at the public library, City Hall, the Chamber and Bookseller store.

Heritage Homes Reprinting: The Heritage Homes book is a wonderful resource which we believe needs to be reprinted. For an investment of \$500.00, two hundred booklets can be reproduced. These can be sold at the Bookseller on Mill St. and at the Chamber offices. Sales will reimburse the City for the upfront costs.

Walking Tours: The Commission is interested in enhancing the public's experience of Grass Valley by instituting monthly historic walks, from April through October. The walks will highlight some Heritage Homes, murals and the downtown area, using a core group of trained docents.

Upon direction from the Council, the Commission will return with cost estimates and a timeline for implementation.