



## **GUIDELINES FOR A "GRASS VALLEY CITIZEN'S STAR" AWARD**

Adopted by City Council on May 23, 1995

An individual nominated for a "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" should meet each of the following criteria:

- 1) Is or has been a resident of the greater Grass Valley area.
- 2) Has given outstanding, dedicated, long term service for the community of Grass Valley; resulting in significant accomplishments.
- 3) Has demonstrated good character and integrity.
- 4) Has been involved extensively in community service and activities.

### **Recommended Process for Selecting a "Grass Valley Citizen's Star":**

- a) Nomination for a "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" must be made in writing to City Clerk; supported by at least ten (10) letters of recommendation from organizations and individuals, validating the nominee's accomplishments.
- b) The application(s) for "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" nominations will be reviewed by an awards committee composed of three (3) citizens as follows: the Chairperson of the Grass Valley Downtown Association or designee, the President of the Grass Valley / Nevada County Chamber of Commerce or designee, and a citizen-at-large selected by the previous two members. The Mayor and / or Vice Mayor will serve as ex officio members of this committee.
- c) The City Council must approve the "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" nomination.
- d) Funds to purchase the "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" must be raised privately.
- e) The Public Works Department will install the "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" at no charge.
- f) The placement of the "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" will be in the brick area around Stamp Mill monument at the southeast corner of East Main and South Auburn streets or in adjoining sidewalk.
- h) A dedication event will be held to commemorate the individual and his or her contributions. The people who nominate the "Star" recipient shall be responsible for the dedication event.
- i) Generally, no more than one "Grass Valley Citizen's Star" award will be made in any calendar year.

To: Grass Valley City Council

From: Grass Valley Historic Commission

Date: March 11, 2025

Re: STAR Nomination for Peggy and Howard Levine

We are submitting this STAR Award nomination cover letter and supporting materials to the Grass Valley City Council nominating Peggy and Howard Levin as our nominees for this prestigious award. Enclosed you will find 10 letters of support from a variety of community leaders.

Peggy and Howard Levine were two of the finest examples of "giving back" to one's community than any two people we have ever known. Each of them pursued their own course with a common goal of helping people and serving community. From their elected perches on the Grass Valley City Council and Trustee to the Nevada Union High School Board to reviving the Grass Valley Downtown Association and the North Star House and collectively, helping to save the Holbrooke Hotel and their historic Bed and Breakfast are just a few of their myriad of accomplishments. Moreover, they are both genuine and loving human beings who never had a harsh word about anyone.

We believe the Star should be worded as: Peggy and Howard Levine  
for their Lifelong Energy and Efforts  
in Supporting Our Entire Community

Please note that we submit this application knowing well that, if approved for designation, it is the City's duty to excavate the site for the star and our responsibility to raise the funds to physically produce the star. We also have planned a reception for the unveiling.

It has been 15 years since the last STAR was placed so we look forward to working with the City to move this nomination expeditiously forward while Howard is still with us.

Members of the GV Historic Commission

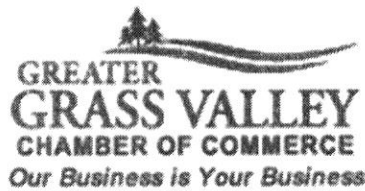
  
Teresa Poston

  
Dyanne Albrecht

  
Greg Savelli

  
Mark Reilly

  
Terry McAteer



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#### Executive Director

Robin Galvan-Davies

March 1, 2025

Grass Valley Historic Commission  
City of Grass Valley  
125 East Main Street,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945

**RE: Subject: Recommendation for Howard Levine and Margaret "Peggy"  
Warner Swan Levine**

Dear Commissioners,

It is with great admiration and heartfelt enthusiasm that I recommend Howard Levine and Margaret "Peggy" Warner Swan Levine for recognition of their outstanding contributions to our community. Their lasting impact on Grass Valley is woven into the artistic, cultural, and historic fabric of our town, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire.

Howard Levine's devotion to Grass Valley was evident in every role he embraced. As an artist and educator at Sierra College, he nurtured creativity in his students, fostering a deep appreciation for the arts. His leadership as Executive Director of the Grass Valley Downtown Association and his service on the Grass Valley City Council demonstrated his unwavering commitment to the vitality of our historic downtown. Howard and Peggy's stewardship of the Holbrooke Hotel not only preserved a landmark but also strengthened its role as a cornerstone of our local heritage.

Peggy Levine was a brilliant artist whose work enriched the cultural landscape of Nevada County. Her artistic vision extended beyond her own creations, she played an instrumental role in the renovation of the historic North Star House, designed by the renowned architect Julia Morgan. Her dedication to preserving this architectural treasure ensured that future generations could appreciate its historical significance.

Together, Howard and Peggy embodied the spirit of community, tirelessly working to preserve our history, elevate the arts, and enhance the vibrancy of Grass Valley. Their contributions have left an indelible mark and honoring them would be a fitting tribute to their lifetime of dedication.

I wholeheartedly support their nomination and would be honored to provide any additional information if needed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin Galvan-Davies  
Executive Director

**Greater Grass Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center**  
128 East Main Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945  
(530) 273-4667 • [www.grassvalleychamber.com](http://www.grassvalleychamber.com)





March 1, 2025

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Robin Galvan-Davies

Grass Valley Historic Commission  
City of Grass Valley  
125 East Main Street,  
Grass Valley, CA 95945

RE: Recognizing Howard and Margaret "Peggy" Warner Star Levine for a Star

Dear Commissioners, It is with great admiration and heartfelt enthusiasm that I recommend Howard Levine and Margaret "Peggy" Warner Swan Levine for the Star recognition for their outstanding contributions to our community. Their lasting impact on Grass Valley is woven into the artistic, cultural, and historic fabric of our town, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire.

Howard Levine for recognition of his exceptional contributions to the revitalization and enrichment of downtown Grass Valley. As the Executive Director of the Grass Valley Downtown Association (GVDA) for 13 years, Howard's visionary leadership and unwavering dedication have left an indelible mark on our community. During his tenure, Howard spearheaded numerous initiatives that transformed our historic downtown into a vibrant hub of commerce and culture. His collaborative approach fostered strong partnerships among local businesses, city officials, and community organizations, leading to a unified effort in preserving and enhancing the character of Grass Valley.

Beyond his role with the GVDA, and his extensive public service, Howard and Peggy were dedicated to hospitality and the enrichment of the community. As the owners of the Swan Levine House, the former Jones Hospital, they welcomed thousands of guests to their unique artistic bed and breakfast. Their dedication to hospitality extended to their stewardship of the Holbrooke Hotel which not only preserved a landmark but also strengthened its role as a cornerstone of our local heritage.

Together, Howard and Peggy embodied the spirit of community, tirelessly working to preserve our history, elevating the arts, and enhancing the vibrancy of Grass Valley. Their contributions have left an indelible mark and honoring them would be a fitting tribute to their lifetime of dedication.

I wholeheartedly support their nomination for a Star and would be honored to provide any additional information if needed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin Galvan-Davies  
Executive Director  
Grass Valley Downtown Association

128 East Main Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945 • (530) 272-8315  
[www.downtowngrassvalley.com](http://www.downtowngrassvalley.com) • [info@downtowngrassvalley.com](mailto:info@downtowngrassvalley.com)

To Whom it May Concern,

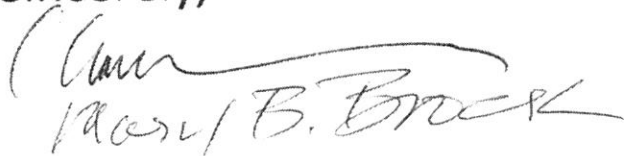
Howard and Peggy Swan Levine have contributed immensely to the historic preservation, economic growth, and overall quality of life in Grass Valley.

After moving into Grass Valley in 1975 we became close family friends of the Levines. Over the years we watched Howard and Peggy contribute to the city and county's vibrant growth and preservation. They were founders, and provided ongoing active leadership, of the Nevada County Arts Council. Peggy served on the High School District Board and County Grand Jury. From their family residence at 328 S. School St., they ran a private print making school, taught art classes and worked tirelessly to preserve the historic home (The Old Jones Hospital), out of which they also operated, a Bed and Breakfast Inn. Both Howard and Peggy contributed mightily to the historic preservation and economic viability of Downtown Grass Valley and indeed all of Western Nevada County. Howard served as head of the Downtown Association and was available night and day to handle whatever was needed for any event

downtown. Peggy served on the County Grand Jury. Howard served on City of GV Planning Commission and City Council. Howard's well deserved nick name was "Mr. Grass Valley. Peggy actively served for years on the Board of Directors, working tirelessly on the restoration, preservation and management , of the North Star House.

My list could go on. There should be no doubt whatsoever the Howard And Peggy Swan-Levine are totally deserving of recognition for their dedication and service to the City of Grass Valley with the placement of a brass star (really they should get 2 stars), on Mill St. in their honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charlie and Mary B Brock". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Charlie and Mary B Brock

Mark A. Johnson

530.802.3702   markingv@yahoo.com

127 Chester Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945

February 25, 2025

To: Grass Valley City Council,

I would like to state my recommendation that Howard & Peggy Levine be awarded a CITY STAR reflecting their dedication and commitment to the City of Grass Valley for over 4 decades in volunteer positions as well as successful businesses in the city. They are deserving of this honor for all dedication and improvements over the years and their love of making Grass Valley what it is today.

Sincerely,

*Mark A. Johnson*



GAGE McKINNEY  
485 Chester Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945  
February 24, 2024

Grass Valley City Council  
125 East Main Street  
Grass Valley, California 95945

Re: Nomination for "Grass Valley Citizen's Stars" for Howard Levine and Peggy Levine

Honorable Council:


I nominate Howard & Margaret "Peggy" Swan Levine for Grass Valley Citizen's Stars based on their more than forty years of service to the city and the region. The stars would recognize Howard and Peggy's indispensable role in helping to establish the Grass Valley we know today and that we will know into the future.

The following is a *partial* list of Howard and Peggy's contributions:

- Grass Valley City Council member and Mayor (Howard)
- Members of local school boards (Howard & Peggy)
- Director, Grass Valley Downtown Association (Howard)
- County Grand Jury member and foreman (Peggy)
- Political activists, especially related to ballot measures & propositions for conservation and tax increases for parks & recreation (Howard & Peggy)
- Founding supporters of what became the North Star House Conservancy (Peggy & Howard)
- Member & chair, Grass Valley Historical Commission (Peggy)
- Thirty-year member & leader of Ladies Relief Society (Peggy)
- Founders of Nevada County Arts Council (Howard & Peggy)
- Board member of Foothill theatre (Peggy) and forty-year supporters (Howard & Peggy)
- Founding board member of The Center for the Arts (Peggy)
- Managing partners of The Holbrooke Hotel (Peggy & Howard)
- Proprietors of perhaps the first bed & breakfast inn in the region, where they entertained many who later became residents & set a standard for hospitality (Howard & Party)
- Contributors to Nevada County's vibrant local arts scene as artists & patrons (Howard & Peggy)
- Sponsors of local visiting artists and performers especially providing lodging (Howard & Peggy)
- Long-time arts instructor at Sierra College (Howard)

As Howard and Peggy contributed so much for so long, no individual will ever describe completely what they meant to our city and region. Grass Valley would not be the city we know today without them.

As a Grass Valley citizen and historian, I recognize Howard and Peggy made a contribution for the ages. They deserve the official recognition of the city they served and loved. Thank you for your consideration.

  
Gage McKinney



January 13, 2025

Nancy Chandler

328 Horizon Circle,

Grass Valley, CA 95945

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with deep respect and admiration that I write this letter of recommendation for Peggy and Howard Levine to receive a Star in the sidewalk for the City of Grass Valley. Their wavering commitment to the City of Grass Valley and the entire community has left a lasting impact that will continue to inspire for generations to come.

Throughout their time in Nevada County, Peggy and Howard left a legacy of incredible accomplishments in the Public- school system, Local Historic Preservation, Local Government and most importantly in the artists community.

It is both fitting and deeply deserved that we honor the Levine's for the incredible difference they made.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'N Chandler', written in dark ink.

Nancy Chandler



**NEVADA  
COUNTY**  
CALIFORNIA

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**Lisa Swarthout**

Supervisor, 3<sup>rd</sup> District

Email: [lisa.swarthout@nevadacountyca.gov](mailto:lisa.swarthout@nevadacountyca.gov)

Office Location: 950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 200

Nevada City, California 95959

530.265.1480 | Cell: 530.205.0004

January 13, 2025

Lisa Swarthout  
Nevada County District 3 Supervisor  
950 Maidu Ave.  
Nevada City, CA 95945

To Whom it May Concern:

I am honored to recommend Howard and Peggy Levine for a Grass Valley City Star. As long-time school board members, non-profit board members, local artisans and business owners and both appointed and elected officials, Howard and Peggy have dedicated countless hours to enriching our community.

Their selfless commitment to service was truly inspiring. Howard and Peggy exemplify leadership, consistently putting the needs of Grass Valley first. As a colleague, neighbor and friend, I have witnessed firsthand their unwavering dedication to foster a vibrant and inclusive community. Their collaborative spirit and innovative thinking have led to meaningful progress and lasting positive changes in Grass Valley and all of Nevada County.

Howard and Peggy Levine were exceptional community leaders who embodied the very spirit of the City Star Award. I wholeheartedly support their nomination and feel this is a well-deserved recognition of the contributions they made to our Community.

Sincerely,

Lisa Swarthout





**COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 220

Nevada City, CA 95959

530-265-7040

[ceo@nevadacountyca.gov](mailto:ceo@nevadacountyca.gov)

[www.nevadacountyca.gov](http://www.nevadacountyca.gov)

**Alison Lehman**

County Executive Officer

January 14, 2025

Dear Nomination Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the recognition of Howard and Peggy Levine with a Grass Valley Sidewalk Star to honor their many meaningful contributions to our Grass Valley and Nevada County community.

Together, Howard and Peggy have demonstrated extraordinary leadership, vision, and commitment to the cultural, social, and economic fabric of our community. Their legacy of service, creativity, and community building has deeply impacted our community, leaving a lasting and positive mark.

Howard Levine's accomplishments as Mayor of Grass Valley and as a longstanding community leader are unparalleled. He modeled inclusive leadership and was a skilled problem-solver. Howard played a pivotal role in revitalizing the downtown area, championing beautification projects like "Paint the Town," and fostering a vibrant cultural hub as executive director of the Grass Valley Downtown Association. His work helped shape the Grass Valley we know today.

Peggy Levine was a celebrated artist and philanthropist, known for her boundless energy, creativity, and generosity. Peggy's spirit was a guiding force in enhancing arts education and Grass Valley's cultural scene. She played a critical role in the restoration of the North Star House, helping transform it into a beloved cultural event center, providing a venue for numerous community gatherings from farmers markets to children's theater. Peggy's activism and dedication to the arts and education have enriched the lives of many, leaving a permanent mark on the cultural landscape of our community.

Together, Howard and Peggy exemplify the spirit of collaboration and community engagement. Their shared passion for the arts, culture, and civic responsibility has significantly elevated Grass Valley and created a place of pride. Their vision, tireless dedication, and influence have been an inspiration to me and countless others.

By awarding Howard and Peggy Levine a Sidewalk Star, we would honor not only their individual achievements but also their collective contribution to Grass Valley and the greater Nevada County community. This recognition would serve as a lasting reminder of what can be accomplished through dedication, creativity, and a strong sense of community.

Thank you for considering this well-deserved recognition for two of our most cherished community leaders.

Sincerely,

Alison Lehman, CEO

County of Nevada

Grass Valley City Council

January 6, 2025

City of Grass valley

125 E. Main Street

Grass Valley, CA 95945

Dear Members,

It is with distinct pleasure I nominate Peggy & Howard Levine for the City of Grass Valley STAR AWARD; they were both absolute 'stars' in the story of the community. I became friends with Peggy & Howard when moving back to Nevada City in 1979, sharing a love of many mutual interests; both of them were passionate about life and living in this wonderful place.

Peggy and Howard were for decades champions of Grass Valley and an important part of the greater community as artists, homeowners, teachers, philanthropists, hotel owners, organization members, dreamers, preservationists, and community leaders. They were tireless advocates serving in many roles, Howard on the Grass Valley City Council, Downtown Business Association and Peggy as woman about town, leaving their mark on many places and in many people's lives.

Peggy and Howard were among the first few to "rediscover" the Julia Morgan designed North Star House in the 1990's. Many North Star meetings took place in their Swan-Levine House on S. Church Street, a gathering place for many activities and causes.

Peggy served on the board of the North Star Historic Conservancy at its inception and for years championed and worked tirelessly with the vision of the North Star becoming an important part of the community, today it has become the North Star Historic Cultural Event Center.

Howard served on the NSHC board and continues as a Board Advisor; he is active with organizing and raising funds for the Margret (Peggy) Swan-Levine Art Gallery that will become an important cultural and educational part of the second floor of the North Star House Cultural Event Center. The gallery will show case local artists and adjacent classrooms will provide learning opportunities for the community arts.

I urge you to recognize Peggy and Howard's legacies with stars in the concrete of Grass Valley.

David Wright,



NSHC Board Member and Site Architect



David Wright Associates  
Architect

Architecture & Planning • Solar & Energy Engineering  
1072 East Main Street • Grass Valley, CA 95945  
(530) 477-5057 • davidwrightarchitect.com



Grass Valley City Council  
125 East Main Street  
Grass Valley, CA 95945

January 15, 2025

Dear Council,

Another side of Peggy and Howard's life which is often overlooked is their devotion to public education. Howard was a passionate art teacher at Sierra College while Peggy served for 12 years on the Nevada Joint Union HS Board of Trustees. As County Superintendent, I always knew I could rely on Peggy and Howard to have my back and the back of our public schools.

Howard taught a variety of art classes in Rocklin and in Nevada County. The best way to judge the impact of a teacher is through the eyes of his students. Here are just three of many students who commented on Howard as a teacher:

*"Seeing as he's also the mayor of Grass Valley, I admire Howard Levine for the amount of energy he gives his students. Passionate about art, interesting in class, tough but understanding. Fun and interesting class. Explores many topics and mediums. Main complaint: we got to draw delicious freshly baked cupcakes but not eat them. :( was disappointed"*

*"Howard is an excellent artist, and mentor. I enjoy his feedback. He is very laid-back and calls everyone babe! If you are either a professional or a beginner I recommend this class. Expect more of a mentor than an instructor though! Field trips to his printmaking studio are fun! He is patient, and a little spacey. But he is very educated in art!!!"*


*"Levine was fun and challenging. The projects and assignments definitely furthered me overall as an artist and opened my mind to using different mediums and techniques. He was very kind, helpful and encouraging. Fun class, great professor!"*

Peggy also always had student interests at heart but from a different perspective. She led by often saying, "I make decisions on this Board which are always in the best interest of students." With that adage, oftentimes, you are conflicted by the needs of your community, of your parents and of your teachers. Peggy ruffled a few feather during her tenure but was always true to her word. She was adamant about her support to keep the arts and vocational education alive even through tough budgetary times.

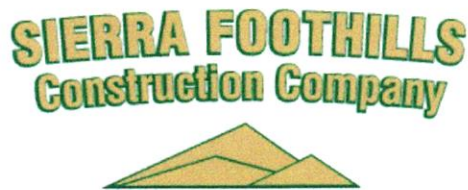
I worked closely with Peggy on a number of initiatives and always found her businesslike, professional coupled with a huge heart. Peggy was the model board member who always sought consensus and who believed in the power of the collective board to lead a school district. District Superintendents Mike Barkhurst, Joe Boeckx and Maggie Deetz were always singing the praises of Peggy because she was quiet in action but loud in passion.

Peggy and Howard are both deserving of the Star Award, if solely based on their contributions to the Nevada County educational community.

Cordially,



Dr. Terence K. McAteer  
Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, retired



March 5, 2025

To: Grass Valley Historical Commission  
C/O Terry McAteer

From: Keoni Allen, Sierra Foothills Construction Company

Re: Recognition of Howard and Peggy Levine's contribution to the City of Grass Valley

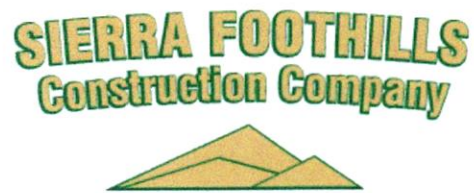
Dear Members of the Grass Valley Historical Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to add my thoughts and memories to the effort to recognize Howard and Peggy Levine and their effort to preserve the history of Grass Valley.

From the beginning of SFCC in 1986, our offices were located in the building that Howard and Peggy owned at 205 West Main Street and we quickly became good friends, in large part due to our common passion for the old buildings in Grass Valley.

During our friendship we worked on many things together. Howard became the Director of the Grass Valley Downtown Association. Peggy became involved in the restoration of the North Star House and we at SFCC renovated dozens of downtown buildings. Those buildings include The Old Post Office, The Holbrooke Hotel and our offices across Main Street from City Hall. Howard and Peggy were always there to offer their support and advice on helping to preserve the architectural history of Grass Valley.





Knowing Howard and Peggy Levine's contribution to preserving the history of Grass Valley, no one has come close to doing as much as they have to honor and preserve our history. They most certainly deserve recognition for their contributions to our town. Please let me know what I can do to help that effort.

Sincerely, Keoni Allen, Sierra Foothills Construction Company

March 01, 2025

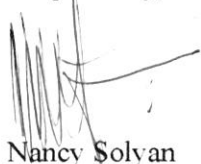
To Whom It May Concern,

It is a pleasure and an honor to write this letter of recommendation for my friend, Howard Levine. I wholeheartedly believe he should receive a Star at the corner of South Auburn and West Main Street in our town of Grass Valley. I have known Howard and his late wife Peggy Levine since 2008, both personally and professionally. First with his association at the Center for the Arts where I worked, then later when Peggy and I both had cancer in 2017, running into each other for treatment at Sierra Nevada's Cancer Treatment Center. She and I bonded even further as friends. In 2020, Howard sold my husband and I their historic building at 205-209 West Main Street called the Quick Building, built in 1856.

In his role as Mayor of Grass Valley, Board Member of various organizations, Executive Director of the Grass Valley Downtown Association, Art instructor, Business owner, and many others, I undoubtedly sensed Howard's love for this city, which was inordinately attentive and caring. He is seemingly able to be multiple places at once. Whether at a Board meeting, music show, street fair, or a City Council meeting, he will be there. In his time here in Grass Valley, Howard has always been a true supporter of this magnificent town that we all call home. His heart has been here since the early 1970's!

Howard has always shown dedication and undying service in his devotion to the city of Grass Valley which is a true sign of someone who deserves to be recognized and celebrated.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Solyan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nancy Solyan  
Resident and Business owner of Grass Valley