

ABOUT THE HOUSE



From the Foundation President

I hope all of you are enjoying your summer! As fall approaches, please check out our coming events and consider including the McHenry Mansion in your plans.

How long has it been since you took a tour? If you have a Friday, Sunday, or Monday afternoon free, come on down and let one of our Mansion docents take you on a tour to reacquaint yourself with this grand part of our Valley's history.

Our Midsummer Malice event received a tremendous outpouring and was a complete sell out. So don't miss our upcoming fun and free summer Ice Cream Social, Sunday, September 13th from 12:00 to 4:00 in the Mansion yard. We're giving a free ice cream sundae - design it yourself choosing your own flavors and toppings! - to everyone who joins us. Our treat! The Mansion is open for you to wander through (leaving your ice cream in the yard!). Come on down on the 13th!

There's more! For a Child-Safe Halloween, on October 27th, the City of Modesto, in collaboration with the Mansion Foundation Guild and Mansion Docents, is holding its annual



Midsummer Malice Players

Spooktacular in the Mansion yard. This is a fun event for children of all ages, with plenty of Tricks and Treats. We have so many enjoyable events and activities in the coming year and we would love to see you!

Our board is currently considering projects for this year and we have several very interesting possibilities. We'll have more to tell you in the coming months.

We so appreciate your continued interest and support and hope to see you soon!

Barbara Wesley,
President, McHenry Mansion Foundation Board

Welcome to the Adirondacks!

Don't Mind the Dust.

By Dee Bernal

Americans love a good vacation- summer vacations, European vacations, solo vacations. Sometimes we vacation with such gusto that we need a vacation from our vacation. It's a way of life for us. And, thanks to one very outdoorsy pastor, vacations became a way of life for adventurous Victorians, too.

For all our contemporary love of day trips, camping, and cruises, "vacation" hasn't always been a part of the American vocabulary. Originally known as a "holiday," the act of spending days, weeks, or even a full season of leisure far away from home was the exclusive domain of the wealthy and idle. Working class folk were too busy toiling away six days a week to spend money, time, or energy on such frivolities. Regardless, rich or poor, if one were to take a holiday, it would be to somewhere "civilized" and tame like Europe or a relative's house. Outdoorsy activities like camping and hiking were a little too close to pioneering and all that manifesting of destiny many were already engaged in just a generation earlier.

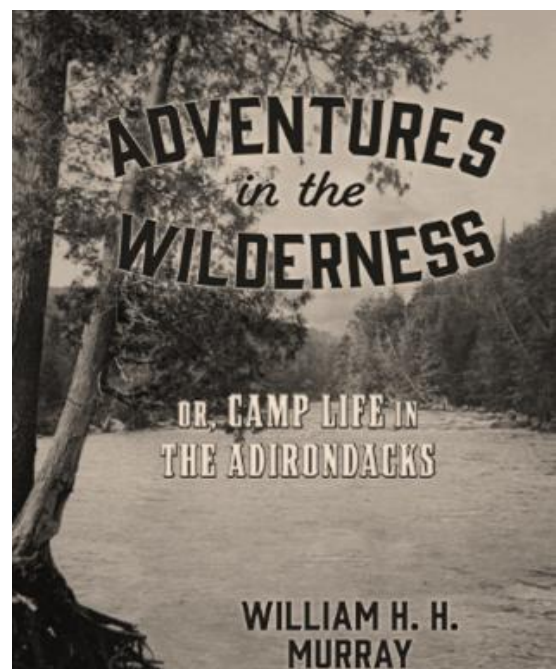
But as towns grew into cities, westward expansion slowed, and the middle class grew, many Victorians became "citified." Where their forefathers had developed an intimate connection to nature, by 1869 the link had started to devolve into something abstract and distant. Those big city, latter Victorians were primed for a new wilderness adventure. Luckily, William H. H. Murray appeared to fill the need.

Murray was not a fisherman, hunter, or trapper. He was, perhaps surprisingly, a 29-year-old pastor with a passion for nature. Like many an outdoorsy man, he was also considered handsome and well-built. Imagine if Bear Grylls and Rick Steves had a baby, then sprinkle in a little seminary school. That was William H. H. Murray.

An enthusiastic advocate for outdoor activities, Murray believed city life was disease-ridden and stressful, ultimately weakening urban inhabitants.

On the other hand, communing with nature through camping restores the body and soul. This was an unconventional perspective. When the average Victorian pictured intentional, enjoyable experiences, traipsing through raw nature was usually not one of them.

In 1869, with an unwavering belief in his unusual idea of fun, Murray published *Adventures in the Wilderness; or Camp-Life in the Adirondacks*. It was the first comprehensive guidebook to the outdoors written for the average citizen. A practical how-to manual that demystified outdoor life by outlining exactly how to enjoy the 9,000 square miles of lakes, forests, and rivers of upstate New York. The book shared sensible but rarely given camping advice such as what to pack, how to budget for food, and reasonable fees for a hiking guide. The tourist edition even came in a waterproof binding and included train schedules and foldout maps. Panned by book critics but loved by readers, Murray's guide to the Adirondacks became an instant bestseller. Printing 10 editions in only four months, it kicked off a stampede of adventure seekers looking to escape the hot city to enjoy fresh air and cool lakeside breezes.



Christened “Murray’s Rush” by the press, the previously pristine passageways of the Adirondack were soon overrun by the Victorian version of the weekend warrior. Overconfident and underprepared, these city slickers soon came face-to-face with one of the coldest, wettest summers in Adirondack history. They also came face-to-face with actual nature...and were terrified. Like a greatest hits episode of America’s Funniest Home Videos, the vacationing Victorian would spook at the sight of deer tracks, get lost mere yards from his or her tent, and overturn their canoe with comical ease. Worst of all, that year’s late-arriving winter meant the rapidly reproducing mosquito population were relentless, swarming and biting any and everyone in sight.

Unfortunately, the mosquitoes weren’t the only blood suckers in town. Hotels and inns, overwhelmed with guests, began charging, not by the night but by the hour. Local inhabitants who’d never ventured past their own front yard began hiring themselves out as hiking guides, often getting themselves lost right along with their doe-eyed customers. What was supposed to be idyllic was anything but.

The fallout was swift and brutal. In the papers, “Murray’s Rush” soon became “Murray’s Fools.” Those who fancied themselves “real” outdoorsman were sick of all the inept newbies crowding their beloved wilderness. And almost everyone within newspaper reading distance was aghast at the stories of women stomping through the backwoods

like common lumberjacks. Poor Murray was so vilified that he felt compelled to respond to the abuse via an op-ed piece in the *New York Tribune*.

Despite this inauspicious start, the American vacation had been born, and it would only continue to grow and thrive. The summer of 1870 saw even more tourists venture into the wilds of the Adirondacks. More prepared, most of these adventurers fared much better than those of 1869. With Murray’s constant and now well-paid promotion, the Adirondacks became a true vacation destination. By 1875 there were 200 hotels and campsites, stagecoach service from the train station, and even steamboat tours around the lake.

Eventually, the Adirondacks became so fashionable that even wealthy New York families like the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, and Carnegies couldn’t stay away. They bought huge parcels of land and built massive “cottages” far away from the common folk occupying the hotels and campsites. These scions of society would vacate their city homes to take up summer residence near the lake. Thus, Americans were finally gifted the term “vacation.”

Three decades later, in 1904, William H. H. Murray died in relative obscurity at age 64. There are no Adirondack monuments dedicated to him. Not even a small plaque to acknowledge his contributions. Very few of us even know his name, though many of us live his dream every summer. Because Europeans take holidays, but a vacation is an adventure that’s distinctly American. 🌀



End of Summer Sale CONTINUES!

20% OFF "Hydrangea & Lemon"



McHenry Mansion Foundation
Gift Store & Visitors Center



McHENRY MANSION FOUNDATION GIFT STORE

Thanks to these past years chair, Gary Boudreaux for setting up incoming chair, JoAnn Merenda for success. 2026 to date has seen a 30% increase in business, YEA! JoAnn and her committee are cooking up more exciting campaigns and unique merchandise for the year.

Members please take advantage of the "End of Summer 20% OFF Sale" alongside your ALWAYS 10% OFF total purchase discount! Wow!!



Membership just got easier!

You can now pay your annual dues online!

Use this handy link:

<https://mchenrymansion.org/membership-levels/>

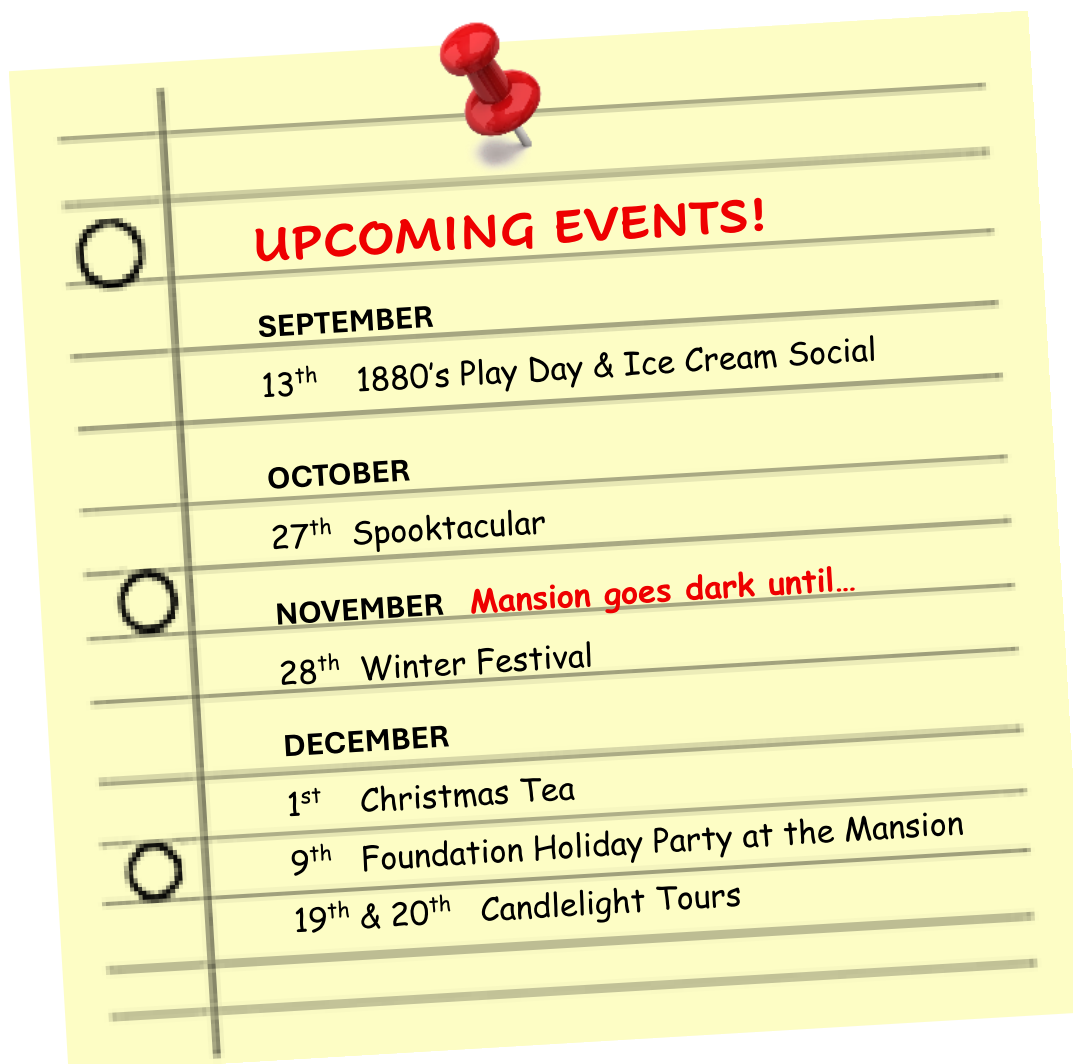
McHENRY MANSION FOUNDATION GUILD REPORT

Susan Baudler, Guild Chair is excited to report the 1st ever Murder Mystery a.k.a. McHenry Mansion Foundation presents "Midsummer Malice at the McHenry Mansion" with the Prospect Theater Group was a resounding success and a whole bunch of fun!

The event was posted with posters at specific businesses and at the VC/Gift Store and on social media for 1 week and SOLD OUT.

Additional sponsors, Burnside Body Shop, Graze Craze and Joseph Farms Cheese helped make this idea come to fruition. And we're already getting a lot of positive chatter on our social media sites!

Co-chair, JoAnn Merenda and the rest of the "Malice Committee" are looking forward to the next event coming soon! Stay Tuned!



McHenry Mansion
1880s PLAY DAY & ICE CREAM SOCIAL



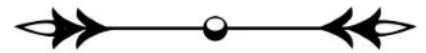
Sunday, September 13, 2026 | 12:00 - 4:00 PM

Presented by
The City of Modesto & The McHenry Mansion Foundation

906 15th Street
 Free event!
 Open to all ages!
 While supplies last!


Our City.
Our Future.

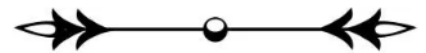

 McHenry Mansion
 Foundation



Step back in time for an afternoon of old-fashioned fun! Play Victorian-era games like hoop races, croquet, and parlor games, while exploring fun activity stations inspired by the 1880s!

Take a break to enjoy a cold treat provided by the McHenry Mansion Foundation. This is a perfect day to experience history hands-on in a festive, welcoming setting.

Open to all and free to attend! Ice cream and activities available while supplies last.



MEMORIALS

PETER WIGT



Docent Council

MARGIE NEDER



Marie & George Bairey

To make a memorial or honorarium contribution, make checks payable, and send to:
 McHenry Mansion Foundation, 924 15th Street, Modesto, CA 95354.

Include the name and address of the person or persons to receive a contribution acknowledgement

PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS: Provided by Campbell & Assoc., Jessica Flores, Barbara Roberson