

“By virtue of the authority vested in us, we hereby grant to said petitioners this charter...”

This was the document the founders of The San Joaquin Valley Colony (SJVC) were elated to receive. Dated the ***eighteenth day of May 1974*** the colony of the Mayflower Descendants in the State of California, San Joaquin Valley Colony was formed.



The ***San Joaquin Valley Colony*** encompasses the greater central valley counties of Kern, Fresno, Madera, and Merced. At the time it was founded there were 58 charter members. While the numbers have gone up and down, the current membership stands at 77 members throughout the central valley and beyond. The first meeting took place on July 10, 1974 in Fresno. **Evelyn Forbes** led this colony on its new adventure as the first governor. In the beginning they had evening meetings that

were held at various places and on different days of the week. To establish a routine, after a short while the colony settled on four Saturday luncheon meetings to be held at a central location (Fresno) and easily accessible from a highway offramp. Throughout the history of the colony, luncheon meetings have been held on or near to the 4th Saturday of September, November, January, and April. In recent years, the luncheons have been limited to the spring and fall meetings while the executive officers also meet January and September in preparation for the upcoming colony luncheons. Though luncheons can be a great way to meet other members and have great discussions on a multitude of subjects, *“it was decided by a consensus of participating members that programs should be confined to facts about our Pilgrim Ancestors and /or New England history.”* (Robert C. Soule – colony governor- 4/26/96) . With this goal in mind, the San Joaquin Valley Colony has hosted a great number of scholars, authors, and experts of the Mayflower ancestors and history. In addition, Robert Soule was able to find records of the SJVC hosting Annual Sate Meetings in both May 1979 and May 1991.

When home copiers became available in the 1980’s, colony members Valerite Howland and Tom Mott opened their homes and genealogical records to others to sift through and make copies to bolster their own records or help with proving their ancestry to the pilgrims of the Mayflower. The San Joaquin Valley Colony has participated in other notable



*Charlie Wadham reading
Mayflower story*

genealogical activities such as Genealogical Fairs in Clovis on February 3, 1978, and at an LDS church in 1982, and Community Awareness Day held at the Fashion Fair Mall, in Fresno, on October 14, 1995.



*Members assembling 5th grade
Mayflower educational packets*

Our colony has several remarkable honorees. In 1987, member **Colonel Harold E. Comstock** (*John Howland*), was honored for his induction into the American Fighter Aces Association at Champlin Fighter Museum, Mesa, Arizona, for breaking the flight speed barrier (prior to Chuck Yeager’s record in 1947). **Valerite V. Howland** (governor) and **Robert C. Soule** (chaplain) received the ***“Governor’s Commendation Awards”*** for their service to the Mayflower Society. They were awarded this distinction at the 82nd annual state meeting held at the Fresno Hilton Hotel, May 18, 1991. One of our longest standing members was **Bea Baumbach**. She was the first Colony Registrar and served this position for twenty years! In recognition of her untiring service a loving tribute akin to *This is Your Life* was presented at the September 24, 1994 colony meeting.

With so much rich history of our ancestors and the history of our colony we can't wait to gather as many members at our meeting June 8, 2024 to celebrate our **50th Anniversary** as the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of California, San Joaquin Valley Colony. We are excited to have Mr. Dale Thomas, a founding member, joining us in this celebration!

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