



Atwater Historical Society

April 2026

In this issue . . .

Edna Mitchell Bloss

Thorne's Story



The Historical Society has been busy since the beginning of 2026. The home has been thoroughly cleaned. The carpets and floors scrubbed. A superb job done by all.

Two wonderful donations - a beautiful curio cabinet (Rosie Daniels) and a wall clock that once hung in Dyck's Watch Shop (Maxwell Norton) were accepted.

Spring brings new things...

Blinds installed in the office and maid's rooms.

Curtains washed.

Windowsills will be painted as needed.

Furniture is in the process of Being reupholstered.





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In the Know...



Presidents Corner:

Happy Spring! At the Bloss House roses are blooming and the yard looks beautiful. We plan on keeping you up to date with our new newsletter from the Bloss home. Robin Shepard and committee have been working hard updating our by-laws and standing rules. The election process has begun and we would appreciate your comments at the next meeting. If you would like to throw your hat in the ring let Dee know. (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary or Curator) We will be voting at the May 17th meeting. Please come join us.

Treasurer Notes:

Linda reported that \$20,000 dollars was moved from the Restoration account to a CD account at Travis Credit Union the week of March 16th.



In the beginning... Ella Stone Bloss and George Samuel Bloss came to Atwater in 1884 with their two children George Stone Bloss, Jr. and Edna Mitchell Bloss (Thorne).



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Adding quality images to the digital archives....

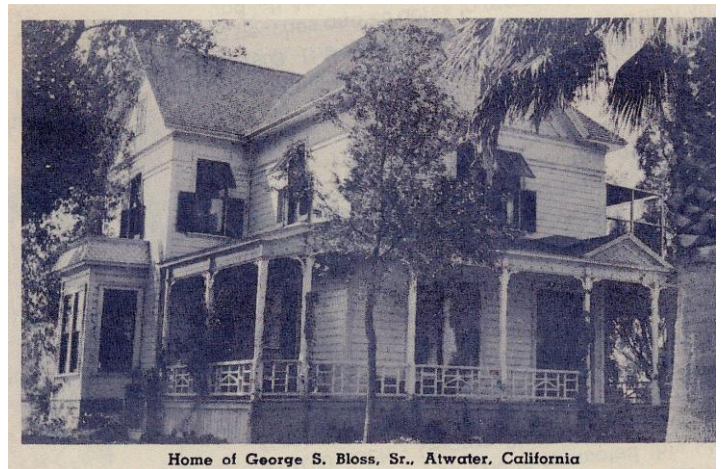


The Society has delved into Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT). A “new” photograph of George and Christine Bloss from a 1957 Atwater Signal newspaper article and a “cleaned-up” photo of George Bloss, Sr.’s home. We will continue to comb through photographs in the archives and newspapers to enhance our collection..



Home of George S. Bloss, Sr., Atwater, California

George Bloss, Sr. Home – the only photo we had in the archives.



Home of George S. Bloss, Sr., Atwater, California

New “photo” of the home using ChatGPT.

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George Bloss, Jr. -Merced



Many thanks to Carol Kitchens for sending new digitized photos.

Carol is an heir of the Emma Stone Crane family. Ella Stone Bloss' sister. (George Jr.'s Mother)



John W. Mitchell

Northern Valley Yokuts Display taking shape in the Sleeping Porch



Thank you to Ben And Mary Pickford for this beautiful display stand.

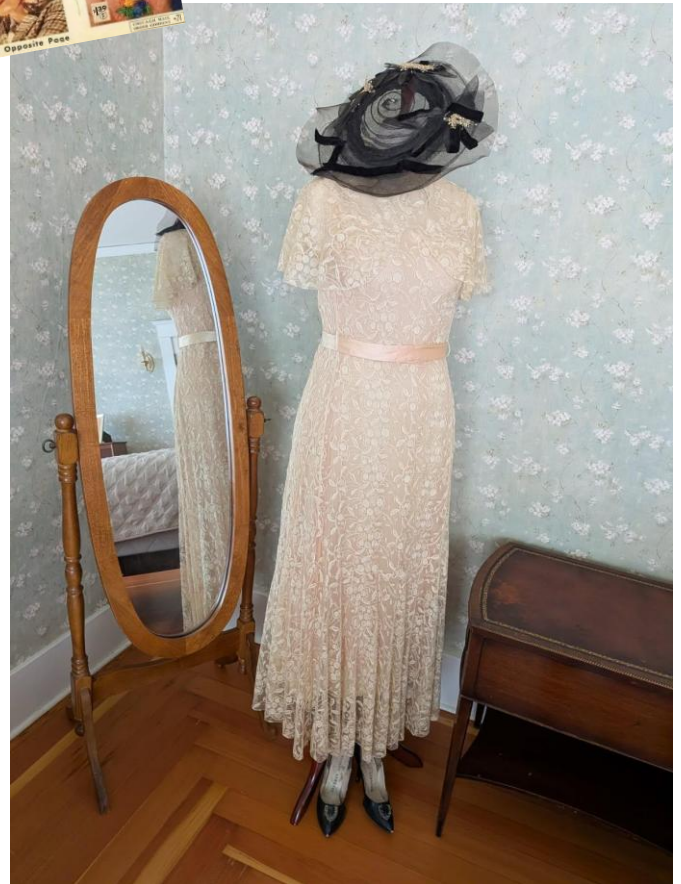
The exhibit will be complete soon!

The Guest Bedroom had a facelift



The new curio cabinet houses the hat collection. Era hat boxes are set about the room and one of Christine's beautiful dresses is shown off on a new mannequin.

The room is full of life once again. At one time it was filled with visitor's including Edna (Bloss) and Julian Thorne, and it became Minnie Thompson's room once she came to live in California. (Christine's mother)





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**Important
Dates....**



Board Meeting 12-1
General Meeting 1-3

April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
Easter 	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Board Meeting 12-1 General Meeting 1-3	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

Meeting
Reminder!

May 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	1	2 
Gwen and Lupe 	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 Board Meeting 12-1 General Meeting 1-3	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

VOTE
Meeting
Reminder!

The Forgotten Sister - Edna Mitchell Bloss Thorne

by Joanna Law-DeBaal

Mrs. Edna Mitchell Bloss Thorne may be the most interesting Bloss you have never heard of. Moving to San Francisco in 1902, her journey through life would intertwine with some of history's most momentous events. She was born August 1, 1876, in Litchfield, Woodbury, Connecticut to George Samuel Bloss and Ella Stone Bloss.



In 1884, her family packed up and moved to California after some persuasion by Ella's Uncle, John W. Mitchell. Edna was eight years old, and her brother George Jr. was ten. The family moved into a home on the corner of Third Street and Atwater Boulevard where the "1912 Bloss Building" now stands.

According to the *Merced County Sun*, September of 1892, George Bloss, Sr. built an elegant two-story modern home on the south side of the railroad tracks where Atwater Iron and Metal and Teasdale Quality Foods now stand. Miss Bloss, was an outgoing and gregarious young lady, serving as vice president of the Atwater Lyceum in April of 1892, where lively debates and lectures engaged community members.

Her mother passed away from stomach cancer in September 1893, when Edna was seventeen years old. A mere two months later, Edna's Great Uncle John W. Mitchell would also pass away. Ella's inheritance passed onto her children, Edna and George Jr.

Edna and her brother were given a farewell party by many young friends, noted the *Atwater Signal* on Saturday July 28, 1894. She and George Jr. were "headed to institutions of learning near the bay". Edna attended Van Ness Young Ladie's Seminary in San Francisco where special attention was given to music, art, and painting. Edna graduated with the class of 1896 alongside six other students.

Attending social events in San Francisco, she met Julian Thorne, and they became a well-known couple. Edna was an heiress to the Mitchell estate, and Julian had a sensible, responsible role in the real estate business. Her marriage announcement in the *Merced County Sun* described Edna as “a strong personality with an unusual charm of manner that had made and held her many warm friends. She was the happy possessor of a great many acres of land and was considered a beauty.”

They were married September 19, 1902 at a friend's home in San Francisco. Edna and Julian were avid golfers and were members of the San Francisco Golf Club. She and Julian spent many years playing in tournaments all across the bay area where she was frequent winner and known as a clever player. According to *The Bulletin*, Thursday April 12, 1906, Edna and Julian purchased a beautiful three-story home on Broadway in San Francisco. With a sudden release of pressure along the San Andreas fault, a major 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Northern California at 5:12 am on April 18, 1906.

The great San Francisco earthquake damage and resulting fire killed more than 3,000 people and destroyed over 80% of the city. The *San Francisco Examiner* stated the Thorne's went to Atwater on the 30th of April because Julian believed his wife needed a change of scenery. They had been lucky; the fire missed their home.



In September of 1907, Edna, Julian and George Jr., went on a world tour leaving from San Francisco on the Korea steamer. Heading to Hawaii for a week, then off to Japan, China, India, and Europe. George Jr. left early and travelled on the fast steamer Lusitania back to New York in May 1908. (There is a postcard of the Lusitania on display at the Bloss Home Museum)

A German submarine torpedoed the Lusitania off the Irish Coast on May 8, 1915, sinking in fifteen minutes, around 1,193 people were killed. World War I, which had started in 1914, was raging but America had not entered the war. Yet.

In a statewide election, a suffrage amendment passed by a slim margin on October 10, 1911, and was added to the state constitution. California became the sixth state to grant women in the U.S., the right to vote. This acted as a catalyst for women to emerge and engage in civic life. Edna along with other affluent women of San Francisco endeavored to build a women's athletic club and in 1915 they signed the articles of incorporation. It was the first Women's Club west of Chicago when it opened in 1917 and was the largest club in the country after its expansion in 1923.

The Athletic Club's purpose was to encourage physical culture and athletics among women. They had a gymnasium, tennis and squash court, Turkish baths, and a saltwater swimming pool. The Club was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 due to its social and architectural significance. Edna was an active member of San Francisco Society. Following the Bloss family tradition of philanthropy, Edna was involved in fundraisers for the Children's Hospital, and Canyon Kip Community House, which cared for children whose mothers had to work, providing a nursery, dispensary, food, and clothing.

April 6, 1917, America entered WWI with Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. Other factors included the sinking of the Lusitania, which had killed 128 Americans, had turned public opinion against Germany. War bonds were sold as a way to defray the cost of war. According to the *San Francisco Bulletin*, 1918, Edna worked on the fourth liberty bond drive, this was the first time that women had organized for loan drives. She was appointed captain of the Chemin des Dames Division, or the Ladies Way (Path).

In April 1930, George Bloss Sr., passed away. The Thornes spent a quiet summer at their San Mateo home, called Thornewood, and returned to the city for Opera Season in September. Two months later, Julian passed away after two years of illness, at the age of fifty-four. Edna, three months younger, was also fifty-four.

As she grew older, gardening played a significant role in her life. Edna joined the San Francisco Garden Club and participated in peninsula estates garden tours. In November of 1934, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that the club would be planting trees, acacias, elms, and living Christmas trees during December. Also, that month, Admiral and Mrs. Sameul Wood Brown entertained a group of friends for a large luncheon.

Mrs. Julian Thorne enjoyed lunch on board the U.S.S. Arizona before its departure to Long Beach according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Seven years later, on December 7th, 1941, Japan bombed the U.S. Naval Station at Pearl Harbor drawing America into WWII. The U.S.S. Arizona now serves as a Memorial and a national monument in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, dedicated to the 1,177 servicemen and Marines who died during the attack and is the final resting place of 1,102 individuals.

Edna contributed to the war effort by allowing the Red Cross Alta Plaza surgical dressing station to operate inside her home to prepare bandages to ship overseas in support for the war effort. Her first-floor drawing room and dining room were transformed into work rooms with tables, sewing machines and other equipment for making and packing of surgical dressings.



Through everything life had in store for her, Edna never forgot her childhood home. She visited her father, brother, and sister-in-law Christine during holiday seasons and several times throughout the year. She donated to the construction of the Thompson Bloss Memorial Library in memory of her nephew and the Ella Bloss Memorial Hospital for her mother. Donations to the Women's Club, of which her mother was a founding member, and in 1962, the United Methodist Church on Bellevue with a wing dedicated in Edna's name.

June 25, 1970, Edna Mitchell Bloss Thorne passed away leaving her 2.9-million-dollar estate to various charities. The American Cancer Society, San Francisco Boys and Girls Clubs, the Sierra Club, and Salvation Army to name a few. The Sierra Club turned the 86-acre Thornewood Estate into an

Open-Air Preserve in San Mateo County. The acreage was bequest with the stipulation that the land would stay in its pristine condition with no development and is enjoyed to this day. Edna Mitchell Bloss Thorne may be the only Bloss you have never heard of, but she never forgot the city of Atwater. We owe a debt of gratitude to the forgotten sister of our city.

ChatGPT Colorized 1902 newspaper photo of Miss Edna Bloss





Thompson Bloss

Get Involved Today!

Looking for individual to work open houses. Please sign up today!

Open June 7, August 2, November 1

Volunteer - join our docent program

Become a Member -

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| • <i>Individual Membership</i> | \$40.00 |
| • <i>Student Membership</i> | \$20.00 |
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