



Atwater Historical Society

June/July 2026

*In this issue: George Thompson
Bloss Memorial Library*



Save the date:

June 20, 2026, at high noon!

With Father's Day falling on the 21st of June, the meeting day has been changed to June 20th.

Why is this day so important?

Election of officers and the board of directors.

On the Ballot:

President: Brad Pickle

Vice President: Greg Olzack

Secretary: Mimi Nunes

Treasurer: Linda Dash

Curator: Joanna Law-DeBraal

3 Year Board of Directors: Kathy Jansen, Judy Texeira

Installation of officers and board members.

Voting on updated By-Laws and
Standing Rules

Lunch will be Served!!



America's 250 Year Celebration is coming up soon. The Atwater Historical Society was asked to participate with a 300-word essay on what makes Atwater special and to send representative photos of Atwater today.



Announcing the Exhibit Opening of
AMERICA 250 - MERCED COUNTY
Thursday, June 25, 2026 • 5 to 7 p.m.



Merced County Courthouse Museum
21st and N Streets, Merced • 209-723-2401



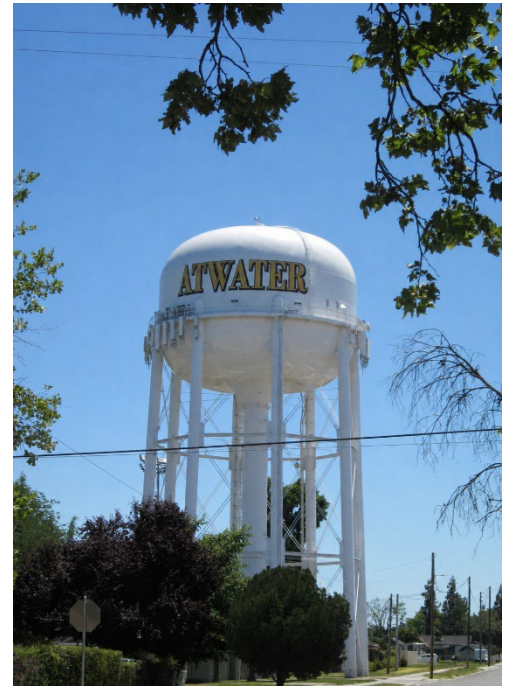
Opening Program at 6 p.m. on the Front Steps:
Supervisor Daron McDaniel, Hon. Judge Brian McCabe,
DAR - Merced River Chpt., Bear Creek Ukulele Society, Ice Cream Social

FREE ADMISSION

 www.mercedmuseum.org 



Atwater Essay and Photographs Submitted To the Courthouse Museum



Atwater – Historic Charm with a Hometown Vibe

Early Atwater took shape with the advent of dry wheat farming. Thousands of acres of grains blossomed into an agricultural beacon with the introduction of irrigation in the early 1890's. The potential was limitless - peaches, almonds, figs, vineyards and much more filled Atwater and the surrounding colonies with color. By 1922, the population base had increased and the city was incorporated. George Bloss, Jr., became Atwater's first mayor. The Bloss family endowed the community with many of the building blocks necessary for growth. A pharmacy, a doctor, a church, a school, and a library were the foundations.

Atwater's population grew in the early 1940's when Castle Air Force Base came to the region. Another school was soon added to the Mitchell School district. The Ella Stone Bloss Memorial Hospital was built, and Osborn Park became a safe place for children to play sports. Youth sports continue to be a staple along with holiday parades, and community events which gather large crowds.

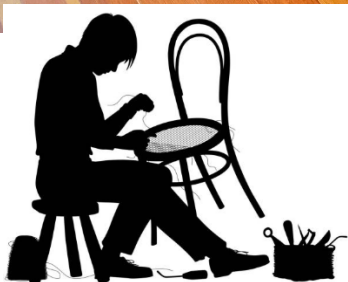
Agriculture is the glue that holds the community together and links its citizens to their origins. The Bloss Memorial Healthcare District and Bloss Scholarship awards continue to support the community members' wellbeing and enhance their futures, while the Bloss Home Museum acts as a reminder of its early pioneers. There are currently two high schools, eight elementary and three intermediate schools serving Atwater.

Castle Air Museum evokes memories of our military past and acts as an excellent tourist attraction. Teasdale Foods and Dole Packaged Foods, LLC operate in this small town but have multistate reach. Businesses are growing to serve the citizen's needs. Major chain stores and restaurants now reside on parts of the early colony lands. Through the city's recognition of its 100-year anniversary in 2022, and restoration of its downtown, Atwater continues to maintain its small-town, close-knit community pride.

By Joanna Law-DeBraal



Beautiful new upholstery on the couch and
necessary restorations on the chairs...



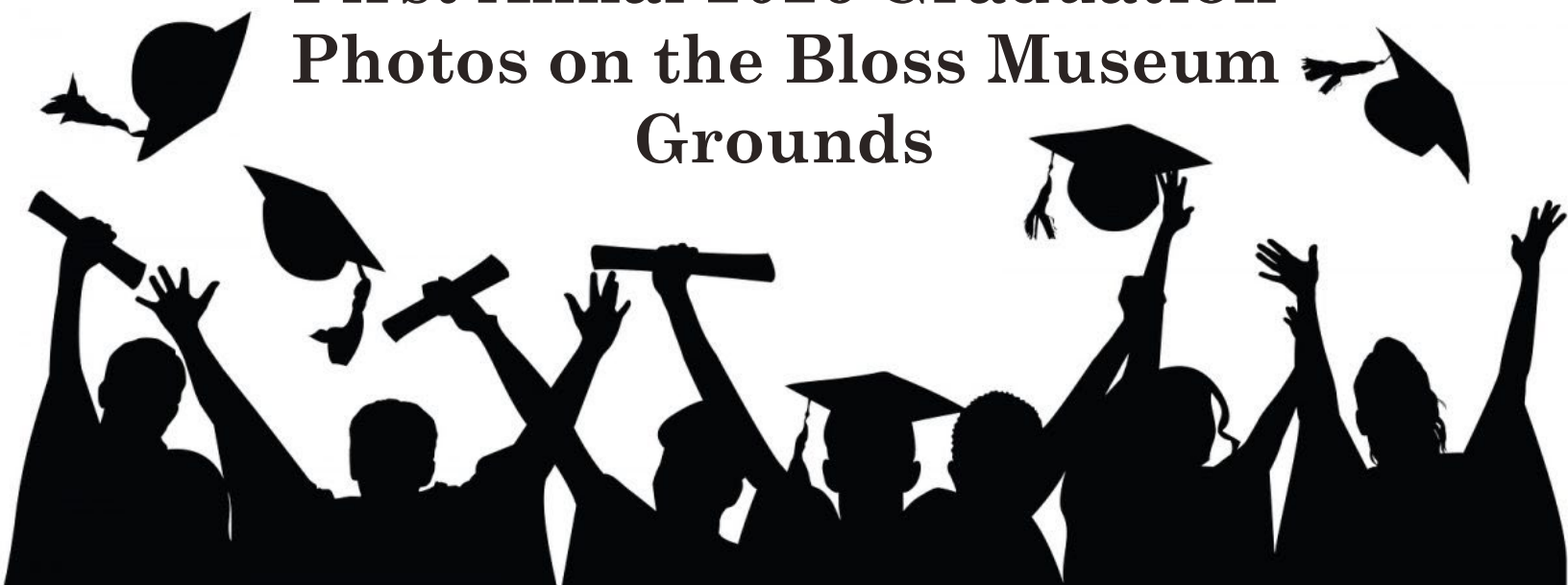
A special thanks to Mimi Nunes who took
the lead on this project.

Twelve graduates made their way to the Bloss Home grounds for graduation photos on Saturday May 30, 2026.

A Special Thanks to Greg Olzack for organizing the event and all those who participated!!



**First Annal 2026 Graduation
Photos on the Bloss Museum
Grounds**



Born in Grief - Atwater Library
Memorial to George Thompson Bloss

By Joanna Law-DeBraal Curator Atwater Historical Society

George 'Thompson' Bloss, born June 22, 1914, was a handsome boy. Looking through his baby album provided a window into the past. Thompson was a gardener starting from the time he could walk. He loved his pets and pictures showed him holding a favored cat and playing with dogs. Like any young boy, he enjoyed riding his bike.

Additional photos illustrate the love of a grandpa doting over his grandson. Nothing was more telling than an adorable photo of grandpa, George Bloss, Sr., sitting next to Thompson on the back porch of the Bloss Home on Cedar. It was clear that Thompson was a cherished and beloved child.

Grandpa



George Sr.
and Thompson

Thompson would not celebrate his seventh birthday. His death followed an illness of several weeks from measles and bronchial pneumonia on April 18, 1921. George Bloss, Jr., was not well at the time his son became ill. His mother, Christine, had become seriously ill with pneumonia and had been receiving care at Stanford.

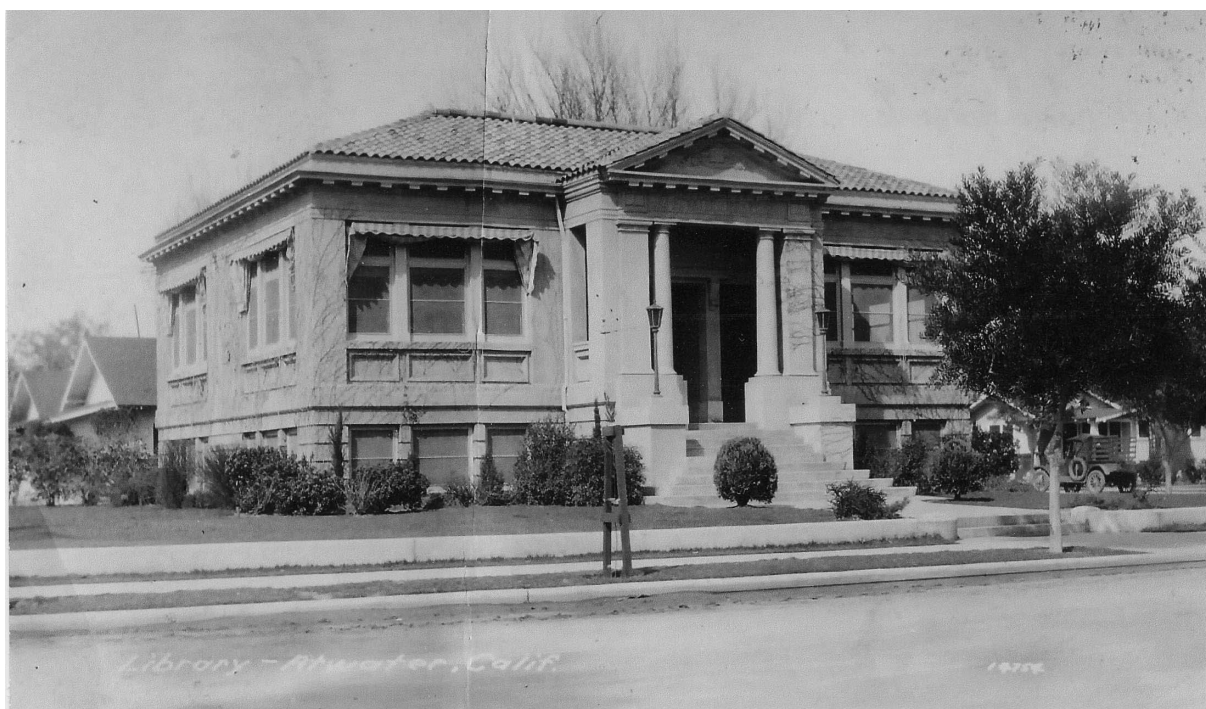
According to the *Merced Sun-Star*, April 17, 1921, George Bloss, Sr., had sat with the youngster for a week while his son improved. George Jr. was with Thompson at the Stewart Hotel in San Francisco at the time of his passing. Christine, still ill with pneumonia, was not informed of her son's death until she improved.



The funeral was held at the family home in Atwater, May 7th, at 1:30 p.m. The remains were taken for interment to the Mitchell Mausoleum in Turlock where the mother of George Bloss, Jr., rested. (Ella Stone Bloss)

The library, erected in 1925, was dedicated to the memory of George and Christine Bloss' son who had passed away four years before construction began. The donors to the building were George S. Bloss, Sr., and his two children George S. Bloss, Jr., and Mrs. Edna Bloss Thorne of San Francisco.

The contract for the erection of the Bloss memorial public library building was agreed to on Monday the 16th of March to contractor Gross of Merced. T. A. Wayne of Atwater began excavation for the construction of the library, located on Third and Cedar Streets, on March 26, 1925.



The building was to be one of the prettiest structures in the county. It cost \$20,000, furnished, and equipped and would take five months to complete. The structure is solid concrete, 50 x 60 feet in dimensions, and has one story and basement according to the *Merced Express*, February 27, 1925.

It is a classical Revival-style building, roofed with Italian tile. Cast cement, plaster, opaque glass, and marble were used in construction of the library. The basement was to contain a hall for Boy Scouts and ample space for the heating plant, janitors' quarters and a repair and storage room for the library.

The main floor was to have a large library room, with a smaller room for young people, and an office for the librarian. The plans, drawn by W. E. Bedesen, in a "Carnegie Style" is similar to the library in Turlock according to *An Architectural Survey of the San Joaquin Valley* edited by Hope B. Werness in 1978.

It stood alone on a 100 x 115-foot lot. That gave assurance that no other building would encroach upon the beauty of its scenic effect. It was steam heated through the library and Boy Scouts' department on the lower floor.

Construction was completed in late November of 1925. No expense was spared as it was a memorial to Mr. Bloss Senior's only grandchild. The first Branch Library located on Front Street (Atwater Blvd.), was destroyed by fire. The few surviving books from that library were used to open a new library in the Atwater Hotel.

The library again moved to the residence of Mrs. Harrell, where it remained until a new store building, with separate room for the library, was completed in 1912. There were some reports that it was temporarily located in Mitchell Hall.

The local library moved to its new quarters at the new Bloss Memorial Library building, which opened at the beginning of January 1926. It was a beautiful addition to Atwater, setting back from the street and surrounded by lawn and flowers.

The Thompson Bloss Memorial Library was deeded to the city by George Bloss, Sr. on December 22, 1925. During the February 5th, 1926, city trustees' meeting, the deed gift was accepted. It was his desire that the property continued to be used for public purposes as long as the building was suitable for library purposes.

On July 20, 1928 Ordinance No. 17 passed. It stated that "the place chosen to hold meetings for the City Council of the City of Atwater shall be the assembly hall on the first floor of the Bloss Memorial Library Building in the City of Atwater" and it repealed Ordinance No. 12.

The same was true for the Council Chamber of said City Council, approved by C.P. Ralston, Mayor of the City of Atwater. The library also housed the Tax Collector's office and Board of Equalization.

By early 1960, the city realized they needed to build a larger City Hall and were actively in pursuit of a location. Groundbreaking began on August 15, 1968, for the new City Hall with the completion date set for February of 1969. The new \$300,000 City Hall 'Civic Center Complex' was located at 750 Bellevue Avenue.

In 1970 Edna Bloss Thorne left a \$10,000 bequest in her will for the George Thompson Bloss Memorial Library according to *An Early History of the Merced County Free Library 1901-1976, Third Edition*, by Kathleen L. Brantley-Guiterrez.

On November 12, 1985, the City Council deeded the Bloss Library to the Atwater Chamber of Commerce to increase accessibility for civic engagement. As of April 25, 2022, the Chamber was no longer able to maintain the building and the city was agreeable to incorporate the building and grounds back into its list of facilities.



According to the City Council Agenda Report pertaining to Accepting the Donation Agreement from Atwater Chamber of Commerce for the Bloss Library:

“The Bloss library’s top floor could be utilized into a museum. To house exhibits both permanent and rotating and would represent the community of Atwater and its founders.”

The Bloss Family was instrumental in the development and growth of the City of Atwater. George Bloss, Jr., was the first mayor of Atwater. The family contributed the Ella Bloss Memorial Hospital, George Thompson Bloss Memorial Library, Bloss Block, the Atwater Women’s Club, and the Plunge. Each built to improve the life of the citizens in the community. A museum honoring the Bloss family and all of Atwater’s early pioneers seems appropriate.



George Jr.
and Thompson



Christine
and Thompson



Atwater Historical Society

Important Dates....



JUNE 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 
21 	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JULY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4 
5 	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	