

# Yolo County Historical Society



## Prez Says

I wanted to share a fall poem with you. Emily Bronte is one of my favorites. Hope you like it.

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;  
 Lengthen night and shorten day;  
 Every leaf speaks bliss to me  
 Fluttering from the autumn tree.  
 I shall smile when wreaths of snow  
 Blossom where the rose should grow;  
 I shall sing when night's decay  
 Ushers in a drearier day.

This past month has been an eventful one for the society. We participated in the tour of China Town between College and Elm Streets. Although there is not much left of the original buildings, the enthusiastic conversation that occurred showed that there is an interest in exploring the alley history. I will continue the discussion with others, and we will see what arises. If anyone is interested in joining the discussion, please let me know. It will be exciting.

The other event that occurred recently is the go ahead to establish a **Yolo County Fair History Museum!** Yes, it is true! Dino Gay, the president of the *Native Sons of the Golden West*, has been working with Bart Vanucci at the fairgrounds. The proposal was presented to their board and they voted to make this happen. This is super for us. We already have School House presentations during the year, and now the third-grade students can also visit the Museum. So cool!

This newsletter is devoted to the 150th anniversary of Holy Rosary Church. Since I wrote the history for our church's new history book, I thought you might enjoy some of the early history.

Despite the 'shutdown', history still manages to find a way. As always,

History Rules!

Kathy Harryman

## Just a bit of information

I received this message from **Sandra Lee Rosa Wright** who now lives in Newport Beach. She is a member and included a note with her renewal.

My mother (**Edythe Scoggins Rosa**) and my grandmother (**Eugenia Howlett Scoggins**) were graduates of Spring Lake Elementary School. I attended that school from first through seventh grades and was in the first graduating class of Willow Spring Elementary School.

Thank you Sandra for sharing your history with me and the Society.

Kathy

## HOLY ROSARY CHURCH HISTORY

by Kathy Harryman

### YOLO COUNTY – CATHOLIC HISTORY BEGINS – THE MISSION SYSTEM 1800-1850

The Mission system established by the Catholic church was the basis for the colonization of California. Even though Yolo county was in the middle of the state, the missionaries would come from Mission San Francisco de Solano, near the present-day town of Sonoma.

This land was under the rule of Spain during the era of mission building (1769-1833). The only people who lived on the land were the native American Patwins. On October 26, 1821, the first recorded Catholic service was conducted. Father Fray Blas Ordiz, Order of Friars Minor (Franciscan), performed a baptism of a local native. Coming from Mission San Francisco de Solano, he writes in his diary, "I received word that a gentile was at the point of death, due to having been run through with a lance. I immediately went to him to see if I could succeed in baptizing him. I had that joy and gave him the name of Pedro." In 1822, after Mexico gained its independence, Alta California came under Mexican rule. The next recorded Catholic event occurred in 1844, when Mrs. William Gordon, a staunch Catholic, and financial supporter of the Diocese of San Francisco, "likely received extreme unction (at her home) by a priest from Mission San Francisco de Solano." (History of Yolo County, William O. Russell, et al., 1940, pg. 265)

### THE NEXT FIVE DECADES – BUILDING A CATHOLIC PRESENCE 1850-1900

The next five decades saw an increase in population in Yolo County largely due to the discovery of gold in 1848. The population at that time was around 1,086.

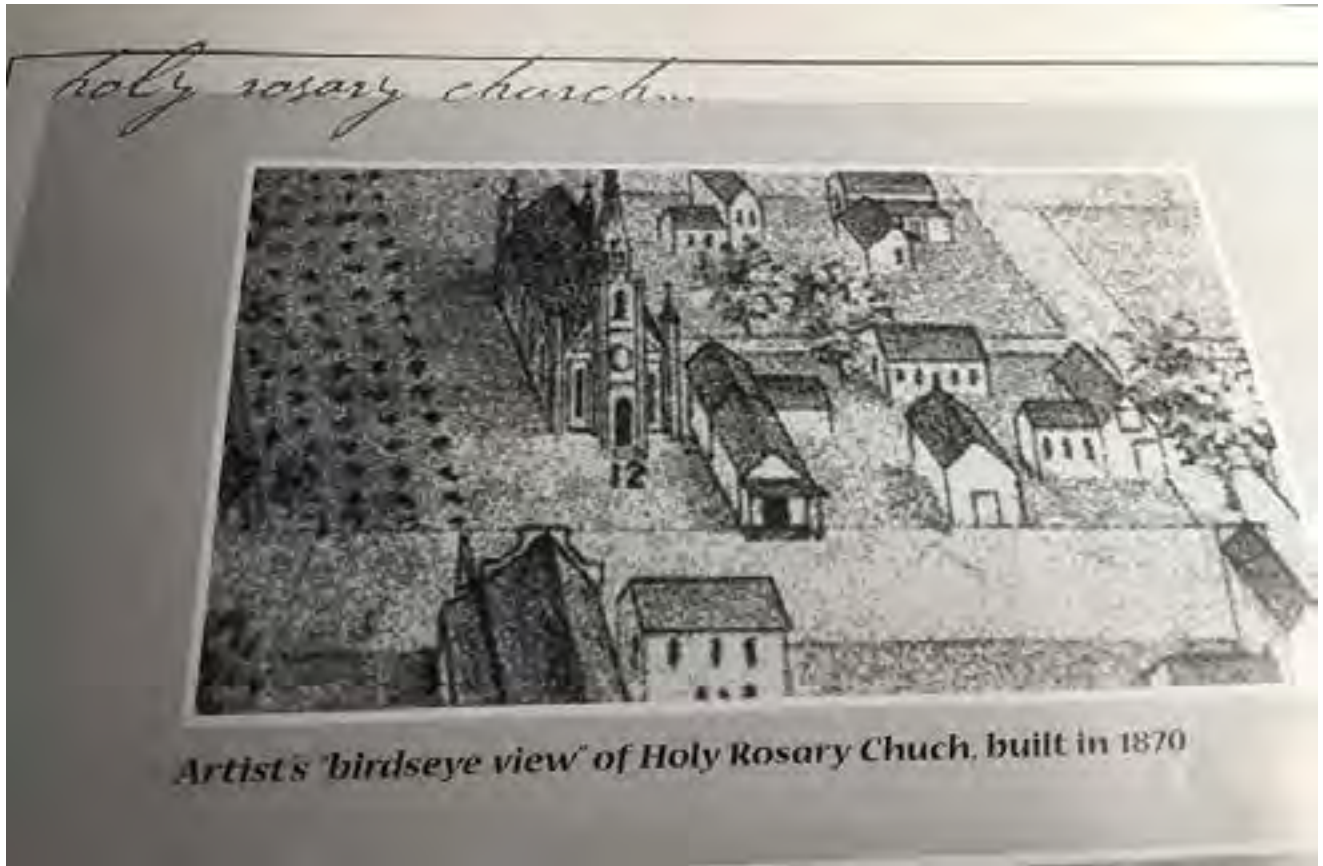
The next recorded Catholic presence was in 1858 when the first Catholic Mass was performed in the house of John O'Keefe in Knights Landing.

In 1869, Rev. P. Kelly came from the town of Folsom to hold mass in the home of Peter Fitzgerald in Woodland. During that same year, prominent men were appointed to purchase land for a church. An architect was selected, and a church was built on Main Street between Elm and Walnut, at a cost of \$7000.00. In October 1870, the church was dedicated by the Very Rev. Jacob Croke, in memory of the Holy Rosary. Father Lawrence Scanlon was the first resident priest. This church lasted only one year. Heavy rains caused the steeple to settle and crack and the building was declared unsafe.

In 1874, construction of a new church was begun on the corner of Main and Walnut Streets from property purchased by Fr. Patrick Gallagher, the new pastor. Nine years later, Fr. John McGinty purchased property for a Catholic cemetery (St. Joseph's on West Street) and property on Main Street for a boarding school. He paid \$250.00 for five acres. In 1884, Holy Rosary Academy was built and staffed by Holy Cross Sisters.

Two years later, Woodland became part of the newly formed Sacramento Diocese. The population of Woodland was approximately 2,886.

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## FIVE MORE DECADES – CHURCH BUILDING 1900-1950

In 1911, Father Michael Wallrath was assigned to the Woodland parish. The original church was declared unsafe due to faulty construction and poor soil conditions. Father P. Greely had left \$7,000 and a lot (180' x 190') on the corner of Court and Walnut Streets. Rev. Wallrath, a church builder, proceeded to move the old church to the north corner to make room for a new building on Main Street. He converted the old church into the current parish hall. On Friday, March 1, 1912, ground was broken. Fedele Costa, an Italian artisan, was the contractor and fashioned the church in the traditional Italian architectural style. The cost of this building was \$25,000 plus \$1,000 for the steeple.

On June 1, 1913, the church was dedicated by the Right Rev. Thomas Grace, in honor of the Queen of the Holy Rosary. An Irish artist from Oakland decorated the interior arch of the main altar with scenes from the sorrowful mysteries. The stained-glass window scenes were created by United Glass Works in San Francisco and Dumbiring, a firm in Oakland. The cost was donated by members of the parish. Liberty Bonds and selling inscribed bricks to parishioners (\$1,000 each) helped reduce the debt. Father Wallrath was dynamic.

The new church of Our Lady of the Rosary, regarded at the time of its construction more than a quarter of a century ago as one of the most imposing and beautiful church structures in Northern California, was designed by Sacramento architect Harry Devine ([Sacramento Diocesan Archives](#)).



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## CHALLENGES 1950-2000

In 1946, Father Tumulty brought The Sisters of Saint Francis of the Atonement to minister to public school students. Again, signs of stress were found in the construction of the church. In 1949, Father Tumulty hired Harry J. Devine, a Sacramento architect, to build 'the tallest church in Woodland'. It was to be a Romanesque design with a tile roof in the traditional shape of a cross. The bell tower was 108' high. Various types of marble were used to decorate the inside of the church. The cost of this church was \$215,735.



*Holy Rosary Church,  
dedicated on October 2, 1949*

Father Tumulty spent 23 years (1938-1961) as pastor of the Parish. During this time, he oversaw the building of two schools in addition to a new church – a small school to serve kindergarten children and the new Holy Rosary School on California Street.

Loss of Holy Rosary Academy by fire in 1952 was one of the most serious reverses which the parish suffered during the last three decades. The Stations of the Cross were salvaged after the Academy burned.

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In 1961, Monsignor Markham became the pastor. He built the parish rectory, a modern 6,100 square foot building erected near the east end of the church on Court Street. The building could house four priests. The front of the building was used for offices. Monsignor Markham was the first priest to put into practice the changes from Vatican II. He also was instrumental in working with other pastors in Woodland promoting ecumenicalism between the Woodland churches.

In 1970, Father Anthony V. Maio arrived. Under his supervision, the parish continued its progressive course. One of the highlights of his pastorate was the 1974 reconstruction of the old parish hall, the interior of which had deteriorated through misuse and neglect. The hall's renovation was done by volunteers. The cost was \$125,000.

The decreasing number of nuns resulted in the loss of both of the parish's orders. The Sisters of Saint Francis of the Atonement left in 1966 after 21 years of service and the Sisters of the Holy Cross departed in the early summer of 1977, resulting in an all-lay faculty for Holy Rosary School.



*Holy Rosary Parish Hall,  
used as Church from 1943-1949*

Father Cornelius O'Donnell served Woodland for twelve years (1982-94). Father O'Donnell had to deal with three major issues. The first was keeping the parish school alive and growing after the Sisters left. The second challenge was meeting the needs of the growing Hispanic community of Woodland. The third issue was Yuba College's desire to continue to use parish property for its Woodland campus site. Father O'Donnell challenged eminent domain in court and won. Instead of tearing down the temporary building, Father O'Donnell bought the buildings for \$25,000, thus adding to the parish complex. He also began a \$1,000,000 endowment for the school to help continue Catholic education for the students.

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TODAY

The next 20 years have continued the tradition of building to meet the growing needs of the parish. Father John Boll added the Community Center to the property and refurbished the pastoral center. Now, Father Jonathan Molina is challenged to complete the final phase of the development by building a new and much larger church on the corner of California and West Cross Streets.

From the initial steps of the padres to the current day, Holy Rosary Church continues to be a warm and welcoming place for all parishioners and visitors.



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Dated Material

### **Submitting letters and articles**

Format articles in Word and send as email attachments to Kathy Harryman [khwoodland@aol.com](mailto:khwoodland@aol.com)

### **Change of Address**

Please notify Kathy Harryman [khwoodland@aol.com](mailto:khwoodland@aol.com) of any address changes (it costs nearly \$1.00 to get your correct address from the Post Office and your newsletter mailing is delayed). Or sign up for delivery as an email PDF attachment (see above email).

### **Vision Statement**

The Yolo County Historical Society strives to preserve, protect and acknowledge the diverse history of Yolo County through education, communication and advocacy.

See our website at [ychs.org](http://ychs.org)

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