

Yolo County Historical Society



Prez Says

Wow! Another year has passed...2023!!! We look to the past to see what we have accomplished, and we look to the future to see what we will accomplish. I am very proud of our accomplishments as a historical society. We have forged ahead and opened the museum at the fairgrounds. We have taken on the Haswell cabin in Capay. We played a small part in the new Yolo Library, and we are continuing to provide open houses for historical businesses in Woodland on First Friday. We are maintaining a footprint for history.

Now, as the year progresses, our new projects are the mural in China Alley in Woodland, the Rumsey Bridge plaque, the Yolo County Courthouse, and organizing historical presentations at the Woodland Senior Center. Great goals, but I am confident that we will forge forward and continue our historical focus in the county.

In the meantime, I would like to thank all of you who donated extra monies to the Society. You are all a treasure, and you enable us to move forward and continue our goals.

Again, as always
History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President

Snowflakes

by Kathy Harryman

Have you ever wondered about snowflakes? When the snow is falling it is hard to imagine that the white stuff coming down is composed of thousands of flakes. It is also hard to believe that each snowflake is different from another snowflake.

Remember in school, when the teacher had us fold paper and then we cut out sections on the fold. When we opened our masterpieces, we all had different cutouts. That's when she or he said, no two snowflakes are alike! Well, I decided to research snowflakes. I hope you find it as fascinating as I did.



Victorians were innovators with a deep curiosity about the natural world. Before photographs of snowflakes could be taken people made sketches, often after catching them on pieces of black fabric. With the use of magnifiers, Victorians were able to learn more about the construct of these frozen particles. But it wasn't until 1885, that snowflakes were photographed.

Wilson Bentley was born in Vermont in 1865. His mother said that he was always interested in the small things found in nature, from raindrops to butterflies.

His mother, a former teacher, gifted him a microscope for his 15th birthday and he would spend the rest of his life dedicated to learning as much as possible about nature, especially precipitation.

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continued – **Snowflakes**

Bentley was interested in the complexity of snowflakes and wanted a view of them that was more permanent. In 1885, his parents bought him a camera for \$100. He used the camera to capture the image of a fleeting snowflake.



“On the 15th January 1885, Bentley took his equipment out in the midst of a snowstorm. He connected his camera to his microscope and stood in the cold, catching falling snowflakes. When he found one, he gently lifted it with a feather so as not to melt it and placed it under the lens of the microscope. The freezing cold of the outside air allowed the snowflake to last through the minute and a half-long exposure to take a photograph.

Instant photo printing was still a long way away, so Bentley took his film inside and developed the negatives. He almost fell to his knees: at last, he had managed to take a good photograph of a snowflake, resplendent before him. “It was the greatest moment of my life”.

from ***Just History Posts***

This experiment would make Wilson Bentley the first person to ever photograph a single snowflake. He assumed that others were doing the same work and amassed over 400 such photographs before his work became known by a single scholar or scientist. When George Perkins of The University of Vermont learned about Bentley’s project. he convinced him of its importance, and a book was devised



From that first photograph in 1885, Bentley photographed more than 5000 snow crystals until his death in 1931. From his large collection of photographs, Bentley learned that every single snowflake was unique. He became known as “Snowflake” Bentley. The book is still in print and can be purchased. There are also children’s books titled *Snowflake Bentley*.

Source: <https://recollections.biz/blog/the-victorian-study-of-snowflakes>



Capay Valley Preservation Project Launched

by Moira Fitzgerald

In the 1930s, the WPA funded the construction of the cabin at **Camp Haswell** on Cache Creek above Rumsey. Local residents built the cabin by hand using creek stone and mortar. The cabin eventually became known as the "Boy Scout Cabin." It was and still is a popular stop for recreation on the Cache Creek and has withstood flood and severe wind for 9 decades. The YCHS October-November 2022 newsletter provides more details about the current use of the site.



Taking the beautiful drive up CA-16 on the way to Rumsey Canyon, visitors can stop by the Boy Scout Cabin to explore and enjoy this perfectly placed picnic spot on Cache Creek. Any visitors during high waters will marvel at how perfectly designed this tiny cabin is for surviving the floods and winds over the years without destruction.



In recent years, Yolo County Parks and Recreation took over management of the cabin. Most recently, there was talk by the county of tearing the structure down because the roof needed to be replaced. The stone structure itself is stable so it would not require any work to ensure the safety of others or the integrity of the building.

One of the boys, Matt Gwerder who grew up playing in the cabin, is now a young adult resident of the valley. Auspiciously, he is also a licensed building contractor and was made aware of the county's intent to demolish the building. He has taken it upon himself to spearhead the preservation of the cabin as one of the few remaining examples of WPA work in the valley and a favorite place for locals and visitors alike.

Matt is a young, busy contractor, father, and husband with a passion for preserving history. He has worked tirelessly with the County and received approval to push the project to completion. Matt is donating his time and expertise to repair the roof and secure the building for future generations as well as inspired other community members to lend a hand.

With the support of the Yolo County Historical Society, fund raising has begun to cover the cost of materials and permits. If you are interested in donating to this worthy WPA project, please send a check made out to the **Yolo County Historical Society, PO Box 1447, Woodland, CA 95776**, with "Camp Haswell" on the memo line. As always, donations may be tax deductible. Please check with your tax preparer.



Hattie Weber Museum

Report to Yolo County Historical Society

October and November 2022

During October, the museum was offered an unusually large number of donations for its collection, involving decisions about what to accept and then formally accessioning items and document.

Most of these have been from John Lofland, a Davis resident who has been a prolific writer of Davis history. He's now downsizing and has offered us many of the research and other materials he's collected over the years., for example his collection of California travel guides, early aerial photos of Davis, a copy of the Davis Core Area plan from 1985, and numerous old maps and books.



In addition, the city has recently brought us several binders of documents and letter that were part of Cultural Resource Manager Esther Polito's papers. She held the job during the 80s and 90s. Especially interesting are the documents concerning our museum's founding, by Phyllis Haig and the Library Club, in 1992.

Other items from the city include two ceramic beer or stout bottles for our bottle collection, and a huge parade flag (too large to be exhibited in the museum) which had belonged to Davis's now-defunct chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thanks to Kathy Harryman for helping us find a new home for it – Woodland's VFW organization.

Our volunteers have been busy. Aaron Wedra is regularly adding his favorite Davis places to his "Scenes from the Saddle" exhibit. Beanne Weber is scanning missing photos of accessioned documents into our Past Perfect program, and Isabelle Villanueva is helping us with the storage of our textile collection.

We've had some particularly interesting visitors recently. Veder Wright, son of Celeste Turner Wright, the first tenured woman faculty member at the University Farm, came in to chat and later brought us a copy of his mother's memoirs.

Two descendants of Jose Felipe Pena, who settled near Vacaville on a Mexican land grant, received help with genealogical research on the family. Several members of the DHS class of 1976 happily found themselves in the yearbooks we've made available to the public. Visitors from China, Poland, and Mexico asked many questions about Davis and offered information about their own communities.



We prepared the WPA building for winter by removing branches from its roof and cleaning the gutters.

Our visitor total was higher than usual in October, probably because of the start of UCD's fall quarter: 39 on Oct. 1; 45 on the 8th; 64 on the 15th; 25 on the 22nd; and 36 on the 29th.

During November and December, we continued to work on the accessioning and prepared a new exhibit, "Davis's Bus to Alabama," which will opened on January 14. See New Hattie Exhibit on the next page.

New Hattie Weber Exhibit

by Merrily DuPree

The Hattie Weber Museum's new exhibit, "Davis's Freedom Riders," opened on January 14. It tells the story of thirty-four individuals, most of them from Davis, who responded to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for American supporters of voting rights to come to Alabama on March 21, 1965, to support his protest march. It would begin in Selma and end at the state capital, Montgomery, on March 21 of 1965. (His previous attempt had failed when the marchers were attacked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge by state troopers with billy-clubs and tear gas.) A second march "was limited and symbolic pending a court order." It was the third, successful, march the Davis group would join. Their organizers were from Davis's Community (Presbyterian) Church and the Cal Aggie House.

John Pamperin, an assistant pastor at Cal Aggie House, had quickly chartered a Greyhound bus for the group at a cost of \$4,000, which was voluntarily paid by the riders and local donors. The thirty-four participants consisted of members of Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant congregations, and eleven of no formal denomination. Rider Gerald Friedberg reported in the *Cal Aggie*, "The group was strikingly heterogeneous: ten women and twenty-four men, including nine clergy, six students, three professors, seven housewives, lab technicians, a rancher, a chemist, and others."



During the first part of the journey, the riders were in great spirits, playing card games, conversing, and singing "freedom songs." As they entered the South, however, the new drivers were openly hostile. When they arrived in Alabama, they experienced more hostility from whites, but enthusiastic support from African Americans. They joined the march near St. Jude City, where they spent the night in an African American church, with delicious food provided by members of the congregation. Later, they listened to inspiring performances by Joan Baez, Dick Gregory, Odetta, Harry Belafonte, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and Sammy Davis Junior, among others.

The following day, marching eight abreast, they arrived at Montgomery, where they heard King's impassioned speech. At 7 p.m. that night they returned to the bus and started the long journey home.

Exhibit materials include photographs, taken by Gerald Friedberg, of the riders preparing to board the bus and, after the march, posing in front of the bus at a rest stop in Arizona. Also, we have several photos taken along the march route, and in St. Jude's City, including National Guard helicopters circling overhead. We plan to make available two articles describing the experience, by Gerald Friedberg and Tansy Thomas.

The world of Winters sports exhibit on display at the museum

by Jacob Hoffman, *Winters Express*, January 5, 2023



Tom Crisp worked with **Historical Society of Winters** members to create the new *Wide World of Winters Sports* exhibit at the Winters Museum. (Museum photo)

A new exhibit graces the Winters Museum walls, celebrating the history of sports in Winters, and the museum's Vice President, Tom Crisp, talked with the *Winters Express* about what this exhibit entails.

Discussing how this exhibit came to be, Crisp ran through the process of how the Winters Museum decides on the area of focus for each exhibit.

"What we do is we find a topic, and then we have an exhibit for that topic — and the group knew that I had already done a lot of research on sports in Winters from the books I'd written on the various sports of Winters High School and also some other town sports — they figured that was going to be a straightforward work," Crisp said.

Crisp was also specific in expressing his gratitude to Gloria Lopez, who he said, "was the one who really organized the thing, I supplied the information and some artifacts, but she was the one that got us to include other sports other than baseball, since that's my main area of research, and then put it all together."

This newest exhibit, which is up now but will celebrate the grand opening in February, features a plethora of sports-related history, biographies, and showcases, ranging across different sports, including baseball, soccer, and horse racing, as well as across many decades and skill levels, ranging from local high school achievements to Winters residents competing at professional and even Olympic levels.

One of Crisp's favorite subjects, one he described as "key" to the exhibit, is Winters native "Frank Demaree, who played in the (baseball) major leagues for almost 10 years in the 1930s and early 40s" and was a subject of much of Crisp's research. Crisp described Demaree's career and exploits, including becoming a two-time all-star and playing in four World Series, facing off against legends like Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and even appearing on a Wheaties box in 1937.

Crisp hopes this exhibit will communicate to the community of Winters "how rich an athletic history that Winters has in a variety of sports," and he hopes that by showcasing that "Winters athletes, coaches, etc., have gone on beyond Winters — maybe some of the kids will look at it and say, 'hey, wait a minute, that's pretty cool, maybe I can do that.'"

"There's one Winters High graduate who got a gold medal in the Olympics," Crisp said, encouraging *Express* readers to visit the exhibit to learn the story of that Winters resident, and maybe be inspired to follow in their athletic footsteps.

For information about the Winters Museum's hours or to learn more about volunteering as a docent, visit www.wintersmuseum.org. Admission to the museum is free.

Yolo Branch Library

On Saturday, December 17, the Yolo Branch Library in Yolo was officially opened and ready for business.

There were over one hundred people there to celebrate the long-awaited library. The Yolo branch Library was established on December 27, 1910, as a reading room located next to Borach's Store. On Sept 14, 1917, James Bertram, Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation, notified the County librarian that the corporation would award \$3,000 to Yolo County to construct a branch library building in the town of Yolo.

Yolo residents raised \$300 to buy the lot, owned by W.L. Morris, for the library. W.H. Weeks was selected to design the library. The Yolo Branch was one of only four California Carnegie Libraries constructed of wood and in the craftsman style. It opened in Dec. 1, 1918. In 1990 the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It served the community for nearly 100 years before it was declared unsafe in 2018.

The new library has 4,000 square feet with expanded book and media collections, more public use computer stations, 24/7wifi, dedicated study rooms and distinct user group areas for children, family, teens, and adults. There is also a community room for meetings.

The historical society worked with the community to salvage historical artifacts: the tiles surrounding the fireplace, the portrait of Andrew Carnegie, entrance doors and an original Yolo Library painting.

Congratulations to the people of Yolo for recognizing the value of education while adhering to history of the original building.



Just a Shout Out

We are beginning the process for **Big Day of Giving**. As you know, this is when we solicit the community to help us with funds for our projects.

We have focused on the **Yolo County Fair Museum** and have been able to do some much-needed modernization. This year, we will again focus on that museum asking for security upgrades, outdoor painting, and educational media programs.

Thanks go to **Rob Coman** and **Jenny Lillge** who have pushed us into the social media age!

Honoring Members

Marc Faye

March 12, 1932 - June 15, 2022

Marc has always supported history in Yolo. During his 64 years of farming, Marc served on numerous agricultural-related boards of directors. He served for two years as a California Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. His service to the community was extensive. He along with his wife, Gerda, were great supporters of the archives and the Gibson House Museum.

I remember a time during the fair when we had to move ten desks out of the schoolhouse to accommodate the archives. He piled them in his truck and took them to his farm for safe keeping. When the fair was over, he drove his truck back and the desks were put back into the schoolhouse. I thanked him and he said, "no problem." He just parked his truck, covered up the desks and then drove them back. Always willing to help, he will be missed.

Kathy Harryman

Mary Lee Thomson

February 9, 1940 – October 26, 2022

About Mary Lee's Time at the Hattie Weber Museum, by Merrily Dupree

When I began volunteering at the Hattie, after my retirement from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 2011, Mary Lee was the Exhibits Coordinator. She was extremely smart (she had a law degree from UC Davis and worked for many years as an employment attorney) and also a very funny person, so was a lot of fun to work with.

Jim Beckett, the Hattie's second director, was a personal friend and had encouraged her to become a volunteer. She continued after Jim retired, when Dennis Dingemans became director. She put together some excellent exhibits: "Racial Conflict in Davis's History," "The Schmeiser Family: Talented Davis Pioneers," "Women Winners of Davis's Brinley Award for Community Service" (with their photos mounted on hot-pink paper!).

She was a huge supporter of saving the WPA Building, and organized a museum sale of second-hand items, which netted us \$1,000. She loved knitting and gave us many of her finished products to sell. She arranged for the museum to be part of the Davis "Art Abouts," (by sponsoring local artists) at which she would prominently display information about our need for funds for the WPA project. She was a tremendous contributor to the museum and is greatly missed! It was so kind of her to remember us in her will. Mary Lee gifted the Hattie Weber with \$1000 from her estate.

Yolo County Fair Museum Update

We had our first opening on the weekend of the Craft Fair at the fairgrounds. It was cold and rainy, but we did manage to have people come in and see what we were about. Below are pictures from the event.

We are planning to open the **County Fair Museum** on the second Saturday of each month from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Photos courtesy of Jenny Lillge.



Come out and see us.

Saturday, Feb. 11

11 a.m - 3 p.m.

Bring your friends.

Membership/Newsletter Update

We have 87 members in our group. We are small but mighty!

Mardi Bagan mails 54 hard copies and I send out 33 internet newsletters. The costs have increased: stamps, paper, and copying.

If you are taking a hard copy newsletter and would like to change to an internet newsletter, please contact me at khwoodland@aol.com.

Every cent we save, allows us to spend more on historical preservation.

Thank you.
Kathy Harryman



Patrons

The following folks support the *Yolo County Historical Society*. We could not run this organization without their help. Thank you very much!

You, also, can be a patron by **contributing** \$100 or more.

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