

Yolo County Historical Society



Prez Says

This has been an exciting time for the Yolo County Historical Society. We are involved in many historical activities in the county.

The Hattie Weber has opened with enthusiasm and joy. They have a new docent already and I am sure the positive trend will continue.

We finished *The Big Day of Giving* and managed to collect \$1,400 for the new Yolo County Fair Museum. That is not bad for the first-ever try.

Woodland's First Fridays have opened. Pat Campbell and Jane Niehaus, two of our members, were the docents at the Roth Building along with the Native Sons of the Golden West.

Woodland is at the beginning of their **150-year celebration**, and we have played an active part in the historical information that you will see when you go downtown. I have given them the researched information from our First Fridays and that information will be incorporated into a poster and placed in the window of the respective business. I have also been working with other members in the group, Sam Kennedy, and Spencer Bowen, providing historical information about Woodland.

During the 150th celebration, there will be an article taken from *A Run Around the Block* by Vita Griggs that I wrote for the *Daily Democrat*.

I also gave Greta Galindo at the Woodland Public Library books that have been written about Woodland so she can display them in the Library. It is amazing how many books there are. I have listed them in this newsletter (see page 6).

Teri Laugenour, one of our members, has been working behind the scenes cleaning up and organizing the storage unit in the IOOF building. What a job! She is almost finished and the files look GREAT!

We also honored Dennis Dingemans, the former Hattie Weber Director, at our last meeting. More on that later.

Yes, as you can see, a lot has been going on. As we move further into the summer months, the closing statement that I use regularly becomes a reality.

Don't forget to come to our Annual Meeting. The invitation is on page 7.

Remember, History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President



Dues are due

Send a check made out to YCHS, PO Box 1447, Woodland CA 95695

\$25 Household

\$50 Business (name in all the newsletters)

\$100 Patron (name in all the newsletters and a discount on our trips)

GERTRUDE'S OAKS: The Story of Woodland's Urban Forest and its Embattled Native Oak *Quercus lobata*

This book is scheduled to be published this summer. The book's publication is underwritten by the Yolo County Historical Society and the Woodland Stroll Through History Committee. Here is a synopsis provided by the author, David L. Wilkinson.

For nearly a century Woodland, California has prided itself as a self-proclaimed "City of Trees." This idyllic Yolo County community was proud of its stunning array of housing styles showcasing eclectic architecture built beside majestic oaks on elm-lined streets. But Woodland's relationship with its trees begins much earlier. In 1861 with the arrival of the post office, pioneer schoolteacher Gertrude Swain Freeman, wife of the town's founder, Frank Freeman, named the town, which was literally carved out of a dense valley oak woodland. During Gertrude's lifetime, many of her beloved valley oaks disappeared, due to, in her words, "the avarice of man." The steady erosion of Woodland's native oak habitat characterizes California's history where 90% of valley oak habitat from Redding to Santa Monica has been destroyed due to agriculture, vineyards, and development.



In this deeply researched account of Woodland's long, complex, sometimes tense, and altogether joyous relationship with its trees, cultural historian David Wilkinson weaves together absorbing stories about people whose lives intersected with trees. The melding of hearty and industrious people enmeshed within a beautiful oak setting fostered poetry, parks, plantings, tree celebrations, tree relocations, memorials, speeches, editorials, and books; but also petitions, tree wars, tree poisonings, lawsuits, and regulatory ordinances.

Wilkinson brings to life this dynamic history by introducing readers to several exceptional historical figures whose pens forced the Woodland community to examine its destructive tendencies towards its tree heritage. Corydon P. Sprague and H. Wallace Atwell, Frank Gilbert, and *Daily Democrat* newspaper publishers, Edward E. Leake and son, Paul Leake, are among the writers who challenged Woodland people to protect its natural heritage, to understand and honor its history, while fulfilling its destiny to become an exceptional "City Beautiful."

Other historical figures simply loved planting trees. Richard H. Beamer, a beloved former mayor, state official, businessman, and real estate developer, hoped to be remembered for planting trees others would enjoy. He is responsible for the palm trees at the Woodland Public Library which are now over a century old. Woodland's mid-20th century "tree czar" Alvin Hiatt oversaw the planting of thousands of trees we enjoy today, while widening streets which wiped out mature trees igniting internecine warfare between neighborhoods and city hall.

Gertrude's Oaks also delves into the lives of local women leaders committed to Woodland's civic and cultural development. Some of these leaders rose to statewide prominence in the Women's Club movement. Woodland clubwomen were instrumental in raising funds for Woodland's first municipal park and Carnegie Library and spearheading Woodland's inaugural Arbor Day in 1903. Wilkinson shines a light on such local luminaries as Serelda Thomas, Elizabeth Nelson, Alice Spaulding, Emily Hoppin, Lydia Whitehead, Veta Hurst Griggs, and Dr. Francis Newton, who were among those women whose energy, drive, vision, and creativity strengthened Woodland's tree culture and overall quality of life.



Continued on next page

continued - **Gertrude's Oaks**

In the wake of a lawsuit filed by local tree advocates to protect century-old olive trees from being destroyed by more road widening, the **Woodland Tree Foundation** emerged in the 21st century. As the Foundation's co-founding president, Wilkinson reflects on how this grass roots organization has "built community through canopy" by engaging volunteers to plant thousands of trees, including many oaks, while promoting a modern era of tree management governed by Woodland's first-ever "Urban Forest Master Plan."

As a historian and tree aficionado who has spent decades living among Woodland's iconic oaks, Wilkinson builds a strong case for the moral imperative of preserving and protecting the community's remaining "living landmarks" through thoughtful public policy. *Gertrude's Oaks* leads readers through the process of sustained citizenry efforts to craft a modern tree ordinance in cooperation with progressive city leaders to protect native oaks while informing the public about their value.

"After all," Wilkinson concludes, "Woodland is the 'City of Trees' and should be leading the parade in our region by implementing modern and progressive tree policies to address the fragile environmental condition of our lovely blue and green planet." This proud civic virtue, sustained in word, if not in deed, throughout the vicissitudes of Woodland's long history, begun with a chord struck by a pioneer schoolteacher, Gertrude Freeman, underpins the spirit of this book.



Native Sons of the Golden West
Fundraiser to benefit the restoration of the
Union Church of Dunnigan
Dinner and live music featuring Elias (Mariachi music)
Saturday, July 24
4 - 7 PM
\$250 for table of 4
For more information contact
Dino Gay dinogay@sbcglobal.net

Why Dennis Deserves an Award

by Kathy Harryman

This February, the Board had to accept the resignation of Dennis Dingemans. It was a sad day for me because Dennis represents the "best of us." His focus and enthusiasm for the history of Davis was awe-inspiring.

Davis is a wonderful academic town. The focus has been on the university to the detriment of the history of the community. Dennis was able to work with the city council and the residents of Davis to bring awareness to the small Hattie Weber Museum. We need to clone the Dennis' and place them in all the small towns in this county. That is where history happens.

Thank you, Dennis, for being an integral part of the Society. Below is the presentation that was read when he received the **YCHS Honoring History Award**.



Marilyn DuPree and Dennis

There are so many things I can say about Dennis. He has a true commitment to history and to the Yolo County Historical Society. His willingness to take over the Hattie Weber Museum after Jim Becket gave up the directorship was commendable. He gathered around him a dedicated group of individuals who kept this small museum open sharing Davis history with its citizens. His dream of creating a rose garden to generate income for the Hattie, his commitment to preserving the WPA building and his tenure on the Davis Cemetery Board signify a gentleman who loves history and wants to share his love with others.

Dennis was always willing to support some of the far-out ideas of the Society. When the World War I celebration/parade idea arose, Dennis wholeheartedly and enthusiastically supported it. He and his wife, Robin, even came dressed for the occasion. Dennis also shared his writing skills with the Society. He wrote a book about Woodland as well as dozens of articles for the newsletter.

It has been my great pleasure to work with Dennis and the Society has benefited greatly because of Dennis and his commitment to history.

You are and will be missed.

As always, History Rules!



With spouse, Robin Dattel

Remember When, Part 1 of 2 parts

by Kathy Harryman

As we celebrate the 150-year anniversary of the incorporation of the city of Woodland, one theme stands. Woodland is a community that has its roots in the past. The downtown businesses are a testimony to that fact. The historic homes in both the north and south of Main Street are also a testimony to that fact. The Woodland Opera House is a concrete example of what happens when a group of individuals take on the responsibility of saving and preserving history. In this community change does happen. But it happens slowly. People come and people go, but the history of the community and its influence in the county and in the country remain a testimony to the power that history has over us all.

Let's take a trip back to the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century and see what Woodland was really like. The following "Remember When" statements are from the book *A Run Around the Block A Victorian Idyl* by Vita Griggs.

The author admits that her book is from a child's perspective. She says that "A child gets around like an ant—it sees a good deal." Her memories of living in a small rural community of about 2,000 people lets us see what Woodland was like 120 plus years ago.

Remember when Woodland used crude oil to settle the dust in the streets? The residents complained bitterly when the oil from the dusty roads ruined their carpets.

Remember when the women of Woodland wore veils and goggles, and the men wore dusters and knotted up their beards in handkerchiefs for protection because there was so much dust on the roads?

Remember when Woodland's lush green laws were fed by municipal wells?

Remember when the horse-drawn streetcar ran along the track on Main Street to the Southern Pacific Depot? The conductor was a Mr. Williams. He had a rattling cough and must have sprayed the passengers behind him with millions of germs.

Remember when there were so many elms, walnuts and oaks in Woodland that you could walk half a mile in speckled shade, meeting sun only at intersections? Then crossing Main Street, where heels sank deep into asphalt and steam rose from horse droppings along the curb, continue walking again under shade for another half a mile.

Remember when the Salvation Army invaded Woodland and there were almost twenty saloons on Main Street? The Army was kept busy with young women patrolling the streets and holding corner meetings every night. They shouted prayers, thumped a drum, and shook the tambourine.

Remember when the sidewalks were dirt footpaths and in the town itself there was cement only before wealthy houses? Most of Woodland used gravel, composed of small white pebbles.

Remember when Woodland had a Chinatown, several blocks with wooden sidewalks under timber awnings? Passing along, one smelled sandalwood incense and opium and heard the squeak and gibber of oriental stringed instruments.

Remember that the two dignified Gable Sisters Myrtle and Gertrude were nicknamed Tot and Duck and that their striped stockings raced over three and half stories when the mansion hummed with youth and life?

More in the next issue.

Books Celebrating Woodland

The following is a list of books about Woodland. They are from various sources: historians, personal anecdotes and writers. They were written to provide a glimpse into what life was like over the past 150 years. The topics vary, but the focus of each book shows us a small part of the town. They are currently on display at The Woodland Public Library. If I have missed one, please *let me know* – Kathy.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Crafting a Valley Jewel | David Wilkinson |
| 2. Explore History of Woodland Walking book | David Wilkinson |
| 3. Woodland City of Trees 1995 | Yolo County Hist Soc/Joanne Larkey |
| 4. Gertrude's Oaks | David Wilkinson |
| 5. Hollywood Comes to Woodland | David Wilkinson |
| 6. Dead Cat Alley | Jim Smith |
| 7. Asa & the Holstein Queen | Lynn Gough |
| 8. Woodland & It's Colorful Characters | Steve Venables |
| 9. Cruising Main Street in the 1950's | Neal Peart |
| 10. De Pues book 1879 | Greta Galindo (Library) |
| 11. Images of America – Woodland | Robin Datel, Dennis Dingemans & Thomas Krabacher |
| 12. Hesperian College 1861-1896 | Hesperian College |
| 13. I'm Third – An American Boy of the Depression | Robert A. Nordyke, MD |
| 14. Reflections of Woodland & Yolo County | <i>Daily Democrat</i> |
| 15. The Chinese Laundry on Second Street | State of CA – Dept of Parks & Rec. |

Archeological Reports #24

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 16. The Holy Rosary Church Story 50th Anniv. | Fr. John Boll & Kathy Harryman |
| 17. The Stained Glass Windows of St. Lukes | Tom Eaton & Robert F. Dunn |
| 18. Please Excuse Johnny | Florence McGehee |
| 19. A Run Around the Block | Veta Griggs |
| 20. Go Play Outside | Bill Griffith, Jr. |
| 21. You Must Fight Them | Maceo Montoya |
| 22. ??? Don't know if they are abt Woodland | Reyna Grande |

Booklets of Woodland

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Woodland (Hershey) Opera House | YCHS |
| 2. Woodland Opera House | Gary Wirth |
| 3. Woodland House Tour 1976 | YCHS |
| 4. Historic Homes of Woodland Ca | YCHS |
| 5. Dead Cat Alley – Walking Tour | Dino Gay |
| 6. Woodland Historic Tour | Woodland Landmarks Advisory Committee <i>et al.</i> |

Patrons

Thanks so much to the following for supporting the *Yolo County Historical Society*. We could not run this organization without your additional help.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Starr and Jeff Barrow | John and Kathy Harryman | Meg and Tom Stallard |
| Bob Bigelow | Dan & Sarah Hrdy | Roz Stone |
| Don and Pat Campbell | Geraldine Hunter | Mike Truitt Family |
| Odette & Dan Christenson | Steve and Teri Laugenour | Phil & Kris Turner |
| Katherine Ashley Cobb | Dr. Frank and Mrs. Liz Lemus | Ramon & Karen Urbano |
| Rob Coman | Sandy and Bill Marble | Lydia and Steve Venables |
| Tom Crisp | Nancy Hatcher McCullough | Lynn Wilen |
| Carol Danke | Jane Niehaus | David Wilkinson |
| Jon and Barbara Durst | Claudia and Chuck Owens | Peggy Witham |
| Marc & Gerda Faye | Marjorie Pearce | Ryan Baum & Alice Wong |
| Wanda Freeman | Jane Proctor | |
| Barbara Graham | Marsha Reemts | |

Become a patron by contributing \$100 or more.

Please support these local businesses. They support the Yolo County Historical Society.

- The House Dresser**
- Corner Drug**
- Local Inspirations**

- Simas Family Vineyard**
- Dahlin Associates**

Yolo County Historical Society's Annual Meeting
Thursday, June 17 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Hattie Weber Museum
445 C Street, Davis

You are invited to our annual meeting. We will tour the WPA building as well as the Hattie. We will have a short meeting recognizing our "Honoring History Award" recipient. We will also meet the new co-directors of the Hattie Weber.

Refreshments and cookies will be provided.

Yolo County Historical Society

P O Box 1447

Woodland, CA 95776

Dated Material

Submitting letters and articles

Format articles in Word and send as email attachments to Kathy Harryman khwoodland@aol.com

Change of Address

Please notify Kathy Harryman 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.

We are a 5013c tax deductible organization

Tax id number: **23-7086043**

See our website at ychs.org

Editor: Barbara Sommer
basommer@ucdavis.edu