

# Yolo County Historical Society



## Prez Says

As I sit here and compose the January newsletter, I am dismayed how quickly 2019 flew by! In a couple of days, we will have the 2nd decade of the century! I remember when we were all bemoaning the changeover from 1999 to 2000 and how all the computers were going to crash, and all our information would be lost. Boy, changes do occur, and history always should give us a chuckle.

As we move into the new year, we are continuing opening the businesses in Woodland on the First Friday of each month. We will begin in February. Hopefully, we will be in the former *Woody's Jewelers* at 532 Main Street. We also have other businesses who are interested in participating. The Society is encouraging the Davis and Winter's groups to think about opening their businesses. Hopefully, that will happen.

On a sad note, we lost the Stephens Barn in the Capay Valley. That redwood barn was originally a tobacco barn. Yes, tobacco in Yolo County.... It was sold to Granite Construction and the county gave them permission to dismantle it. Betsy Monroe took the lead on this one. She researched and wrote letters and talked to the county. But to no avail. Thank you, Betsy for your diligence.

Here's hoping this newsletter brings you all a happy, healthy New Year. Remember, as always....

History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President

## Business Buddies

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

The House Dresser  
Corner Drug  
Local Inspirations

## 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  
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***Become a patron by  
contributing \$100 or more.***

## ***The Old Farmer's Almanac***

by Kathy Harryman

Around this time of year, someone sends us a copy of the *Old Farmer's Almanac*. I usually put it in the bathroom and that's where it stays to be read whenever we have the time. I've always wondered about the *Almanac* – how it began, who started it, where do they get their information? I didn't realize that I would begin a fascinating journey into the historical beginnings of this simple, paper publication.

Almanacs have been around since the 14th century. *Webster's Dictionary* defines the word 'almanac' as "1: a publication containing astronomical and meteorological data for a given year and often including a miscellany of other information 2: a usually annual publication containing statistical, tabular, and general information."

The first known use of the word almanac was in the 14th century. The word comes from

Middle English *almenak*, from Medieval Latin *almanach*, probably from Arabic *al-manākh* the almanac (see [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/almanac](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/almanac)).

The first almanac in North America was published by William Pierce of Harvard College in 1639 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The most important almanacs were published in New England by Nathaniel Ames of Dedham, Massachusetts, publication lasting from 1726 to 1775. Benjamin Franklin's brother, James, published the *Rhode-Island Almanack* starting in 1728. The colonists brought with them a tradition of reading and creating almanacs.

The most famous almanac in colonial times, was Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*. On December 19, 1732 Franklin published his first almanac under the pseudonym of Richard Saunders. The almanac was published for the year of 1733 and was published once a year for the next 25 years. It contained all sorts of interesting information such as the calendar, weather predictions, sayings, poems and demographics. It also included recipes, trivia, advice, aphorisms, and proverbs about industry and frugality. Franklin considered it a vehicle of instruction for common people who could not afford books, a literature for the masses. Almanacs were the most read secular books in the colonies.

*Poor Richard's Almanack* was not all serious business. Franklin's wit is present in the following

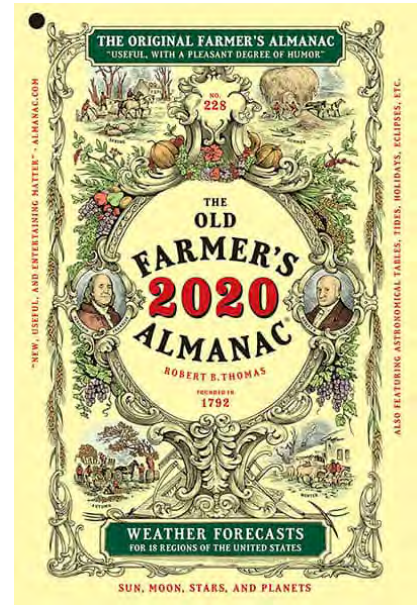
"One today is worth two tomorrows."

"Love your Enemies, for they tell you your Faults."

"He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals."

"There never was a good war or a bad peace."

How do 3 people keep a secret? "Three may keep a secret if Two of them are dead."



*Continued on the next page*

Almanac, *continued from page 2*

The almanac was a best seller in the American colonies; printing up to 10,000 copies a year. Its success brought wealth to Franklin. *Poor Richard's Almanack* was so popular that Napoleon ordered it translated into Italian and later it was also translated into French (see [www.benjamin-franklin-history.org/poor-richards-almanac/](http://www.benjamin-franklin-history.org/poor-richards-almanac/)).

*The Farmer's Almanac*, with its tidbits of delightful information, has been in existence since 1792. The magazine was created by Robert B. Thomas. He published his first issue of *The Farmer's Almanac* in 1792. The "Old" was added in 1832. Thomas said, "We must strive always to be useful, with a pleasant degree of humor."

Born in Grafton, Massachusetts, nine years before the start of the American Revolution, Richard B. Thomas was brought up on a farm in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. He was fascinated by science and at age 16 read Ferguson's *Astronomy*, which he came across in his father's library. He later wrote that "it was from the pleasing study of this work I first imbibed the idea of calculating an almanack." With this dream in mind, he became a bookseller, taught school, built a store and bindery near the family farm, and studied astronomy in his spare time. In early 1792, he went to Boston to study mathematics under the tutelage of another almanac maker, Osgood Carlton, and that fall delivered the copy for the first edition of what he called *The Farmer's Almanac* to printers Joseph Belknap and Thomas Hall. With its format and contents established, it was ready for the longest publishing tenure in American history. Although Thomas died more than 150 years ago and 12 Almanac editors have followed him, no other name but his has ever appeared on the cover of **The Old Farmer's Almanac** ([www.almanac.com/fact/robert-b-thomas-birthday-founder-of-the-holiday](http://www.almanac.com/fact/robert-b-thomas-birthday-founder-of-the-holiday)).

The initial cost of the book was six pence (about four cents).

Today, *The Old Farmer's Almanac* stands as the oldest continuously published periodical in North America. ([www.almanac.com/extra/life-and-times-robert-b-thomas](http://www.almanac.com/extra/life-and-times-robert-b-thomas)).

### **But how accurate is *The Old Farmer's Almanac*?**

The publishers say it is 80% accurate. (That's a higher percentage than our weather men/women today). The secret formula that Thomas used to predict the weather takes into consideration sunspot activity, tidal action of the moon, the position of the planets, and a variety of other factors. The formula is still in use today. Few people have seen the actual formula. It is kept in a black tin box at the Almanac offices in New Hampshire.

### **What type of winter is predicted for 2020?**

According to the 2020 Farmers' Almanac, this winter will be filled with so many ups and downs on the thermometer that it may remind you of a "Polar Coaster." "Our extended forecast is calling for yet another freezing, frigid, and frosty winter for two-thirds of the country," shares Editor Peter Geiger.

### **Why is there a hole in *The Farmers Almanac*?**

That hole isn't a defect; it's a part of history. Starting with the first edition of *The Farmers' Almanac* in 1818, readers used to hang it up on nails in their homes, barns, and outhouses (to provide both reading material and toilet paper)

*The Old Farmer's Almanac* publishes four editions per year. Its annual circulation is 3 million copies.



# Yolo Fliers Club Centennial Celebration

by Jeanne M. Locatelli, Ray Goodson and Jeff Burger

*The following article was initially published in the Fliers Club Newsletter, 2018.*

The *Yolo Fliers Club* celebrated its 100th anniversary on September 28, 2018. Festivities included a morning golf tournament with many players wearing 1919 style golf attire. The Centennial Celebration evening had many members both past and present, and their families in attendance. Period dress was worn by many, which added to the joyous event. There was an on-going video presentation of the history of the club in the main dining room, along with hors d'oeuvres and cocktails

The party proceeded outdoors by the 7th hole for the proclamation presentations from the City of Woodland, the County of Yolo, and the California Alliance for Golf. YFC Member Wally Sheffield's portrayal of the Yolo Fliers Club founder, O.W.H. Pratt brought to life again what he envisioned in 1919. Pratt wanted YFC to be a country club for golfers, swimmers, and fliers; while hoping to form teams in baseball, bowling, swimming, boxing, fencing, and flying. Joining O.H.W. Pratt was member Marlene Malby portraying Mathilda Leland, first woman member of the original 100 members in 1919. Mathilda gave insight into the movement of women in business and gaining the right to vote. Mathilda was the owner and manager of the *Strand Theater* on Main Street in Woodland.

Some historical happenings in the club:

The 1919 initial membership fee was \$100 and the yearly dues \$30.

The first Fliers Club dinner and dance was held in April of 1920 at the Armory Hall in Woodland, with more than 400 guests in attendance. The evening was described as one of the most brilliant in the history of Woodland's social calendar.

The largest civilian air meet on the Pacific coast, according to the Associated Press, was

held on May 7, 1921, at the Yolo Fliers Club. The second annual Aero Exhibition and Race meet, with more than 4,000 in attendance brought national attention to the City of Woodland. Press reports were published in over 1600 papers throughout the country. Many national and internationally known aviators participated in the air show. There are several famous aviator photographs including one signed by Amelia Earhart on display at the club.

At the entrance gate to the Fliers Club, there is a memorial to those soldiers from Yolo County who died while fighting in World War One.

In the late 1930's the club nearly closed due to the Great Depression. There were many individuals, businesses, and local farmers that participated in the effort to save the Club, including the Woodland Chamber of Commerce. The club re-opened for play with nine holes on the first day of April in 1940. The second nine holes opened in 1958. Since that time the club has developed into one of the finest golfing facilities in the Sacramento Valley.





**Yolo Fliers  
100th  
Centennial**



Top: Unknown pilots.

Middle: Marlene Malty as 1st woman member, Mathilda Leland; and Wally Sheffield as founder, O. W. H. Pratt.

Bottom: Billy Sanders, Marlene Malty, Tammy and Mike Domgaard.

# The Village Homes Subdivision in Davis Origins and Evolution of “A Better Place to Live”

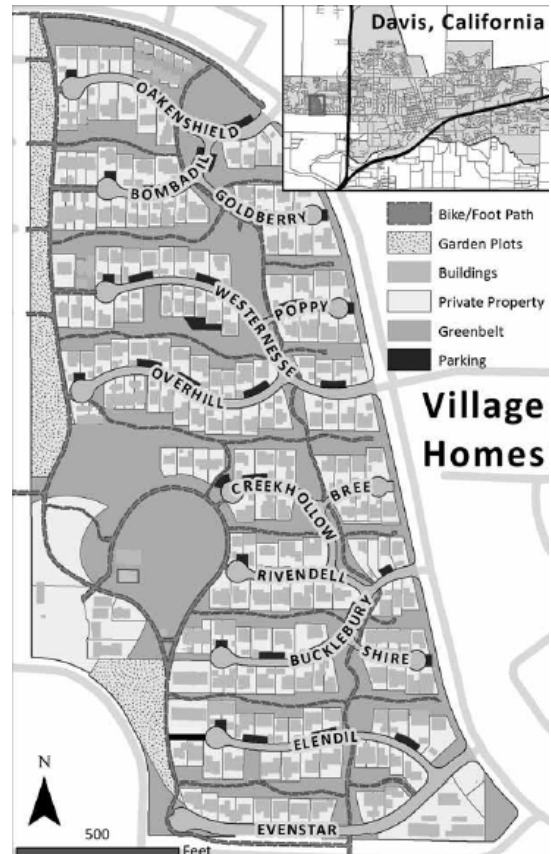
by Dennis Dingemans

*The following is an abstract of an article published in the Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, 2018.*

Village Homes is a seventy-acre, 245-residential-unit subdivision in Davis, California, built in 1975–1983. It challenged various American subdivision norms while championing energy efficiency and solar systems; on-site groundwater recharge; mingled residential and agricultural uses; off-street paths for walking and cycling and reduced space for automobiles; shared semi-private open spaces to nurture neighborhood interaction; housing stock that varied in size, tenure, and cost to foster social diversity; a village center with businesses and community services; and a strong sense of place.

All this was made possible by supportive contexts ranging in scale from individual actors, local politics in college town Davis, California’s, long history as a place sympathetic to “the search for the ideal,” California’s environmental leadership, and national and international events, chiefly the 1970s’ oil crises. Forty years later, nearly all original features of Village Homes remain intact, with the clearest exception being affordable housing, the loss of which has occurred across Davis and much of California. Its environmental and social design features have diffused to various extents to other developments in Davis and beyond, but no other subdivision in America has the same package, which reflects a particular place and time. Creating a denser version of Village Homes is a desirable goal.

Read more: Download the wonderfully descriptive paper (APCG YEARBOOK • Volume 80 • 2018) at <http://ychs.org/publications/VillageHomes.pdf>



# Membership Matters

by Kathy Harryman

People make history and everyone has a story to tell.

Many local historical societies were founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by amateur historians whose interest in the past was often combined with a desire to celebrate the significance, growth and business potential of the community. These early societies were commonly formed by elites whose main interest was the history of people like themselves, leaders in business, commerce and government. Their mission was to preserve the legacy of their ancestors, to commemorate local heroes and to preserve historic architecture. Rapid urbanization and urban renewal in the 20th century led to another wave of interest in preserving local history. No one knows for sure how many local historical societies and small museums exist in the United States today—rough estimates place the number at over 10,000.

You are a vital part of the *Yolo County Historical Society*. We invite you to help us continue to preserve and tell your stories – our stories – in the coming years. Your contributions sustain us and inspire us to continue to make Yolo County history real and relevant.

Share your newsletter with a friend and invite them to join us. Or give a gift of membership. Membership fees directly support our mission – to engage and empower people to make the past a meaningful part of our everyday lives. History does rule!

Read more: *The Future of Local Historical Societies* by Debbie Ann Doyle | Dec 1, 2012

<https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2012/the-future-of-local-historical-societies>

## Ten Myths about the Cold

from The Old Farmer’s Almanac 2019

1. Do you lose most of your heat from your head? *No.*
2. What should you do if your fingers or toes are cold? *Wiggle them.*
3. Is a cup of coffee or a sip of brandy a good way to warm up? *No. Drink warm water.*
4. If you go out in the cold, will you catch a cold? *No. Colds are from a virus.*
5. If you fall through ice and into water, will you die of hypothermia right away? *No. It takes about 1 hour to die of hypothermia*
6. Dehydration is not a danger when you exercise in cold weather. *False. It is a danger because you are losing more water through your breath.*
7. If you’re stranded and thirsty, should you eat snow? *No.*
8. If I’m feeling cold, you must be feeling it too. *No. Age, gender and fitness levels determine cold.*
9. Is shivering good? Why do we shiver? *Your body is trying to warm up.*
10. Does cold always feel the same? *No, 10 degree change feels colder in the fall than in the spring.*

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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 \$1.00 or more 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.

**Editor:** Barbara Sommer  
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