

# Yolo County Historical Society



## Prez Says

A lot is happening right now in the world of History in the county. As many of you are aware, the county fair has a new CEO, Sarah Pelle, and part of her job has been to institute changes to make the fair a profitable enterprise. One of the items that has been in major controversy is our little Fair Museum. There have been multiple meetings with the CEO and the two major history groups: Yolo County Historical Society and Native Sons of the Golden West. Since the negotiations are ongoing, I am limited in sharing details. Just know that we are diligent (see below).

Since this is March and Women's History Month, I thought it might be different to share with all of you information that is dear to my heart. Many of you know that I collect dolls and have for a long time. I mostly concentrate on composition dolls, but I have developed a large collection of World War I military dolls. I shared my collection at the Hattie Weber when we celebrated during the parade. I also have a large collection of black rag dolls. I thought it might be interesting to share with all of you, some of the women who created dolls since this is Women's History Month. I hope you will be awed as I am. These women were AWESOME!

Again, as always, History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President

## Update on the Yolo County Fair Museum

Dino Gay and I have met with Sarah Pelle to try to come to some resolution regarding the museum on the fairgrounds. We also met with the Fair Board and made a presentation to them including the documentation regarding the concept of the museum. We felt it was important for them to know the reason why we are there and what we hope to accomplish. Our next step is to invite them to the museum so they can see what we have to offer.

Right now, we are in the process of discussing the items of concern for both the Fair Board and us. The major concern is the PGE cost to heat and cool the building. Because we have items that react to the heat and cold, we have had to keep the heating unit at about 62degrees. That has caused some concern and worry for the Fair Board. We have decided that we will hold off on some projects that we had scheduled for the spring. In the meantime, Jenny Lillge is composing an MOU for the Schoolhouse. Apparently, we once had one (probably in 1954) but no one can find it. There is no problem with the schoolhouse.



# In Celebration of Women's History Month

by Kathy Harryman

The following are stories of several women who became very successful creating dolls for a growing consumer market. There are more stories, but I thought the following were the most interesting. Hope you enjoy and hopefully it will bring back pleasant memories.

## Nancy Ann Storybook Dolls

In 1936, with \$125.00 to invest in her business, Nancy Ann Abbott, in her apartment in San Francisco, created what was to become a very famous line of dolls. These dolls were only 3 ¾" tall. Within a decade, Nancy Ann Dressed Dolls, Inc., would become the most popular doll producer in the United States. Her company turned out 12,000 dolls per day.

Over time, the company would change the composition and look of their dolls, and in 1945 they changed the company name to Nancy Ann Storybook Dolls, Inc. The company created dolls of the week, dolls of the month, storybook characters, sporty dolls, party dolls and dolls from around the world. I am sure many of the readers had a Nancy Ann doll or had a relative who had one.



## Terri Lee

Violet Lee Gradwohl was an innovative and creative mother with little business experience who lived in Nebraska in the 1940's. "Terri Lee" was the name of one of her daughters. Violet's cousin sculpted the original mold and an artist, Lee Plat, was one of original painters of the doll's delicate features and distinctive eyelashes.

The doll was one of the world's best dressed toddlers in the 1940's and 50's, and a fashion icon to many little girls across the country. There were over 500 different costumes and accessories at the height of her popularity.

The company was one of the first to promote diversity with an ethnic doll line in the 1940's. The company was also the first to form strategic partnerships with the Girl Scouts, Peter Pan Peanut Butter, and Steiff, bringing more name recognition and popularity to the Terri Lee family of dolls.

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**Dolls** - *continued*

**Kewpie**

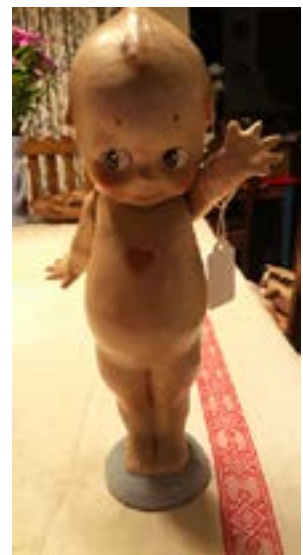
Rose O’Neill always loved to draw. Her father would leave special sharpened pencils and blank paper around the house for her. At age 13, Rose entered a children’s drawing contest sponsored by the *Omaha Herald* and won first prize. At the age of 16, she went to New York City on her own where she stayed in a convent with the Sisters of St. Regis.



After selling a portfolio of sixty drawings in three months, she became the highest paid female illustrator in the United States and became the first female staff artist at Puck Magazine. In 1909, she created the Kewpies. They first appeared in the Christmas issue of the *Ladies Home Journal* and then appeared regularly in the *Women’s Home Companion* and *Good Housekeeping*.

Kewpies became a phenomenon. The merchandising boom swept over the world in 1913 and lasted for decades. She became a very wealthy woman. Her estate was worth \$1.4 million (approximately \$50 million today).

She became known as the “Queen of Bohemian Society.” She also became a women’s rights advocate and was considered one of the world’s five most beautiful women.



Rose was a workaholic and continued to produce a large body of work. Her mentor was Auguste Rodin who encouraged her to show her personal drawings in Paris. After her Paris exhibit, she returned to New York where she showed her work again. She spent the rest of her life holding salons at her Washington Square apartment where poets, actors, dancers, and the great thinkers of the day would gather.

**Madame Alexander**



The Alexander Doll Company was founded in 1923 in New York City by the four daughters of Maurice and Hannah Alexander. In 1923, at the age of 28, Beatrice was able to obtain a loan for \$1,600 and established the Alexander Doll Company. Hiring her sisters as doll makers, she designed and sold cloth dolls which were, in a way, the antithesis of the porcelain high-end dolls that she believed were not meant for true play but for admiration from afar. The girls sold their dolls in their father’s shop.

In 1929, the name “Madame Alexander” appeared in the trade catalogues and came to represent dolls of quality. There are over 6,500 different personality dolls. They were outfitted in silks, velvets, fine satins, and beautiful accessories. Famous dolls included the Dionne Quints, Scarlett O’Hara, and Little Women.

In 2005, The Toy Association analyzed the most popular American toys in the decade 1920-29. Madame Alexander led the list.

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**Dolls** - *continued*

**The Gollywog**

Florence Kate Upton was born in 1873 in New York, a child of immigrant parents. At the age 15, Florence joined her father in taking classes at the National Academy of Design in New York. Florence’s father died. At the age of 16, she obtained work as a professional illustrator.

In 1893, she left New York and returned to her family in England. In 1895 she began to sketch out ideas for a children’s book using penny wooden dolls as her models. Her aunt, Kate Hudson, found a blackface minstrel toy in her attic and Florence used this character in her story book. The toy named “Gollywog” provided the inspiration that she needed to complete her book.



She created 13 Golliwog adventures. The doll became a popular children’s toy during a large part of the 20th century. Unfortunately, she did not patent the name and it was used indiscriminately by companies throughout England in various advertising items. Upton continued to paint and study art. She became an accomplished society portraitist.

**Dolly Dimples and the Campbell Soup Dolls**

Grace Drayton was born in 1878 and raised in a family of artists. She attended the Philadelphia School of Design for Women in 1893. She began her career as a freelance artist in 1895. She created comic strips for the Hearst newspapers. Her most notable comic strip was “Naughty Toodles.”



In 1904, her husband encouraged her to do illustrations for the Campbell Soup Company. The company hoped to market their soup to children. Grace was awarded the contract and drew the ‘chubby kids.’ Parents loved the cute kids so much that artwork, dolls and figurines were created. The kids were featured in the *Ladies Home Journal* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

She was noted for her paper dolls, especially “Dolly Dimple,” who appeared in the women’s magazine *Pictorial Review*.



Grace was the first woman to be a cartoonist for Hearst. She is one of the first and most successful female cartoonists in America.

There are many more women who created their own line of dolls and became rich and famous with their small sideline business. They provided dolls that became playmates for many youngsters. Many hours were spent making up stories and pretending. The dolls I have included are in my collection and make me smile. I hope you are smiling too.



# History Happenings

by Kathy Harryman

Who said there isn't much happening here in Yolo County????

## Railroad Museum

On Saturday, April 20, 10-2 p.m. the **Railroad Museum** will hold its annual yard sale. This is their major fundraiser for the year. They need donations from the community. No clothes or large furniture. If interested call Raylene Ewing at 530-219-0287

Progress at the Museum: Members have been working on renovating the three baggage carts and now will work on a baggage tag cart and for use in the Christmas parade. They have renovated the scale and one of the signals. They have been working with the California Northern railroad yard to obtain a cement phone booth that was used to telegraph news down the lines. But, best of all, according to Raylene, the curtains are now up in the ladies' waiting room. No more peeking!

## Hattie Weber Museum

The Hattie Weber Museum is focusing on the Davis double decker buses that have been part of the community for years. Organized by the Associated Students of UC Davis campus over fifty years ago, the buses have become an integral part of the Davis community. The original English-style double decker bus was brought on a boat and driven to Davis. The buses require conductors to keep passengers safe as they enter and exit. They wear a vest, wave a flag, and help anybody off. The bus recently celebrated its 100 millionth rider, Gabriela Jimenez, a political science student who used the bus to get to class. There were two original double-decker buses. One has been returned to England and the other has disappeared! Where could you hide a red double decker bus???

## Native Sons

The Union Church project has received \$86,000 from the county's rural cannabis fund. The money will help pay for structural and some demo work. They received a \$5,900 grant for their entry doors. They need to finish the windows and install a heating system.

## Tilly Fest

The Native sons are beginning to plan for Tilly Fest. They need sponsors and vendors. It will be a music venue. There is some discussion about having a cow plop contest and a butter carving event. If you have any questions, contact Dino Gay at 530 383-0772

**Kiwanis** is selling ribs on April 13. It is a pickup and go event. The information is online.

## Winters History Museum

On Saturday May 4, at 2 PM in Rotary Park in Winters, there will be a Japantown Monument dedication ceremony, a project of the Winters Museum. This is so timely because earlier the Yolo County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a resolution rescinding a discriminatory decision made during World War II. In June of 1943, the Board passed a resolution opposing the release of Japanese Americans confined in internment camps across the United States. Thank you, Winters History Museum.

## Haswell Cabin

We are still collecting monies to save the Haswell Cabin. There is a dinner scheduled on the Rumsey Bridge in June. As soon as I have more information, I will let you know.

## 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.

Starr and Jeff Barrow  
Ryan Baum and Alice Wong  
Don and Pat Campbell  
Odette & Dana Christensen  
Katharine Ashly Cobb  
Rob Coman  
Carol & Ed Conley  
Tom Crisp  
Paul & Leila Crist  
Ginger & Bob Day  
Mark and Merrily DuPree  
Jon and Barbara Durst  
Gerda Faye  
Tom & Marilyn Fields  
Dino Gay  
Al & Kay Graf  
Barbara Graham  
Richard Harrison  
Kathy Harryman  
Dianne Holinghead  
Dan and Sarah Hrdy  
Steve and Teri Laugenour  
Dr. Frank and Mrs. Liz Lemus  
Jane Niehaus  
Jim Niehaus  
Claudia and Chuck Owens  
Marjorie Pearce  
Jane Proctor  
Marcia Reemts  
Carol Rose  
Meg and Tom Stallard  
Roz Stone  
Mike Truitt Family  
Kris Turner  
Ramon and Karen Urbano  
Lydia and Steve Venables  
Lynn Wilen  
David Wilkinson  
Peggy & Suellen Witham

## Business Buddies

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

### **Corner Drug**

Dahlin & Essex, Inc.

### **Legislative Intent Service**

Marco Brando

### **Pleasant Pheasant**

### **Simas Family Vineyard**