

Yolo County Historical Society



Prez Says

It's summer! The year is halfway over! Do you feel as though time is passing so quickly that you are on a roller coaster? For those of you who have been in California a long time, remember the Giant Dipper in Santa Cruz? How we used to love to go on that coaster when we were young and so adventuresome.

The Giant Dipper, a wooden coaster, was created in 1924, now celebrating its 100th year anniversary. It is considered one of the top ten oldest coasters in the world and the fourth oldest in the United States. Wow! Who knew? The Dipper cost \$50,000 to build and the maximum speed is 55 mph.

Now why am I reminiscing about a ride that isn't even in this county? Well, I am always amazed at what people can do if they want to save something. That ride has had its share of controversy, yet here it is still standing and working and continuing to provide rides for thousands of individuals who want a bit of excitement. Isn't that what history is all about? We see something that we think should be saved, and we work to convince others of like minds to help us save it.

That's what we are all about. And that is what we are currently doing.

In this newsletter, there are accounts of three major events that are happening in this organization. The first is a 'new look' inside our schoolhouse. The second is an ongoing discussion with the fair grounds about the Fair Museum and the third is the beginnings of a campaign to acknowledge Woodland's China Alley.



Along with all that, we are planning to activate our lecture series in the fall. Wow! Makes me tired just thinking about it.

Dues for the year are due. I have enclosed a form in the mailed form of this newsletter.

As always,
History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President

Mark Your Calendar

End of the year dinner/meeting

Tuesday, August 6, 5:30-8 p.m.

Spring Lake School, Yolo County Fairgrounds

See our new look schoolhouse.

New Look Schoolhouse

by Kathy Harryman

Spring Lake schoolhouse has taken on a new look thanks to Mardi Bagan and Barbara Graham (pictured to the right).

The thought originated last summer, when Mardi and Terri Laugenour were docents during the fair. Terri thought that the schoolhouse needed some updating. Mardi thought it needed some organizing and structure. That concern was brought to a monthly board meeting and all agreed.

With the board's approval, the ball was rolling. We waited until spring. Mardi led the campaign and hired Ramiro Barriaga to come in and help rehang the pictures and clean out the light structures. We were collecting dead insects in the lights. He also fixed one of our display cases.



When I returned from my jaunt to Solvang, I met with Mardi and Barbara and looked at what they had done. Wow! It looked terrific. I went through the file cabinet and decided to eliminate some of the old books that Marilyn Kraegel used to create the Schoolhouse program.



We also found photos of past students and classes from the old schoolhouses throughout the county. What a treat. We are going to place them in binders and have them available to our visitors during the fair. There were also a lot of old schoolbooks.

At our next board meeting, Mardi will present the results and request that we have an old-fashioned schoolhouse book sale and sell the books during the fair. The money generated will go to help schools with their transportation needs during the next school year. Thank you, ladies.

If anyone would like to work on scrapbooks, please let me know. It's a great quiet time activity during the hot summer months.

Artists of the Spring Lake Schoolhouse

When you enter the Spring Lake Schoolhouse you hopefully will notice the paintings of various schoolhouses on the walls. I thought it might be interesting to share with you something about the artists – thanks to Rachel Poutasse, Library Assistant at the Archives, for finding and providing the following information.



Evelina B. Lawrence was a renown artist who successfully took up her artistic expression later in life. She was born in 1916 and grew up on the family's ancestral farm in Kennetit Square, Pennsylvania. The home and property was deeded to Evelina's ancestors by William Penn in the 1600's.

She came to Woodland around 1966 with her husband, Charles A. Lawrence. They lived here for about fifteen years. She taught art classes through the Community Art Center. She died in Klamath Falls, Oregon, in the age of 93. We are grateful to Evelina and her artistic ability.

The other artist is Charles M. Gordon. "Bud" was born in 1909 in Montana. He moved to Yolo County in the 1930's and became a farmer in the Capay Valley. He was a descendent of George D. Stephens. He married Kathryn Gable in 1937.

Charles was very involved with the Yolo County Farm Bureau and the Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. We are thankful that we have his paintings of schoolhouses throughout the county.

Next time you come to the schoolhouse, look for these two artists' works.

Update on the Museum at the Fairgrounds

We have been meeting with the administration at the fairgrounds regarding the cost of heating and electrical use of the building. In a good faith effort, we have paid \$100 per month to help defray the costs. The administration has purchased a unit that will record the electrical and heating usage. They will then use the PG&E rates to bill us.

All the museums met several weeks ago. We all talked about what we wanted to see happen at the museum. Several museums are ready to leave the facility. They don't have the funds to contribute to the costs. We appointed Mary Aulman, representing Yolo County Historical Society, and Paul Shaner, representing Native Sons of the Golden West, to be our negotiators. I introduced them to Sarah Pelle to negotiate on our behalf. We would like to stay until the fair. After that, who knows???

The Yolo County Historical Society Board met on June 28 for a brief overview of the proposed contract. Mary Aulman led us through each article of the document. We discussed the articles and made suggestions. All the members agreed that we should sign the document and commit to a year.

We are concerned with the PG&E costs. Our suggestions will go to the Yolo Fair Museum Historical groups on Tuesday, July 9. There will be an update at our annual meeting on August 9 at the Spring Lake Schoolhouse.

The Spring Lake Schoolhouse is not part of this discussion. Jenny Lillge has written an MOU on our behalf. Sarah has assured us that there will be no problems with the schoolhouse. The MOU was presented and discussed. There were a few additional changes. The Board voted to approve the MOU. Hopefully this MOU will be for five years.

Woodland's China Town or Yolo County's China Town or Saving China Alley

by Kathy Harryman

Are you wondering why I have three titles to this article? I really didn't know what to title it so I decided to use all three. As many of you know, in April of 2021, I gave a talk about "The Old China Town." I had heard various names and numbers of Chinese inhabitants throughout the years. I wanted to know exactly how many Chinese were in Yolo County and what they did for a living.

I gathered information from the 1860, 1870, and 1880 census. I then developed a presentation using my research. I concluded that Chinatown on China Alley was a thriving subculture in Woodland, the county seat. Here the Chinese congregated with their friends and shared common language, customs and social activities. They could play dominoes, mahjong, and gamble. They could visit their Chinese stores and doctors.

After the presentation, Dino and I worked with the city and were able to get signs that say "China Alley." You can see them on Elm Street and behind the Wells Fargo parking lot. We would like to do more with China Alley.

In the Spring 2024 issue of *Preservation: The magazine*, there is an [article](#) on Chinatowns and a quote by William Wei, University of Colorado Professor who says "Chinatowns are examples of the American Dream. They are a significant part of America's immigrant experience and affirm our contributions to the development of the United States."

In 2023, the National Trust launched **America's Chinatowns**, an initiative to work with partners and communities to research, elevate, and build coalitions that sustain and support historic Chinatowns across the United States.

The Chicago Café

Compiled from articles from the internet

The Chicago Café in Woodland has always been an anomaly for me. It serves Chinese food but why is it named Chicago Café? It doesn't make sense.

I have asked the question and have never received an answer until researching for this article. Professor Gabriel "Jack" Chin, from UC Davis said that "Chicago" was a common name for Chinese restaurants because the city had a reputation for serving superb Chinese cuisine.



The Chicago Cafe has held a warm place in the hearts of many of the residents of Yolo County. People regularly go there to eat and meet friends and family. The restaurant is very small with booths and a counter. It reminds me of one of the old-fashioned restaurants of the 1950's and 60's. The seats are worn down with the indentions of many 'bums' that have sat and ate and talked. When you enter the establishment, you get a warm family feeling.

The walls are filled with memorabilia of the Fong Family, the third-generation owners. Oftentimes, Paul Fong and his wife Nancy are serving in the restaurant. Paul says that his grandfather started it and then his dad came here. Most of the Chinese immigrants to this area came from the Guangdong region in the Pearl River Delta. On the back of the building is a historic plaque marking the locatin of the former old Fong Family home that was attached to the restaurant.



Nancy and Paul Fong

According to an article in the *The Guardian*, "... the Fongs worked punishing hours. Many decades ago, when John (grandfather) was in charge, the Chicago Cafe operated from 5:30 a.m. to serve breakfast to farmers until 3 a.m. to serve patrons of nearby bars.

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continued - Chicago Cafe

Recently a group of students from UC Davis, under the direction of Professor Chin heard about the Chicago Café. Leading a team of interdisciplinary students, he wants to document the diner’s past and how the institutions reflect the Chinese American experience. According to Carla Meyer in her [article](#), “He (Chin) thinks that the Chicago Café might be the oldest continuously running Chinese restaurant in California and maybe in the United States.”

The students are studying the diner’s history from information on the walls, local registries, newspaper archives and other historical sources to determine the age of the restaurant. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “Accounts of the restaurant servicing customers earlier than 1910 have been spotted in newspapers from the 30’s and 40’s.”

The student team found the date 1904 in a trove of artifacts uncovered at the restaurant. There was also a business card and a handwritten letter. An article in 1940 in the *Woodland Daily Democrat* said “For over 37 years, the Chicago Restaurant has served Woodland well with the finest of foods at extremely low prices.” That would put the origin date to 1903.

See more detail at the following links:

Is America’s oldest Chinese restaurant in a tiny suburb of Sacramento? Historians investigate, *The Guardian*
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/may/02/oldest-chinese-american-restaurant-chicago-cafe>

Chicago Cafe: California’s Oldest Chinese Restaurant, UC Davis
<https://www.ucdavis.edu/curiosity/news/chicago-cafe-is-oldest-chinese-restaurant-in-california>

How a UC Davis law professor discovered the oldest Chinese restaurant in America, ABC 10
<https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/how-law-professor-discovered-oldest-chinese-restaurant-america/103-e6c88f95-4e1f-4b07-9686-6dc89045110d>

DUES ARE DUE

Yes, it is that time again. We are the cheapest game in town. Still \$25. If you have recently joined, you do not need to send a renewal.

I’ve enclosed a form for you to fill out.

Please note that we are trying to use the internet with email addresses in place of paper. It saves us about \$1.25 per copy. If you would like to get an email, instead of a paper copy, please make sure you include your email address in the application, or let me know. Thanks, Kathy, khwoodland@aol.com

Yearly dues (membership runs from 7/1 to 6/30)

\$25 Household, \$50 Business (name in all the newsletters), \$100 Patron (name in all the newsletters and a discount on our trips)

We are a 501(3c) tax deductible organization – **ID# 23-7086043**

Make out check to **Yolo County Historical Society.**

Mail to: **YCHS, PO Box 1447, Woodland, CA 95776**

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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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They support the Yolo County Historical Society.

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YCHS Newsletter

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

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