

Yolo County Historical Society



Prez Says

What a wonderful Yolo County Fair we just had in Woodland. I hope you all went to it and saw our fabulous Yolo County Fair Museum. We had over 1,100 people visit the museum. Huge thank you to Dino Gay and his wife Katie. We now have the 'Blower" grapes planted on the side of the building. Yay team!

We were able to paint the building right before the fair opened. It looks great. Dino also arranged to have our logo put onto the front door. It's always wonderful when you have a vision and that vision becomes a reality. Our next project is security and along with that, we'd like to have an ongoing video presentation of Yolo County.

Imagine that! What a ride it has been. We first negotiated the use of the building to house the eleven plus historical groups within the county. The historical society along with Dino Gay purchased the used display cases from Woody's Jewelry Store. Then we were given a new floor to replace the old linoleum floor. We put in new lights to highlight the museum displays. The next item was painting the building and we did that. I can hardly believe we have come so far. But we couldn't have gone this far without your help. No one does a project by themselves. We all need each other to make a dream become a reality. Thank you to all of you. History does Rule! You have all shown that.

As always,

History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President



Dues are Due

If you haven't already, please pay yours.

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 501c3 tax deductible organization – ID# 23-7086043

Make out check to Yolo County Historical Society.

Mail to: **YCHS**

PO Box 1447

Woodland, CA 95776

Support Sunrise Rotary Foundation

by Kathy Harryman

Most of you know that the paint for the County Fair Museum was paid for by Sunrise Rotary Foundation. On Saturday Oct 14, 2023, 6-10 p.m., the foundation is having its fundraiser. We are one of the selected beneficiaries of the evening, along with the Woodland Public Library and the UC Davis Bee Haven. The cost of the salmon/tri-tip dinner is \$60 per person. It will be held at Waite Hall on the Yolo Fairgrounds.

I want to have the museum open at that time so everyone can see it. The event begins at 6 p.m. with a social mixer, hosted bar and u-pick raffle. At 7:30, dinner begins. At 8:30 the live auction, door prize, and grand prize drawing occurs. The grand prize raffle is worth \$3,000. The tickets are \$100 each with only 100 tickets sold. You need not be present to win. The theme of the fundraiser is western attire.

You can purchase tickets online at [WSRBBQ.eventbrite.com](https://www.wsrbbq.eventbrite.com) or contact Sue Westwood at 530-304-4735. I'd like as many historical society members (and friends) as possible to be there. This is a huge gift to the museum.

Woodland Sunrise Rotary Foundation
Presents



Our 24th annual Salmon BBQ and auction. This year we will have fun with a Yellowstone Western theme. We encourage you to come dressed in western attire to enhance the evening.

Saturday, October 14th, 2023
6:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Waite Hall, Yolo Fairgrounds
1250 E. Gum Avenue, Woodland, CA

\$60.00 per person

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- 6:00 PM - Social mixer, hosted bar and U-pick raffle.
- 7:30 PM - Dinner: Salmon, tri-tip and all the sides.
- 8:30 PM - Live auction, door prize and grand prize drawing.



GRAND PRIZE RAFFLE
Participate in our \$3,000 grand prize raffle. \$100 / ticket. Only 100 tickets sold. Need not to be present to win.

PROCEEDS BENEFIT

- Woodland Public Library - For books for mobile library.
- Yolo County Historical Society - For museum exterior painting.
- UC Davis Bee Haven - For interpretive signs.

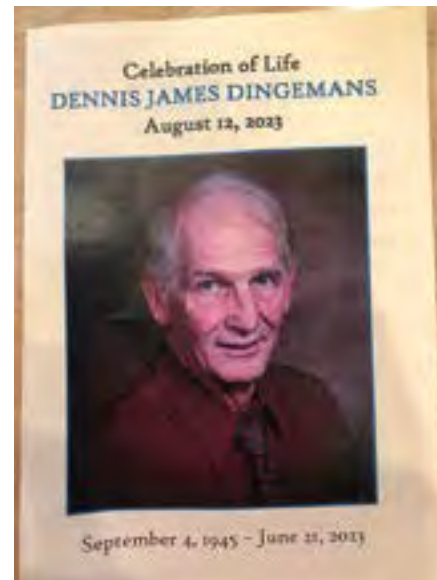
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A Eulogy to a Great Man

by Kathy Harryman

Normally, historians read biographies of great individuals like Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt, Sojourner Truth, and others during their years of study at the university. Every so often, we are very lucky to have these people in our lives. Dennis Dingemans was one such individual.

On June 21, we lost a wonderful individual who has been an avid history supporter in Yolo County. Several of us attended his funeral at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis on August 12. If I were to copy his obituary, it would take two newsletters. So, I will highlight our years with him as an active member of the Yolo County Historical Society board.



I met Dennis when I became a board member. He had recently retired from teaching Geography at UC Davis. But Dennis never really retired. It soon became apparent that Dennis did not sit around and warm a seat. He was eager to be in the action. He volunteered at the Hattie Weber Museum with Jim Beckett and a small group of ladies who staffed the facility on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. After Jim retired, Dennis became the director. He, along with the volunteers of the museum, organized many displays focusing on the history of the community.

He became actively involved in our World War I project, and rented a uniform so he could be in the parade. What a guy! He also led historical one day trips around Yolo, Colusa, Solano, and San Joaquin counties. But what I most remember about Dennis was his dogged determination to preserve Davis's only WPA-funded building, the 1937 restroom in Central Park. He not only organized a major fundraiser, but then waited patiently for years for the city to finally allow him and his group to continue with the project. His patience taught me a lot. Sometimes, I think he enjoyed playing the waiting game.

He co-authored a book on the history of Woodland and another on the history of UC Davis. He served on and chaired the Board of the Davis Cemetery District, bringing a cultural geographical perspective to that position. He served in the city of Davis Design Review Commission and the Planning Commission, as well as on several other advisory groups related to housing and economic development.

Dennis suffered with Parkinson's Disease for almost 20 years, but throughout it all, he still was seen riding his bicycle to the museum and playing scrabble with his friends. He is buried in the Davis Cemetery near the historical families of Davis. I can just see Dennis asking all sorts of questions of the families! For a more thorough obituary, please see the July 9, 2023, [obituary](#) in the *Davis Enterprise*.

Why Grapes?

On the north side of the **Yolo County Fair Museum**, are five grape vines duplicating those planted in the 1870's by Dr. Russel B. Blowers (see next page). The following is from the book **Woodland City of Trees A History** by Shipley Walters.

During the 1870's vineyards were particularly popular. In 1875, there were 496,231 grape vines growing in the county. The early Mission grapes grown by Uncle Johnny Morris had been replaced by Zinfandel and Petit Sirah wine grapes and Muscat and Sultana raisin grapes. Russel B. Blowers of Woodland, whose 80 acres are now the site of the Yolo County Fairgrounds, was the first commercial raisin producer in California. At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, he received the award for producing the best raisins in the world. Blowers was the first man in the county to use a steam pump for irrigation and he developed a raisin dryer for his Muscat grapes that was widely copied by other growers. (Walters, pg. 35)

Russel Blowers died in 1894, leaving one son and two daughters to run his ranch. The son, Russell, died in 1912 leaving the two daughters and their stepmother in charge of the ranch. Carrie Blowers died in 1930.

In Carrie Blowers, Yolo County has lost one of her outstanding woman leaders. Brave, courageous, Carrie was the daughter of R. B. Blowers, one of the very first California pioneers to establish firmly the state grape industry. . . . His (Blowers) spirit of progressive action and splendid unselfish citizenship was inherited by Carrie Blowers. With others who endeavored to follow in the footsteps of her father, we found her a loyal friend, keenly interested in farm progress and the upbuilding of our community. (*Daily Democrat*, July 3, 1930)

In 1939, Miss Annie Blowers, died. After the death of her parents, Miss Blowers and her sister, Miss Carrie Blowers, operated the Blowers ranch, aided by Frank Phillbrick, their foreman, for 30 years. The stepmother died in 1935, at the age of 100. (*Daily Democrat*, Jan. 9, 1939)

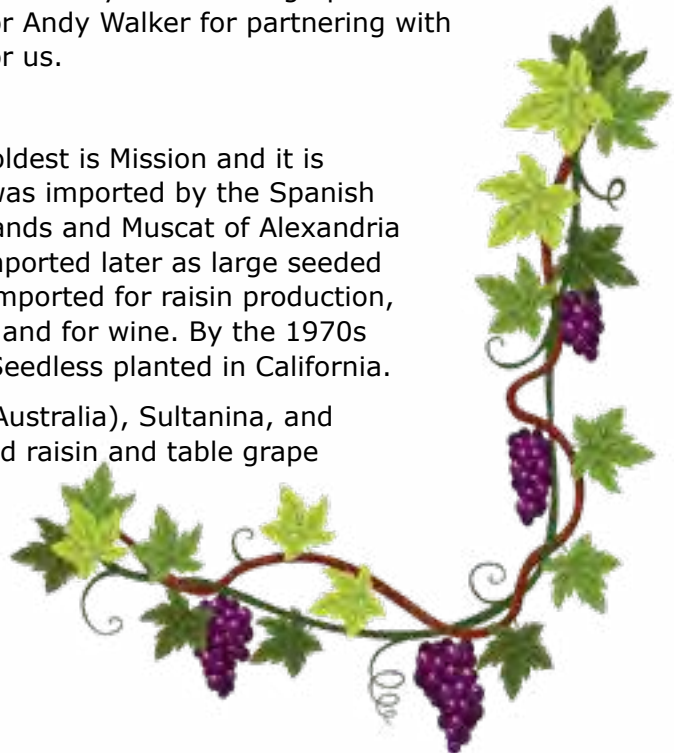
The next time you visit the museum, please make sure you view the grapes. Thanks to Professor James Lapsley and Professor Andy Walker for partnering with the museum to research and grow the grapes for us.

An additional note from Andy Walker:

All of the varieties are pure *Vitis vinifera*. The oldest is Mission and it is now known to be Listan (or Listan Prieto). It was imported by the Spanish Missionaries in the 1500s from the Canary Islands and Muscat of Alexandria was imported sometime later. Emperor was imported later as large seeded table grape variety. Thompson Seedless was imported for raisin production, but was also used for to produce table grapes and for wine. By the 1970s there were over 200,000 acres of Thompson Seedless planted in California.

Thompson Seedless is also called Sultana (in Australia), Sultanina, and Kishmish. It is now being replaced by improved raisin and table grape varieties.

Jim Lapsley added "And don't forget Zinfandel!"



Below is a copy of the description currently posted in the museum.



Blowers' raisin grape vines

Outside this window are five varieties of grapes that R.B. Blowers grew for raisin production here on this property (c. 1860s - 1870s):

1. Mission (red, south end)
2. Muscat of Alexandria (green)
3. Emperor (red)
4. Thompson Seedless (green)
5. Zinfandel (red)

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO MADE THIS EXHIBIT POSSIBLE!

Andy Walker (propagation), Jim Lapsley (research),
Tom Christison (logistics), Dennis Mariani (walnut shells), Tom Cordoza (trailer),
Katie Ball (irrigation) and Bart Vanucci (Yolo County Fairgrounds)

The Pacific Rural Press of November 4, 1876, included a detailed article Blowers' raisin vineyard in Woodland. Plants were spaced 10' x 10' with a low crown, allowing the canes to rest on the ground.

"The crown is kept low, the lowest branches being just far enough above the surface to allow the passage of a horse-hoe close up to the trunk."

In another part of the article: "In the vineyard of Mr. Blowers' the crowns of the vines are so low that most of the bunches of grapes rest upon the ground, but are not in the least injured thereby and attain a perfect development."

About a decade later, another article mentions that Blowers used temporary stakes of about two feet to lift the canes off of the ground.

Comments about the Museum

The following are comments from Facebook about the Museum. We had over 1,100 individuals attend during the 5-day fair. BIG THANK YOUS...

Elijah Rodriquez (Director at Sacramento Valley Museum)

I really enjoyed seeing all the displays!

My favorite exhibits were of the SVHR with the Woodland Train Depot and the case with memorabilia from Bill and Kathy's!

Very well done!



George Rowland

My hat goes off to the YCHS. What a great little museum.

New to Yolo County? This is a great place to learn about where you live. GREAT JOB!!!!!!

Becky Gordon

Such a fun, informative little museum, and my grandson had fun finding all the bees to win a prize.

James Minear

That used to be the fair office but they outgrew it and when the fire station became available they took that over... It was the First Aid Station for a while and now I think it's appropriate to have it as the museum! I am like you hate to see so many buildings gone and so many traditions gone!! So do like I am going to do and join the Yolo County Fair Heritage Foundation and become an active member. Go to the board meetings get involved and make a difference.

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
Bob Bigelow
Don and Pat Campbell
Odette & Dana Christensen
Katharine Ashly Cobb
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Carol & Ed Conley
Tom Crisp
Paul & Leila Crist
Ginger & Bob Day
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Business Buddies

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

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Legislative Intent Service

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Simas Family Vineyard

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