

Yolo County Historical Society



Prez Says

There is only three months until Christmas! Just joking – although when shopping in the large stores, there is a lot of holiday items to purchase.

There has been a lot happening within the society. We have begun a new year and dues are due. If you have not paid your dues, this is your last newsletter. As we do not have fund raisers, other than the Big Day of Giving, dues are important to this organization. We have managed to keep them low, so that they can be affordable for anyone who is interested in the history of this county. See payment details on page 6.

For those of you who are receiving your newsletter via email, thank you. If you are receiving the newsletter in the mail, that option is still available, but the price of stamps has increased to 73 cents.

The fair has ended, and I would like to thank all our members who volunteered to help staff the schoolhouse and the museum. The feedback I received was very complementary. People loved looking for the cows in the museum and the schoolhouse was a bundle of activity with the children writing on the chalk boards. On Saturday alone there were over 300 people who came through the museum. Our hours were limited in both the schoolhouse and the museum. If we can staff both buildings, we will increase hours next year.

I hope you all saw the television slide show in the schoolhouse. This was made available by a donation from the *Stroll Through History*. They made it possible to show the many schoolhouses that we have in the county. If you have a photo of an old schoolhouse, please let us know so we can add it to the slide show. Thanks to Rob Coman for installing the television and working on the slides.

Many of us attended the "Dinner on the Arch." It was delightful. Food was great, evening was beautiful. The purpose was to raise funds for the Haswell Cabin. I will let you know how much they made when I get the information.

We have our first book submitted for the **Joann Larkey Historical Writing Project**. The board was presented with the criteria established by our bylaws in 2014. Because the publishing world has changed, the board decided to review the criteria. We will still accept proposals.

Pat Campbell received a book written by Dr. William S. Freeman, Jr. of Knights Landing. He arrived in 1951. He wrote 120 pages of Knights Landing history. I decided to share some of the information from his book. The information is all in his own words and spelling. He did not always use complete sentences so some of the writing reflects that. He also used the term 'no sabe' a lot. I think it means "I don't understand." The first look at Knights Landing centers around the Chinese in that area. I hope you enjoy learning about the history of that little sleepy town.

Remember, As Always,
History Rules

Kathy Harryman, President



Chinese in Knights Landing

by Ralph Webb

This is a personal history from Ralph Webb who arrived in Knights Landing in 1951. He was one of five children. This document represents his personal remembrances and research of his community. This is Part 1 of a 4-part series of memories from his unpublished work.

This account has some very sad and appalling aspects. There are parts of our history of which we cannot be proud. – Ed.

When the Chinese left the railroad they scattered to the 'four winds' some found lodgment in Knights Land, others in Kirksville, a large 'colony' settled at Smiths' Ferry where they done some farming growing mostly broom corn vegetables, etc.

Some of them went to the mines, others ran laundries, (wash houses). Some of them got cooking jobs. They fared better than the others they at least got something to eat.

Some of them worked on ranches as common laborers.

The last Chinaman in Knights Landing was an old wash chinaman named Yep. He washed for many years, he was arrested in 1913 and fined one hundred dollars for 'boot legging', which he paid. Shortly after, his house burned. What became of him 'no sabee'.



Dr. Ralph Webb

There is only one China shack in Knights Landing at this time. It is on Mill street in front of Hooper's hardware store. At one time the opium cans were piled to the eaves between this place and the other shack next door.

The Chinese got no protection from the whites. Therefore their law was vested in the "highbinders" which were the law and gospel' of the Chinese. Their law was swift and cruel, we are told any one wishing a person dispatched all that was necessary to give the 'highbinder' \$200.00. He would apprehend the poor supposed offender. As before stated the job was swift, and final.

'Highbinders' would appear here. When they left they would take a man with them. That would be the last he would be seen in or about Knights Landing.

The 'highbinders' always were dressed in the finest silk. Their head quarters were in San Francisco. They come unannounced and left as they come. Some poor Chinaman was missing when they boarded the train for San Francisco.

When they were here they talked to very few persons. I never saw one of them smile. Well I do not see how they could.

They ran gambling dens in all three of these places, Knights Landing, Kirksville, and Smiths Ferry. A boy about fifteen years old was the messenger between these places. He drove a mule hitched to a cart. He left Knights Landing about nine o'clock each morning and returned in the evening at a time that he could be back while the sun was shining. He had made the trip for about two years. One evening he was held up and robbed of about \$3000.00. The next a couple of 'highbinders' were on their way back to San Francisco with the poor boy. He never again saw Knights Landing.

continued

continued - **Knights Landing**

Years after there was a man in Knights Landing who had much trouble with the law. Do you remember the china boy that drove the mule in the cart a messenger for the China gamblers. Do you know who robbed him, he said, well I was the 'guy' and I got about \$3000.00. He said the boy begged and said the highbinders would kill him. He said he never heard anyone plead in his life. The China boy was a bright clean looking lad. My heart goes out to him to this day.



Photo from *Knights Landing: The River, the Land and the People* by Shipley Walters with Tom Anderson.

The Chinese cannot be altogether blamed for having their own laws and police, because they received no protection from the settlers . The town boys made life a night mare for them. ...

The Chinese were first class gardeners and the thing the settlers missed was the good inexpensive vegetables, their gardens were always free of weeds, and things of beauty

The Chinese peddled their vegetables in two large baskets carried on what was called a lug pole, with this set up they traveled in a trot which give the baskets a bouncing effect. It was surprising small Chinaman could carry by using this trotting gait.

In the 1880's there was an organization formed called Anti-Chinese. Any thing Chinese was boycotted. If any one employed a Chinaman and would not discharge them they were boycotted, many farmers disliked very much to let their Chinese go others did not let them go, which brought on much hard feelings.

The results was the Chinese scattered to other communities. Some went back to China, many of them died of mal-nutrition, others of disease, others of old age.

The last Chinese in Knights Landing was in 1913.

The boys threw rocks at the China houses, tied their queues together. One would get on one side and other on the opposite One would hit one of the Chinese. He would start for him not knowing he was tied to the other. One or both would be jerked over.

The Chinese were always very generous at new Years, these same boys would be on hand to get their hand out of candy and fire crackers and always got it.

These colonies were 'stag' affairs. One would seldom see a women and children were almost never on the street. They just were not here.

Read Kathy's follow-up on the next page.



Follow Up to **Chinese in Knights Landing** - Kathy Harryman

Questions? Here is additional information.

Where is Kirkville? According to the article, it was a bustling Chinese community that the young man traveled to every day to pick up money.

Kirkville, elevation 36 feet, is an unincorporated town in Sutter County. It is located on the east bank of the Sacramento River, south of Cranmore and Hinsdale, southwest of Subaco, and northwest of Robbins.

The native plant communities of Kirkville are valley grassland and riparian forest.

The U.S. Postal Service sometimes lists addresses in Kirkville as being in Robbins, because Kirkville is in the 95645-zip code and Robbins is partly in it as well.

History The site of Kirkville was once owned by O. S. Colegrove, who called it Colegrove Point. Nearby Cole Point is still named for Colegrove. The Colegrove Point post office was established from 1866 to 1871.

Kirkville is named for T. D. Kirk, who laid out the town in 1874 and called it Kirkville. Kirkville had its own post office from 1874 to 1878.

Source: <https://localwiki.org/yuba-sutter/Kirkville>

The other question I had was the definition of **highbinder**.

- 1: a professional killer operating in the Chinese quarter of an American city
- 2: a corrupt politician

This just goes to show that you can learn something everyday.



Dear Kathy,

I remember the Fong Restaurant very well. In 1930-40 when I was elementary school age and went with my parents to our almond orchard near the Colusa border, we came back to Woodland dusty and tired from harvesting in August.

We drove to Fong's Restaurant where we could go in the back door and sit in a booth with the curtain pulled. This was a big relief to my mother. I think, since we had been working since early morning.

I enjoy the newsletter very much and the news.

Sincerely

Joan Moses

Thanks for the memory - Kathy

Annual Meeting Highlights

by Kathy Harryman

Normally our annual meeting is in June, but this year we decided to hold it closer to the fair. We wanted to share the new schoolhouse look with the members. We also wanted everyone to see the new video presentation of the schoolhouses in the county.



The annual meeting is arranged to share the activities that occur during the year and to share the new year's upcoming focus. As you all know, we oversee the Yolo County Fair Museum. We are also going to reopen the 3rd grade program at the schoolhouse in the fall and spring. Marilyn Sholtz has trained two new schoolteachers, and we are always looking for others. We have had three teachers requesting information about the program.

We also plan to open the Fair Museum to the 3rd graders. I would also like to begin a series of lectures on the history of our region. We have many qualified individuals who know a lot of information about various topics. Our First Friday Woodland downtown tours are taking a break for a few years.



After the meeting we enjoyed great hamburgers cooked by the Kiwanis organization. They were wonderful. We had watermelon and cookies for dessert. Although our attendance was small, all enjoyed the event. It is always fun when you are around people who love history.



Photos by John Lofland



CONGRATULATIONS, KATHY!



Kathy Harryman has been awarded the 2024 Yolo Philanthropy Award, presented each year by the Yolo Community Foundation (YCF) to recognize volunteers and donors who make a significant impact in our community (sponsored by Nugget Market).

The nominators stated, "We're delighted to honor you for your 12 years as president of the Yolo County Historical Society and for tirelessly working to educate others about our county's history."

A reception will be held for all the honorees on **Tuesday, November 19th**, at the California Agriculture Museum, from 4:00-6:30 pm. A registration website will be available for the public on October 7th.

Dues are Due

- 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)
- *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**

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.

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