

# Yolo County Historical Society



## Prez Says

Summer is over and fall is upon us. The days grow shorter, the sun is not as bright and hot. The early mornings are just a bit nippy. We just finished Woodland's *Stroll Through History*. Every year, our group helps docent a house during the event. This year we were in the Scibienski's two story Italianate Victorian on First Street. It was a challenge because we had to take groups through the entire house. Five docents saw 60-70 people during their assigned time. Thank you, Stroll Committee, for doing a great job. It's all about focusing on the rich history of the community.

Just a few changes:

Our new newsletter editor is Barbara Sommer. She is relieving Dennis Dingemans who is heavily involved in the WPA/City of Davis renovation. Thank you, Dennis, for your editorship and thank you Barbara for stepping up and taking over the newsletter.

Matt Stone, our Central Valley Baseball coordinator, has stepped down from his position. Curtis Purtell is going to take Matt's place. Matt wants to spend more time with his family. Thank you, Matt, you are super.

We have been on a membership push during September and October. Between Lydia, Steve and John Harryman, we signed up eight new members at three different events. During our First Friday free tours, we will continue to push for membership.

Thank you to all who signed up to be members. We really appreciate your support. If you would like to receive your newsletter via e mail, please email me at [khwoodland@aol.com](mailto:khwoodland@aol.com). Receiving the newsletters online saves time, postage and money.

Remember, as always

History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President

## Public Event - November 17

On November 17 at 2 PM, board member Dennis Dahlin will give an illustrated talk on the history of Davis Community Church (see article on page 3).

The public is invited to this free event at the church, Fourth and C Streets. It is co-sponsored by the Davis Community Church and YCHS.

Following the event, the author will be available to sign books at the Hattie Weber Museum.

## Patrons

Thanks so much to the following for supporting the Yolo County Historical Society. We could not run this organization without your additional help. Become a patron by contributing \$100 or more.

Starr and Jeff Barrow  
 Don and Pat Campbell  
 Odette & Dan Christenson  
 Katherine Ashley Cobb  
 Rob Coman  
 Tom Crisp  
 Carol Danke  
 Delta Commission  
 Jon and Barbara Durst  
 Marc & Gerda Faye  
 Barbara Graham  
 John and Kathy Harryman  
 Geraldine Hunter  
 Steve and Teri Laugenour  
 Nancy Hatcher McCullough  
 Jane Niehaus  
 Claudia and Chuck Owens  
 Maria Reemts  
 Meg and Tom Stallard  
 Mike Truitt Family  
 Ramon & Karen Urbano  
 Lydia and Steve Venable  
 David Wilkinson  
 Ryan Baum & Alice Wong

## An Appreciation of the Historical Society's Roberta Stevenson

by Dennis Dingemans



At the Hattie Weber, March 2009

When long-time YCHS member Roberta Stevenson died earlier this year, she had just achieved her goal of living to be a hundred. Because I had the pleasure of working together with her for more than 25 of those year I was asked by President Harryman to share my knowledge of Roberta's contributions to the Yolo County Historical Society and the to the Hattie Weber Museum.

I first met her during the ten years that she was in charge of scheduling volunteers for the Historical Society's booths at the county fair. She had an effective technique. I couldn't say no to Roberta's requests for staffing the Spring Lake School House or the lemonade stand. If I had scheduling conflicts that lead me to decline her plea for volunteering, she was quick to suggest that I should instead bake cookies or donate money. Everybody got the "hard sell" and Roberta was a reason the YCHS has a

bulging treasury. When she decided "ten years was enough" of telephone solicitations she got me to take over her job.

When next we met, it was at the Hattie Weber Museum where Roberta was the stalwart along with Virginia Isaacs in staffing the six hours we were open twice a week. When Virginia died, it didn't take Roberta long before she persuaded me to sign up to replace Virginia as a docent.

Roberta had valuable skills for her volunteering at the museum because she had a librarian degree from UC Berkeley, earned in the 1950s. But her main contribution to the work of the museum was her charmingly effective personality in approaching patrons to learn what they wanted to learn or share. She had several other interests that helped her gain knowledge of the history of our county and our city. She loved to work hard on genealogy. She also was a member of the *Friends of the Yolo County Archives*.

One of the amusing skills of Roberta was the ability of this fairly petite woman to drive skillfully her Ford LTD – one of the longest and widest cars ever built. She could haul big loads of books to and from *Friends of the Library* meetings.

Roberta was devoted to her family and loved to talk about family history and connections to the history of Pennsylvania and Ohio. My favorite aspect of her boldness and competence was what she reported that she did during World War II. She moved from her home in upper Sandusky to take a war job in the office of the new Fontana steel plant in California. Before many months, Roberts said she was the payroll clerk for many hundreds of workers.

## The Mardens

### “Swamplanders” Contribute to Church and Community

by Dennis Dahlin



William Harrison Marden  
(DCC archives)

*William Harrison Marden contemplated the tangle of tules and willows. Earlier settlers in the area had dismissed Putah Sink as “a grizzly-infested thicket,” where Putah Creek dispersed its flow in the Central Valley marshes. But the thriving vegetation indicated fertile soil, and most of the uplands had been claimed by others.*

*Still in his twenties, Marden already had faced his share of danger. The self-reliant “New Hampshireman” had come west in 1855, joining a wagon train of gold-seekers headed for California. This group of Argonauts quickly recognized his leadership skills, earning him his lifelong nickname of “General.”*

They had faced deprivation and disease, finally arriving in the gold fields. But like so many other miners, success was elusive for Marden, so he resolved to settle in the Central Valley.

Putah Sink was risky, he knew. Grizzly bears probably were the least of his concerns. He would have to be a squatter, a “swamplander,” wading through a legal thicket of conflicting American laws and Mexican land grants. His persistence would pay off, however. He and his family would become leaders in the community.

Marden may have set a record for the number and variety of leadership positions in the new community. Within two years of his arrival, he was serving as justice of the peace for South Putah Township. He proceeded to open a butcher shop, formed a partnership in a hardware store, then bought a hotel building in 1870 and renamed it Marden House. He recorded the first property deed in Davisville, paying \$250 in gold. As if that were not enough, he served as the community’s postmaster for sixteen years.

In 1880 he retired to the Marden ranch, by then a sixty-acre raisin vineyard east of Davis.

His wife, Marium Leigh Marden (1831-1899) was an early leader in her own right, “an energetic, progressive, and influential woman in community affairs.” The couple had met in the goldfields and were married in Auburn, California in 1856. In 1872, together with Mrs. F. G. Crawford, Marium Marden founded the first lending library in Davisville, located on the upper floor of Marden House.

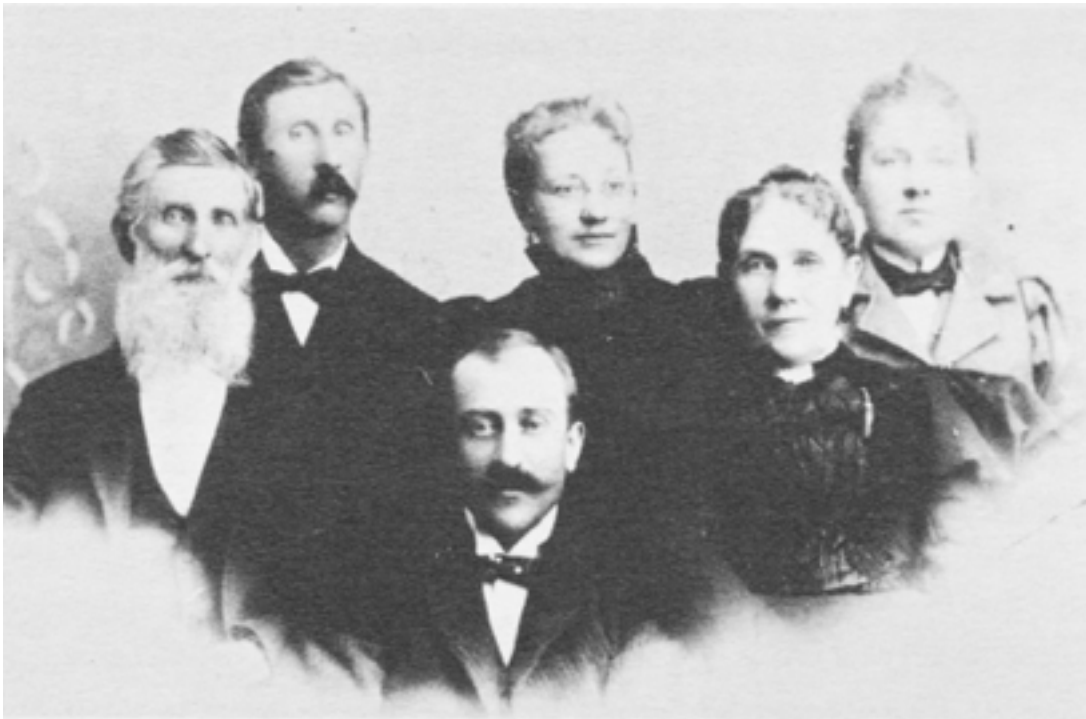


The Marden House hotel,  
home of the first lending  
library in the community  
of Davisville.

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*Continued from page 3*

Their daughter, Nettie Marden Wilbur (Mrs. Otis Wilbur), carried on the family tradition of community service. Before marriage, she founded the Bachelor Girls Book Club in 1909, with the goal of establishing a permanent library. To raise money, the club sponsored events and projects such as spinning bees, luncheons, dances, parties, Picnic Day lunch basket sales, and “library showers.” Nettie and the others located a lot at 117 F Street, and proceeded to build a one-room library for \$550. Here, Miss Harriett “Hattie” Weber was appointed librarian in 1911 and served in this capacity for the next forty years. The Phyllis Marden Wilber Haig Room at the Hattie Weber Museum honors the Marden tradition.



Marden family: W. H. Marden, W. Edward, Grant, Minnie, Marium, and Susan Annette (Nettie)

In addition to their many community contributions, the Marden family played key roles in the new Davisville Presbyterian Church. A charter member of the new congregation along with his wife, W. H. Marden served as the first church treasurer and one of its first trustees. Their daughter Nettie, a talented musician and music teacher, served as choir director and soloist for the congregation.

*Author Dennis Dahlin is a Davis landscape architect and historian. A member of Davis Community Church, he serves on the Yolo County Historical Society board of directors. This article is an excerpt from his forthcoming book, “Church and Community: A History of Davis Community Church.”*



## Is Anything Ever New?

Did you know that a Box Ball Alley was in the Roth Building on Main Street in Woodland in 1912? Created in 1903 by Hoke and Holcomb, a manufacturing company that lasted for 100 years the Box Ball Alley was a game sold to entrepreneurs as a get rich quick scheme. See the ad below.



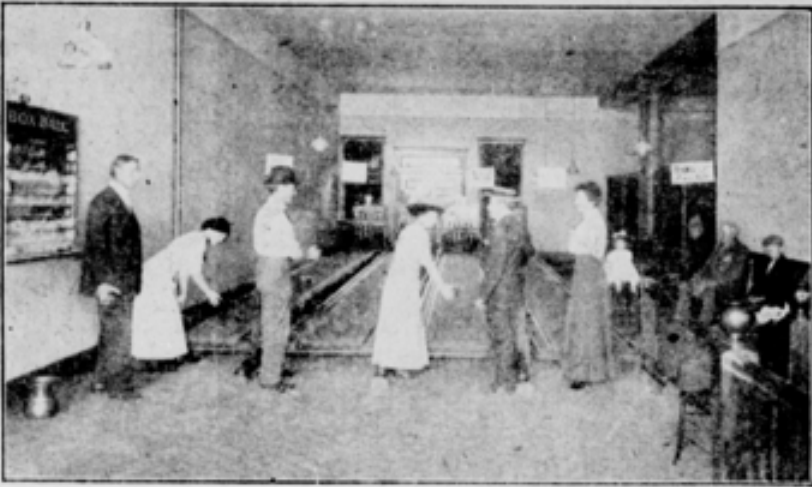
**\$513.00** Clear Profit in 51 days **\$150.00**  
from an investment of

Is the result from the operation of one American Box Ball Alley in Sullivan, Ind. Why not go into this business yourself? It is the most practical and popular bowling game in existence. It will make big money in any town. These alleys pay from \$25.00 to \$65.00 each, per week. This is no gambling device, but a splendid bowling game for amusement and physical exercise. Liberally patronized by the best people of both sexes.

Quickly installed, conveniently portable. No pin boy needed. Receipts are nearly all profit. More than 3,000 already sold. We sell on payments and our catalog is free. *Write for catalog.*

**AMERICAN BOX BALL COMPANY, Patentees, 1302 Van Buren St., Indianapolis, Ind.**

W.A. Scruby installed the modified version in the Roth Building. The entire piece was portable and could be set up anywhere. It came in three sizes and was very easily installed. This craze was advertised at the Roth Building for only 5 cents a game.



**BOX BALL**

A bowling game for everybody. The most fascinating of indoor sports.  
Men, women, boys and girls, all may play and enjoy it.

**THE PRICE IS ONLY 5 CENTS**

We have installed 3 alleys in the new Roth Building and invite the public to see and play.

**AMERICAN BOX BALL CO.**

## R. B. Cranston

by Kathy Harryman

Reuben Burton Cranston was born in Fairview, Ohio on Sept 2, 1856. His mother died when he was eight years old.

He went to school in Fairview and worked as a farmer there until he was about 22 years old. In December 1879 he moved to Yolo County and settled at Capay where he did general farm work – digging wells, chopping wood. He drove a stage coach for three years and carried the mail from Woodland to Clear Lake, 70 miles over the mountains. After that he was employed by E.H. Baker in the Exchange Hotel (Julian Hotel). A year later, he was offered a job as a clerk for the Marshall Diggs Hardware store. He worked there for the next 12 years.

On January 1, 1888, he married Alma Henry who was born in Michigan and moved to Capay when she was 13 years old.

In 1898 he bought a hardware business from the late H.B. Wood estate and located it at 537 Main St. (the Hong Kong Restaurant). Alma worked and saved with her husband to start the small hardware store. They had five children.

His second hardware store was located on the northwest corner of First and Main Streets – the Freeman-Schmauderer building where he set up his first hardware store.

In 1914 he contracted the services of architect William R. Fair and erected a Mission Revival building for his growing hardware business. The building expanded into the single-story buildings west of the original building.

The Mission Revival style of architecture is a “back to the Mission Period of California.” It occurred in the late 1800 to early 1900s. The characteristics include an enclosed courtyard, clay roof tiles, thick arches, low pitched roofs, plaster or stucco exterior arcades, interior rooms and halls, and limited windows and openings. This building had the first elevator in Woodland.

The hardware store was built on friendliness and

fairness. It carried paints, varnishes, plumbing goods, shelf and heavy hardware and “other articles to be found in a first-class hardware store,” according to Gregory Thomas Jefferson’s *History of Yolo County, 1913*. In 1923 Cranston became an agent for Fanches Creek Nursery and sold trees and vines. He also stocked stoves, ranges, Syracuse gangs and plows, Pittsburg fences, carriages, and wagons. His brother Thomas was first a teacher and then joined Reuben as his bookkeeper.

R.B. Cranston died in 1923 “following a day’s strenuous work” at this store “according to the Daily Democrat. He had high blood pressure. All stores in Woodland closed on Tuesday between the hours of 1:30-3:30 out of respect for the Woodland pioneer.

The 20,000 square-foot building represents three generations of Cranstons in this community. This long-time business was a Woodland fixture until its closing in the 1990s.

Tom Stallard purchased the building from the Cranston estate and with the assistance of architect Duane Thomson completed the remodel of the structure in 2004. It is now a commercial building with coordinating spaces for commercial endeavors.

Is this building haunted? Well according to the previous workers and owners of the store, after 9 PM they heard loud noises from the mezzanine. The next day, they found items and books knocked to the floor. The police were even called when someone heard footsteps! The workers liked to say that “Rube” was watching out for his store just like he did when he was alive.

### Business Buddies

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

The House Dresser

The Gifted Penguin

Corner Drug

Local Inspirations

## The Hattie Weber's Scrapbook Conundrum

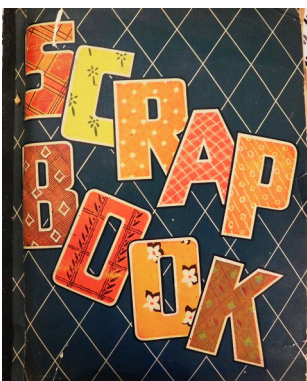
by Museum Director Dennis Dingemans

On a busy day last summer, the Museum staff was shown and offered three interesting scrapbooks by the family heirs of the maker. We thought hard about how they would fit into our collecting priorities. What would you have done, given what we now can tell you about the proffered treasure?

### 1. The subject matters were an issue:

#1 was titled "Jimmy Wilson's Scrap Book of War Weapons" and dated February 27, 1945. It's 30 pages were full of tanks and planes and ships, and subs and guns;. Most of its pictures were clippings from popular large format magazines printed in black and white.

#2 was titled "Jimmy Wilson Davis" and dated May 16, 1946. Twenty-five of its 75 pages were full and the articles had wide ranging historical themes. The sources were much like #1.



#3 was not labeled except with its cover which said "Scrap Book." Its content covered 20 pages of the 50 possible and consisted entirely of matchbook covers (with the matches removed). Several of the first pages were devoted to WW II military bases and "V for Victory" messages.

Several pages were devoted to restaurants and motels and recreation sites. Some were for Chinese and Mexican restaurants from an era when ethnic restaurants were not so common. Some were slightly risqué.

### 2. A second issue that led us to think we may not want to accept the donation concerned the fragility of the three books and their low quality paper. The pages holding the 90 matchbooks were especially in a state of decay and clearly about to rip and shred. Would it be appropriate and worthwhile to remount the content on new paper?



### 3. A third issue favored acceptance. The written offer to give these scrapbooks to us reminded us that the youthful maker was the son of noted local high school track coach "Woody" Wilson. The UCD Picnic Days event holds "Woody Wilson Relays." This was the deciding factor in my vote to acquisition: it was an object that showed the energetic character of a famous family.



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Address Service Requested

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  
[basommer@ucdavis.edu](mailto:basommer@ucdavis.edu)