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SCRFI's Newest Neighbor

In the last Scruffy Post we met the new owner of the church's next-door building, Jacob McDonald, which used to be the mercantile store and office for Excelsior Water Company back in the Gold Rush era. The Smartsville Store was across the street from the church, re-opened in recent years, but then closed again. Fortunately it was purchased by someone who respects the town's history, restoring it now for community-oriented purposes.

Meet Lauren Green -- new owner of the store as seen in the photo above, with the mural by our talented neighbor, Margaret Arnold. Lauren will call her business Smartsville Salvage and Sundries. Her intention is "to sell architectural salvage, interesting reclaimed items and feature (and sell) local works. It could be local honey, artwork, handmade lawn chairs, crafts and local finds." She is flexible in "letting it become what works" and wants "the shop to be part of the community and fit it where it can."

Recently she found an old sign hidden within the walls that has the last four word “OTEL.” It may be from the original hotel and was used in building the store in 1933 which stands there now.

Lauren sees and speaks with several people who curiously stop by the church every weekend when she is working on her store’s restoration. She’s most happy to show them around and answer questions. Like SCRFI, she is dedicated to preserving its historical aspects and will strive to generate even more enthusiasm within the community and our visitors. Lauren is truly looking forward to a grand opening of her store next Pioneer Day. We couldn’t have asked for a nicer new neighbor!



Lauren and Sydney



Pondering the work from the vantage point of beneath the historic Smartsville Store...



Recently Lauren found part of a historic sign hidden in her store's wall which may be a part of the original hotel used to build the current building in 1933.

Special Visitors Bring Special Gifts

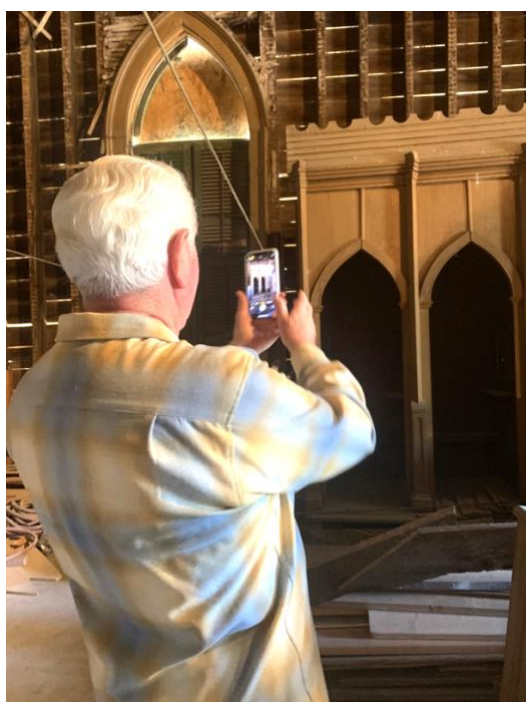
If you attended Pioneer Day a couple of years ago you may have seen our first ever “pioneer mass” led by Father Dan Madigan. Fr. Dan is related to the historic priest Daniel O’Sullivan, who in 1871 helped rebuild a burned-down church into the building we have today. Joining him recently to see our progress, was Father John Boll, historical archivist of the Sacramento Diocese, and their friend Tim Taormina, a skilled woodworker bearing a special gift.

Fr. Dan presented us with a beautiful brass altar bell for displaying in our sanctuary on the altar steps. Tim remembered ringing such a bell as an altar boy long ago.

Tim presented us with three lovely altar plaques, used to read in Latin during mass, including the prologue to the gospel of John and the Lovato. One begins with the words “Gloria in Exelcis Deo,” just as it reads above the sanctuary in gold lettering. The plaques’ wooden frames are of an exotic African hardwood in a striking reddish color.

The three of them in turn enjoyed seeing the beautifully restored sanctuary completed by Aurel Onut of Byzantine Painters last year. They were impressed with the confessional and braved the spiral staircase to see the worn-out organ (for which we have a replacement, thanks to Mike Moyer and Sue Cejner-Moyer). Fr. Dan was surprised by the height of our 24’ ceiling and we all were awed by the resonant singing of Fr. John inside the church. Follow the link to hear [Father John Boll singing](#).

Fr. Dan will be back for the next Pioneer Day with Fr. John. He has more ideas for the altar area, utilizing Tim’s skillful woodworking. You’ll enjoy meeting these three devoted men.



Fr. John Boll, historic archivist



Tim Taormina and Fr. Dan Madigan



Correct placement of the altar bell and three altar plaques

More About the Visit

By Kit Burton

For readers who are curious, a biography of Fr. [Dan Madigan](#), written by his friend Fr. John Boll reveals a man who has made important and lasting contributions to the spiritual lives of countless citizens in Sacramento, CA. Pastor of Saint Joseph church and founder of the Sacramento Food Bank, Fr. Dan is now retired but remains a strong influence in Northern California.

We at SCRFI know Fr. Dan because he is an avid student of Catholic gold rush history. His great grandfather's sister had two sons that became Catholic priests in Northern California. One of them, Fr. Dan O'Sullivan, was called upon to rebuild our Smartsville church in 1871 after its predecessor, a mission church, was destroyed by fire.

For years Fr. Dan Madigan has followed our restoration progress with understandable interest and now that we have achieved many of our initial goals, he has been particularly curious about our future plans. At Fr. Dan's request we arranged for Dan and two of his friends, Fr. John Boll and Tim Taormina, to come to Smartsville for a visit to see our church.

The meeting was very special because we were able to discuss our future plans rather than explain, as we have in the past, what efforts lay ahead to save the building. Dan, John and Tim were pleased to know that we intend to restore the sanctuary to appear as it did 100 years ago, and to install three rows of pews and much of the original wood furnishing. They pointed out to us non-Catholics what, how, and why the various parts of the building were used, and clarified how a portion of the completed restoration could function as a museum.

And they didn't come empty-handed. Fr. John helped clarify some questions regarding the early church history, Fr. Dan gave us a beautiful altar bell, and Tim gave us three custom framed historical plaques that would have been present on the altar. Kathy even had a photograph of our church's altar that showed three similar plaques, confirming that they were indeed used in Smartsville. These gifts will make the sanctuary part of our restored building particularly authentic and give that part of our project context as part of our gold rush history.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable meeting and we had time for lots of conversations about many subjects. We are truly blessed to have restoration contributors that not only help with financing, labor, and restoration expertise, but also help us give meaning and understanding to the project as a whole.



Largest of the three altar plaques, measuring 18 X 12

The Oldest Painting of Rose's Bar

Our dedicated vice-president Kathy Smith is like a detective in uncovering the many facets of our area's history. She is active in groups and commissions and is constantly delighting us with new discoveries. Another history buff, Hank Meals, sent her an image of a painting which dates back to 1853 and is therefore the oldest known painting of its kind.

The Gold Rush painting is by [Henry Walton](#) (1804 – 1865). Walton settled in the Finger Lakes region of New York, in 1836 where he painted portraits and town views and created most of his life's work. Between 1851 and 1857 he relocated to California, traveling and painting its people and scenes.

Rose's Bar is a pen and ink drawing with watercolor and measures 16" X 11". Its intricate details are phenomenal – a depiction of what Mr. Walton saw as he sat on the hill sketching. The scene is full of details, of things we only read about. It depicts the diverted and dammed river, the sandbars and gravel beds, men at work building expansive flumes and sluices, water wheels, as well as the little settlement of Rose's Bar nestled in the crook of the Yuba River.

Rose's Bar is owned by the [Dietrich American Foundation](#) and is currently in storage, but may be available one day for display at a local museum, perhaps even in our restored church. Other paintings of Mr. Walton's are of a [California Gold Miner](#) in Rough and Ready, which belongs to the Oakland Museum, and one of Grass Valley belonging to The Society of California Pioneers in San Francisco.

SCRFI's collection of artifacts and paintings grow and we look forward to sharing them with you on Pioneer Day next April, and hopefully at a smaller event this year.



Wright Restoration Returns and We Show Off our Progress

We're very happy to have John Wright of Grass Valley back on the job. He is tackling three west windows. Last year John beautifully restored the two front windows. He sees us making progress and also remains determined, like SCRFI, to continue his important part of the huge job ahead of us.

John's work is complex. Some of the shutters may be usable, but only if repaired. Others need replacing. Glass panes are missing or broken. The gothic arch painted-glass at the top of each window all need repair or replacement. The wood is, of course, not simply straight pieces. We haven't decided on what kind of painting design will go on them and will probably wait on that part of the restoration. The nicest thing will be when we can eliminate the need to board up the windows and open the new shutters to let in some light!

We've been able to show some interested visitors the progress in the building, including the restored windows, the sanctuary, and the foundation work in the back. Every Pioneer Day Timbuctoo landowner Will Michaels visits from out-of-state, but with no Pioneer Day again, we thought we needed to show this enthusiastic volunteer our current work. He brought another one of our important volunteers with him – Tom Diede, who is a coordinator for our hay wagon tours of the mining area and drives one of the tractors.



Kit and John Wright discussed the current work plans for the window restoration. John's hobby is restoring and enjoying old Mercedes cars.



Before we shared what's inside the church, Mike Moyers and Sue Cejner-Moyers brought an organ for our future museum, replacing the one in ruins in the choir loft.



Kit, David Rubiales, Tom Diede, Will Michaels and Kathy Smith
The rope in the center rings the bell in the tower on special occasions.