



SCRFI P.O. Box 374, Smartsville, CA 95977

www.smartsvillechurchrestoration.org

Wall Work Commences

With the help of Joe Ramus and his JR Squared construction company, we have begun the long-awaited and tedious task of preparing the walls for drywall with plywood sheathing and a moisture barrier. Hundreds of nails are left to pull out of the studs from the former lath-and-plaster wall and ceiling (unfortunately, not the historic square nails). Some of the lath has yet to be removed and dumped. The walls are 23' high and the job is tough, but we're encouraged by this new step forward. We're also hoping to find someone who can also help prepare the exterior with some needed carpentry work before it can be painted.

John Wright of Wright Restorations continues his window restoration work. He posted a nice video of the church restoration progress you can view on our Facebook page for Smartsville Church Restoration: [John's video 9/27/22](#).



Kit Burton, Joe Ramus and his father, Joe Ramus, Sr.



John describes the shutter latch to Kit

Message from Kit

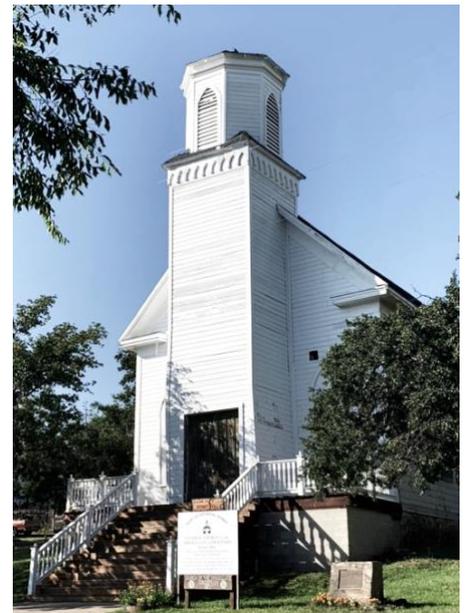
For the past five weeks I have been recovering from a stroke. Although many of my functions remain unchanged, others require rehabilitation therapy. I am happy to report that my rehabilitation is proceeding as well as we had hoped. Vice-president Kathleen Smith has assumed my official duties as president of SCRFI. Janet Burton, our secretary, is assuming many of my prior duties. All of us have made adjustments in our daily routines.

I thank our SCRFI board of directors as well as our loyal friends for “stepping up” to ensure that no momentum in restoration was lost. I want to thank all of you for adjusting to new circumstances, assuming additional duties, and maintaining faith and confidence in our restoration project.

We have two on-going projects: continuing restoration of the windows, and preparation of the walls and ceiling for final surfacing. These tasks have proceeded without change in scope or delay. Our contractors are hard at work on their restoration tasks. We have not lost time or enthusiasm for our historic church project. In fact, I sense a heightened urgency to complete our restoration efforts.

Looking forward, we have confidence that our beloved church has been saved, but there’s increased urgency that our time and resources for this restoration effort are limited. I pledge my continuing support of this project for as long as I am able. I ask for your patience, your continued enthusiasm, and your confidence in seeing this project to a successful conclusion.

God has blessed our project. This simple building is the jewel we hope will give our community a place in California history.



Remembering a Beloved Friend of the Community – *Linda Wygal*

With shock and sorrow, we learned of the passing of Smartsville Post Office's clerk, Linda Wygal. We at SCRFI owe her a debt of gratitude for her faithful contributions of crocheted blankets for our annual raffle fund-raiser on Pioneer Day. She always demonstrated genuine care for the community. As our postal clerk, Linda was a wonderful friend to talk to – always interested in each person individually, always helpful, always pleasant, and efficient as well. Sadly, she was going to retire in October. Her co-workers and the community feel this sad loss. Here is what some local folk say about Linda:

Deb: Linda was a blessing in my life. I knew her for a long time and we had plans to get together and do more crafts, many of which we gave away.

Alicia: The world was a better place with her in it.

Kim: She was an amazing, loving, beautiful friend. There are no words to express the loss.

Bev: We worked together for quite some time. She was an awesome co-worker and a friend.

Michelle (who is taking Linda's place): She helped me with many things. She helped me doing genealogy to find my mother's and father's family history.

Julie: Linda was my friend and she helped me quite a few times in the past couple of years. We would walk up there and visit her with my grandkids and she loved that.

Mary: It's just so sad and she will be missed. What an asset she was to our community!

Jeannie: Linda was not just the lady who ran the post office, she was a friend and a part of our Smartsville family. Thank you for everything you always did for us and the community. Linda, you were so close to your retirement, but now you have your wings. Thank you for everything you did for us and the community. You were an Angel on earth. Fly high, my friend.

Charis: She was a sweet and giving person. I went in there one day after work with a blister on my foot from my boot, and the next day she had two pairs of boots she gave me. So kind-hearted!

Hilda: A few days before she died, Linda texted me to ask how I was doing, and to ask if I needed anything. She was so kind like that. After her retirement, we were going to start getting together to crochet. I was looking forward to that, and to introducing her to my crochet group. I miss her.

Ron: Linda said the health care system is why people like her have heart attacks at work. She cared about the weeds outside the post office and paid out of her own pocket to have me weed whack. She was a good person.

Ace: She was a wonderful post mistress and she will be missed.

Jennifer: Linda had become a personal friend through Smartsville P.O. over the years. She made a nice colorful Christmas tree skirt last year and jam and other goodies. I also would share goodies and gifts. She always loved to chat and go out of her way to say hi to my dogs. I miss her so much!

Letty: Linda was a bright light in my day, especially during the COVID closures. She went above and beyond to meet my business mail needs! It was always a joy to "talk story" with Linda. When she turned 65 in June, she shared with me how sweet her husband, Bob, was to surprise her with a delicious strawberry cream cake!

Timothy: I appreciated her because she helped me out a lot and I'm just a plain old customer.

Kit: She was a friend that many of us greeted frequently and a supporter of the church restoration.

Janet B.: Linda was blessed with a generous, loving spirit. She blessed everyone around her.

Jerry: I worked with her on and off at the post office. She had her way of telling jokes and was easy to be around.

Margaret: Linda brought joy to my visits to the post office; it was like having a little family time in the middle of a day of errands. I wanted to bring some of her sweetness back to the post office so I chose camelias to paint, my favorite flower.



Margaret Arnold's painted camellias in Linda's honor, viewed here with one of many post office patrons



Linda Wygal and two of her Pioneer Day blankets



Linda with daughter Roseita at a Marine Ball (courtesy of Letty)

A Treasure Trove of Memorabilia

By Kathleen Smith

While cleaning out old things, Star Amato pondered what to do with a grocery bag of film negatives and some memorabilia from Sam Gunning that had been her mother's. This was the perfect opportunity to tell her about SCRFI's plans to house a collection of memorabilia from early Smartsville and Timbuctoo, in the church when the Smartsville church completed.

The negatives are approximately 4 by 5 produced by the one the first Kodak cameras for personal use. Kodak provided a wooden box loaded with 100 negatives. When it had been used it was sent back to Kodak to process the negative and mount prints. Kodak would load another one hundred negatives into the camera and return them all to the photographer.

There are nearly three hundred photographic negatives of life in Smartsville circa 1885. Some are in good shape but many of them need some TLC. Going through them to catalogue them there were many photos I have seen before that had been given to us by descendants of the area. Most of the photos are of family groups including pets. Some on their favorite horse others of someone milking the family cow and many of celebrations like Independence Day. Many of them are of first communions and life involving the church.

These photos are so precious -- giving us a glimpse of some things we had never seen before. We will continue to scan and restore the negatives so they can be seen by all who would like to. The hope is that maybe some will be identified by descendants who will recognize places and faces and therefore add to the history.

Star Amato grew up in Smartsville and attended the Rose Bar School. Her parents operated the market during the 1960's. Thank you so much to Star and her family for this incredible gift. If anyone else has memorabilia that they don't know what to do with, please let us know.



Fr. Andrew Twomey



The altar at Christmas; a first communion

Hooooooooo's There?

By Ray Raffety

Note from Kathy Smith: *Ray Raffety's parents operated the Smartsville market in the 1940's. I asked him to write some of his memories of growing up in Smartsville and he gave SCRFI permission to use them.*

Have you ever walked past a cemetery at night? Have you ever had a feeling that something was behind you when you found yourself on a lonely street after dark? Imagination is a powerful thing. It can conjure frightening situations which can cause you to fear for your life. Childhood fears of lions and tigers and bears fade in comparison to one of super-natural stature.

Come with me now on a walk which takes us past the cemetery on Sanford Lane. I had been playing with my friend Ronnie who lived on Smartsville/Hammonton Road that afternoon and the time passed faster than I realized. Ronnie's mother had called him to come in the house to wash up for supper before I thought about what time it was. My mother would be expecting me home too. The sun was dipping behind the hills to the west and the shadows were fading fast. It was late October and darkness set in by five o'clock in the afternoon.

I decided to take the shorter way home which was by way of the road that dropped down the hill below the cemetery on Sanford Lane, rather than to follow Smartsville Road and go by way of the east approach on Main Street. Our house was at the corner of Main and Cramsey Lane so it would have taken much longer to get home that way anyway. I walked at first, then, thinking about the dark coming, started to trot. By the time I approached the cemetery the moon had risen and it shown palely against the ever-darkening sky. The limbs of the now bare trees obscured it partially and presented an eerie landscape. Sounds became magnified. I quailed at the rustle of dead leaves beside the road which was probably from small animals or birds in the underbrush, the sound making the hair stand on the back of my neck and causing me to quicken my pace.

Hooooooooo! Hoooooooooo!

Oh my gosh! What was that? I thought before I realized that it was an owl of course. I laughed at myself for being so skittish. How many times have I heard an owl hoot? The thought of my mother telling us kids how to make an owl stop hooting flashed past in my mind. "You tie a knot in the bed sheet and it will stop," she had claimed. Well, I don't have a bed sheet handy, I thought to myself. Just then I felt, as well as heard, the soft swooshing of wings as the owl glided past my head. Now I was really spooked and I still had to get past the cemetery.

I developed the feeling that someone or something was behind me. I dared not turn and look but still I could not resist the temptation to satisfy myself that I was just imagining things. Finally, I turned as I continued trotting, not wanting to stop. A high-pitched squeak of metal on metal pierced my ears and I almost stumbled on my own feet. Oh golly, what was that? I glanced at the cemetery and tried to see if something was in there with the silent silhouettes of the tombstones. The wind had come up and the branches of the trees moved with it causing some of the remaining dead leaves to flutter down making the scene more eerie than it already was. I was passing the gates of the cemetery now.

Again, I heard the grating sound of metal on metal. What can it be? I don't believe in ghosts. Just at that time a strong gust blew one of the gates open and the darned owl hooted at the same time. I'm getting out of here! I

began to run. I was now going down the steeper part of the road and my feet felt like lead. Have you ever been so afraid that you could not make your legs do what you wanted them to do? Then matters got worse.

Clouds covered the moon and the night turned pitch black! I could barely see the sides of the road. I had to slow to a walk and strain my eyes to see where I was going. The wind was getting stronger and the sound of it sifting through the trees added to my uneasiness. I was almost at the bottom of the hill where the road connected with the highway. Hoo hooo hooooooo! Screeeech, came from behind me. I stopped and turned, straining to see back up the hill. I was past the frightening scene but the sounds still seemed to be calling me. If I ever got caught after dark again at Ronnie's house, I would not come this way.

The lights in the houses over in Smartsville blinked through the foliage-bare trees as I crossed the highway and walked toward Ganney Lane. When I came to Father Quilty's house he was coming through the gate in the front of the yard. I knew that he was the care-taker of the Catholic Cemetery as well as being the resident priest of the Church of Immaculate Conception.

"Hello, Mr. Quilty." He looked startled.

"Hello, son," he replied, "I didn't see you. Where are you coming from? It's time that you were home, isn't it?"

"Yes sir, I've been up to Ronnie Owens'. Mr. Quilty? I came by the cemetery just now and the gate was open. It scared me when the wind made it squeak. Did you know it was open?"

"Yes, Lad, I did. I am just on my way to lock it up. I was cleaning in there this afternoon and I forgot to close the gates. You run along home now. Your folks are probably worried about you."

My adrenalin was back to normal now and I walked slowly down Ganney Lane, crossed the bridge across Sanford Creek and climbed the hill into town. I was glad to see the lights coming from the windows of my house. I didn't even mind thinking of the scolding that was sure to come from my mother when I came inside late for supper.

the end



Ray Raffety, Kathy & his wife, Pioneer Day, 2013