

# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

Published by  
HEALDSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OCTOBER 1978



H.H.S. CLASS OF 1905

Back: Charlie Miller, Florence Wright, Ariel Will, Candace Wagers, Henry Coffman, Ethel Woods, J.C. Wisecarver, Jessie Smith.  
Front: Antoinette Luce, Alice Day, Milton Luce, Ethel White, Sarah Grove.

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133 Matheson St. Healdsburg, Calif. 95448

Issue No. 10 October, 1978

### THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

Some interesting items have been brought in to the museum since our last newsletter. The old steam whistle from Pete Dirvin's cannery is a gift from Elsie Vellutini. Dwight Richards sent in the first minute book of the Hamilton School trustees. Bernice Learned left two old plates and a silver napkin ring from the Anson Burlingame family.

"Godey's Lady's Book" of 1868 was brought in by Boochie Aikin along with old bottles, a photo album and Peterson's Magazine of 1884. A one hundred year old Wilson sewing machine, used by his mother, was donated by Charles Derrick.

An enlarged photo of the 1904 floral festival was a gift from Geo. Gagliardo.

Eleanor McCausland presented the museum with a variety of clothing, from very old up to the 1920's, a collection of sheet music from the golden years of popular songs, and a special box of infants clothes from 1857. High School annuals from the years 1913 to 1940 were received from Louis Schwab and Mrs. McCausland.

Lillian Guffanti contributed some infants clothing and a very old child's tea set, together with a two volume set of the county history. Ruth Dibble donated some unusual Healdsburg newspapers, High School memorabilia, and a business directory for 1895.

We thank everyone who has been thoughtful and generous.

### PARTY NIGHT

John Schubert, popular historian of the Guerneville and Russian River area, was the guest speaker at the Healdsburg Historical Society's last meeting on September 28th. June DeRoche, noted stage and radio celebrity, presented an outstanding entertainment with impersonations, a story, and songs. She is a versatile performer.

The highlight of the evening was a party, arranged by some of the officers, for museum curator Ed Langhart, in recognition of an Award of Merit made earlier this year by the Conference of California Historical Societies. Jan Harrison arranged a special display of the material she had submitted in application for this award. The program was well attended by an appreciative audience.

## CYRUS ALEXANDER

Cyrus was born in Pennsylvania in 1805 and moved with his family to the Illinois Territory in 1810. As a boy he was of slight build and not too healthy and he lived at home until he was 26, working consecutively in a tannery, a flour mill, and the lead mines of Galena. These experiences were to prove invaluable in later years. However, he had an adventurous mind and, seeking an outdoor occupation to improve his health, he left home in 1831 to work as an independent operator for the Sublette Company, then forming in St. Louis. Trapping and fur trading, he worked his way westward into the Rockies and as far north as Yellowstone Park, and finally, after three years, found himself stranded on the Colorado River near the Gulf. It was here, after one last misfortune, that he decided to give up the fur trade and made his way to San Diego.

There he worked as a sea lion and otter hunter until the wholesale slaughtering of these animals made it unprofitable. It was there also that he learned the Spanish language and met Capt. Henry Fitch, for whom he worked occasionally. Once he happened to be nearby when one of the small Fitch children fell into the creek near the house and, hearing her screams, pulled her out of the water. From that time on he frequently acted as an agent for Mr. Fitch. He applied for and received his Mexican naturalization papers on March 18, 1837.

Three years later Fitch asked Alex, as he was generally called, to go to the country north of San Francisco bay to see if there was any good grazing land there. He came north on horseback, crossed the bay above Carquinez Straits, and proceeded through Napa Valley. Here he found Yount and Bale, then on to the town of Sonoma and to the Santa Rosa ranch of the Carrillos and past the lands of Marcus West. After viewing this unclaimed land around what is now Healdsburg he sent a report back to Capt. Fitch who made a trip north to inspect the land Alex had recommended. Although Fitch was to take an active interest in the grant, this northern establishment, known as the Sotoyome Rancho, was only one of his many business enterprises and he was destined to never live upon it himself, and to see it but twice, during this trip he made in 1841 and again in 1844 for the survey of the grant, which was made by Jasper O'Farrell.

An agreement was made between the two men whereby Alex was to improve the property and manage its stock for four years at which time he would receive two leagues of land in payment plus one-half the increase in livestock. Alexander selected a site for a cabin on the east bank of the Russian River. This was built of split redwood, had a dirt floor and a door of two sawn boards obtained from Sonoma. When settled in this he commenced building an adobe house near the present location of the home of Milt Brandt, easterly of Basalt Rock Company. This adobe house was later occupied by the widow of Capt. Fitch and her children, and stood for many years as a landmark until it burned in 1913.

Alex was a good man and developed the trust and friendship of the Indians who aided him in his building and farming. He obtained seeds and seedlings from Fort Ross to start his orchards, and he built a tannery on the slopes of Fitch Mountain to make leather for clothes. He also built a lime kiln which he fed with seashells brought in baskets from the coast by his Indians. Later he located a more accessible supply of shells down near Wilson's Grove.

His American neighbors at this time were Capt. Juan Cooper on the Molino grant, Mark West on the south, Bale and Yount in Napa Valley, William Gordon of Cache Creek to the north, and Capt. Sutter in Sacramento. Alex liked to visit with Gordon when possible as he was an old Rocky Mountain hunter himself and they had much in common, even though the grants were about 100 miles apart. Rufena Lucero, sister of Mrs. Gordon, lived on the Cache Creek ranch, too, and attracted Alex. He received the consent of Gordon and the two were married by Capt. Sutter in December, 1844. Now with the help of his wife he enlarged his tannery and did a good business in leather clothes. He also manufactured cigars from tobacco sent up by Capt. Fitch. In October of 1845 his contract with Fitch ended and he and his wife and their first child moved out and set up camp on the two leagues they had selected which lay on the east side of the river to the east and south line of the Sotoyome Rancho. Next he built a temporary redwood house and then an adobe. He planted wheat, grapes, and fruit trees and moved some of the tannery from Fitch Mountain to his new land. Moses Carson, half-brother of Kit Carson then took over management of the Sotoyome Rancho, and stayed on until 1850.

## MUSEUM vs. HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society complements and supports the museum. Each is a separate organization dedicated to the preservation of local history.

### THE MUSEUM:

Established in 1976, as the ultimate goal of the Healdsburg Bicentennial Committee. The trustees are appointed by the Mayor and they are currently: Alice Grove, President, Brad Witherell, Bernice Auradou, Billie Jo Haley and Bob Jones.

The museum is part of the city government, which provides the building and pays for the utilities, and alarm system and telephone. Because it is part of a municipal corporation, contributions to the museum are tax deductible.

### THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

Organized also in 1976 to further the idea of a proposed museum, this group functions through elected officers acting pursuant to approved by-laws.

Volunteer members of the society are receptionists at the museum. The society has received a tax-exempt status from the state and federal government and has established a Museum Memorial Fund to accept donations for growth of the museum, to provide particularly for enlarged future quarters.

## NOMINATIONS

Do you have a candidate to recommend as an officer of the Society? The nominating committee asks that nominations for the various offices of the Healdsburg Historical Society be submitted to the committee, in care of the museum attendant, at 133 Matheson St., Healdsburg, prior to November 15th. The annual election of officers will be held at our next regular meeting - Nov. 16th.

Healdsburg Tribune: June 12, 1919

### AERIAL NAVIGATOR ONCE A HEALDSBURG BOY

Ray Duehem and company of San Francisco hold the record for having started the first aerial navigation system to run on scheduled time. These ships fly from Richmond to Vallejo, to San Francisco and Los Angeles, with passengers, and are fast becoming popular. The trip across the bay is made in seven minutes. Ray Duehem at one time lived in Alexander Valley and is a brother of Harold Duehem, who visited Healdsburg friends last week.

(Editors note: Ray Duehem was accomplished in other ways. Paloma Grant Woods, daughter of John D. Grant writes as follows: "My father and Mr. Ray Duehem had perfected and had a patent on the Stereoscopic or third dimensional motion picture film and also color film. The big companies from time to time would insert third dimensional shots into films.")

Can anyone furnish information about Ray Duehem? So far I've found nobody who remembers the family. ----Ed Langhart

## FIRST AUTO-BUS SERVICE

"A distinct step in the progress of Healdsburg and of Sonoma County was marked Tuesday morning, Sept. 1st, when the first car of the Sonoma County Transportation Company left the Hotel Plaza, at 7:45, for Santa Rosa". So reported the Tribune of Sept. 3, 1914, two days after the first run of a service that continues to this day.

For the first week the bus made round trips between Healdsburg and Santa Rosa about every two hours daily, to accommodate patrons of the Sonoma-Marin District Fair.

Although others had been invited only F.W. Cooke, his wife and Dr. C.N. Thomas were aboard when it left the hotel. But at Windsor the vacant seats began to fill. The car swung from the state highway down into New Windsor and back to Old Windsor where a brief stop was made. A number of pupils of Santa Rosa High School, standing at the side of the road, also boarded the bus.

Reaching Santa Rosa, the car attracted much attention as it glided smoothly along the streets. It was filled to capacity - and then some, and the ticket-taker was compelled to ride from Windsor to Santa Rosa on the running board. The run was right on scheduled time of 45 minutes.

Darrell Wagers was the first passenger out of Santa Rosa, bound for Healdsburg. At Gwinn's Corners the car halted to pick up Clyde McCord and H.B. Combs. "This is cheaper and more convenient than keeping a horse", said Mr. Combs as he stepped from the car in Healdsburg a half hour later.

\* \* \* \* \*

Aug., 1930: Santa Rosa Junior College obtains Burbank Park and plans its first buildings.

## Healdsburg Enterprise:

Oct. 16, 1889

The occupants of the dago den on West street engaged in a general slogging match on last Wednesday evening, and from the shrieks, cries and cursing, it appeared that the entire fraternity were being wiped out of existence. On the arrival of the nightwatchman two of the combatants were arrested and placed in the city jail, but from lack of evidence to convict they were discharged from custody the following morning.

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### Officers and Directors of the HEALDSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Rose Demostene....President  
Jack Relyea.....Vice President  
Major Phillips....Treasurer  
Jan Harrison.....Record Sect'y.  
Mary Kay West.....Corresp.Sec'y.  
Robert C. Jones...Director  
Robert Hasset....Director  
Dan Dowling.....Director  
Thomas Roscoe....Director

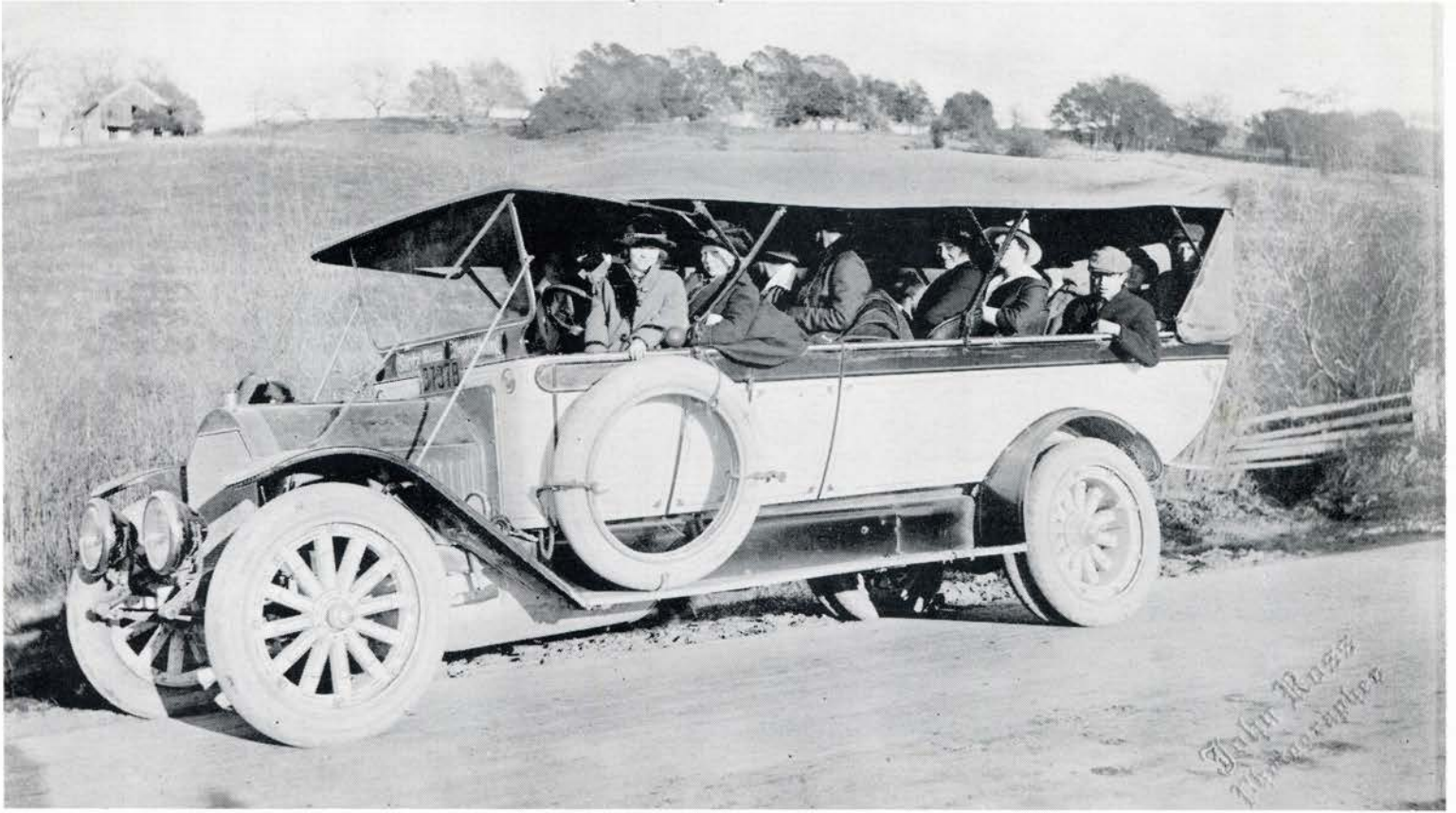
Newsletter Editor: Ed Langhart

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### THE IDA CLAYTON - 1889

"A petition with 206 signatures has been presented to the Board of Supervisors asking that the county purchase the Ida Clayton and Great Western toll road and make it a public road. \$2,500 is the price asked by the company which now controls the road.

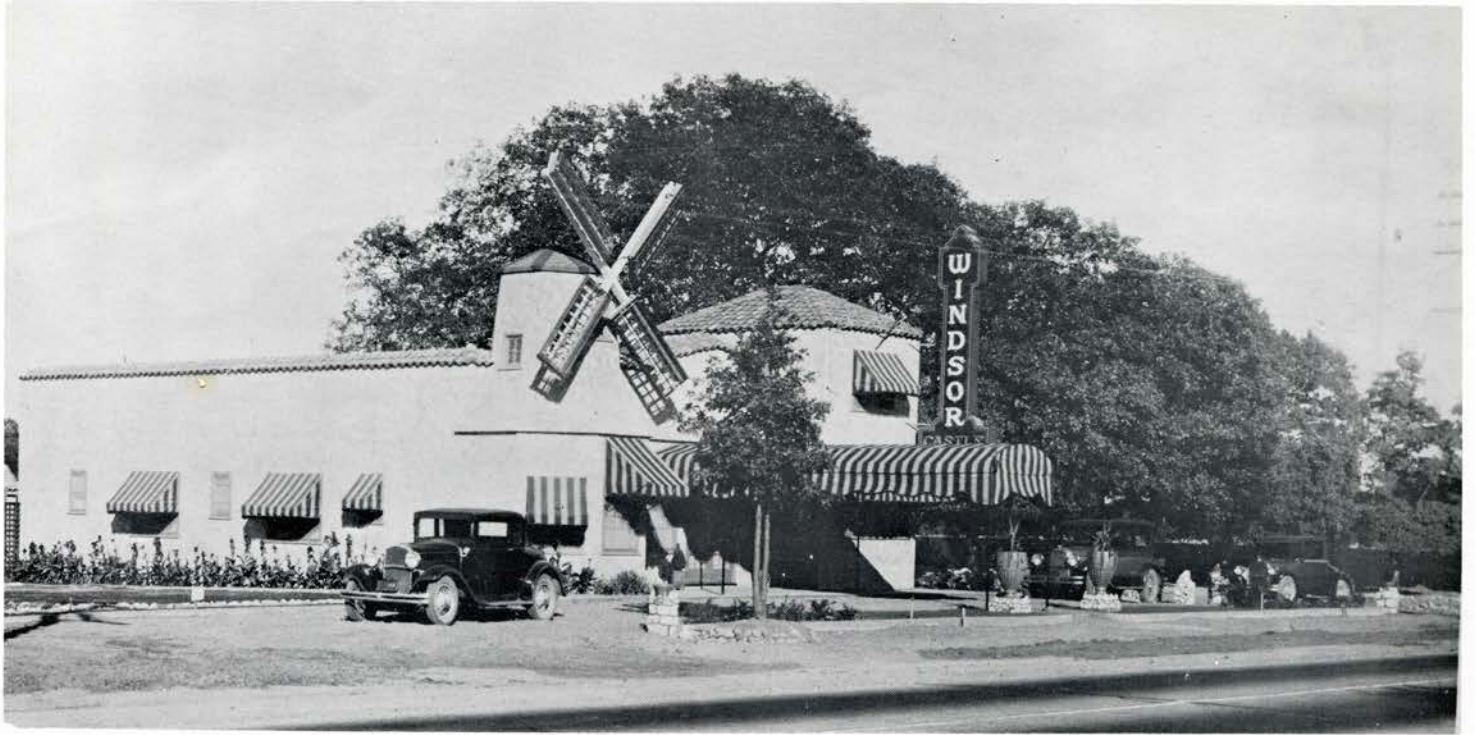
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FIRST HEALDSBURG-SANTA ROSA BUS . . . 1915



NETTIE and NINA LUCE



**WINDSOR CASTLE**  
Opened July, 1930



**NOVO TOSCANO HOTEL**  
Ferroni & Alberigi, Prop's.  
(on site of present Sportsman Lodge)



## RAPE OR FRAME?

The image of the usually sedate and scholarly school teacher didn't fit Donald M. Graham, who for several years was a teacher in Healdsburg, and a supposedly exemplary member of the church. He was arrested in July, 1862, on a charge of attempt to commit rape on a six year old girl, a daughter of J.H. Hickle. He was examined and committed to jail in default of a \$1,000 bond. He himself admitted "the devil got in him".

The affair, of course, created a great deal of gossip and it was agreed that, convicted or acquitted, the scandal would drive him from the community. He was tried and convicted and sent to State Prison. Friends worked on his behalf for a new trial and in September, 1863 he was brought to the county jail in Santa Rosa pending the trial. However, he made his escape from jail, and it remained a mystery how he had done it as the doors to the jail were found locked as usual on the following morning and the jailhouse keys were in their proper place. The officers thought false keys were used.

In November he was seen in the hills north of Windsor in company with Mr. Lewis, the county Coroner. It appears that Graham had erected a cabin in a canyon, near where he was seen. John Prewitt, of Windsor, who had seen and talked with the two men, stated the cabin was as comfortable and convenient as could be expected. He undoubtedly intended to make it his residence for the winter. Mr. Prewitt informed Sheriff Bowles of the incident but when a posse arrived at the cabin they found the premises vacated.

The following week Constable Farmer of Santa Rosa, with a small Posse, arrested Graham at his cabin while he was eating his dinner. He told the Constable he intended to make public his reasons for remaining in the county after effecting his escape from jail. The new trial was held in Santa Rosa in February and Graham, who had been so long in durance vile on the charge of rape, was acquitted. Was it a rape or a frame? From the newspaper accounts we'll never know. The full story of this case is likely buried in the court records of the county.

OUR OLDEST MEMBER - AT REST

It is with deepest regret that we report the death of our oldest member, Mr. Abele Ferrari, who passed away August 20th. A native of Italy, where he was born on April 10, 1880, he emigrated to California at the age of 24, and took his first job at the St. Francis Hotel. After a year he moved north and began work for Italian-Swiss Colony.

Shortly thereafter he was employed at the Healdsburg Machine Shop which he later purchased with two partners. He devoted most of his life to manufacturing and installing winery machinery. In 1925 he purchased an interest in the Soda Rock ranch and winery in Alexander Valley.

He was the husband of the late Mansuetta Ferrari and is survived by their four daughters, Rose Demostene, Rena Steele, Vera Plum and Inez Nuessle, eleven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. He is also survived by countless friends.

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NOVEMBER MEETING:

Because our next meeting date falls on Thanksgiving, the meeting will be moved forward one week to Thursday, November 16th, at the library of the High School.

The program will be a showing of historic photographs by museum curator, Ed Langhart.

AN INVITATION

Would you like to get out of the house once or twice a month? You have this opportunity by volunteering to be a receptionist at the museum. Three or four more people are needed to complete our roster. A phone has been installed at the museum and the number is 433-4717.

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HOT POPCORN WAGON

"Misfortune overtook "Dolphy", the Popcorn King of Healdsburg, Friday afternoon of last week.

"Dolphy" was engaged in popping a good supply of corn, on North street, near the livery stable, dreamily speculating on the profits of the coming night at his stand in front of the Nickelodeon, when - biff!

"There was an explosion of gas, and the popcorn wagon was in flames. "Dolphy" made valiant efforts to save his mercantile establishment, but the outfit went up in smoke.

"Dolphy" estimates his loss at fifteen big dollars, and as he carried no insurance, he was hit hard. But "Dolphy" is not discouraged. With characteristic pluck he has rigged up another wagon, and he is doing business nightly at the old stand."

. . . Healdsburg Tribune  
Aug. 27, 1914

\* \* \* \* \*

Margaret Powell Kidder of Toronto, Canada, has written about the Geysers Resort as she remembers it at the turn of the century. Her father, Dr. David Powell, was owner of the resort during this period. This is the third and last of three installments:

### THE GEYSERS

One year Father was given a fawn by a 'grateful patient'. He decided it should be shipped to the Geysers - after it became big enough to be dangerous in the confines of our stable yard in Marysville. We had named it Sampson, for the naval hero of the Spanish-American war. Poor Father! The deer was a very costly animal, for while waiting to arrange to ship him to the Geysers he was put in the care of the man who cared for the cemetery. There he got loose and did a great deal of damage to the cemetery plots. Then, when we arrived in Calistoga, our beloved Charlie Foss thought he should be taken for a walk before being put on the stage-coach. The result was a number of wrecked store fronts along the main street. But at last he was safely in a paddock at the Geysers leading a very happy life among the manzanitas and other shrubs. The next year a mate, Fanny, was found for him. I wish I could say they "lived happily everafter", but some years later a disgruntled stable hand let Sampson out of the paddock, the day the deer season opened, and he was killed by a hunter not far from the hotel, meeting the tragic death that must come to all wild animals, according to Ernest Seaton-Thompson. Fanny lived on for many years and was allowed to roam free, with a bell around her neck. She was very wise and always stayed close to the hotel when deer season opened.

When we were children I can remember that the "bar-tender" in the hotel was always our friend and trusted ally. Once, my cousin and I hid underneath the bar and consumed the best part of a large bottle of maraschino cherries before we were found. The smell of limes and lemons and, I suppose, whiskey, still lingers in my mind with the remembrance of the little drawer that held the powdered sugar and the long twisted handled spoon that stirred our Geysers-water lemonades. There was always one made for us when we came up from our swim, got our mail in the little post office of the hotel and retreated to the cottage porch.

The hotel was a large wooden building with a wide verandah upstairs and down, that ran completely around except where the building joined the dining room and kitchen - which must have been an addition to the original building. The dining room was large and airy. We had all our meals there at a large round table in one corner. There were usually Chinese cooks, who were our friends, and when we visited the kitchen we were entranced with the rattlesnakes hanging up by the outer door. The Chinese valued them as medicine and to eat. There were always snakes about so they hunted them assiduously. At one time we kept pigs, who lived on the oak mast and killed rattlesnakes - the rattlers being unable to penetrate the thick layer of fat with their poison.

Throughout my life I have always felt the Geysers was my true home. After much roaming, it is the one place that gives me a feeling of "homesickness". I always wanted those I knew to love the place as I did. Eventually, after my Father's death, the property had to be sold. (To John D. Grant, March 31, 1925).

It is now the source of power generated from the natural fumeroles, by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. It is one of three places in the world where power is derived from natural steam. New Zealand is one and the Po valley in northern Italy another. I am sorry that its commercial use has spoiled it for the use my Father and Uncle always intended for it -- a place of healing for body and spirit.

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#### SUDDENLY DEPARTED

Our good friend and member, Selma Plasberg, died Sunday, the 17th of September, as a result of an automobile accident near Santa Rosa. She was a regular attendant at the museum and actively engaged in historical study, and a member of several local organizations. We will miss her.

The Healdsburg Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the generous contributions made by individual members to the Museum Memorial Fund:

In memory of HELEN WAGERS

In memory of ABELE FERRARI

THE GIRLS OF RUSSIAN RIVER

I've seen the girls of every clime,  
Whose gentle voices haunt me ever,  
But what are they to be compared  
With our sweet girls of Russian River.

There is a charm around them all,  
But what it is I cannot tell,  
For every one that hears them speak,  
Before they know are in the spell.

We have them here at twenty-four,  
Who make old bachy's hearts to quiver,  
Whenever they can win a smile  
From our fair maids of Russian River.

The city gents that visit here,  
Before they know are in a fever,  
When they behold the fairy forms  
Of our sweet girls of Russian River.

And even I am in the spell,  
Whose heart was never known to quiver,  
Until I came across the one  
They call the 'belle' of Russian River.

The Healdsburg boys neglect their work  
And spend their cash beside,  
Whenever they can get the chance  
With them, to take a ride.

The merchants too are in the snare,  
But can I blame them - never,  
For they are not the only ones  
That's caught on Russian River.

Fat widows up to forty-five,  
Up here they do not have to tarry,  
They only have to set their caps  
A chance turns up for them to marry.

I love them all, both old and young,  
Though getting gray my heart still quivers,  
And wish that I were young again,  
I'd marry one on Russian River.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS RECENTLY ADDED TO THE ROLL:

- |                    |                             |                |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Ethel K. Aikin     | Olive Gaddini-Bacigalupi    | Silvia Rewak   |
| Francis Branern    | James L. McClish            | Henrix Simpson |
| Mrs. Roy Gilliland | Annette Seville Nicholaison | Ruth Simpson   |
| William Heintz     | Stephen Rewak               | Shirley Triest |