

RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SPRING 1997 • ISSUE 56



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DEMOLITION
OF THE
FIRST
CITY HALL
IN 1960**

**PAGE 3:
BOB BOEHM,
WORLD CHAMPION
WITH HIS
HYDROPLANE
"JERKY"**



An Official Publication of the

• **HEALDSBURG MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY** •



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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

*The Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum
and Historical Society*

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In This Issue

Spring 1997 !

Our very capable curator Marie Djordjevich, for this issue, has come up with two extremely interesting articles : a fascinating account of the present exhibit, *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain* (on display through May 11 in the Museum's main gallery) and a fascinating history of Healdsburg's first city hall. *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain* is a traveling exhibit produced by the High Desert Museum, Bend, Oregon and is sponsored by U.S. West and the Oregon Council for the Humanities. As our curator points out this exhibit is about the Chinese human experience and their contributions to the development of the American West.

"The story is one of heartbreak and triumph, blood and guts, tears, pride, struggle and survival," Marie says.

"This is an important piece of American History," she added.

Even though this is a traveling exhibit, much work needed to be done by Marie, assisted by Museum board member Bob Rawlins.

In a small side exhibit downstairs from the museum's main gallery assistant curator Holly Hoods tells us about the Chinese in Healdsburg in the 1885s to the 1900s and how they owned and operated laundries. When viewing the main exhibit take the time to observe Healdsburg's connection to the *Gum San*.

Marie also has given us an interesting story about Healdsburg's first City Hall. Now that the city staff has moved into the new edifice on Grove Street, we thought it was appropriate to delve into the long history of the first hall.

Holly Hoods, in her article on Oral History, shows us that preserving the historic memory of the community is extremely important. In the Museum's oral history project, the primary goal of the project is "to serve the community by honoring local elders and documenting their life experiences." For her article she has interviewed members of the high school class of 1940 and 1945 as well as the classes of 1997 and 1998 in order to get the young people interested in the history of the community.

In our series about Healdsburg's four World Champions, Bob Boehm, Jr., world's 136 cubic inch hydroplane champion, reflects on his days when he was flying through the water on his hydroplane "Jerky". "These were thrilling years for me," he says.

Continuing to bring you more information about the Museum's artifacts, our curator has chosen the subject of photographs which she calls "visual histories."

It is always exciting for us to bring together another issue of the Russian River Recorder. In these pages we want to reflect the history of our community in such a way that will bring the work of the Museum, its staff and board members to the forefront.

Arnold Santucci
Editor

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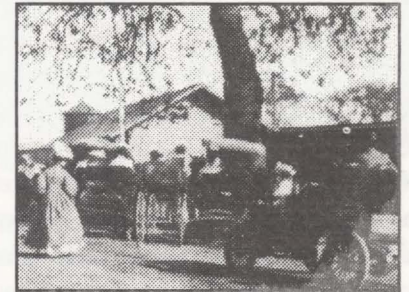
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Jack Ehrlick and his wife stand in front of their Dry Goods Store on Center Street, C. 1911.



Chin Gee Hee, contractor, entrepreneur and noted China Boss. Courtesy U of W Suzzalo Library.



At the Healdsburg Depot Circa 1909.

Bob Boehm

Healdsburg's Hydroplane Champion

Robert Boehm, Jr., one of Healdsburg's four world champions, loved speed but only with boats and airplanes, never with an automobile. Boehm proved that he enjoyed the thrill of speed by setting many world records.

In Healdsburg's Plaza Square is a pedestal honoring Healdsburg's four world champions: Dr. Edward Beeson who set a high jump record in 1914 that remained unbroken for ten years; Ralph Rose, shot put champion from 1909 to 1923; Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman, women's tennis singles champion in 1909-1910-1911; and the only champion still alive, Robert A. Boehm, Jr., 136-cubic inch hydroplane champion since 1955.

Boehm, a native of San Francisco, came to Healdsburg with his parents and family, Esther and Robert Boehm, in 1934, graduating from Healdsburg High School with the class of 1936.



Bob Boehm with one of his many trophies.

"These were thrilling years for me," Boehm said in recalling the time he spent with his 136 inch hydroplane, "Jerky", and achieving world records. He holds three world records in the one mile straightaway category and three world records in the five miles event.

"You have to take chances to win," he added, "but I was fortunate that I was blessed with a perception of depth. There was something in me that let me race." And in all the years competing in races he was only injured twice, once on his neck and the other time on his abdomen.

Boehm's hydroplane, "Jerky", named after a pet buck which he kept on his family's ranch on Westside Road, was launched at Clear Lake in 1953. Working with his brother-in-law, Laurel Musselman, and Frank Palmieri, a stock Ford V-8-60 engine was built up and installed in the custom built fiberglass hull. In its maiden race at Lake Yosemite in Modesto, "Jerky" reached a speed of 50 mph before a piston froze and damaged the engine.

Musselman, Boehm said, was indispensable to him, "He had the uncanny ability to know how to make a boat go faster." Boehm praised his other crew member, Frank Palmieri, a carburetor and ignition specialist, as "the best man in that field in all of California."

Following the mishap at Lake Yosemite, it was "back to the pit." A new engine was installed and in 1954 "Jerky" came in seventh in competition at Turlock State Park. Knowing the craft was capable of doing better, Boehm and Musselman experimented with different engine locations and weight distributions.

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Artifact

Photographs - An Important Part of the Museum's Collection

Photographs are visual histories. Photography helps people to understand their world and the world that used to be. Photographs are an important link to and record of the past. They can illustrate different aspects from a written record; therefore they have documentary value as resource materials. Photos offer us a fixed examining of life's aspects: they show us customs, preferences and styles; they allow us to observe celebrations; to watch people at work, at play, at home; to see how they courted, married, and raised children; coped with stress, hardship and the changes in their lives.

Photographs are an important part of the Healdsburg Museum collection. We collect photos that emphasize the history and culture of the Healdsburg area. We have thousands of photographs and they are used for various activities. Perhaps the most prominent use of photos in the museum is in the exhibits. Enlarged photos are used to supplement and contextualize the artifacts and text. We also use photos for research--to see what something or someone looked like at a certain time, to trace societal patterns and attitudes, to create links between eras.

Two responsibilities that come with photographs are documentation and preservation. In order to use a photograph for exhibit or research it is necessary to know information about that photo, basically who, what, when and where. After this factual information is recorded, interpretation can take place. Why were they taken? Are they representative of a particular time? Are they truthful? The answering of these question can help make photos valuable historic records, and allow them to be sources of information about ourselves, our past, our cultures and our worlds. ♦



Felta School, Circa 1917.



Canoeing on the Russian River, Circa 1910, photo from the Estate of Edna Biddle Stone.



Telephone Exchange, 1923. left to right, Ed Elliott, Lucille Bowers, Lillian Clements, Thessel Garrett, Pearl Newland, Josephine Matthews, Cleone Kels, Olive Stone. The Exchange in 1923 was located on the corner of East and Matheson Streets.



Packing apples at the Miller Fruit Company on West Grant Street in the 1940's.

Healdsburg's First City Hall

by Marie Djordjevich

Earlier this year, Healdsburg's City Hall moved from the corner of Center and Matheson Streets to a new building at 401 Grove Street. This makes the number of City Halls in Healdsburg history total three to date. The following is the story of our first.

One of Healdsburg's most famous "extinct" buildings is the old City Hall which was located at the corner of Matheson and Center Streets. This grand three story brick building was built by E.G. Hall for \$12,500 on a 61 x 66 foot lot. Building began in the fall of 1885 and it was completed and the building dedicated in May 1886.

The idea for a city building had been bandied about at least in the late 1870's as evidenced by this statement in the *Healdsburg Enterprise*: "We have heretofore, in the columns of the ENTERPRISE, called attention to the necessity of immediate steps towards procuring or erecting a suitable building for a Town Hall" (January 8, 1880). It wasn't until the January 6, 1885 meeting of the city board of trustees that the issue of a city hall became serious. By February the lot at the corner of Center and Matheson had been bought by the city for \$1800. In early April \$10,000 in bonds were authorized through election. By April 14 open competition for plans and specifications were announced, and on May 18 the board accepted plans for the new city hall offered by S. and J.C. Newman for \$300. On June 6 a notice to bidders was advertised, and the following month the contract was awarded to E.G. Hall. The foundations were completed on August 19, and a few days later Sotoyome Lodge F. and A.M. No. 123 laid the cornerstone during a small ceremony. On May 3, 1886 the Rod Matheson Post, G.A.R. was given permission to dedicate the new City Hall, and on May 10 E.G. Hall declared the job finished and submitted his final bill. By June 15 all bills were paid and the city officially owned the building.

Throughout its history the building was in constant use. It housed not only the city offices, but also the post office and the postmaster's stationary store; the public library; the firemen's meeting place and living quarters; and at one time the school gymnasium. The express and telegraph company were located at what was later the Police Department, the Chamber of Commerce preceded the Clerk's Office, and the California State Forestry, Healdsburg Station was headquartered there for a time.

The venerable City Hall building stood for 74 years. It withstood such things as fires and even a shooting. In October 1954 the Poulsen building next door on Matheson Street was gutted by fire. There is a discrepancy in the records as to the amount of damage that the Poulsen building fire did to the City Hall. The *Healdsburg Tribune* in its late 1950's editorials declared that the top floor was gutted in the fire. However, a State Fire Marshall survey inspection report done in May 1960 reveals that the third floor was being used for storage, and that "the east wall of the City Hall was rather severely damaged by fire occurring in an adjacent building" (report, 5/17/60). Nonetheless, subsequently voices began to argue for the demolition of the building and the construction of a new one. Editorials in the *Healdsburg Tribune* in the late 1950s called for a new City Hall saying it is a "definite necessity". The old city hall building was labeled in "horrible condition", "inadequate", "in a dangerously bad condition", "not worthy of repairing", and a "disgrace to our community" (February - August 1958 editorials). Apparently there was talk of putting money into renovating the old building; however, the *Tribune* was also against this: "The present building is old and it is not worthy of repairing. The money which would be needed to put it into first class condition, in our estimation, would only be wasted" (7/17/58). In August of 1958 there was an election which included a pro-



Healdsburg City Hall in its original splendor about 1890.

posal of a \$235,000 bond to go for the construction of a new city hall. The measure was rejected by a 441 to 310 vote (a 2/3 majority was needed for it to pass).

In 1960 the *Tribune* was still calling for a new City Hall. In a February 125 editorial it stated that the city's insurance firm "stresses the need for a new city hall." The *Tribune* goes on to declare "the importance of doing something about the "eyesore" we call the city hall." On June 7, 1960 there was another election concerning a five-part \$450,000 "municipal improvement bond issue". \$210,000 of this was a measure for a new City Hall. Election campaign materials include a "vote yes" statement which said that Healdsburgers "**Need a New City Hall Because** - *lack useable space for expanding city * inadequate jail facilities *remodeling economically impractical *declared unsafe by State Fire Marshall; **Should Have a New City Hall** - *for efficient operation * to raise standard of city appearance * for pride of Municipal Citizenship * price is reasonable - can't afford to do without!" The \$210,000 cost included: demolition, acquisition of land (the Poulsen property), equipment, landscaping, architect's fees, and rent for personnel offices during construction. 71% of registered voters turned out and the \$450,000 municipal improvement bond issue passed. All five measures, including the new city hall, passed with the 2/3 majority needed (City Hall - yes=1117, no=463).

In early October bids were submitted to the City for the demolition of the old city hall. On Monday October 3, 1960 Healdsburg City Council awarded the demolition contract to Empire Wrecking and Demolition of Santa Rosa, who submitted the low bid of \$1934.00. The Monday night city council meeting was the last one held in the old city hall. In commemoration, the council, "by resolution, ordered that the old fire bell, located at the top of the city hall, be tolled for one minute at the conclusion of the meeting to proclaim the final use of this historic location." The resolution was carried out at 9:30 pm" (*Healdsburg Tribune*, October 6, 1960). Later in the week the old city hall building at the corner of Matheson and Center Streets started coming down. By December there was an empty lot, and the ground-breaking for the new city hall (at the very same location) took place on December 19, 1960. ♦

GUM SAN

LAND OF THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN

AN EXHIBIT ON CHINESE LIFE AND LABOR IN THE WEST

Between 1859 and 1900 thousands of Chinese came to America. There is circumstantial evidence that the Chinese visited coastal California centuries before this. Sixth century Chinese historical records relay that a Chinese monk traveled around 7000 miles east and reached a country he called Fusang. Scholars disagree as to where he landed; some interpret it as Baja California. There is some documentation showing that the Chinese came to the Americas in the 1600s traveling and working trade routes, and landing in Los Angeles, Monterey and Mendocino. The first record showing the Chinese in California is from 1815, when Ah Nam came to work as the Spanish governor's cook in Monterey. But it was in 1848, when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill, that a large number of Chinese began to arrive. The opportunities presented in America contrasted with the situation in China, leading many Chinese to travel to this land of opportunity, to Gum San, "land of the golden mountain."

"DO NOT SEND MY BONES BACK TO CHINA. BURY ME HERE BENEATH MY TEARS."
SHAWN WONG

China in the mid-1800s was full of upheaval and turmoil. Defeated by Britain in the Opium War of 1840, China was forced into trade with the West, causing the native handicraft industries - especially textiles - to suffer (Mau Dicker). In the south of China, where most immigrants originated, the rapid growth of the population (from 17 million to 28 million in the first half of the century) meant fewer available resources. Civil war - the Taiping Rebellion - beginning in 1851 in the south of China claimed an estimated 20 to 40 million lives.

Meanwhile, with the discovery of gold in California there was a great demand for labor in both the American and Canadian West. The



Text by Marie Djordjevich

Photographs and Illustrations
Courtesy of High Desert Museum

rapid economic development of this area called for a great demand for labor. This combination, "this 'push' of impoverished migrants from Southern China and the 'pull' of high demand of labor in north America made many Chinese take ship for the New World" (exhibit text). The lure of opportunities posed by the American West supported immigration desires and the hopes of easing familial hardships.

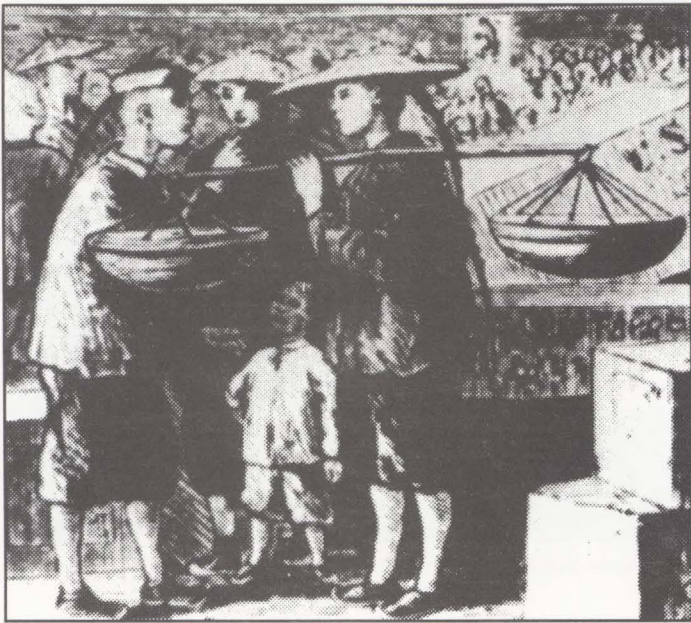
There were three forms of immigration passage to the United States: the credit-ticket system, which advanced passage on the condition that the debt is repaid from future earnings upon reaching the destination; the contract-labor system, in which an American company paid for the transportation in exchange for a certain amount of work (the passage was deducted from wages); and the coolie trade, which was basically a slave labor system, where workers were kidnapped or tricked into signing false contracts (Mau Dicker).

By whatever means of passage, when they arrived at Pacific Coast ports the Chinese found employment in a wide range of industries.

"I HAD ALL MY RAILROAD EXPERIENCE IN SEATTLE WHERE I WAS ONCE A TRACK LABORER, A CONTRACTOR, AND AFTERWARD, ONE OF THE CONTRACTING BUILDERS OF THE OLD FRONT STREET CABLE LINE..."
CHIN GEE HEE

The first work the majority of Chinese did was gold mining. In the beginning the Chinese worked their own claims. Things changed however, due to discrimination. As hostility and anti-foreign feelings grew towards them the Chinese began to operate "in worked-over areas or unpromising sites" (Mau Dicker) and eventually, most were working contract labor as part of large work gangs "constructing untold miles of ditches to bring water to dry diggings and working hydraulic mining operations" (exhibit text).

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*An early woodcut illustration depicts Chinese departing for "Gum San."
Courtesy California Historical Society.*

Outside of mining areas the Chinese worked in a multitude of jobs. They had a major impact on agricultural areas, building levees, draining swamps, clearing fields, constructing irrigation systems, and harvesting crops: "in short, in California's agricultural heartland, the Chinese were harvest workers, fruit packers, tenant farmers, share croppers, truck gardeners, shepherds and cowhands" (Choy et al). The Chinese worked in shoe factories, iron foundries, woolen mills, garment factories, lumber mills and cigar making factories. They labored in quicksilver mines, coal mines, borax beds and salt beds. They built limestone caves for wineries. Along the coast they built fishing ships, helped develop the abalone and shrimp industries, and worked in fish canneries. In cities and towns many became laundrymen, cooks, and domestic servants. Perhaps one of their biggest contributions to the American West's development - both in labor and lives - was to the building of the western half of the first transcontinental railroad.

On July 1, 1862 the Pacific Railway Act was passed by Congress. This Act chartered two railroad construction companies - the Central Pacific Railroad Company, which was to begin work in Sacramento and go east; and the Union Pacific Railroad Company, which was to begin near Omaha and go west - to build and operate a transcontinental railroad line. Finding labor was a problem. The work was intensive and dangerous, and did not have the lure of the "strike-it-rich" gold mines. By this time the Chinese had been driven from the gold mines and many needed the employment the construction of the railroad offered. The work through the Sierra Nevada was laborious, and hazardous: "Using only hand tools - axes, picks, shovels, crowbars, sledgehammers - and blasting powder, the workers cut their way through the mountains. At times they were lowered in baskets down a sheer cliff face to blast out a path" (Mau Dicker). Casualty records were not kept, so the number of Chinese who perished doing this work is not known. Estimates run into the thousands. When the

transcontinental railroad construction ended, the Chinese continued to work railroad, building many smaller rail lines and roads, creating a transportation network in the American West.

Many of the job opportunities available to the Chinese were low paying, and some enterprising individuals "began to go into business for themselves, providing goods and services within Chinatown, as well as to the community at large" (exhibit text). Their businesses included laundries, restaurants, stores selling Chinese goods and supplies, small farms and woodcutting enterprises. Some also became "China bosses", Chinese men who spoke English and had learned to work with the American companies that need large numbers of Chinese workers. They served as a kind of labor "middle man". There were also individuals skilled as medical practitioners who not only treated Chinese, but became successful and serving the larger community.

*"WELL, THERE THEY WERE, WITH 300 CHINESE WORKERS, AND EXCEPT FOR MY MOTHER, NOT A SINGLE WOMAN. THAT WAS THE WHOLE CHINESE SETTLEMENT IN SEBASTOPOL. ALL THOSE OLD GUYS THOUGHT ABOUT WAS HOW THEY WANTED TO GO BACK TO CHINA."
VICTOR G. AND BRETT DEBARY NEE*

Daily life for the Chinese in America was one of a mix of old and new. Wherever they went, they adapted to the varying areas (i.e. in the gold fields they lived communally); however, they wore their traditional clothing, and kept personal items and customs. Many of these related to food, and they raised or imported traditional vegetables, fruits, fish and poultry. When moving "took with them their stir-fry utensils, woks, and ceramic jars of sauces and spices" (exhibit text).

While most of the early Chinese came to America with the hopes of working temporarily, making a good living and eventually returning home, many ended up staying. This, coupled with an exclusion from Western communities, led to the development of Chinese communities, or Chinatowns. These communities had their own "form of self-government organized under the leadership of merchant's guilds and district associations" (Choy et al). Institutions such as the Six Companies (today the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association) "provided education and represented the community at large" (exhibit text). Chinatowns also included private clubs for gambling and leisure pursuits, literary clubs, photography studios and opera troupes. Residents built temples, or "joss houses", which were both social and religious centers: "They were focal points for the holidays which bound the Chinese communities together in common observance of traditional festivities" (exhibit text). These festivals and observances became an integral part of Chinese community life. Residents also frequented teahouses, "where lonely bachelors could while away the hours talking of the old country" (exhibit text).

The majority of Chinese that came to America were men. "During the Gold Rush era, when Chinese men were a common sight in California, a Chinese woman was an oddity" (Yung). In this early time the main reason for this disproportion was the fact that the Chinese did not intend to settle permanently. They came to make money in order to go home and better their situation. The men came to make their fortunes, while the women stayed behind to tend to the families. Since wives were expected to keep the home, and many men

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Gum San: (From page 7)

could not afford the additional passenger price, many of the Chinese women who ended up in the American West had been sold as prostitutes or slave girls. Later, immigration laws prevented women from entering America and joining their mates. This combination of factors (cultural, economic, political) "resulted in a 'widow' society in China and a 'bachelor' society in America" (Choy et al).

"LEAVING BEHIND MY WRITING BRUSH AND REMOVING MY SWORD, I CAME TO AMERICA. WHO WAS TO KNOW TWO STREAMS OF TEARS WOULD FLOW UPON ARRIVING HERE? IF THERE COMES A DAY WHEN I WILL HAVE ATTAINED MY AMBITION AND BECOME SUCCESSFUL, I WILL CERTAINLY BEHEAD THE BARBARIANS AND SPARE NOT A SINGLE BLADE OF GRASS."

ANGEL ISLAND DETENTION CENTER, 1910-25

The Chinese immigration experience is rife with discrimination and prejudice. Initially welcomed for their labor, anti-foreign feelings soon had the Chinese labeled culturally, morally and racially inferior. The Chinese were blamed for economic difficulties and labor shortages. Between 1852 and 1880 a series of laws and local restrictions limited jobs and rights for the Chinese. Anti-Chinese feelings were manifested in murders, massacres, expulsion, segregation and destruction of Chinese communities (mysterious fires of "unknown causes" were common). Then on May 6, 1882 "the federal government, influenced by powerful anti-Chinese lobbyists from California, passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred entry of all Chinese laborers to the United States for ten years" (Choy et al). In 1904 this Act was extended indefinitely.

The Chinese countered their exclusion in various ways. Some took the issue to court, others wrote editorials or made public speeches. Ways around the law were sought, the most popular being the "paper son" system. The Exclusion Act did not include U.S. citizens; therefore, because of derivative citizenship, children of Chinese U.S. citizens were allowed to come into the United States. In exploitation of this fact, "Chinese Americans going to China would report the birth of children (usually sons; rarely daughters) and create slots for those Chinese who did not have an American connection. Assuming the identity of a Chinese American's son, such a "paper son" was now eligible to enter the U.S." (Choy et al). The U.S. government was aware of this system, and to circumvent it set up interrogation points at immigration stations' ports of entry. The most well-known of these stations was on Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay. These points included interrogation and physical exams, and some people were confined for up to two years. The Exclusion Act remained in effect until 1943 when the Repeal Act was passed on December 17.

"ONCE YOU ARE BORN CHINESE, YOU CANNOT HELP BUT FEEL CHINESE. 'SOMEDAY YOU WILL SEE,' SAID MY MOTHER. 'IT IS IN YOUR BLOOD, WAITING TO BE LET GO.'"
AMY TAN, *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*

While most Chinese immigrants were initially male and not intending to stay, and even though exclusion further reduced the Chinese population in America, by the early 1900s the Chinese population managed to produce a second generation, and America became not just temporary, but home. The Chinese still struggled against discrimination and exclusion, but succeeding generations



*Chinese laundrymen relaxing with traditional musical instruments.
Courtesy, Idaho State Historical Society*

began to "Americanize" through schools, Christian churches, and social organizations like the YMCA and the Boy Scouts (Choy et al). However, the Chinese also managed to hold on to old traditions, attempting to create a balance between old and new. Language, customs, food, festivals, all served and still serve to maintain a Chinese cultural and ethnic identity.

The History of the Chinese in the American West and beyond is one of hardship and endurance, contribution and adaptation, blood and tears, triumph and success. The Chinese contribution to the development of the American West cannot be disputed or discounted, and was a vital, important aspect to the growth of a country. ♦

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Oral History

Preserving the Historic Memory of the Community

by Holly Hoods

Oral history is a method of collecting historical information which can reveal aspects of life neglected in history books. It is an especially useful method to study social history and local history. The mission of the Healdsburg Museum is to record the history of the Healdsburg area through the collection, preservation and exhibition of historical materials, and to actively foster the appreciation of local history through educational programs, activities, and historical research. In keeping with our mission, the primary goal of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society oral history project is to serve the community by honoring local elders and documenting their life experiences. Educational outreach is also a key aim of this project. We hope to engage local students by offering them an opportunity to participate in meaningful research and rewarding community service as oral history researchers and interviewers.

An oral history memoir is a planned-in-advance, recorded, and transcribed interview designed to preserve the recollections of a person who has firsthand knowledge of an event or way of life that is of some historical interest. Oral history helps put groups of people in history who belong there, and ensures the

passing on of ideas, thoughts, memories, and attitudes of one generation to another.

During the early 1980s, the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society conducted a number of oral history interviews with long-time local residents. Most of these interviews were never transcribed, although some of the information was used to prepare the 1983 Healdsburg Cultural Resource Survey of historic architecture. Without a volunteer coordinator in charge of overseeing the oral history project, however; the oral history project largely disappeared by the 1990s, except for a few exhibit-related interviews recorded by former curator Claire Rithner. At the most recent planning meeting, the HMHS board voted to hire me, the Museum's assistant curator, to work an additional day a week to resurrect and revitalize the oral history project.

Currently I am reviewing the existing tapes and determining their suitability for transcription, establishing interview guidelines and procedures, developing lists of interview subjects and narrators, and establishing contact with local schools. HMHS Vice President Susan Bierwirth and I just submitted a letter of intent to the Sonoma County Community

Foundation to apply for a grant to develop and organize this project. The grant, potentially available this fall, would allow us to pay for equipment, materials, training, and archival storage. The oral history memoirs will be transcribed and made available to the community through newspaper and newsletter articles, exhibits, and deposition in the Museum research library.

Through the project, students and others will have excellent chance to connect more personally to history, and to experience some of the issues and excitements of being historians. As historian Paul Skenazy writes: oral history "lets us feel history from inside a community; history as going on in and happening to one's own community and so, possibly, recognize the relation of someone else's stories and thoughts to your own as common residents of a place or a time or a culture." In this way, oral history is, or can be, a kind of celebration of community and its existence and continuity. Through this project, we hope to celebrate our community by promoting intergenerational learning, and knowledge and appreciation of local history. We welcome your interest, input, and participation. ♦

Youth Culture In Healdsburg: Yesterday and Today

Oral History Interviews with 1940's and 1990's Healdsburg High Students

by Holly Hoods

Teen Trends and Fads



*Gladys
(Richards)
Engelke*

Gladys (Richards) Engelke (Class of 1940):

I don't know if you'd call fads--like driving a car-- a fad but most of the boys would've loved to have a Model A. They'd been through

the Model T craze, so the Model A was what they all wanted to have. I think there was a total of about 10 cars at the high school. That was it. Speaking of cars, my father bought a new 1940, red Pontiac and it was pretty jazzy! He'd let me take it to school now and then, and oh! [laughter] The kids are still talking about it: me and my red car! I raced Charlie Wiggins down Old Redwood Highway one day.

Fads, also, remember there was the zoot suit. Well, there was one boy in our class--Nathan Bennett--who came out in a zoot suit, which he wore to the dances. And he was a great dancer, and so all the girls wanted to dance with him and his zoot suit. The boys kind of frowned on it with a little jealousy.

Oh, and ribbons, you remember? [We girls] always had little bows. In our class, Helendale [Autry Barrett] always had a bow in her hair.

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Youth Culture

(From page 9)

We were crazy about the big bands! That was the thing: those big bands! And of course, during the War, we got to dance to a lot of them. They used to come to Rio Nido. I'd usually go with a group of girls and boys.



*Gloria
(Nicoletti)
Christensen*

Gloria (Nicoletti) Christensen (Class of 1945):

Shoes were saddle shoes. Saddle shoes, white bucks, or brown loafers-- like the penny loafers now--we wore. And bobby socks--always bobby socks! You couldn't go to school in slacks, jeans, or shorts; you had to wear dresses and skirts, and blouses. You were more like going to work than going to school. No one said what you had to wear, but everyone dressed well for school. [Boys wore] cords and jeans mostly.



*Stephanie
Bernier*

Stephanie Bernier (Class of 1998):

Music, I would say is a major part of a high school student's social life. As far as what types you listen to, concerts--those are a big thing. As far as back to the '60s and '70s, a lot of those styles have come back in, which is really weird, you know. I think it's all about Generation X trying to find their identity. [Hair dying is] a big thing. That and body piercing, as far as, not only ears, but just about anywhere you can imagine. Noses, belly buttons, and eyebrows are probably [the most popular body parts to pierce]. The school administration is working very hard to prevent the gangs from flying their colors. They've talked about uniforms, but I don't think it'll ever--



*Katie
Hall*

Kate Hall (Class of 1997):

You do see it on campus: there's ears pierced all the way up around their ears; three or four on their ears. Noses (that's real common

with everybody). . . eyebrows. . . lips. Nobody--I think--has their tongue pierced. Nipple piercings are real common among the "stoner" group. A lot of them have it. And belly buttons are real common, too.

For everybody, except maybe the "hicks," big pants is generally the trend. The "gangsters" usually wear excessively big pants, and they have to wear belts cinched really tight to make them stay on. They usually have a lot of black, a lot of red, a lot of blue. Brown, white: they're predominantly gang colors of the local gangs. The "Brown and White" are Latino gangs. The "Black and White" are Latino gangs, but they aren't really a predominant thing in Healdsburg. And then there's the "Crips," which are blue, and the "Bloods," which are red. They're identifying with that group, but they aren't allowed to wear the identifying bandannas on campus. So, they can't outrightly proclaim: "Yes, I am [a gang member]," with their clothing, but they try.

The "skateboarders" are identified a lot by the real grungy clothes. They try to look as gross as they possibly can. [laughter] The guys usually have non-natural hair colors. Everybody tries to look like a "stoner," but are sometimes afraid to go all out. They buy clothes from Salvation Army. Formal clothes at school (i.e. ties, dress shirts on guys, blouses on girls) are looked down upon.

After school

Gladys (Class of 1940):

I went home on the bus, because we lived down in Windsor and the bus just dropped the students off, at that time, along the highway. We lived two miles from the highway, so we always had to walk the two miles home - good exercise! I really had to go home after school! We had a ranch and I had chores to do: get the cows, feed the chickens, gather the eggs.

Prune Trees were all over, and everybody had prunes to pick in the summer time. Anyone our age, should you ask them if they ever picked prunes, and you'll hear what they say about picking prunes! [When I first started] I had a little coffee can. That's how small I was: picking prunes in a little coffee can! The money you'd get for picking prunes went for our clothes. However you could dream--you could pick prunes faster by thinking of what you were going to buy with the money whether it be a sweater, a skirt, a dress. . .

Gloria (Class of 1945):

I lived where there wasn't any bus service: about six miles out. And at that time, that was a long ways out! There were four of us that rode into town every day with a man that worked in town. He'd take us down to school, and then we'd have to wait 'til he was off work at 5:00 in order to go back home. So, we'd go downtown, and we'd go to Tomasco Drug and have a Coke; and then there was Chick Chaney's Fountain. And we just used to hang around; a bunch of kids--never got into any mischief or anything--just tooled around, I guess you'd call it. It was so different from now: that was where people went. Chocolate Cokes. . . cherry Cokes. . . Boy!

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Youth Culture

In the summer, [picking prunes] was a given. You picked prunes! I remember there were the neighborhood kids and my brother and I. My father would get the truck, and we'd pile in the back of it, and go out to the prune orchards early in the morning. We'd have our breakfast out there (we'd have usually a sandwich with bacon and eggs in it), and have our breakfast after we were out there a couple of hours. We just had to do that. We picked prunes from the time we were six years old. If we picked really good, we didn't have to pick in the afternoons. And then we could go down to the creek swimming, and that was our big treat! My mother would keep track of how many boxes we picked; and then before school started, we would go shopping for our clothes. And she knew exactly what we made, and how much we could spend on our clothes. As I got older, in the summer I worked in the soda fountain; and I still saved my money for clothes!

Kate (Class of 1997):

I think a lot of kids are working [after school]. I think students are a lot more busy now than before, say, even than my parents. A lot of students if they aren't doing a sport, they go to school, then go to work, then go home. I have a friend who works almost full-time, and she's going to school. There's a lot more pressure on the kids to help supplement the family's income. School, sports, drama, work, then homework is the essence of high school life.

Also a lot of students have to drive themselves places if they want to go anywhere. They have to pay for their own. Just about everybody who can drive, does drive, you know, and most students have cars. If you don't have transportation, then you can't do anything, 'cause there's no place for kids to go in Healdsburg. There's no place for us to hang out. And a lot of my friends try and hang out on the Plaza; and because they look different, and they all have weird hair color and piercings and stuff, they get yelled at by the police. I know people that get harassed by the police regularly because they're just sitting there! They think they're going to cause trouble. If you want to do anything, you have to drive somewhere to do it. Usually you have to pay for insurance and gas and all that stuff.

Stephanie (Class of 1998):

[After school], the movies are a big thing. We have two theaters. [I earn money by] working for parents; and basically, sometimes you're lucky. I try to stay away from babysitting! [laughter] I enjoy it; I really do! I love kids; but I think as you get older, you hope to--I don't have a job right now, but I do do a lot of volunteer work. Wherever you can get money, you're lucky.

Pressures of the times: 1940s, 1990s

Gloria (Class of 1945):

I remember in high school, during the War, they had blackouts. At times, you had to have shades on the windows. And if they had the

blackouts, then you couldn't drive with your lights on. And I remember coming in to a school dance--my mother again had a group of girls. She was taking us to this high school dance, and we got almost to town, and I don't remember how we knew, but there was a blackout. So, we parked the car and sat there in the dark for I-don't-remember how long. We couldn't drive in, because the lights had to be off. After that, they started having dances in the afternoons instead of at night. I remember that so well.

I remember they bombed Pearl Harbor on a Sunday, and then we went to school. I was scared to death! You know, everybody was just petrified. And when we went to school the next day, they had an assembly meeting, and we listened to President Roosevelt's speech on the radio and then the principal talked to all of us. It was really impressive, I thought. You look back and wonder how people people really survived, having their sons over there and not coming home. It was really a lot of people from here that didn't come home; and some families that never got over it.

Gladys (Class of 1940):

We all were affected by the War. My brother was gone, my husband. . . fellow classmates--some of them didn't come back. It hit home! You've never seen anybody more patriotic than the people. It was just magnificent! Everybody went all-out!

Kate (Class of 1997):

If you don't go to college, you're not considered a good person, 'cause you won't get a good job in this day and age. If you don't go to college, you're not going to get a high-paying job or a high-enough paying job. It's this incredible pressure to get into the schools. And if you don't get a scholarship and if don't get grants, you aren't going to college; and then you don't get a good job and you don't make enough money to survive. There is all this incredible pressure; and also on top of that, you're also dealing with gang members, and friends who are using drugs, and AIDS, and worrying about AIDS. It's an incredibly stressful situation for a person to grow up in.

Stephanie (Class of 1998):

I know when my parents were in high school, there wasn't quite as much pressure, as far as continuing on to higher levels of education. And now that they've grown up and had kids of their own, and we're their kids, college is becoming so much more important. In so many of the high-paying jobs, you need a degree. There's a lot more pressure from the parents to get their kids [in college] because they want to see their kids succeeding and doing well. That's pretty much the only way you're gonna make it unless you're extremely lucky.

I know I've heard my mom say that high school is supposed to be the best time of your life. Well, I've modified that to "It's the best of times and it's the worst of times at the same time." Not only do you have to deal with all the academic parts of school, you've got all the social parts. It's a lot of pressure on students and I think that's one of the main reasons why so many students turn to drugs and alcohol. It's because there is so much pressure. It's just . . . escape. ♦

Bob Boehm:

(From page 3)

They decided she was riding "tail heavy." So in 1955 the hydroplane showed a "high rooster tail" in setting a world's record on Salton Sea for 136 inch hydroplanes at 83.899 mph for one mile.

In 1957 at Newport, California Boehm and "Jerky" set his sixth world record. This record was set at 66.460 mph over a 2-1/2 mile course. He also holds the straightway record for this class at 83.899 mph.

Boehm became the 1956 high point winner for the entire United States, an American Power Boat Association award. The fastest he ever ran a boat was at Lake Yosemite, Merced. It was early in the morning and very quiet when he pushed the speed to 107 mph. At that speed, he said, the situation became "lutey" so he slowed down. "You haven't lived until you have had to take chances to win," Boehm said in recalling his racing days.

Those were thrilling years when he was competing in this fascinating sport and he looks back on this adventure with great fondness.

Following his hydroplane racing days, Boehm took on another challenge. Building and flying an experimental airplane. He took about five years to build this plane and following a very generous offer, he sold the plane.

When he was hydroplane racing he was employed by the PG&E. In 1958 he gave up his racing career following the birth of his son to his wife, Martha. He also gave up his position with the utility company and went into the trucking business staying with this endeavor for forty years. He retired in 1980 and lives with his wife on Westside Road.

These days he keeps active and interested in a number of organizations plus hunting and fishing. He enjoys his annual deer hunting trek to Lake County; he still "boats" but limits himself to a fourteen footer that travels about 15 to 20 mph; and he does a lot of fishing with his longtime friend, Bing Bettiga.

Presently he is the District Deputy Grand Master of the IOOF Lodge, District 72 and also is the Noble Grand of the Healdsburg IOOF Lodge 64.



Bob Boehm hugs his mother, Esther, following on of his many wins.

Two of his siblings are living in this area: Mrs. Laurel (Florence) Musselman and Arthur (Buck) Boehm, ex police chief of Cloverdale. His other two brothers, Fred and Chet, died a few years ago.

Boehm paid special tribute to his mother, Esther, an ardent supporter of Boehm's racing endeavors. He recalled that every year she would hand sand his boat and varnish it.

Bob Boehm, a world champion who showed that perseverance and love of a sport can bring many rewards that last a lifetime. ♦

by Arnold Santucci



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