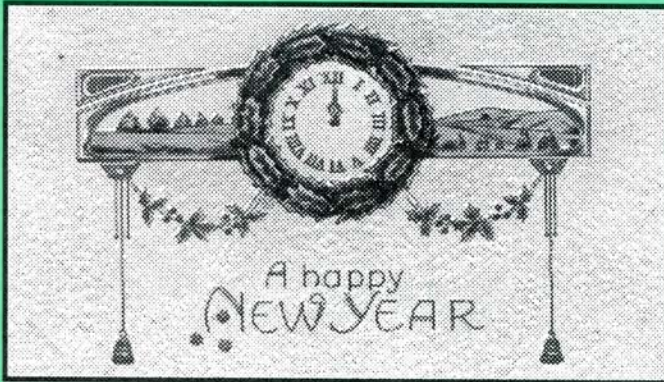




RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

WINTER 1999 • ISSUE 67

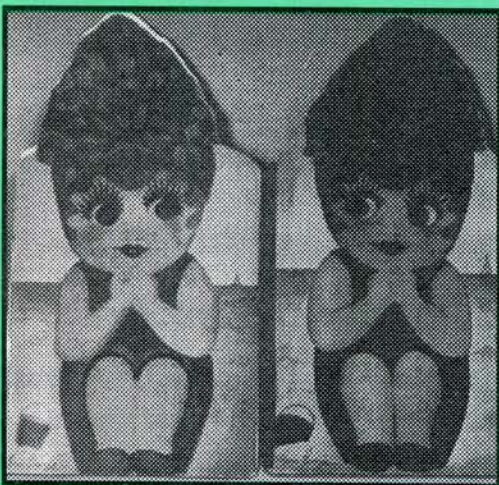
An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



Post card sent to Mr. and Mrs. J.S. Nelson from the Cuthbert family,
January 5, 1916

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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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

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IN THIS ISSUE

This is the fourth and last issue for the year 1999 and we look forward to the year 2000 when again, with the very appreciated help of our curator, Marie Djordjevich, our assistant curator, Holly Hoods, and our very capable volunteer staff member, June Maher Smith, we look forward to publishing four more issues of the Russian River Recorder.

During the past year we have attempted to bring to the Museum members a part of Healdsburg's history, and, we hope, in

an interesting and informative manner. It has been a rewarding endeavor, on my part, and, hopefully, for you, our readers and museum supporters, also a rewarding experience.

From all of us on the publications committee, our sincere wishes to you and your families for a happy and joyous new year.

Arnold Santucci
Editor

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Artifact

In This Year's Toy Exhibit,

entitled "Where's Wendy", a little doll goes on a big adventure, which includes showing up in Healdsburg in different places at different times. One of the places in which Wendy discovers herself is the Russian River at an earlier time. Two of the toys on display in this section are two pairs of roller skates - the metal kind that was strapped on over the shoes.

The combination of the river at an earlier time and the roller skates makes for an interesting story:

Merryland Auto Camp on the Russian River at Healdsburg was one of the best known recreation spots in this part of California for a long time. In the 1930s, when it was operated by John and Clara Naber, it contained a grocery store, a gas station, cabins with kitchen facilities, and a campground. The campground was a large open field, with water available from nearby faucets. Electric lights were provided throughout the trees. Merryland also had a dance hall erected in the 1930s. It drew many people with big name band headliners. When the band names were discontinued, attendance dwindled. The building was then put to use as a roller rink.

"Phil Pike managed the skating rink later. He had previous experience with such a venture, and did well. The "River Garden Rollerdom" was open all year, with longer hours in the summer. There were contests with skaters from other rinks, each having its own emblem. The beach was lit at night by lights from the skating rink... Admission was 25 cents which included renting a pair of skates that clamped on your shoes. If you needed a strap it was five cents extra. I didn't have to pay because I helped Phil with the skates whenever he needed. If I had a dollar for every hour I spent at the rink I'd be rich." (John Naber, son of Merryland proprietors John and Clara Naber, from 1935-1943). ♦ ♦ ♦



Merryland Auto Court, Circa 1941-2



*Roller Skates
Healdsburg Museum Collection*

*#232-36
Gift of Charles Scalione*

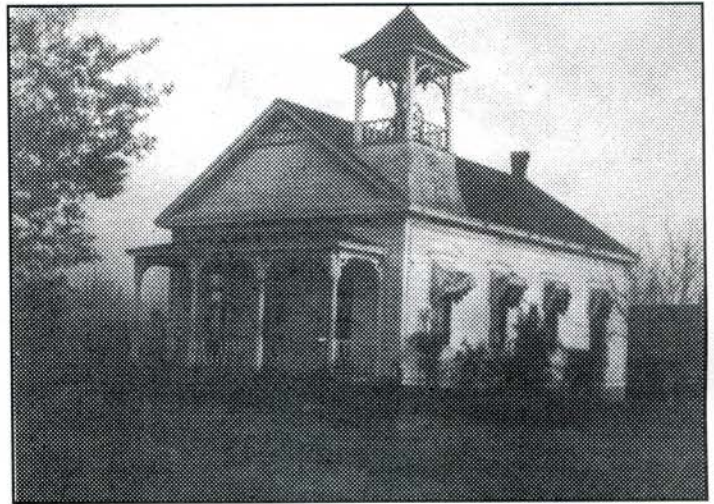
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Gift of Debra Crevelli*

"Christmas in Alexander Valley"

by

Marie Djordjevich

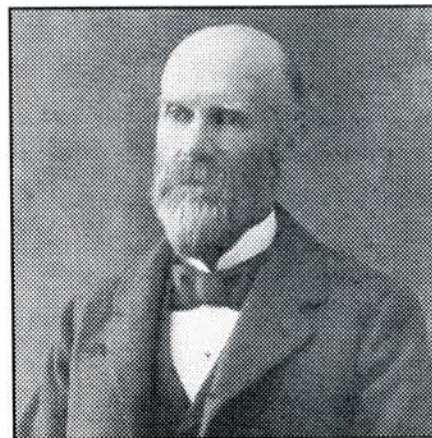
[The following is an excerpt from the *Healdsburg Tribune* of January 2, 1889. It is one example of how a Healdsburg area community celebrated the holiday season over 100 years ago. The Guilford School that is mentioned in the letter was technically in the Geyserville School District. The five pastors mentioned were all very active in the Healdsburg and surrounding community during those years. They belonged to what was called the Pastor's Union. Mr. McBride was at the Presbyterian Church; Mr. Towson at the M. E. Church, South; Mr. Webb at the Baptist Church; Mr. Wallace at the Christian Church; and Mr. Tuttle at the M. E. Church.]



Guilford School, 1916

presents that were found among the branches of these beautiful trees. Viz: Five purses, each containing \$12 in coin, and presented to the five ministers who have been preaching for us during the past nine months at intervals. Each purse bearing one of the following names: Mr. McBride, Mr. Towson, Mr. Webb, Mr. Wallace, and Mr. Tuttle. Thus showing in a small but substantial way that the people of this beautiful valley appreciate the good sound of the ancient gospel and thus would invite them to continue their well begun work. After the distribution of presents all proceeded to their quiet homes, there to dream over the joys of the evening which will add another bright page to the memories of the past. Signed, H.O. Ferguson ♦ ♦ ♦

EDITOR ENTERPRISE: Knowing you to be interested in all the pleasing events of the community, I deem it proper to ask you through your columns to note a short communication relative to the manner in which we spent our Christmas in this beautiful valley. Though stormy, muddy and raining, most all of the inhabitants for miles around repaired to Guilford school house, there in connection with our Sunday School, to enjoy the ever welcome Christmas tree, laden so richly with costly presents, keepsakes, so highly prized in after years by both old and young. The house was filled at an early hour with anxious hearts awaiting the evening's exercises which consisted of songs, recitations and dialogues, all of which were well rendered. After which, stalking in at the front door, came that ancient veteran, Santa Claus, with his gray and shaggy locks, scattering to and fro sweet meats and other nice things among the anxious little ones thus making fun and merriment for all. Distribution of presents was now in order which was no little task as we had two large trees well laden, and to attempt to describe all of the beautiful and costly presents would be almost impossible in this short source. But in justice to the good people of this community I will mention five substantial



H.O. Ferguson

Sunday School

Superintendent

Photo appeared in "Healdsburg and Northern Sonoma County, A Pictorial History", submitted by Daria Williams Budworth

The Millennium Debate - 100 Years Ago!

by Marie Djordjevich

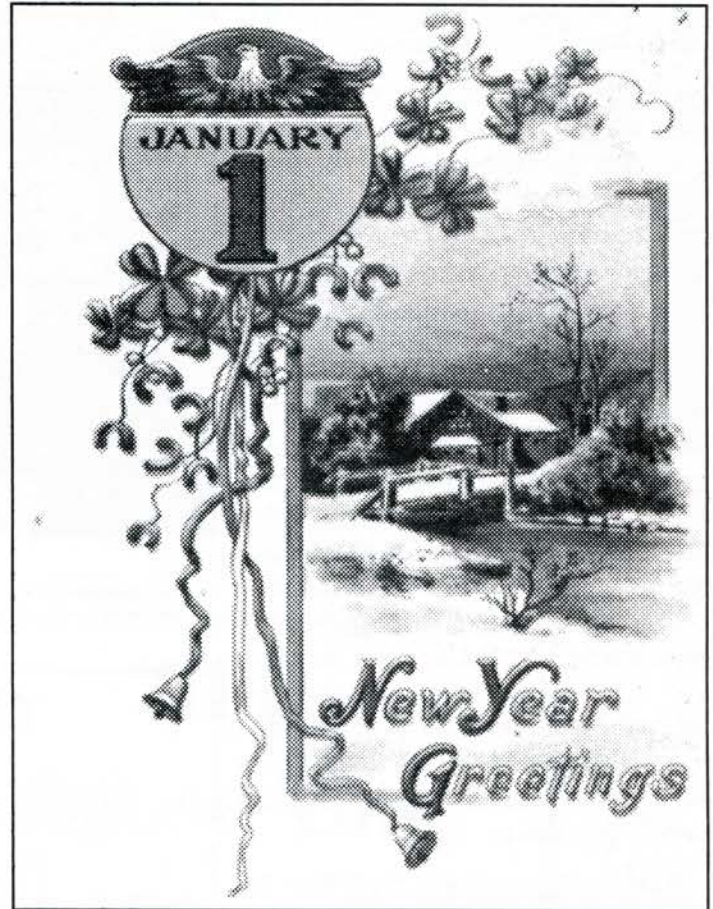
As we approach the year 2000 with all its excitement and hype, the question of whether or not it is the new millennium is much debated. Is it or isn't it? Does the year 2000 kick off a new millennium, or do we need to wait until 2001? The world is definitely celebrating the change to three zeros. Whether or not it is a millennium change, the number change is enough to satisfy the many celebrators out there.

However, a quick glance at many organizations' stand on the matter (i.e. the U.S. Naval Observatory, the Royal Greenwich Observatory) shows that all declare the year 2001 to be the start of the new millennium: "Because there is no year zero, the first year of the calendar ends at the end of the year named 1 A.D. By a similar argument 100 years will only have elapsed at the end of the year 100 A.D. Since 2000 A.D. is the 2000th year of the Christian Calendar, two millennia will have elapsed at midnight on 31 December 2000. So the third millennium and the 21st century will begin at the same moment" (Royal Greenwich Observatory). For all the calendar watchers out there, the new millennium will start on January 1, 2001.

It is interesting to see that we are not the only time that has questioned the changeover. Perusing the newspapers at the last turn of the century, one will see that the same debate was going on. In fact, if you substitute our dates for their dates, there would be no difference in argument!

Read:

There appears to be an erroneous idea prevalent among our exchanges in regard to the time when the nineteenth century ends and the twentieth begins. The year 1900 begins on the 1st of January, 1900, and will not be completed until the last minute of the last day, or at midnight, December 31, 1900. From the first of January, 1900, to the last day of December, 1900, the last year of the nineteenth century is transpiring, and not until the earth shall have made a complete revolution around the sun will the year be finished and the twentieth century begin. At midnight, December 31st, 1899,



*New Year's Greeting Card sent to Mildred Shelford by
Bernice Butler, postmarked December 23, 1915*

the year ends, and the next hour will be the first hour of the year 1900, and we shall date our letters January 1st, 1900, but that is only the first day of the year. We change our monthly calendar to correspond with the day: as, the 1st of September, but we do not change the calendar to October until all the days of September have transpired. Just the same with the year. We date all of our notes to day and year, but do not enumerate the year as complete until the 1st of January 1901, which is the first day of the twentieth century, and 1901 will not be complete until midnight, December 31st, 1901. We are now living in the year 1899. Next January we will be living in the year 1900 and the last year of the 19th century, and will so continue to fix dates until the year is completed, and we enter upon the twentieth century. ♦♦♦

(Healdsburg Tribune, December 14, 1899)

Genevieve "Gene" Pfeffer Warfield, a civic leader and grand lady of Healdsburg Society for over fifty years, lived a very interesting life before she married George Warfield.

Genevieve Pfeffer was born in San Jose, California on December 9, 1890. The Pfeffer family was well to-do and Genevieve, along with her five sisters, were stars of the social scene in San Jose before World War I. She graduated from Stanford University and the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art and in 1917 she and her sister Georgene, also an art student, designed the Splashme Doll. They used the "kewpie" doll as a starting point when they designed their doll, the result of their imaginations. But Genevieve designed the come-hither eyes that are the glory of the vamp bisque and hand painted beach beauty. The first dolls had a saucy silk bathing cap. Genevieve filed for a design patent on September 24, 1917 and the patent, for three and a half years, was approved for the Splashme Doll on December 11 of that same year. Using a combination of their first names, the two sisters developed the business name of Gene George.

From the 1890's until after World War II, most families took their vacations at the beach and attended the large amusement parks such as Coney Island, Atlantic City, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Long Beach, etc.

Genevieve introduced the Splashme Doll in Santa Cruz in 1918. The dolls won instant favor and she had over \$250,000 in orders before she began to advertise.

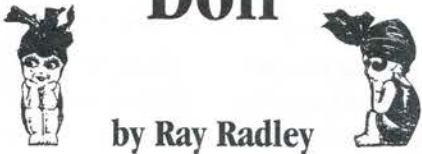
The fame of the Splashme Doll took Genevieve to New York where she contracted with the George Borgfelt and Company as sole distributor. The dolls were the novelty hit doll of the year. The January 1918 George Borgfelt advertisements show that Miss Pfeffer was improving her line of dolls which were now offered with "large bow of silk or adorned with real hair of any color, of the latest coiffure."

During the Spring of 1919 Genevieve dis-



Left to Right,
8" Splashme faced doll, 6 1/2" Splashme doll, 3" Splashme doll with bathing cap, box for soap doll.
(Healdsburg Museum Collection)

The Splashme Doll



by Ray Radley

covered that two large corporations were manufacturing, at the rate of 5,000 a day, copies of her Splashme Dolls at a factory in Chicago. So she traveled to Chicago by train and was hired at one of the factories that she contended was infringing on her patent. She did this, of course, without revealing her true identity. Her new employers found that she was so skilled that they promoted her the first day. How long she worked at the factory is not known, but they were sorry in that they lost so valuable a worker when she left.

The next time her employers saw her, they were in Federal Court. After look-

ing into the come-hither eyes of the Splashme Dolls, Federal Judge Carpenter played godfather to her "children" and issued an injunction restraining the two corporations from making or selling anything resembling the Splashme Doll.

The Splashme Doll fame continued after she won her court case. Florenz Ziegfeld featured the Splashme Doll theme in his Midnight Follies. Atlantic City was having Splashme bathing beauty contests. Famous movie stars were saying nice things about the dolls. Mary Pickford stated: "Splashme's are a delight to have around, and one cannot help but smile when looking at them."

The Splashme Dolls were so successful that Genevieve designed Soap Dolls, Party Favors and, in 1920, three Splashme books were published.

The Splashme Dolls are now just a memory of the times past. After her years as doll designer and artist Genevieve settled down to life in Healdsburg. She devoted her life to her husband, George. She still had artistic flair. I was told by numerous people that "Gene" loved her hats. ♦♦♦

by June Maber Smith

Colonel Roderick N. Matheson built his home at 751 South Fitch Mountain Road in 1857. Today, in 1999, a stately Colonial Georgian Revival home stands at that address, occupied by owners Judy and Ralph Jenkins. During those 142 years only two other families lived on the premises -- Jirah Luce and his wife Nina Matheson, and George Warfield and his wife Genevieve.

Scottish born Roderick N. Matheson emigrated with his parents to New York City in 1840 when he was 15 years old. There he met and married Antoinette "Nettie" Seaman. After working at several different occupations, Rod came west and tried his luck in the California gold mines. He soon moved on to San Francisco and became involved in many city ventures, including a stint as Controller of the city. In 1853 Nettie and Roderick, Jr. joined him there. Four years later the family moved to Healdsburg where Rod purchased 300 acres on the east side of town. They built their home and Rod became a prominent member of the community. He taught in the first school, The Russian River Institute (later known as the Agricultural and Mechanical University of California), farmed and was active in politics. Because of his political interests he was invited to President Lincoln's inauguration in 1861 in Washington, D.C. He had hoped to receive a political appointment while there, but instead, he volunteered to lead a northern regiment. He was soon fighting in the Civil War. His end came tragically in September of 1862 when he was wounded in a battle at Crampton's Gap. He died shortly thereafter from his wounds, never again to see his wife and children. His body was returned to Healdsburg and is buried in Oak Mound Cemetery, where the G.A.R. erected a tall monument to mark his grave.

The family lived on in the home and in 1886 daughter Nina Matheson married Jirah



*The Roderick Matheson house as it looks today.
(Photo courtesy Judy Jenkins)*

The House That Matheson Built

Luce. She inherited the house upon her mother's death and in 1904 the couple extensively remodeled it, adding bay windows, reducing the size of the front porch, and adding other touches.

In 1923 George H. Warfield and his second wife, Genevieve (Gene), purchased the property. George came to Healdsburg from New York with his father, General R.H. Warfield, in 1876. General Warfield was one of the founders of the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Healdsburg and son George joined the firm as a clerk in 1876. Two years later he was elected cashier, and

in 1900 he became president. George married Harriet Seawell (sister of Dr. J. Walter Seawell) in 1896. Harriet died in 1917, having given George two children, Ruth and Richard.

George's banking career proceeded. He and his father were among the founders of the Sotoyome Bank of Healdsburg which evolved into the Healdsburg National Bank and the Healdsburg Savings Bank. George continued his career with the First National Bank of Healdsburg. When that bank became a branch of the Bank of America in 1931

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George was appointed vice president. Even after his retirement in 1936, he continued as a member of the bank's advisory board. The classic bank building at the northeast corner of Healdsburg Avenue and Plaza Street was built in 1920 under George's direction. It featured 24 foot ceilings and "an attractive and well furnished ladies' waiting room" to the left of the main entrance.

In 1921 Healdsburg residents Mr. and Mrs. A.K. Lee introduced George to Miss Gene Pfeffer of San Francisco. A few months later, George and Gene announced their engagement. She was noted for her "Splashme" dolls and she also made dolls representing Hollywood movie stars. (See Ray Radley's article.)

The Warfield's first home after their marriage was in "Duck Flat," the area where the Vineyard Shopping Center now stands. They then moved to the Matheson home and proceeded to give it its second extensive remodeling. They added the stately columns and gave the front of the home its symmetrical appearance.

They were one of Healdsburg's socially prominent couples. Garry Rosenberg remembers calling on Gene Warfield as a young boy with his mother, Lillian, and leaving their calling cards in her tray. Tom Baxter's parents, Tom and Helen, were also good friends of the Warfields. He remembers Capt. Fitch's desk (now in the Healdsburg Museum) in the living room with Grace Hudson's portrait of Rosa hanging over it. The Warfields were a generous couple - when Tom's parents lost their Skaggs Springs area home to fire in 1929, they were invited to stay in town with George and Gene.

In the 1920s the Warfields were noted for entertaining a movie star, Janet Gaynor, and a famous artist, Grace Hudson, and her husband, Dr. J. W. Hudson. These guests were probably treated to an outdoor barbecue dinner, as the Warfields were into cooking and



The Matheson House Circa 1856

eating outdoors long before most of us were. George considered himself a connoisseur of martinis -- he didn't bruise them. He also made a great old fashioned.

Emma Gromo first met Gene in 1927. Emma's husband, John, worked for Gene and Emma soon was helping, too. She ran errands and took Gene visiting. Emma remembers the original barbecue area with its counters and tables.

Although the Warfields were hit hard by the Depression, they were still able to enjoy their beautiful home. George died in 1948 at the age of 79. Gene continued to live in the house until 1984 when she moved to a rest home. During her last few years in the house, Gene let things slide and it fell into disrepair. She died in 1985 at the age of 95.

Judy and Ralph Jenkins bought the Matheson house in 1987 and moved here from Virginia. They tackled the huge project of cleaning up and restoring the home. They rebuilt the terrace on the east



George and Gene Warfield
February, 1945
(Photo from the Tom Baxter Collection)

Please see page 9

side of the house, replaced the foundation and roof and did some remodeling in the kitchen. It is now a beautiful mansion once again. The Jenkins did a lot of the work themselves. Ralph did the electrical work and Judy used her artistic talents to do the wallpapering, stenciling and decorating. All ten rooms, including the five bedrooms, are elegantly furnished, and the four fireplaces are functional.

Although the home was lovingly cared for by the Mathesons, the Luces and the Warfields, we are truly thankful the Jenkins have returned it to its status as one of Healdsburg's truly magnificent homes. ♦♦♦



The Matheson House showing the 1904 remodeling



Movie star Janet Gaynor, left, Gene Warfield, center and famed artist Grace Hudson, right, and in back George Warfield, circa 1940's

SOURCES:

Interviews, Nov. 1999, Judy Jenkins, Emma Gromo, Helen Rosenberg, Garry Rosenberg and Tom Baxter.

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Healdsburg Historic Resources Inventory, 1983.

Retail Businesses of Early Healdsburg

by Holly Hoods

Early Plaza Business District

The core of Healdsburg's earliest commercial section developed--as planned by Harmon Heald--around the downtown plaza, which also served as the central parking lot for horses and wagons. Just six years after the town was incorporated, a correspondent to the *Russian River Flag* wrote about the "striking contrast between the rural village of 1857 and the somewhat pretentious Healdsburg of today." From the vantage point of 1873, the writer praised Healdsburg's lively growth, and recalled early businesses of the fledgling community.

In 1857, the major business section of the town was concentrated along West Street [now Healdsburg Avenue] from North Street to the plaza. According to the writer, "the principal stores were those of Sondheimer and Engel, in a one-story wooden building where Sam Meyer's store is now, and Mitchel and Hooper in the old building north of Hawkins' stable. In the Fall of 1857, D. Bloom opened a small stock of dry goods in a wooden house where Stuhly's barber shop stands."

"Dickenson and Allen kept a hotel on the northwest corner of West and North streets. Mr. Harris had a tin shop in part of the same building. Jacob Heald and J.B. Raney kept the original Sotoyome House [hotel] on the ground where the house of that name is now. The brick store now occupied by Bloom, Rosenberg and Co. was built in 1857 by James Sampkins for a saloon, and was the first brick house in the town. Page and Francis kept a livery stable on the northeast corner of North and West streets. The most valuable lots in town were fronting the plaza

on West Street, and were held at \$15 each, or two for \$25." (*Russian River Flag*, July 17, 1873)

"North Healdsburg" Commerce

The earliest industrial complexes, such as a brewery, tannery, and cream of tartar factory were located at the outskirts of the original town, spurring commercial development nearby. For many years, the area north of Piper Street along Healdsburg Avenue was identified as "North Healdsburg." For at least 10 years after Heald's 1857 subdivision, this area competed with the plaza area to become the main commercial district. It is interesting to note that the major commercial competition to the present downtown area exists on that same northern part of Healdsburg Avenue at the intersection of Dry Creek Road. (*Healdsburg Cultural Resource Survey* 1983:11)

Business Inventory: 1904

Between 1880 and 1906, construction of both commercial and residential structures was slow, but steady. The downtown

core began to take on a uniform appearance with earlier wood frame buildings increasingly being replaced by brick. At the end of 1904, the *Healdsburg Tribune* presented the following interesting assortment of mercantile businesses: **Drug Stores**--W.B. Whitney; C.D. Evans; Julius Luedke, Jr.; **Dry Goods**--Rosenberg and Bush; Frank Hazen; J. Silberstein; L.L. Granger; I.P. Janssen; **Butchers**--Yanglin and Gobbi, Dennes and Haigh; F.F. Mack; J. Likens; **Undertakers**--James Skee; Tom Young; **Shoes**--Schwab Brothers; Vitousek and Company; L.H. Aren; **Harness**--H.K. Thornton; E.S. Price; K. Hildebrand; **Groceries**--Rochdale Company; Alexander and Newbert; G.H. Bush; Cnopius and Breiling; W.P. White; A.D. Passalacqua; G. Buchignani; **Bicycles**--A.E. Howard; McAtee; **Buggies**--James Brown; **Feed**--L.H. Matthews; E.H. Beck; **Tailors**--R. Bo--; Goldstein Brothers; H. Gregg; **Restaurants**--Jim Dailey; Nelson and Beeson; and **Second Hand Stores**--George French; Byers and Rosenquest. (HT, December 22, 1904)

Please see page 11



John Young and Sons, Furniture and Coffins, located south side of Plaza on Matheson Street between Healdsburg Avenue and Center Street, Circa 1894

Descendants of many of these early business owners still reside in the area.

Oldest Healdsburg Business

Fred Young and Company, the oldest continuously-operated business in Healdsburg, was founded in 1859. The company originated when John Young and Peter Grist opened a furniture and undertaking business under the name of "Young and Grist." In most small towns in the 19th century, cabinet makers made coffins along with household furniture, and furniture dealers offered undertaking services along with coffins. [see *Russian River Recorder*, issue 62, Autumn 1998 for more about undertaking in Healdsburg]. Young's sons Thomas and E.F. joined the business in 1869, which then became known as "John Young and Sons."

In 1897, their business was described as follows: "The premises occupied by John Young and Sons are 100 feet by 22 feet, thus affording ample room for the accommodation of their immense stock. The large sales room is well lighted and supplied with all the modern conveniences. The heavy stock carried embraces a superb assortment of furniture of all grades, both modern and antique, including parlor, dining room and bedroom and so on, down to pantry and kitchen outfits. Young and Sons are the leading undertakers in the city, and their goods and work in this line correspond in excellence to those already mentioned." (Reynolds and Proctor 1898: 39). After the death of his father, Thomas Young expanded the company.

Thomas died in 1919, and his son Fred took over the business the following year. In 1926, Fred was elected County Coroner, an office he held until ill health forced his retirement in 1940. He died three years later. The business was continued as a co-partnership consisting of Hazel Young, Adeline Mascherini and Ernest Frandsen. They retained the name "Fred Young and Company" and expanded the mortuary business to Cloverdale in 1954. (Healdsburg



Rosenberg and Bush Department Store, 300 block of Healdsburg Avenue, Circa 1893

Museum "Young" file) The business remained in the Frandsen family until two years ago, when Ian and Marilyn Frandsen sold it to Loewen Group International, Inc. The corporation continues to operate funeral homes as "Fred Young and Co" in Healdsburg and Cloverdale. [Betschart 1999]

Oldest Family-Owned Business

The distinction of being the oldest family-owned business in Healdsburg belongs to Rosenberg and Bush Department Store, which closed in 1985. The business was founded by Wolff Rosenberg in 1865, and was continued by the next two generations. Rosenberg arrived in the United States in 1859 at the age of 19. He worked in a San Jose dry goods store before moving to Sonoma County. In 1865 he joined Samuel Cohn in his mercantile store and soon became a partner. They conducted business in what was then known as the Hertel building, west of the plaza on the present Healdsburg Avenue. In 1873, Cohn and Rosenberg Dry Goods merged with Bloom

Brothers, but the partnership only lasted one year (*Russian River Flag*, Jan. 8, 1874).

In April 1874, Rosenberg opened a new mercantile store, "The White House." (*Russian River Flag*, April 2, 1874) Eli Bush, a devoted employee, became a partner shortly thereafter. Four years later, the store's name was changed to the "City of Healdsburg" (inspired by the "City of Paris" in San Francisco), and it moved into a brick building on the 300 block of Healdsburg Avenue. From 1878 until 1949, the big store was a popular trade outlet. Wolff's sons, Harold and Ira, successfully continued the business. Shortly after Harold and Ira died (in 1944 and 1947 respectively), their widows erected the final store on the former Wolff Rosenberg home site. Wolff's grandsons, Garrett and Ira, continued to operate the family business until 1985.

In 1999, Garry Rosenberg says that people frequently tell him how much they miss the store. Longtime locals lament the loss of a nearby place to buy the basics, like blue jeans

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Continued from page 11

and underwear. He sympathizes, but explains that changing trends in retail put them out of business. "The young people, they want to go to the malls. Shopping becomes a social event."

"We belonged to a group of stores similar to ours. There were probably 25 stores in it, stretching from Redding down to almost Fresno. They were all real good stores and well managed and so forth. We would meet maybe three times a year and discuss mutual problems. We [Rosenberg and Bush] decided we were seeing signs that we didn't like: the average age of our customer was going up and the resources were becoming difficult to deal with. People that we'd bought from for over 100 years were saying we can't sell you any more because you don't buy enough. All they wanted to do was deal with big multi-store operations, so anyway we just closed it. But today, there's not one of those 25 stores that's still in business!" (Garrett Rosenberg Oral History, 1999) ♦ ♦ ♦



The first cabin built by Harmon Heald in 1851 was located on the site of the Union Hotel, Circa 1873

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