



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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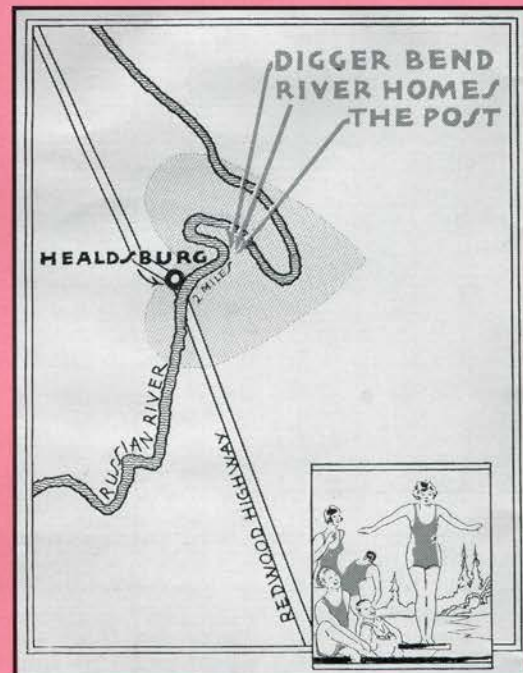
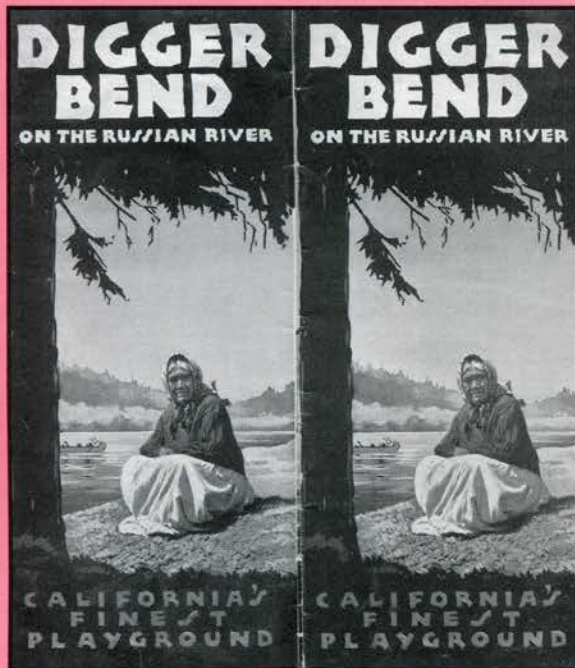
An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society

DIGGER BEND ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN!

by Charlotte Anderson

Page 6



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

PHOTO-NOTES:

THE HEALDSBURG POSTCARDS OF MERVYN SILBERSTEIN

by Daniel F. Murley • Page 4

LOCAL GIRL MAKES BAD

CARRIE SPENCER & THE 1873 CHARLES MORTIMER (FLYNN) MURDER TRIAL

by Holly Hoods • Page 9

In This Issue

A look at postcards depicting the beauty of Healdsburg and the surrounding countryside, a fascinating account of a local young woman and her involvement in a murder and an artifact that gives us the story of the proposed Digger Bend development as a resort in the 1920's. These are the stories we bring you at the close of 2007.

Many of photographer Mervyn Silberstein's photo post cards are used to illustrate Curator Daniel Murley's article about Healdsburg's most famous photographer and chronicler of the life and times during the turn of the century. It complements nicely Dan's article about young Mervyn Silberstein which appeared in the Autumn 2007 issue of *The Recorder*.

We are indebted to June Maher Smith, a frequent and well liked contributor to *The Recorder*, for bringing to our attention a brochure about the Digger Bend proposal of 1928 in which the property at the end of Bailhache Avenue would have become a tourist destination resort. We showed the brochure to our faithful contributor Charlotte Anderson who came up with a fascinating account of a project that would have brought many vacationers/visitors to Healdsburg. Her research gives us a broad view of an enterprise that might have been!

Research curator Holly Hoods brings us another fascinating story of crime. This time it involves a local young woman who lived with her family in Dry Creek until she fell in with unsavory characters. The time is 1873 and obtaining the information for this article, we are certain, took many hours of research. But it was worth the effort, as you will see when you read this crime saga. Holly lamented the fact that she could not illustrate the story with a photo or drawing of Carrie Spencer, the main character. Unfortunately, the State of California Department of Corrections had drawings, etc. dating back to only 1890.

We are looking forward to our assignments for the new year. However, we will be pleased to hear from our readers about topics or subjects that are of special interest to them.

A happy new year to all our supporters.

Arnold Santucci
Editor



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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

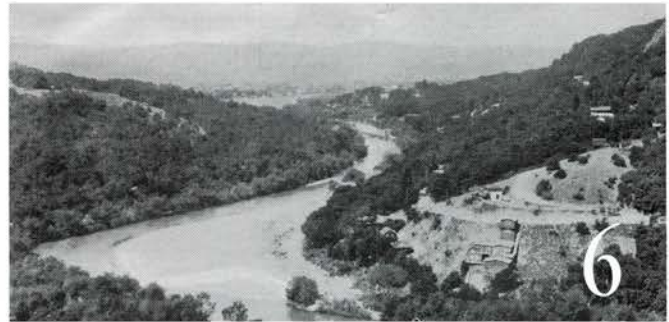
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4 Photo-Notes: The Healdsburg Postcards

by Daniel F. Murley

Noted Healdsburg photographer Mervyn Silberstein captured the scenic beauty of Sonoma County and many social gatherings at the turn of the century.

6 Digger Bend on the Russian River: What Might Have Been!

by Charlotte Anderson

A grand plan for a vacation paradise which never came to being.

9 Local Girl Makes Bad: Carrie Spencer and the 1873 Charles Mortimer (Flynn) Murder Trial

by Holly Hoods

From Dry Creek to the gallows. Local woman's connection to major crime events.

PHOTO-NOTES

The Healdsburg Postcards of Mervyn Silberstein

by Daniel F. Murley



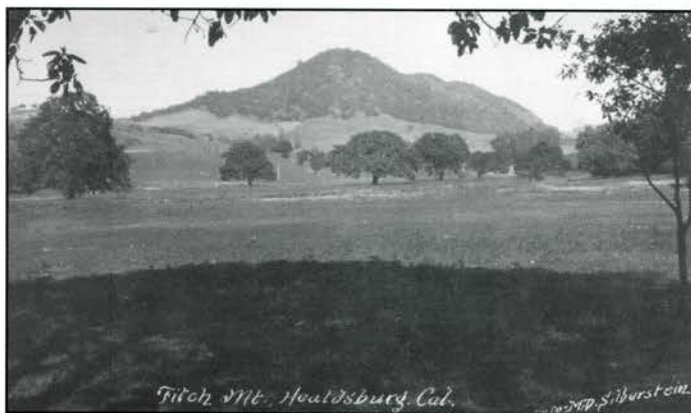
Mervyn D. Silberstein - August, 1913

When the lenses of his various cameras were not directed at his Healdsburg High School chums or family members or female companions, young Mervyn D. Silberstein captured the scenic beauty of rural Sonoma County and the many social gatherings and celebrations which punctuated turn-of-the century Healdsburg. Mervyn moved to San Francisco in 1911 but never truly left Healdsburg.



Jacob and Mervyn riding in the Healdsburg area - 1911

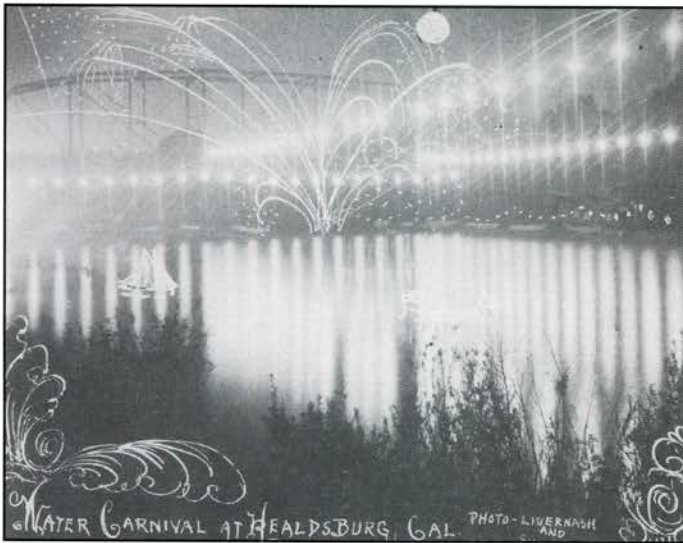
On many of his visits until his death in 1957, he would have Healdsburg and its residents in focus.



Fitch Mountain - 1909

Postcards as a communication medium were in their heyday when Mervyn began placing one-cent stamps on local images which he developed in his own darkroom. Many of his earliest cards featured images which had been altered in the darkroom by writing or sketching on the negative itself. In this way Mervyn was able to express the artistic talents which he demonstrated in his cartoons and doodlings.

Continued on page 5



Water Carnival at Healdsburg, California

Unique subjects for his early postcard work were the members of the local Pomo and Wappo Native American communities. In one particularly striking and heart-warming image, he had as his subjects the infant Lucy Lozinto being overseen by her uncle Jim Shackley. Lucy later became the wife of Stephen Smith and the family was a pillar of the Native community.



"A Sotoyome Son" at Healdsburg, California



The Healdsburg Train Depot, 1910

After he graduated from Healdsburg High School in 1903 he and close friend William "Will" Livernash apparently began a photographic enterprise and most of the images from this period carry the words: Photo- Livernash and Silverstein. Mervyn, besides experimenting with photographic processes, was also examining the possible spellings of his last name. He finally settled on the original spelling using a "b" instead of a "v."

In later years living in San Francisco, Mervyn would publish many of his Healdsburg images through professional printers and some of these color renditions are collector's items.

Throughout his life and literally right up until his death in San Francisco in 1957, his images of Healdsburg were far and away his central photographic theme. Few local sporting events ever missed his camera's attention and his artistic treatment of Healdsburg's scenic bucolic location along the Russian River remain as classic views of the local landscape.

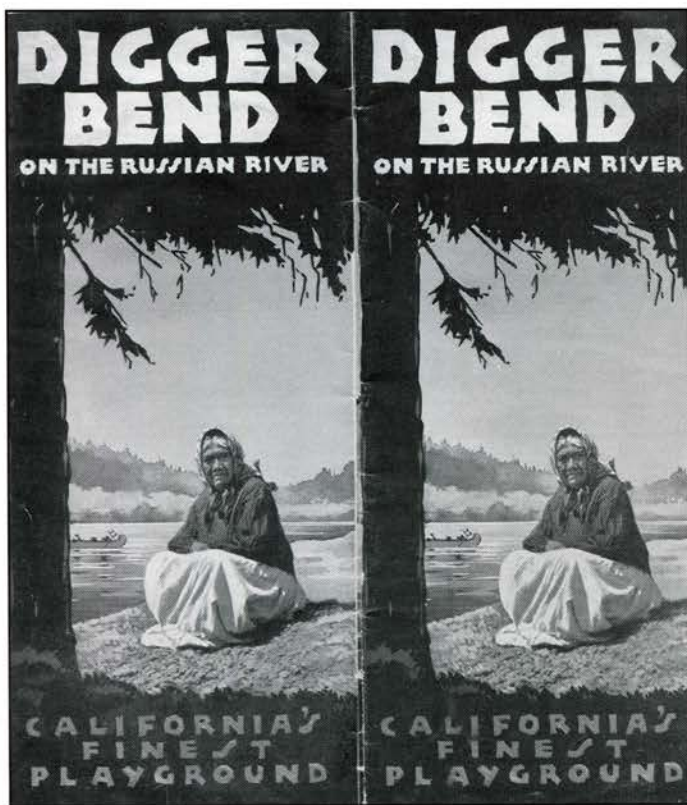


Fireman's competition downtown Healdsburg, 1908

DIGGER BEND ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER

What May Have Been!

by Charlotte Anderson



Digger Bend brochure cover picturing Pomo Salledonia (Sally)

In 1852 Harmon Heald noticed that there was north/south "traffic" across the Russian River so he built his store on the route. That spot was designated on early maps as "Heald's Store," shortly thereafter becoming "Healdsburg." Travelers kept coming, some moving on and some staying. When the population of Healdsburg hit 2000 in 1880, excited citizens began calling their town the "San Francisco of the north." Thus we can see that practically from day one, Healdsburg encouraged visitors to come to their thriving town, and tried to promote Healdsburg as a tourist and recreation area.

One such promotional enterprise was entered into by J. B. Foppiano, E.W. Beatty, Lois E. Post, and Larry Comerford who were proposing a grand destination resort and "country estates," "DIGGER BEND ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER," Healdsburg Museum Artifact #479.1 featured here. Foppiano and Beatty had acquired Sotoyome Rancho property on the east side of the Russian River, originally owned by the Fitches and subsequently the Grants and Bailhaches.

A huge full-page advertisement in *The Healdsburg Enterprise*, 25 October 1928, shouted: "**THE POST!** [A Part of the old Sotoyome Rancho] On the Russian River and on the **New Russian River Road**. Turn from **REDWOOD HIGHWAY** at Concrete Bridge just south of **HEALDSBURG**, Where Redwood Highway and Russian River meet, and go two miles along the new scenic Russian River Road to **THE POST!**" (Note: The scenic road was Bailhache Ave., and The Post was the "resort" and the beginning of the land which was to be for sale.) The ad continued: "An interesting and instructive booklet is being prepared which will be mailed to you free upon request. This will show **HEALDSBURG** as the real natural hub and heart of the **RUSSIAN RIVER**-the only spot where **REDWOOD HIGHWAY AND RUSSIAN RIVER** meet, and where **RUSSIAN RIVER ROAD** (Bailhache Ave.) and **REDWOOD HIGHWAY** meet." This booklet is the aforementioned **DIGGER BEND ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER** artifact.

THE POST!

[A Part of the old Sotoyome Rancho]

On the Russian River and on the New Russian River Road

Home and summer home sites on an acreage basis—minimum one acre—can be had at the price of an ordinary lot. Elbow room in the open for you with over 300 acres of matchless panoramic views of valleys, mountains and river.
Mile and a half of Russian River frontage.
Deepest diving spot on the river.
Deal directly with the owners. No agents.

Turn from REDWOOD HIGHWAY at Concrete Bridge Just south of HEALDSBURG, Where Redwood Highway and Russian River meet, and go two miles along the new scenic Russian River Road to

THE POST!

An interesting and instructive booklet is being prepared which will be mailed to you free upon request. This will show HEALDSBURG as the real natural hub and heart of the RUSSIAN RIVER—the only spot where REDWOOD HIGHWAY AND RUSSIAN RIVER meet, and where RUSSIAN RIVER ROAD and REDWOOD HIGHWAY meet.

Send, every inch of it, the new RUSSIAN RIVER ROAD through Fish Mountain that you can't see half the distance to Knight's Valley and again to direct the scenic light—this is the most picturesque view from Oregon's coast to the mountains of the HEALDSBURG and to the REDWOOD HIGHWAY Region northward. The natural beauty and scenic forces is responsible for the development which opens up a region of extraordinary natural attractions, exceptional beauty and historical interest.

ATTENTION HEALDSBURGERS!

There is a chance to own a portion of the scenic river and the new scenic road, just east of Concrete Bridge, where the Russian River meets the Redwood Highway. This is a rare opportunity to own a portion of the scenic river and the new scenic road, just east of Concrete Bridge, where the Russian River meets the Redwood Highway. This is a rare opportunity to own a portion of the scenic river and the new scenic road, just east of Concrete Bridge, where the Russian River meets the Redwood Highway.

Benoma County has the most diverse kind of natural beauty and wonders of any part of the world. No wonder we have the distinction of being under seven flags! They come—they come—they wait!

A lone eighty-two years ago a north-bounder of our past century gave birth to the Bear Flag and its name to Old Glory, a lone hundred and one year since the first English-speaking settler came to Sonoma County—and today we have over two fine dred rivers and scenic points of interest.

When Chief SOTO found his YOMA in this delightful region it was not the result of haphazard picking. True, the Indians to select a better place where nature is most generous—practical utility, accessibility, geographical location as to climatic conditions and scenic attractiveness.

Now, if you will, where you will, for this more fair—then come and raise your home flag over your "YOMA" at

Full page 1928 "Healdsburg Enterprise" advertisement

Continued on page 7

The advertisement goes on to claim that the new, every inch of it scenic, "RUSSIAN RIVER ROAD through Fitch Mountain Canyon cuts in half the distance to Knight's Valley and opens up direct highway to Calistoga-the shortest and most picturesque drive from Carquinez Bridge to the RUSSIAN RIVER, to HEALDSBURG, and to the REDWOOD HIGHWAY Empire northward." However, the ad neglects the fact that the road was not built yet, and what was proposed never came to fruition. The complete route was described in the same huge advertisement (in much smaller print!) as the following: ".....from the concrete bridge at the Redwood Highway to the concrete bridge at Maacama Creek and thence to Calistoga. When? Next Christmas! A dream? No, just a practical necessity, a civic improvement needing only that you (the people of Healdsburg) are willing to give whole-hearted co-operation. From the Redwood Highway to Frey's, that is about four miles of part

announced the first comers to THE POST: "a group of fifty Standard Oil executives have selected THE POST as the site of their Russian River Club and will in addition build individual homes.....so, soon as the twenty-five foot road is completed to the summit of THE POST, an airplane landing field will be established at a spot already selected and proven by experts." Thus ran the advertising for the new venture.

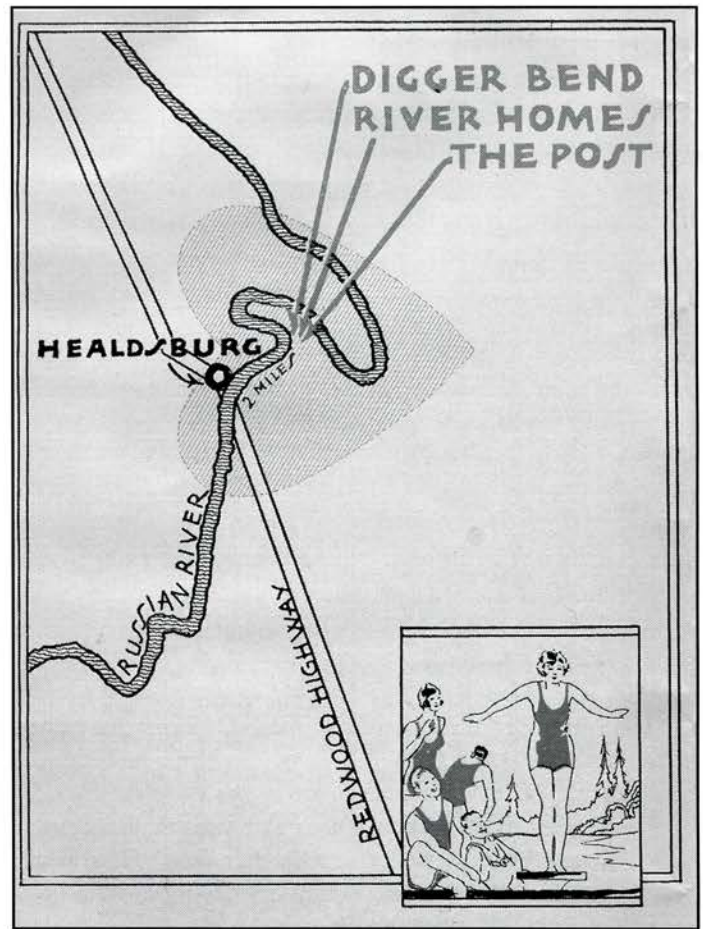
Touted as California's Finest Playground" in "The Heart of the Russian River," Digger Bend, where the Russian River makes a spectacular curve, was known to and used by the local Pomo for many years. The brochure, written some 80 years ago, takes promotional license both with the history of the Pomo rancherias and the Fitch Sotoyome rancho. One fact that remains is that when the white men first saw the Native root diggers and reed gatherers in this particular area, they dubbed them "Diggers," a derogatory term that classified them as lesser human beings. One of the most popular and prolific spots for the roots and reeds was the huge bend in the Russian River; thus, the newcomers referred to it as Digger Bend.



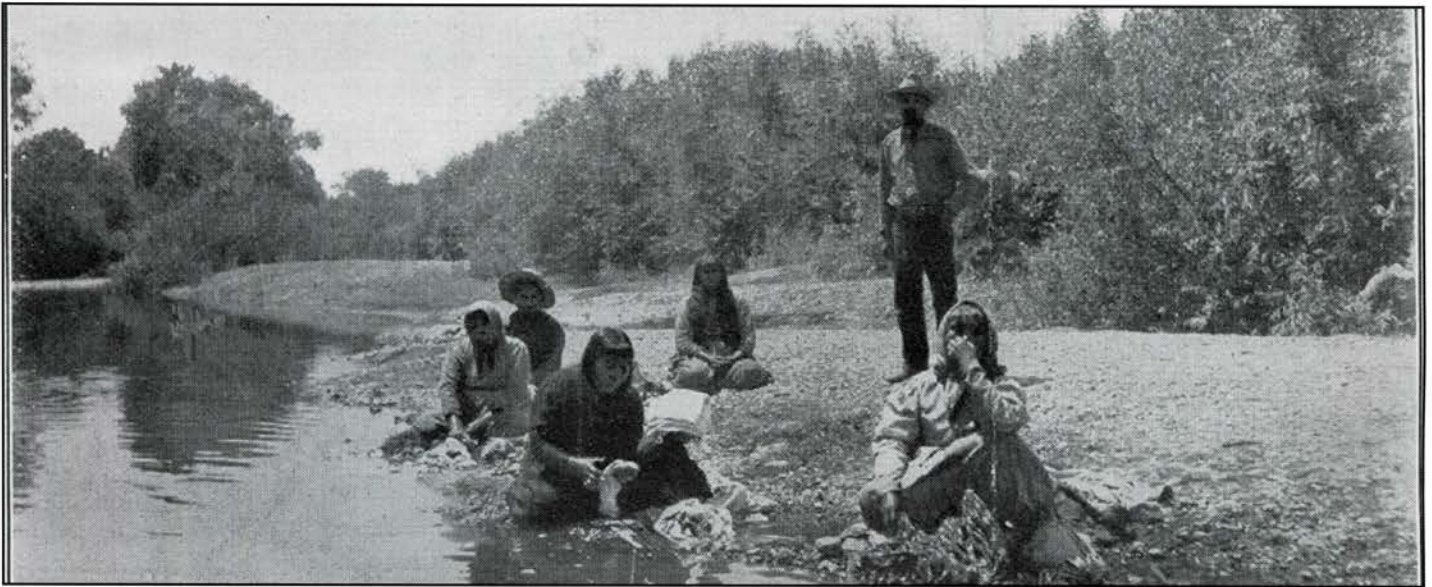
Panoramic view of Digger Bend with Fitch Mountain on left.

road, part trail. From Maacama bridge there is about a half mile of quick work. In between there is about three miles of steam shovel construction. So the new Russian River road will be approximately seven miles long, cutting the distance from Healdsburg to Knight's Valley in two. George Proctor, John Grant, J.M. Carr, and S.P. Brownlee hiked over the route Wednesday. The amazing thing is that the road has not been finished long ago." Even more amazing is the fact that after this and various later proposals, the road never did go through!

One of the owners, Larry Comerford, wrote a front page article for *The Healdsburg Enterprise*, 15 November 1928, showing himself as a promoter par excellence, by beginning with "eight thousand permanent workers and one hundred fifty thousand seasonal workers in an eight million dollar factory covering twelve miles? A dream? NO! The POST is the first unit in this summer home and tourist factory which will inevitably and in a surprisingly few years cover the east side of the river from the bridge to Franz Creek bridge." Larry Comerford, joint owner with Lois E. Post,



Map showing Healdsburg and Digger Bend as "The Heart" of the Russian River.



Pomo group washing clothing on the Russian River. Left front Mary Jarvis; behind her is her mother Josephine Sebastian.

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

The Russian River “flows in majestic grandeur around two large bends, giving within four air miles sixteen miles of river.” The railroad from Lytton Station covers four miles to Healdsburg, but the river to reach the same point takes “an indirect and difficult course of about fifteen miles, continuing southeastward for five or six miles and then abruptly turning to the northwest and flowing through the high and rugged Fitch Mountain group of hills in an irregular ‘S’ shaped canyon.” [from an extract of Prof. Ruliff S. Holway’s “Study of the Russian River,” a University of California Publication in Geography.]

Having what they termed as “California’s Finest Playground,” the Digger Bend owners proceeded to market their “half million dollar development program” in glowing terms. “Strategically located on the great Redwood Highway, in the very heart of the Russian River, Digger Bend is the objective for the motorist and tourist who seeks a convenient point from which to radiate to all playgrounds in Sonoma County-Rivers, Mountains, and Ocean. It is the hub of the resort country as for 50 consecutive days you may breakfast after a dip in the river, see a new point of interest each day, and return in time for a swim before dinner at Digger Bend.” “New, modern cabins permit visitors to spend an entire vacation in this charming spot.”

“DIGGER BEND is being developed and sold by owners only.” Literally, prospective owners had to go to the area and make their own selection of land directly with the owners with a specific survey at no additional expense. Furthermore, “your deed calls

for actual ownership to the center of the River with Title Insurance to protect you.” That point is made several times throughout the brochure, emphasizing that “you can actually own a bit of river for yourself.” Also promised was “the provision for plenty of clear, sparkling, invigorating water, piped to your sites from deep wells and springs.”

Despite the many promises and the tremendous advertising at the outset, the main project did not go as hoped. The road did not go through, an airport was never developed, and the “resort” did not meet expectations. The “lots” were sold off over the next few years by Foppiano and Beatty. Perhaps the people who now live off of Bailhache Ave. are just as happy that the road ends after about 3 1/2 miles and perhaps we must be content with a copy of a brochure called DIGGER BEND ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER to remind us of what might have been!

SOURCES

- Healdsburg Museum, Artifact #479.1, *DIGGER BEND on the Russian River*.
- The Healdsburg Enterprise*, 25 October 1928, full page advertisement, p. 7.
- “The Post Has Commanding Site on River and Will Be Popular Resort.” *The Healdsburg Enterprise*, 15 November 1928, p.1:3
- The Healdsburg Enterprise*, 28 February 1935, p. 1:3
- Healdsburg Tribune*, 12 November 1943, p. 1:3

LOCAL GIRL MAKES BAD: Carrie Spencer and the Charles Mortimer (Flynn) Murder Trial

by Holly Hoods

FROM DRY CREEK TO THE GALLOWS

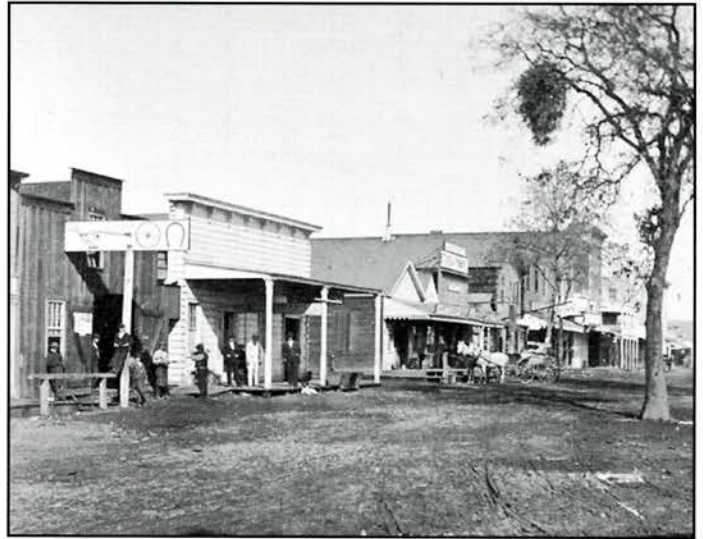
In the early 1870s, California newspaper headlines blazed with the vicious exploits of Charles Mortimer, once called “the most prominent criminal character in the state.” Mortimer’s nefarious career of murder, robbery, embezzlement, poisoning, assault and burglary was brought down by the damning testimony of his “paramour,” Carrie Wardell Spencer (nee Jones), a former Healdsburg woman from a respectable, law-abiding (and greatly horrified) family living in Dry Creek. This local connection to major state crime events intrigued me when I first encountered the story in the Healdsburg *Russian River Flag* of March 1873. Curiosity to learn more about these vivid historical characters and the case prompted further research beyond local sources into San Francisco and Sacramento historical newspapers (online) and the criminal records in the California State archives.

THE (FIRST) MURDER

On September 20, 1872 Mrs. Mary Shaw (alias Gibson), proprietress of a “low groggery” (cheap bar) on Water Street in Sacramento, was found dead in her establishment. Her throat was slashed; her face was cut and bruised; and in one hand she clutched a clump of short hair, evidently torn from the whiskers of her attacker. The room showed signs of violent struggle. A glass of beer, liberally laced with strychnine, was found near the body. A broken tumbler, covered with blood, appeared to have been the murder weapon. It had severed Mary’s carotid artery. A search revealed that money, clothing and jewelry were missing. The rooms had been ransacked.

PRIME SUSPECTS

Suspicion turned immediately to Charles Mortimer and his “wife,” (actually his mistress) Carrie Spencer, who had been staying at the nearby Mechanics’ Exchange Hotel on I Street. They had been seen drinking whisky and tea with the victim from 2-5:00 p.m. on the day of the murder. Carrie and a few other customers at the saloon had witnessed Mrs. Gibson receiving and stashing a sum of money. Charles Mortimer, who had been penniless and scrounging for drinks the previous day, was found by police with a pocketful of money. He glibly explained that he had made a big payoff playing Faro. More damning was finding Carrie, bedecked in jewelry, ribbons and clothing that had belonged to the victim. Fast-



1873 Healdsburg west side of West Street looking north.

talking Mortimer claimed to have bought the clothing and jewelry (for Carrie) after winning at cards from some guy on the street named “George.”

UNDER ARREST

Carrie and Charles were both placed under arrest for first degree murder. At first, when Sacramento police booked her as an accessory to murder, they called her “Carrie Mortimer,” the name she had been using. The young woman admitted that she was not technically married to Charley, though they had been “living together as such.” When questioned, Carrie stated, *I answer to the name Carrie Spencer, but that is not my real name. My name is Carrie Wardell; that is my marriage name. I was married at Santa Rosa and I lived at the time at Healdsburg.*

TELLTALE WHISKERS AND AN ACCUSING CORPSE

The evidence against Charles Mortimer was circumstantial at first, but it kept mounting. When searched, he had 30 scratches on his neck and face, an open half bottle of strychnine, and blood-spattered pants and boots. Mortimer was also (suspiciously) newly clean shaven. The police didn’t believe his story, so they

Continued on page 10

put the heat on him. They cuffed Mortimer and dragged him to the morgue and presented him with Mary Gibson's battered corpse, confronting him, "Did you kill this woman?" No, he insisted, staunchly. The police grabbed the dead woman's hand (still clutching the murderer's whiskers) and thrust it up before the suspect, again demanding a confession. Mortimer staggered a little, but maintained his innocence before the accusing evidence. Later, at the trial, the barber who had shaved him swore that Mortimer's beard had been much thinner on one side than the other and that the sandy color and length of his whiskers had matched the hair sample found clutched by the victim.

CARRIE COOKS HIS GOOSE

At the preliminary examination at the Police Court in early October 1872, Carrie placed her hand on the Bible and swore to a statement that was consistent with Mortimer's alibi and his version of events. She described the so-called suspect "George," who sold the clothing and jewelry to Mortimer after they went to the circus as "a large, fleshy man with long, black beard, light complexion and black eyes."

ANOTHER MURDER

Carrie changed her story after a brief period of reflection within the cold confines of captivity. She decided that the best course of action was to save herself. Carrie turned State's evidence in the Gibson/Shaw case, adding a few new damaging details. She fingered Mortimer not just for this murder, but also for the recent robbery/killing of Caroline Prenel, which had occurred at the victim's home in Waverly Place in San Francisco. At the time, Prenel's companion, a man named Henry Bec, was being held under arrest, awaiting trial on the murder charge. Carrie identified certain jewelry items in her possession as having belonged to Caroline Prenel and said that Mortimer had given them to her and admitted to the killing. Her testimony set Mr. Bec free and heaped more infamy on Mortimer.

Artfully, Carrie squirmed free of the accessory to murder charges, claiming to have lied under oath only because Charles had bullied and threatened her and she was afraid of him. Who knows if Carrie really was scared of him? She certainly should have been, but at this point she was clearly scrambling to save herself any way she could. Charley Mortimer had been an unrepentant killer and thief--newly released from San Quentin--when she had found him to be a suitable boyfriend back in 1871. Now that Carrie faced charges of her own, Mortimer had become excess baggage.

STAR WITNESS AND PARADE OF ALIASES

Carrie captivated the Sacramento courtroom when she entered it on the morning of March 13, 1873. The 26-year old star witness for the prosecution followed a three-day parade of rogues on the stand. These witnesses offered a glimpse into Carrie and Charley's life on the seedy side: a tawdry existence of saloon brawls, borrowed money, petty thievery, lies, and sexual favors traded for drinks. Virtually everyone they knew used one or more aliases, changing identities like changing clothes whenever their old one got soiled, encumbered by too many criminal charges or bad debts. Carrie changed names whenever she changed men, pretending to be a married woman in order to rent rooms together. These were brief alliances. Between 1864 and 1876, Carrie assumed at least six different last names.

A WELL-DRESSED MOLL

Crowds of curious people lined the halls of the Sacramento courthouse in March 1873, hoping to catch a glimpse of the infamous moll when she arrived to testify. On the day before the murder, Carrie had been described wearing rather gaudy attire: "a bright pink dress and plaid overskirt with red shawl, her hair short, and a green hat with rooster plumes." Her dress was much more subdued for court.

No images of Carrie have been found, (even in the State archives despite her many arrests). The March 13, 1873 Sacramento Daily Evening Bulletin, described her at the trial as:
...a tall woman, tastefully dressed in black throughout with black hat and plume. She wore a short blue veil over her face. Her hair was held up by a crimson red band; a narrow band of crimson and a string of pearls circled her neck.

MORTIMER "CROAKED" THE WOMAN

Carrie's words and appearance in front of the jury tightened the rope around her lover's neck while carefully preserving her own white throat. Leaning forward, listening intently, Charles thought he knew what to expect from her testimony; after all, he had carefully written it for her himself. Mortimer's eyes bulged and he twitched in his courtroom seat as Carrie broke from the agreed plans. Looking straight ahead, she coolly testified: "Charley told me that he 'croaked the old woman.'"

SMUGGLED MESSAGES AND A PLAN

The couple had been permitted two unsupervised visits during their incarceration, during which time "Charley" had coached Carrie to get their alibi straight. Security seemed lax at their jail, since they also had been able talk freely "through the wicket."

Mortimer took the precaution of bribing a "colored turnkey" to bring bread for Carrie, in which he secreted notes with detailed instructions. More bread messages were delivered to Carrie, because she claimed to need more help to prepare her testimony. Carrie enjoyed the bread, but she passed the incriminating notes on to the Sheriff. In them Mortimer had shared some of his tricks as an expert liar and con-man. One message to "My Darling Pet," included explicit instructions on how to testify convincingly by first picturing the lies in full color and detail.

"A BAD MAN, YES, BUT SHE'S WORSE!"

Mortimer's attorney, Mr. Gibson, attempted a spirited defense of his client. He had little ammunition other than to attack Carrie's credibility and contend that she was the true murderer ("Why would a man carry off women's clothes from a crime scene-this reveals a woman's hand!"). Gibson also smeared her character, reminding the courtroom that Carrie was "no clean girl. She is a miserable, dirty, perjured witness." He tried to assert reasonable doubt. Gibson acknowledged that Mortimer was indeed "a bad man, but will you hang this poor drunken creature on such flimsy evidence from such a source?"

According to various newspaper accounts of the trial, Mortimer glared fixedly at Carrie as she testified, trying desperately, unsuccessfully to catch her eye, "his countenance becoming blanched and very haggard," as he listened to her seal his doom. The jury deliberated for a full 35 minutes to reach a unanimous decision: Charles Mortimer was guilty of murder in the first degree.

THWARTED JAILBREAK AND A REVELATION

Once Mortimer was sentenced, an even-more bizarre series of events occurred, preceding his trip to the gallows. First came the shocking revelation that he was really "Charles J. Flynn," the wayward son of a prominent Lynn, Massachusetts family. Mortimer's true identity was discovered only by accident when William Flynn, his younger brother, was shot and killed while sneaking into the Jail Yard, rashly attempting to break him out of jail! William Flynn had traveled to Sacramento in response to a desperate letter from Charles.

Upon learning of brother William's death, Mortimer commenced to act like he had gone mad. For ten days he ignored everyone, talking only to a strand of hair on a chair, claiming that the hair was his dead brother. Opinion was divided as to whether he had really cracked or was feigning insanity. Despite his recent stresses, because he was such a liar nearly everyone believed he was faking.

When another Flynn brother, Frank, arrived from Lynn as a gesture of support in his final hours, Charles continued his crazy act, refusing to talk to or notice him.

Sheriff Bryte asked Drs. Wilkins and Shurtleff to examine the prisoner to evaluate his mental condition. Wilkins stated that he could not diagnose the man's sanity without seeing him often and having much time within which to examine him. Dr. Shurtleff pronounced him sane unqualifiedly. Mr. Gibson, Charles Mortimer/Flynn's attorney, appealed to the Sheriff to put the question of sanity to a jury. Sheriff Bryte, after consulting with attorneys and others, declined to do so.

Mortimer was hanged in the yard of the Sacramento County Jail on May 16, 1873, squirming and fighting until his last gasp. Charley's final wish was not granted. It was for five minutes alone in a room with Carrie.

CARRIE'S DESCENT

Carrie emerged from the trial a free woman, but in the eyes of the world a figure of sleazy notoriety. When arrested, Carrie had been wearing jewelry and items of clothing of the dead woman. Did Carrie get away with murder?

The newspapers continued to chronicle Carrie's exploits. She was arrested for perjury after Mortimer's hanging on May 30, 1873. She was arrested for stealing three boxes of cigars from the storeroom of a restaurant in San Leandro. More seriously, she was arrested at her brothel on L Street in Sacramento for "enticing a young girl into a house of ill-fame." Her next boyfriend was "Willis," a former friend of Mortimer's. In 1876, "Carrie Mortimer, alias Willis, 'the paramour of the murderer Mortimer,'" was arrested at a San Francisco bar with several other women for drunkenness. She was convicted in San Francisco City police court for having visited a liquor saloon in the nighttime and of using profane language. The *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin* observed tartly:

This woman's descent from respectability to the lowest depths of degradation has been terribly precipitate.

WHO WAS CARRIE SPENCER MORTIMER?

Caroline Jones was born in New York to William Daniel Jones and his wife in 1847. They came to California for the Gold Rush in 1849. By the late 1850s, the family moved to Dry Creek where they squatted, farming on Westside Road. As a young lady, Carrie "passed in good society" when she lived in Dry Creek, but she became an unruly teenager. Against the wishes of her parents,

14-year old Caroline Jones became involved with an older man, J.R. Weddle (sometimes spelled Wordell or Wardell). The couple was married in Santa Rosa on August 26, 1862. Perhaps the reluctant parents only permitted the underage wedding because their daughter was pregnant. They certainly posted no proud announcement of the marriage in the local papers. The marriage certificate in the Sonoma County archives showed that the groom was 32 and the bride a mere 15. Their marriage lasted less than two years.

Carrie was young, attractive and morally flexible enough to attract many men after she left her husband. Despite her respectable upbringing, she repeatedly chose the companionship of criminals, including "Butler" and "Spencer" with whom she engaged in burglary. They rented rooms and stole jewelry and money from their hosts.

Carrie was known to reside in Healdsburg, San Francisco, Sacramento and Visalia. She claimed to have had three children, two of them still living in 1872. Carrie stated that she lived with Mortimer, "passing as man and wife," for 1 year 10 months in San Francisco then Sacramento. Theirs was not an idyllic life. She described renting rooms for two weeks at a time, working a little, committing petty crimes, then moving to new rooms. The larcenous couple came to Healdsburg in November 1871. Mortimer, a tailor by trade, picked up a little money by working for Elias Jacobs at his tailor shop. Luckily for Jacobs and the rest of Healdsburg, the town of 800 was too small for a criminal operator like Mortimer to flourish. This could easily have been a Healdsburg murder story.

Sources:

Sacramento Daily Evening Bulletin, 3/15/1873; 9/9/1873; 4/22/1873; 1/4/1876; 6/8/1876.

Russian River Flag, 3/20/1873.

Sonoma County Great Register of Voters, 1872; 1898.

Sonoma County Marriage Records.



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