



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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HEALDSBURG AT THE CROSSROADS:

1859-1860

by Darla Meeker

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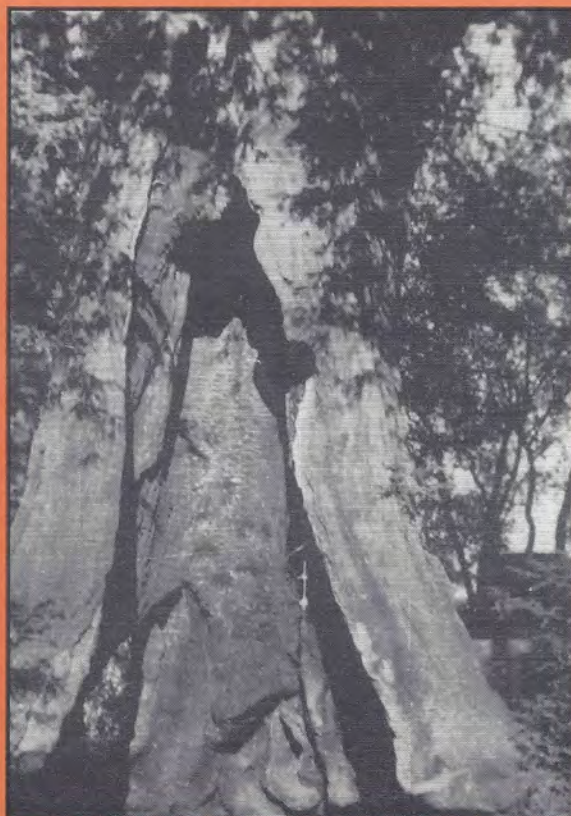
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L. S. Norton



"Old Stovepipe/General Eisenbower" Redwood,
Villa Chanticleer

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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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

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A change of seasons - cooler days and nights, children back to school and thoughts of an important nationwide election, plus pumpkins, Halloween and Thanksgiving.

In this issue we have tried to bring you interesting and informative articles including a number of "I Remember" essays. Our summer issue featured Walter Selover's "I Remember" article which was received by our readers, we were pleased to note, with appreciative comments. This spurred us on to publish, in this issue, a remembrance and oral history by Betty Carson Davidson, recorded in 1987.

Darla Meeker, former editor of the *Recorder*, in this election year, decided to explore how Northern Sonoma County and particularly Healdsburg and the surrounding area voted in the 1860 and 1864 elections. You might be surprised to know that the area had a southern bias and that President Abraham Lincoln, in 1864, did not carry Healdsburg.

Darla, in the approach to her subject and her extensive research, has given us a clear insight into those times. As she points out "most Petalumans who lived south of the Petaluma River, were anti-slavery and staunch Lincoln supporters, unlike Santa Rosa and the Russian River Valley to the north (which) constituted a Confederate stronghold in a Union state when the Civil War began."

We welcome to the pages of the *Recorder* a first time contributor, Michael Haran, who gives us an in-depth account of the history of Healdsburg's very special Villa Chanticleer. Michael, a two year resident of Healdsburg, is a screenwriter and hobby vineyardist. and is hoping to raise funds to film a number of motion pictures in Healdsburg. He is the author of *A History of Fishing Healdsburg and the Russian River Watershed*.

We are grateful to our Research Curator Holly Hoods and HMVA chair Charlotte Anderson (also a faithful contributor to the *Recorder*), for bringing us the story of "Soto Land", a handwritten sheet music from an original and local composition found in the Museum's archives.

We appreciate any and all comments about our efforts to bring you an informative and interesting *Recorder*. Please let us know.

Arnold Santucci

Editor



4 Artifact: "Soto Land"

by Holly Hoods and Charlotte Anderson

Holly, our Research Curator and Charlotte Anderson, HMVA chair for the past 8 years, join forces to tell us about "Soto Land", a handwritten sheet music from an original and local composition found in the Museum's archives.

5 Healdsburg at the Crossroads: 1859-1860

by Darla Meeker

It might surprise you to know that in the 1860 and 1864 elections the results in Northern Sonoma County indicated that there was a southern bias. In fact, the author reveals that Sonoma County was the only county in California where President Abraham Lincoln did not carry the election.

9 I Remember: A Visit to the Healdsburg of Yesterday

by Betty Carson Davidson, 1987

An oral history found in the Museum's archives, gives us a vivid picture of life in Healdsburg in the 1930's.

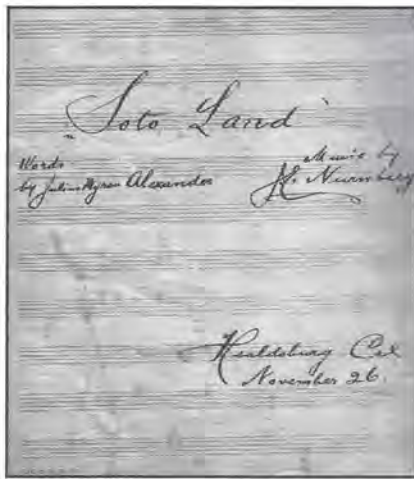
11 The Villa Chanticleer

by Michael Haran

A new contributor to the Recorder, Michael Haran brings us a detailed history of Healdsburg's Villa Chanticleer, delving into the Museum's archives as well as interviewing descendants of families who owned and operated the famous facility over the years.

15 A Walk Down Memory Lane - 37 Years Ago!

An old photo stirs reader's memory of Camp Rose Inn.



ARTIFACT: "SOTO LAND"

by Holly Hoods and Charlotte Anderson



Soto Land is handwritten sheet music from an original—and particularly local—musical composition. The sheet music is on heavy paper and measures 9 1/2" by 12." It is not accessioned.

Soto Land is a singularly romantic ode to a region: this place now called Healdsburg. The name "Soto Land" is derived from the name of the historical Mexican land grant within which Healdsburg is located—the 14,448 acre Sotoyome Rancho awarded to Henry Delano (and Josefa Carrillo de) Fitch in 1846.

The lyrics of the song were simple, penned by Julius Myron Alexander, Healdsburg's Turn of the (20th) Century poet laureate, who wrote passionately about his love of his homeland:

*The blue of sky, the sun of gold;
The birds that sing in green-leafed tree;
My heart, my love entrancing bold,
Calling today, they're calling to me
Calling, calling, calling to me,
From Soto Land, from bird and tree,
Where sunlight falls in golden West
The land I love, I love the best.*

The composers of the tune were prominent citizens—local movers and shakers in the arts—when they collaborated on this creative endeavor on November 26, 1923. Julius Myron Alexander, who was of pioneer stock (the nephew of Cyrus Alexander), had also been editor of the *Healdsburg Enterprise* newspaper for two years and the Secretary (head) of the Chamber of Commerce for the past ten. The prolific J.M. Alexander wrote and self-published hundreds of poems and essays, including his most famous "Flag of Peace," prior to World War I. Soto Land, however, is the only known example of his songwriting.

J.E. Nurnberger was the founder and professor of the short-lived,



Julius Myron Alexander and friends, 1928

but highly respected "Healdsburg School of Music." Nurnberger opened the Healdsburg Conservatory of Music in 1913 in the Kruse Building on Matheson Street. In 1921, he moved to "Powell Street Extension" (now Plaza Court) into the newly purchased Denio house which he had had moved from Matheson Street. He also had a new conservatory built "with the object of having the best acoustics attainable." To this end the conservatory had hardwood floors and a high ceiling. "With unusual foresight, light, temperature and the psychologic value of artistic surroundings have been taken into consideration. Everything that will develop the aesthetic appreciation of the student is considered." In addition, in order to stimulate the student "to continual effort for betterment," Professor Nurnberger gave monthly student musical recitals to which family and friends were invited.

Nurnberger lived but two years after writing this song; Alexander lived for nearly another decade. According to Professor Nurnberger's obituary, printed in the *Healdsburg Enterprise* 11 June 1925, the Czech musician had "retired from active work in the big music world" in 1913, and came to Healdsburg to open a studio. After years of study in Milan and Berlin, he had "frequently played before the crowned heads of Europe." Professor Nurnberger was described as "a master of all musical instruments, but is an especially able teacher of piano and an expert in voice culture."

Nurnberger's rather complicated score has been played and recorded. The recording can be heard at the Healdsburg Museum, but so far no one has stepped forward volunteering to sing Alexander's words!

SOURCES

- Healdsburg Enterprise*, 21 May 1921, p. 4:1
- Sotoyome Scimitar*, 11 August 1921, p. 4:3
- Healdsburg Tribune* (weekly), 11 June 1925, p. 3:4
- Healdsburg Enterprise*, 11 June 1925, p. 1:6
- Sotoyome Scimitar*, 12 June 1925, p. 2:4

HEALDSBURG AT THE CROSSROADS: 1859-1860

by Darla Meeker



West Street, 1859

In a presidential election year, it seems fitting to explore the political climate of Healdsburg in its fledgling years, especially given the fact that, in the 1860 and the 1864 presidential elections, a preponderance of northern Sonoma County election results reflect a southern bias.



Republican platform 1860

In fact, Sonoma County was the only county in the State of California where the sitting president, Abraham Lincoln, did not carry the 1864 election! Regarded as a vote against Lincoln and the Union, local and regional pro-southern voters cast their ballots for Confederate General McClellan, instead.

The reasons for this pro-southern vote count are many, and varied. Yet one incident, a duel-to-the-death, that occurred on September 13, 1859, less than a decade after California was admitted to the Union as a “free” state rather than a “slave” state, seems to underscore the political dichotomy that existed at this crucial time in history throughout the nation, the State of California, and – as the voting records clearly show – northern Sonoma County, including the Healdsburg area.

A DUEL-TO-THE-DEATH: THE SENATOR VS. THE JUDGE, SEPTEMBER 1859

Near the site of the present-day Olympic Club’s “members-only” Lake Merced Golf Course in Daly City, California, a duel-to-the-death

pitted David Terry, California Supreme Court Judge, against the United States Senator from California, David Broderick.

Both men were Democrats. Senator Broderick, a Stephen Douglas (Northern Democrat) supporter, opposed slavery. A stonemason by trade and a renowned New York saloon bouncer, Senator Broderick also was “an enemy of vigilante justice”, as evidenced, in 1849, when he critically wounded a member of the San Francisco Vigilance Committee with his bowie knife.



Democratic ticket 1860

Former Texas Ranger, California Supreme Court Chief Justice, Judge Terry, on the other hand, was a member of the “Chivalry” wing of the California Democratic Party, which was pro-South and pro-slavery, as was presidential hopeful, John Breckinridge (Southern Democrat). Married to the niece of Mississippi’s governor, Judge Terry was determined “to change the Constitution of the state by striking out that clause prohibiting slavery . . . or, if that was impossible, to divide the state, with a portion reserved for Southerners and their property.”

When, in June 1859, a San Francisco newspaper article appeared, citing Judge Terry’s claim that Senator Broderick took his orders from abolitionist Frederick Douglass, the Senator declared the judge to be “a miserable wretch”, as corrupt as President Buchanan.

Judge Terry challenged Senator Broderick to a duel. Having won the toss, Terry selected Belgian-made pistols, with eight-inch barrels and hair triggers. The Judge was familiar with the weapon; the Senator was not. Broderick died three days later, of a bullet wound to the lung. His dying words were said to be: “I die because I was opposed to a corrupt administration and the extension of slavery.”

Not surprisingly, Broderick’s death rocked California’s political world, and sent shock waves across the country. For years afterward, politicians and laymen alike argued whether it was a gentleman’s duel or an expedient political tool to rid the southern Chivs of their North Democrat arch rival.

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SQUATTERS, REVOLVERS AND REBELS

The escalating political violence in early-day California was not limited to San Francisco. For example, when Colonel L.A. Norton arrived in Healdsburg for a visit in 1857, he was *"favorably impressed with the small hamlet of Healdsburg, and the broad acres of Dry Creek and Russian River bottomland lying on each side of the town site . . ."*



L.A. Norton

Yet even before he moved to town, Colonel Norton was warned not to have anything to do with the *"land-grabbers"*. Unfamiliar with the term, Norton soon discovered that the surrounding countryside was alive with squatters whose unsanctioned presence on privately owned land provoked scattered incidences of harassment and outright violence.

In the case of the squatters located on a portion of the original *"Sotoyome Rancho"* Mexican land grant that Captain Henry Delano Fitch's daughter Josephine Fitch Bailhache and her husband John now owned, Norton described the Rancho squatters as *" . . . so confident of their ability to forcibly hold the premises that they literally . . . paraded the streets of Healdsburg, both men and women, with music and banners waving, to draw attention to their cause. The squatters seemed to think that " . . . if they could only get rid of Bailhache they would be secure in their homes. So, they made a raid on (Bailhache) and forced him to secrete himself in the Raney Hotel. Upon hearing the news, Colonel L. A. Norton met the mob, with cocked revolvers in each hand. . . ."*

Eventually, Bailhache moved out of the hotel, and soon thereafter moved his entire family out of Healdsburg, designating Colonel Norton as the overseer of the Fitch/Bailhache property in the family's absence.

Although Colonel Norton was not as fortunate in other local squatter-related skirmishes, in terms of loss of human life and property, he gained an added measure of admiration— and notoriety— within his adopted hometown and throughout Sonoma County, since squatter-related problems were not unique to Healdsburg at this time, as evidenced by this Santa Rosa-style definition of land-grabbers: *"Settler meant squatter; squatter meant Southerner and Democrat; the combination spelled Rebel."*

SECRET SOCIETIES AND THE SOTOYOME GUARDS

During the late 1850s, rumors of secret "underground" Confederate societies ran rampant in Sonoma County.

In January, 1859, to counteract the possibility of a "rebel" insurgency in the Healdsburg area, Colonel L.A. Norton posted a "Military Notice" in the newspaper, announcing the formation of *"a company of infantry in the Town of Healdsburg"*.

Seventy local anti-slavery men, who eventually would support either Stephen Douglas (Northern Democrat) or Abraham Lincoln (Republican) rather than the 1860 pro-slavery presidential candidates John Breckinridge (Southern Democrat) or John Bell (Constitutional Union), answered the call to action. According to the hand-written document on-file at the Healdsburg Museum, Colonel Norton was elected the Captain of "The Sotoyome Guards", with Roderick Matheson serving as 1st Lieutenant and Gustavus Peterson, 2nd Lieutenant, followed by a long list of seventy faded signatures listing the men who were willing to serve in the local militia.

Soon thereafter, Santa Rosa *"free-soilers"* formed the Washington Guard while Petaluma was known for its Emmett Rifles. In fact, most Petalumans, who lived south of the Petaluma River were anti-slavery and staunch Lincoln supporters, unlike *" . . . Santa Rosa and the Russian River Valley to the north (which) constituted a Confederate stronghold in a Union state when the Civil War began."*

THE U. S. CENSUS BUREAU VISITS HEALDSBURG, 1860

On July 4, 1860, the United States' Census Bureau arrived in Healdsburg, California.

The census taker set up shop at the local post office, next-door to Harmon Heald's general store, which was located across from the town's Spanish-style plaza, which Heald had donated, in perpetuity, to the fledgling City of Healdsburg, three years before.

The 1860 census was only the eighth census in the history of the United States, and the second to be held in Sonoma County. The first census had been held at the county seat of Santa Rosa, during the month of October 1850, a scant eighteen months after California was granted statehood.

Yet, ten years later, and only four months shy of the crucial national presidential election of November 1860, the "Town of Healdsburg/Mendocino Township" (a judicial designation which included the Dry Creek and Alexander valleys) now rated a census of its own. Throughout the month of July 1860, the men, women, and children who resided in

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John C. Breckinridge

this area made their way into the heart of the city to make their presence known. Name, age, sex, place of birth, occupation, net worth, and many other questions pertaining to livestock on hand, etc. were duly recorded by the census taker. Census records show that, in 1860, farming was the occupation-of-choice in the fertile "Mendocino Township" valley areas for adult white males of voting age while only 17 "Town of Healdsburg" residents claimed it as their primary occupation. In one important respect, however, adult male valley dwellers

and townsmen, alike, shared a common characteristic: They were relatively young risk-takers, with an average age of 33.5 years.

AN 1860 SNAPSHOT

Not long after the census taker left town, the following article about the Town of Healdsburg appeared in the Santa Rosa-based *Sonoma County Democrat* newspaper:

"We learn from the Review (Healdsburg's local paper), that Healdsburg has 176 legal voters, and 453 inhabitants. There are 12 merchants; 21 carpenters; 10 blacksmiths; 6 doctors; 2 hotels; 2 jewelry shops; 4 livery stables; 2 each of bookstores and harness shops; 4 liquor saloons, and 2 wagon shops; 3 churches and 3 schools. And one each of the following: Restaurant, drug store, printing office, flour mill, saw mill, daguerreian saloon, tan-yard, furniture store, paint shop, turning-lathe."

It is of interest to note that of those Town of Healdsburg businesses listed above, the 1860 Census records show that one stationer, one painter and one wagon-maker, as well as nine (9) of the twelve (12) merchants listed above were born in "Prussia, Prussia Poland, Prussia Russia, Hungary, Germany, or Poland", with a 10th merchant from Sweden. They were joined by 2 blacksmiths, 1 hostler, 1 daguerrian, 2 farmers, 1 boot maker, and several servants from Ireland; 1 liquor merchant from England; 1 physician from France, 1 Canadian attorney, 1 farmer from Scotland, and 1 fifty-year-old servant from the Sandwich Islands named Jo. The Mendocino Township portion of the census also lists a ranchero from Chile, farmers from Germany and Ireland, and "day laborers" from Russia, Portugal, England and Canada.

MEATY MATTERS

As summer turned to autumn, local voters continued to dissect the meaty matters of slavery, abolitionism, insurrection,



Abraham Lincoln, 1860



Stephen Arnold Douglas



General John C. Breckinridge



John Bell

secession, state rights, miners' rights, squatters' rights, and many other visceral, incendiary issues, including Pio Pico's renewed proposal to divide the nascent State of California in two. The spectre of civil war between the states hung heavy in the air.

Although Healdsburg had its own newspaper, *The Review*, the two major newspapers of the day were Santa Rosa's *Sonoma County Democrat* and the *Petaluma Argus*, each endorsing presidential candidates at opposite ends of the spectrum. In fact, when the *Sonoma County Democrat* was purchased during the summer of 1860, rumor had it that the paper had been financed with political party funds. . . which, apparently, was a fairly common practice at that time.

On June 14, 1860, for example, the decidedly pro-slavery and pro-secessionist *Democrat* announced that Lincoln ("a renegade Kentuckian, protective tariff Whig") and Hamlin

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Downtown Healdsburg at time of census.

(“an apostate and deserter from the Democracy, at the dictation of self-interest”) were nominated, at Chicago, “. . . as the standard-bearers of the Black Republican party.”

Less than a month later, on July 6, 1860, while the census taker was ensconced at the Healdsburg Post Office, the Virginia-born editors of *The Democrat* gave their “cordial support” to the Southern Democratic party ticket of John C. Breckinridge and Joseph Lane.

At the time, Breckinridge, age 35, was the youngest vice-president of the United States, and enjoyed President Buchanan’s support in the upcoming election. A veteran of the Mexican War and twice-elected as Congressman from Kentucky, Breckinridge eventually left politics to serve as a Major General in the Confederate Army, originally commanding the 1st Kentucky Brigade, also known as the “Orphan Brigade” since the state government did not officially support the Confederacy.

In response, the *Petaluma Argus* maintained its staunch pro-Republican/Lincoln stance, thereby providing a clarion call to those who were anti-slavery and opposed to secession.

BEYOND THE SUMMER OF THE CENSUS

In the 1860 presidential election, Abraham Lincoln (Republican) carried California with 38,733 votes (32.3%), with Senator Stephen A. Douglas (Northern Democrat) following close behind with 37,999 votes (31.7%), and John Breckinridge (Southern Democrat) winning 33,969 votes (28.4%). John Bell (Constitutional Union) ran a distant fourth with 9,111 votes (7.6%).

On November 15, 1860, the *Sonoma County Democrat* published the following “Official Vote for Sonoma County”:

“The vote for President is as follows: Breckinridge, 1466; Lincoln, 1236; Douglas, 612; Bell, 450. Whole number of votes cast, 3764.”

Five weeks later, on December 20, 1860 South Carolina called a special state convention, where delegates voted 160-0 to secede from the Union.

The frontier life, as Healdsburg once knew it, was quickly coming to an end.

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Sonoma County Democrat, Santa Rosa, CA, 1859-1860.

A VISIT TO THE HEALDSBURG OF YESTERDAY

by Betty Carson Davidson, 1987

It was October 14, 1929 when we arrived in Healdsburg from Salida, Colorado, the heart of the Rocky Mountains. My Dad drove to 438 North Street to my aunt's home. I had never seen my mother so excited; 20 years had passed since she last saw her sister.

It was a very warm day which thrilled us, as it was already early winter in Salida. We couldn't believe all the green trees, especially the orange and lemon trees in the front yard. My cousin, Viva Dumas, took me across the street to meet the Puccioni family, the parents and sister of Louie. Next day we went to visit Miss Young's third grade. After school we went to Jackson's Ice Cream Parlor, where I had my first snow cone.

October 29th, the day of the big stock market crash, Dad rented a four-room house and we went to Ben Ratner's "House of One Thousand and One Articles" to furnish it.

I worked for Mabel Tayman in 1932 and helped the Biasotti brothers harvest Colonel Tayman's prune crop. There were no houses on the east side of the golf course, only Colonel Tayman's prune orchard.

It was February 1933 that I went to work for Gene Warfield, where I helped prepare the house and food for the "gala" dinner parties she held in that very elegant mansion. I worked for that dear lady for four years. She was never cross with me, even the night I spilled soup on Dr. Nowels. I recall making a most special

breakfast tray for Janet Gaynor, and how fearful I was of dropping it as I climbed the long staircase to the beautiful guest room.

Life wasn't all work! Sometimes after school, Erma Jensen would take us to her parents' Snow Flake Bakery, to make fudge. Many brisk Saturdays we would go up Johnson Street and skate down the hill. In summertime, we would enjoy a five cent cherry coke at the "General Drug Store." Perhaps we would go to the library and climb the stairs to the front door where Mrs. Butler made everyone whisper and turn the pages of our books ever so quietly. My father was the "Caddy Master" at the golf course and would permit us to putt around on the putting green. Then we would choose our favorite NeHi soda pop from the ice box in the Caddy Shack that he managed.

A really exciting day was the Grand Opening at the new Ben Franklin Store on West Street [Healdsburg Avenue], and we all hurried down to explore it. Every Thanksgiving Mom would send me to LeBaron's Creamery for whipping cream for pumpkin pie. It was June 1960 when I married Ron Davidson, an air traffic controller, and began moving to Denver, Anchorage, Farewell, Nome, Fairbanks, Fargo, Las Vegas, Pocatello, Eugene, Klamath Falls, Stockton, Redding, and finally in 1978, to the Sonoma County Control tower, where we could come home to Healdsburg and once more walk familiar streets and see old friends and neighbors.



Actress Janet Gaynor, Gene Warfield, unidentified woman, George Warfield, 1930's



Nell Shelford's millinery shop interior, West Street

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Janet McCord Doelker and her niece, Janet "Pinky" Sones, Sunshine Beauty Shop

at Stanley's Stationery, have our watch repaired at Frisch's Jewelry, where the huge clock stood on the sidewalk, get our hair curled with a big permanent machine at the Sunshine Beauty Shop, grab a quick lunch or magazine at the cigar store which became the "Office," ride the ornate elevator in the Plaza Hotel to see friends from out of town, or take them for dinner to Buffi's Hotel, just across from the railroad depot, or stay uptown and eat at Rosa's White House Grill, pick up our live holiday turkey and order wood or coal from Dennes and Haigh, eat a good old fashioned hamburger at the Night Owl Café, play miniature golf at the corner of North and Center streets, order a frosted root beer at the Reed and Bell Root Beer Stand or enjoy a big banana split for twenty five cents at "Chaney's Fountain," grocery shop at Maggenti's or Gromo's market, have Lee Hoy's Sanitary Dairy deliver milk to our doorstep, and never again walk the incline to the upper grades of the red brick Elementary School, which we were forced to leave due to cracked walls and to attend classes for three years at the American Legion Building, nor can we recognize our High School now as it is all one story buildings on the Junior High and we can no longer admire the beautiful redwoods on the west corner of the front lawn, nearly all are gone however, it is most gratifying to hear music once more in the Plaza, and watch the restoration and growth of Healdsburg today.

Many changes have come and gone since that October day, [79] long years ago. We can no longer shop at Vitousek's or Schwab Brothers' shoe stores, browse at Rosenberg and Bush dry goods, select a new spring hat at Shelford's, pick up our medications from Brown and Wolf's Drug shop or school supplies



Buffi's Hotel moving from Healdsburg train depot to new location on West Street/Old Redwood Highway, 1937



Interior of Creamery, Dorothy Belli, Lois Parker, Helen Jacobsen, Larry Phillips, 1941

THE VILLA CHANTICLER

by Michael Haran



Villa Chanticleer brochure, courtesy Delagnes family.

In 1942 the Rev. Mina Ross Brawner, M.D. of Melbourne, Australia jotted down notes of her early childhood in Healdsburg. "In 1896, I vividly remember the old but big Redwood tree on Fitch Mountain standing outside the fence surrounding my mother's home. There was room for 20 picnickers in the hollow trunk. Its top was so high that it seemed, when viewed from our home-side, to pass the distant mountain and blend with the sky.

"One day I came home from school to find the big Redwood on fire. Its open throat was roaring like a furnace. Mother told us that the lighting had ripped down from the clouds and struck it. The roar was terrible. We could stand on the hillside and watch the fire relentlessly burn the heart of our old landmark. But another rainstorm came down extinguishing the fire and the old tree was saved. Then suddenly a fearful crash and roar, the tree came down. We rushed to the spot – mother and the three children who were home. Was the tree gone? The nook seemed filled with the fallen trunk and branches. Quickly I returned to our cottage and secured a tape-measure. Together



we measured the top of the huge tree lying like a giant submarine on the ground. It was 90 feet long. Looking up to my surprise the tree seemed to be as tall as before".

In 1943 Rev. Brawner returned to Healdsburg to see if the old Redwood still stands. It was and she wrote "Old Stovepipe they call you now, and wonder how it happened. But you and I remember. You have kept your secret all these years, but tonight I am telling the world you battled against all obstacles

– and won out. Oh, joy! The old Redwood still stands." Old Stovepipe was renamed the General Eisenhower in 1972.

Some fourteen years later, in 1910, a San Francisco Frenchman by the name of Auguste Pradel and his wife Victorine bought 130 acres, from E. Dufore and his wife Hortense on the north side of Fitch Mountain in which the old tree still stands. They established a French resort to cater to San Francisco's French community. In its day the Villa was the leading French resort north of San Francisco with accommodations for as many as 200 persons.

Pradel built a road, which is today's Powell Avenue, from Healdsburg to the Villa, and a "wagon" road down to the river below Eagle Rock to what was known as "Frenchman's Orchard" and later part of the Del Rio Woods subdivision. A horse and buggy were sent to the depot on the arrival of each train to take people up the hill. Later a small bus replaced the horse and buggy.

In 1912, August Laurens (Pradel's son-in-law) took over the facility and made many improvements in the bungalows. He raised money from local businessmen to "put the road leading from the city limits to the Resort in splendid condition." One wonders just how "splendid" the road was as Felix Lafon remembered that his father's model T Ford would have to back up on the steepest part of the road to get to the Chantecler. In 1921 this road and the Camp Rose road on the south side of Fitch Mountain were made public roads, rebuilt and connected, making a six mile loop from Healdsburg's city limit to city limit.

In 1916 Victor Cadoul and his wife Seraphie purchased the Chantecler Resort (renaming it the Villa Chantecler) for ten dollars in gold coin from the Pradels, and expanded the facilities. An article in the June 18th edition of *Healdsburg Tribune* headlined: "THE VILLA

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ENJOYS BIG RUN” told that there were “nearly 100 guests enjoying the pleasant surroundings and merchants report business in every line with the guests of Chantecler.” (sounded like the merchants got their road investment back). The building had a kitchen and a bar. The dining area was a large screened-in porch on the north side. Cabins were on the east side of the grounds (eventually rooms were built in one of the buildings to accommodate the large number of “single” guests). Overflow guest were put up in tents. It was about this time that the custom of taking guests on a weekly trip to the Italian-Swiss Colony at Asti began.

Ownership changed several times over the years. According to Madeline Delagnes, Cadoul ran the Villa until 1924 when he leased it to her parents Adrian and Marie Cayre. The Cayres kept the Villa until 1926 at which time Codoul once again took over the Villa. Madeline, in an August 29, 1980 *Healdsburg Tribune* article, stated that Pierre Rouquier “built a beautiful home” on what is now Borel Road at Samantha Court off upper Powell Avenue. According to Georgette Cadoul Etchell, Victor and Serephie’s daughter who still lives on Scenic Lane, her father built a small home on Borel Road because her mother didn’t want to live at the Chantecler any longer. Victor later sold the home on Borel Road to Pierre Rouquier and built another small home on Scenic Lane off N. Fitch Mountain Road.

When Rouquier took title to the property he expanded the home adding a big room to the home, and started the Bellevue Villa which eventually included a full service restaurant, 50 cabins and a bowling alley. Knowing that he now had competition, Cadoul made substantial improvements to the Villa Chanticle, including the famed dining room which was reputed to be the largest room between San Francisco and Eureka. Four years later, due to lack of water available at the villa, coupled with the Depression that made him land poor, Cadoul wanted out and he approached Madeline and her husband Lucien Delagnes who owned the Hotel Gotham in San Francisco.



Villa Chanticle cabins, 1930's. Photo courtesy Delagnes family.

According to Yvette Delagnes Conz, Madeline and Lucien’s daughter who still lives off Borel Road, Cadoul leased the Villa to her parents in 1934 (they bought the property a year later). The lease covered the 40 acres of buildings and the business, with Cadoul keeping control over the remainder of the 90 acres. Delagnes installed an outdoor “duck pin” bowling alley. On Sunday afternoons \$25 in cash prizes were awarded to the best bowlers and they also held the Healdsburg championship. Improvements included new lighting fixtures. The resort boasted of two milk cows and a “help yourself” cherry orchard. A children’s playground and a playing card grotto under “Old Stovepipe” were also installed. As a predecessor of today, weddings were held under the big tree.

Three meals per day, a room and wine cost \$18 per week. When the Villa was overbooked Madeline would even set up cots inside the old tree. She liked to serve fresh vegetables and guests enjoyed gathering around to help string beans and snap peas. Seven course meals were served with a bottle of wine. During Prohibition the wine was served in a cup. Lucien bought 50 gallon barrels of wine from Mel Pedroni for \$35 per barrel.

Gil Delagnes, Lucien and Madeline Delagnes’ son who now lives in Windsor, said that when he was a child he would help Frank Vitalli count the money from the dime, penny, nickel and quarter slot machines that were set in and around the Villa. Gil’s pay allowed him to buy the model planes and cars that he loved to make as a child. His parent’s share of the slot machine revenue helped pay for the family’s annual vacations. Partaking in the slots were many local and state politicians who would visit the Villa during the summer months.

During the 1940’s Delagnes subdivided the 16.7 acres that currently comprise the Villa and the residential lots that now surround the property. Also in the 1940’s Delagnes let the Pradels build a home on a northeast part of the property which they lived in until their



Entrance sign, Villa Chanticle French Resort.

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death. In gratitude, upon his death Auguste left four thousand dollars for the care of the Villa.

In 1945, they sold the property to two San Francisco men, Jack Kent and W. Johnson. This is where legend mixes with reality and fantasy with facts. Madeline claims that Kent mentioned to her that they planned to build a casino for "the Hollywood people." "One fellow talked a lot of, you know, b.s. He was a liar – pouf! He was not bad looking, though." She said that they wouldn't sell until Kent dropped his plan to convert the property to a casino.

On the night of September 14, 1945, while 200 guests were dancing in the famed dining room, a fire started in the kitchen. All the guests were safely evacuated but the dining room was burned to the ground. Kent and Johnson rebuilt the beautiful existing main building on a lavish scale and were nearing a reopening date.

Then, on May 11, 1947 a Santa Rosa man named Nick DeJohn (aka Nick Rossi), at one time allegedly involved with Al Capone's Chicago mafia, was murdered in San Francisco. He had been strangled and was found in the trunk of his car. Soon after, an anonymous source informed authorities that Rossi was connected with a man who was planning a "night spot" at one of the resorts in Healdsburg. All fingers pointed to Jack Kent. Charges were never pressed and Kent vehemently stated, "I'll give this whole place to anybody who can prove I ever met, saw, nodded, or even spoke to this gangster in my whole life." But the idea of the Villa as an upscale gamblers' joint was never fully erased. The six foot

by six foot walk-in, impregnable safe that's still in the Villa's basement added to the speculation. Soon after DeJohn's death, and with only the landscaping remaining to be finished, Kent and Johnson declared bankruptcy and all construction ceased. Coincidence...?

As for the Villa's use as a brothel, The Villa was named "Chanticleer" by Cadoul in the early 1920's. He took the name from a French fable LeRonain de Renard which was/is a satire on human conventions and morals. Chanticleer was a rooster in the fable. The name was derived from "chante claire" which means "clear singing" as in the rooster welcoming the dawn. A 1984 *Press-Democrat* newspaper article on the Villa claimed that the rooster is a French symbol for a bordello, a fact which is disputed by Yvette. As far as anyone knows this is as close to a brothel as the Villa has ever come.

When it was first built in 1910 by Pradel, the Villa was known as "Frenchman's Resort". In a May 1972 memo from City Administrator Edwin Langhart to the Petaluma sign maker included a sketch of what the Villa's new sign (the one that now stands at the entrance to the Villa) was to look like. This sketch had only one "e" in the spelling; however, the new sign was delivered with the double "e" in the name. Whether the sign maker made an error or if he was instructed to make the change no one knows but the Villa Chanticleer now has the double "ee" and will so for ever more.

The Villa languished for eight years until Sonoma County forced a sale for back taxes in 1955. With no bidders, two tradesmen who had filed liens for unpaid work for Kent and Johnson reluctantly took title for the sum of the unpaid taxes. During this time the City of Healdsburg was in a quandary. They had been planning to use what is now the Longs shopping center on Center Street for a new City Hall. After a report from a San Francisco consultant stated that the highest and best use was shopping, the City dropped its plans for a city hall at the site. The town had also outgrown the old American Legion Hall, which was also on the Long's site, as a community center. When the Villa became available and the same consultant said that the resort would make a splendid community center, the City bought the 17.04 acre Villa for \$45,000. The purchase price included the Villa, annex, 20 cabins (all but four were torn down) and all equipment. The City annexed the property and spent \$150,000 finishing the landscaping and made upgrades.



Accordian music, Villa Chanticleer, 1934. Photo courtesy Delagnes family.

The 50 by 70 foot dining room has many large windows with views of Mt. St. Helena and Cobb Mountain. It is served by a kitchen with four big ranges, ovens and other appliances. On the other side of the lobby is the ballroom, with an oak floor and a large fireplace. Between these two is the Redwood Lounge, a horseshoe-shaped bar with 22 stools, and eight booths along the sides. The painting behind the bar was commissioned to Lloyd Wasmuth of Santa Rosa by Kent and Johnson. It is a technique called "juxtaposition," in which every brush stroke is a small square. The painter took it home after the bankruptcy but the City bought it back for \$250 and reinstalled it. The annex has one large meeting room and a small kitchen. There are picnic and barbeque areas for 200-300 persons, parking for about 200 cars, tot-lot, lots of trees



Villa Chanticleer after refurbishment by City of Healdsburg.

– oak, redwoods, eucalyptus, acacia, madrone – and 10 acres of undeveloped land.

Since its purchase the City has invested, and is still investing, substantial amounts of money to keep the Villa up to date. In the mid 1980's the Villa was losing about \$10k per year as compared to about \$50k per year today. Adjusted for inflation, this is relatively the same amount. The City is now working on new programs to generate

revenue which will not only close this revenue gap but also generate an income surplus. As Healdsburg's most treasured social venue and the keeper of Old Stovepipe, "You have battled against all odds and won out. Oh, Joy!" The Villa still stands!

SOURCES:

Healdsburg Museum subject file, "Villa Chanticleer." Personal interviews.

37 YEARS AGO . . .

Old Photo Stirs Reader's Memory of Camp Rose Inn

From the *Healdsburg Tribune* August 26, 1971, page 1

Some of the best news The Tribune ever receives come from people who write to add a little something we didn't know about when we wrote a story.

Last month The Tribune featured Camp Rose Inn, in honor of its reopening by Ben and Jane Salvon. The story gave a brief history of the famous Fitch Mountain resort and included some old photographs. One of those photographs – which contained a number of people we couldn't identify – stirred the memory of

Mrs. Russell H. Green Sr. of Palos Verdes and she has filled us in on all but one of the people in the photo, and also has given us a glimpse of what life was like then for a girl who spent summers on Fitch Mountain.

Here is what Mrs. Green told us:

This picture was a post card, for many years the only available Camp Rose postcard. Since I was one of this beach group, I should like to tell about them.

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"Mermaid's Paradise", Camp Rose, 1915

Number one was Helene Hickman. I think she was a University of California sophomore at that time. She played the ukulele and sang, and was a fine pianist. She kept her father's Camp Rose summer cottage full of beautiful sorority girls and together they cut quite a swath among the Healdsburg young men of that day.

Number two is Mrs. Walter Christie, the wife of the renowned longtime track coach at the University of California. The Christies were most hospitable to all the Camp Rose young fry. The fact that they kept their cottage full of UC's track stars could have been a drawing card.

I was number three, Miriam Saville (later Mrs. Russell Green Sr., mother of Simi Winery owner Russell Green Jr.) and number four was



Camp Rose Inn post card, circa 1915

my closest friend of that time, Edith Hickman.

Our fathers, the late Harry D. Saville and Henry Hickman, were way ahead of their time. Sensing that their young daughter's swimming was hampered by the voluminous bloomers and skirts, the only thing available at that time, they bought us boys swim suits – which we

promptly "took in" to fit us. We were the swimmers' avant-garde of that time.

Edith Hickman was a superb athlete. In the days before her marriage she swam the Golden Gate race and also won the lady's Deepsea Race from Mill Valley to Stinson Beach. I swam short distances, my specialty the backstroke.

The Camp Rose Beach was a gay spot in those days – whole families (and dogs), always fun, active, happy young folks."

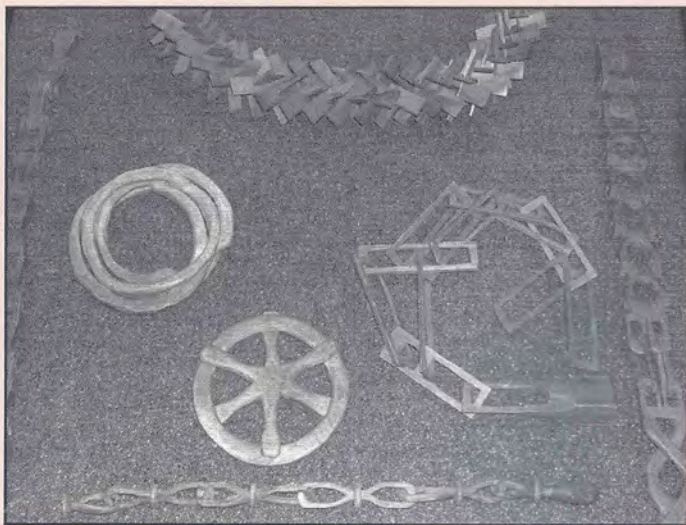
(Today, Russ Green Jr. and his wife BJ own Hoot Owl Creek Vineyards, and together with their son Clay are longtime supporters of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society.)



Women's bathing suit, circa 1915. Donated by Jane Jensen.



Men's bathing suit, circa 1915. Donated by Marian Hoy Jones



George Severn wood carvings.

EXCITING ADDENDUM!

by Charlotte Anderson

Thanks to Bob Silzle, we have some corrections and additions to the “Train Crossing Signals” article in the Summer 2008 Russian River Recorder. The watchman’s shack on West Street (Healdsburg Ave.) was actually located before the tracks on the southeast side! Bob added that the watchman spent his spare time whittling!

In addition, eagle-eyed Holly Hoods spotted a box of wood carvings labeled “George L. Severn, Crossing Guard” at the Museum’s storage room at the Villa Chanticleer. Inside the box were papers which identified the carver and the dates of the wood carvings. Thus we now know that the NWPRR guard at West and Mill Streets was George L. Severn who began his tenure in 1914 and retired on October 30, 1926. During this time he whittled and carved many intricate and interesting pieces which are now on exhibit at the Healdsburg Museum’s downstairs display case.



Location of 1920's NWP Railroad crossing guard shack, 2008.