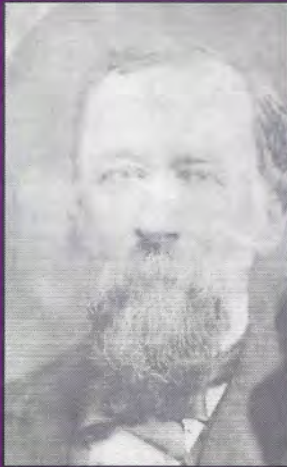




RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

AUTUMN 2009 • ISSUE 106

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



George Miller



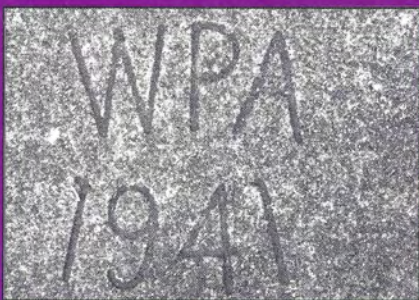
Simi Brothers



Pete Gobbi

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In This Issue

In our Summer 2009 issue we spoke of museums being in the forever business and that the main goal is to preserve Healdsburg's rich heritage for future generations. We might also speak of museums as being hoarders, but discriminatory hoarders. However, museums share their hoard. So in keeping with this thought we want to share with our members and readers some of the artifacts, some of our many hidden treasures.

For this issue our research curator Holly Hoods has unearthed two artifacts that are in keeping with two of our stories about the wine industry. One, a 19th Century alcohol measuring kit donated by George Greeott and another a cooper tool called a chamfer knife, donated by Lawrence Biaggi. I am certain you will find these most interesting.

We are reminded that this is a very important time in our area -- the grape harvest. Michael Haran has written a very detailed and informative account about Healdsburg's first wineries. In researching the material for this article he conferred with Bo Simons, the highly learned librarian at the Wine Library, located within the Healdsburg Public Library. As an aside, let me assure you that the Wine Library is a tremendous asset to the wine industry and the community, and deserves a visit even if you are not in the grape/wine business. We know you will enjoy Michael's well written and researched article about Healdsburg's early days of the wine industry.

Holly Hoods told us that researching for her article about the Wilson Winery, which will be celebrating its 100th anniversary, unveiled some very fascinating facts about the many families who were involved in the winery over the years. She said that an interview that was supposed to last 30 minutes went on for 4 hours and revealed the rich history of this Dry Creek winery. The Museum will be a beneficiary of the Wilson Winery's celebration.

John Foster who wrote *A Trip Back To Fitch Mountain Road in the 30's and 40's* is an 81 year old retired banker who now lives in Danville. He made contact with the Museum in researching information about Bill and Lillian Wolking's home on South Fitch Mountain Road which is now owned and operated by Lisa Neisingh as Old River Lodge. He told us that Healdsburg native Dr. Donald Grant had given him a copy of the Summer 2008 issue of the *Recorder* and that he was mesmerized by the story written by Walter Selover about his and his family's vacations at a Fitch Mountain cabin. At Holly's urging John agreed to write his story which he said was different from Walter Selover's in that he talks about a different part of the River and of kids that, for the most part, "had very little money and had to rely on friends and picking prunes and hops to survive, just so we could enjoy that little part of the earth that we considered as close to heaven as you could get." We think you will find this story as interesting and compelling as Walter Selover's.

With the downturn in the economy we are presently experiencing, it is interesting to note what President Franklin D. Roosevelt's stimulus package did for Healdsburg during the Great Depression. It is the story of the Works Project Administration and what it did for Healdsburg in Holly Hoods's article *The WPA Legacy in Healdsburg: 1935-1943*. The Chamber of Commerce Building is a prime example of how Healdsburg benefitted from this project.

We hope you find this issue interesting and informative, and we are always happy to hear your reactions to any and all the articles.

Arnold Santucci

Editor

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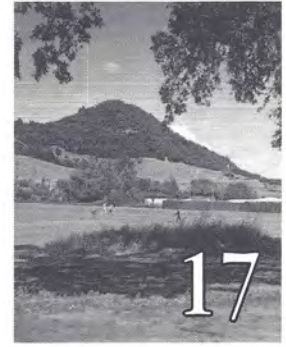
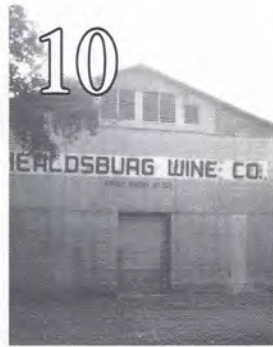
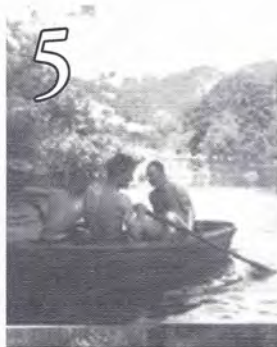
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A fascinating history of the present Wilson Winery whose roots go back 100 years. Holly Hoods digs deep in the history of the winery and comes up with an interesting history with many prominent wine family names.

14 Healdsburg's First Wineries

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Michael Haran gives us a look at the early history of the wine industry and recounts the story of what is believed to be the first commercial winery in Healdsburg.

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by Holly Hoods

To stimulate the economy during the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt's administration initiated a program of light public works projects. Holly Hoods tells us how this stimulus package helped in Healdsburg.

I REMEMBER:

ELVIRA BELLUOMINI'S RECOLLECTION OF GRANT SCHOOL DAYS IN THE 1930's

I went to Grant Elementary School, which was a one-room school. We had anywhere from ten to twenty students at one time. The school was first through eighth grade. When we became older we helped the younger students with their work to help the teacher. We were like one big family of brothers and sisters.

My teacher's name was Hazel L. Wolfe. She used to make up plays for us to put on at Christmas. I always looked forward to that. All the parents came to see us and Santa Claus paid us a visit. Mrs. Wolfe had a bulldog. When we asked sometimes she would bring her dog to school.

Grant School had one room with anterooms on either side—one for the boys and one for the girls. We would place our lunch and coats there. The boy's anteroom had the baseball bats, etc. and the one cord to ring the bell up in the belfry. We always were happy when we were asked to ring the bell for everyone to come in. The bathrooms were around the back of the building outside. There was also a water fountain there. Grandpa Giorgi's brother helped build the school. That is where Mom and all her sisters and brother went to school.

On rainy days we played games such as hangman, tick-tack-toe, gossip and whatever we could think of. When it was good weather we played outside. Our primary games were baseball, cricket, redline, volley ball, ante-over (we threw the ball over the roof of the school to the other side; and if someone caught the ball on the other side, they would run and try to capture as many people on the opposite side as they could, and the captured ones would have to change sides).

Mrs. Wolfe would have music once a week; all grades would participate at the same time. She taught us notes and scales, etc. That is why I can tell what music means when I see it even though I can't play. It comes in handy when we have a new hymn in church - at least I know whether I should be singing high, low, or how long to hold a note.

My friend Betty did not live close to me, but we walked to school most of the time together on the railroad tracks. She lived farther away than I did. If she went down the track toward school and didn't see me coming, she would pick a poppy and leave it on the track to let me know she had come by; I did the same thing. One day when I walked home from school down the highway and turned into Limerick Lane the train was over the track and I could not pass by. I noticed the engine had unhitched and was down the track, so I climbed under one of the cars and got through. When I told Mom she really hit the roof (looking back on it, it was stupid thing to do).

On nice spring days the teacher would take us for a long walk during our lunch hour. We would go down the railroad track toward Healdsburg



Grant Elementary School class, Elvira Belluomini (third child on the left) and Mrs. Wolfe, both in front row. Circa 1933-34



Grant Elementary School class, Elvira Belluomini second from the left in the top row. Circa 1940-41

by the lagoon near the Pirinoli Dairy. We would hear Meadowlarks (still my favorite bird), Blue Herons, and sometimes Egrets. If we heard a train coming we all jumped down off the tracks and waited for it to go by. I always enjoyed those walks. Sometimes we planted flowers by the school. We also identified wild flowers.

There were only four people in our eighth grade graduating class. Because there were few graduates in each graduating class in the country schools, there was one large combination graduation in Healdsburg. The only exception was Windsor Elementary School because that had a large class. We all went to Healdsburg High School along with the students from Healdsburg Elementary School.

(Editor's note: In 1948 the rural schools included Felta, Grant, Junction, Lambert, Maacama, Manzanita, Mill Creek, Sotoyme, Starr and William Booth with a combined eighth grade graduating class of 42 students). RRR

A TRIP BACK TO FITCH MOUNTAIN ROAD

IN THE 40'S AND 50'S

by John Foster



The author's Model "A" Roadster parked on Fitch Mountain Road, with Curt Salkeid in passenger seat and another friend at the wheel.

As we grow older we realize that some seemingly small events in our past had major impacts on our lives. So how was it that Healdsburg and Fitch Mountain Rd. became such a major part of my life? After all, in the 1930's that area wasn't exactly the vacation capital of the world. In fact it wasn't even considered the main destination for a vacation on the Russian River. That honor went to Rio Nido and Guerneville.

It all started with my father. He was English and a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps in World War I. My mother was a French girl. They met, married and immigrated to this country after the war. They had five children, four boys and one girl. I am the youngest. We moved a lot as my father pursued employment flying airplanes. In 1930 he was flying the amphibian from Long Beach to Catalina Island and doing some movie work when he was employed by Boeing Air Transport to fly the route from Oakland to Salt Lake City. Thus, we moved back to Oakland where I had been born in 1928. Lucky for me, we stayed in Oakland where I attended parochial school and graduated from Oakland High School in 1945.

My father was not so lucky. The Great Depression took its toll on him and he was laid off. Willing to accept any employment, he found a job selling liquor. It was there that he met a fellow salesman named Bill

Wolking who, at the time, lived in a rented cabin on Fitch Mountain Rd. about a quarter mile south of Camp Rose. Bill was married to Lillian and they had a daughter, my age, named Diane. We became good friends and suddenly our family was spending a lot of time visiting the Wolkings. Fortunately, their cabin had an additional rental downstairs that we would rent. This is how it all started!

My father had a restless spirit so we often took weekend trips. He loved Sonoma County because he said it reminded him of the English countryside. He would come home all hours of the day or night and tell my mother "round up the kids, we're going to the river." And off we'd go. Every trip was a great adventure for us kids, especially for me being the youngest. If it was late at night there was the rush to catch the last San Rafael ferry boat. (there were no bridges then) because if we missed the ferry we'd have to go around through Vallejo and that added hours to the trip. That dash to the ferry was quite a thrilling ride with my pilot father at the wheel. Night or day, dash or not, the ferry boat was always part of the adventure. We'd go up on deck, sometimes get a cup of hot chocolate, and stay on deck as long as possible to watch the ferry hit the walls of the slip. As I remember, one of the ferry boats was named the "Russian River." Then there was the ride to Healdsburg, through Novato, Petaluma, Santa Rosa and

Windsor on Highway 101 which was only two lanes then. We used to laugh that every highway patrolman knew my father on that stretch of highway. If it was a daytime trip we'd often stop in Petaluma for fresh eggs and a chicken. We really got excited when we passed over the bridge into Healdsburg, then through the prune orchards on Fitch Mountain Road to the cabin. How wonderful it was to wake up in the morning, smell the bacon and eggs cooking and know you were going to spend the day boating and playing in the river.

I was about five years old when we started going to the Wolkings. Over the following years I learned to swim and became what I considered quite a master of boat rowing. I remember how proud I was when I was permitted to row the boat alone all the way up river to Camp Rose. The river in that area had a lot of rocks and I took great pride in navigating through those obstacles. Once there, I'd beach the rowboat in front of all the sunbathers and strut around hoping every one noticed my expertise. If I had a nickel it was a special treat to walk up the beach (run part of the way because of the hot sand on my bare feet) to the little store and get a popsicle. Back at the cabin Diane and I kept busy swimming, avoiding yellow jackets, and diving for colored pebbles. The river seemed clearer then so that you could see the bottom and pick out your

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prize before diving. Great treasures for little kids!

Around 1935 the Wolkings purchased the lot next to and upstream from their rental. They built a beautiful home that at the time was probably the most impressive home on the river. It was three stories with a gorgeous living area that included an outdoor deck with a full view of the river. It remains a showcase for river homes today. Located at 1864 S. Fitch Mountain, it is a very popular vacation rental owned by Wine Country Lodges. But back in the 30's and 40's it was home for the Wolkings who were extremely hospitable and generous and opened their home to many guests.

In 1939 England and Germany went to war. My father volunteered and went back into what was now the Royal Air Force. In 1940 my oldest brother was drafted into the Army and by the time Pearl Harbor was attacked my other brothers were in the military, one in the Army Air Corps and one in the Navy. The war changed everything. Now our trips to the river were limited because gasoline was rationed and all the drivers were gone (my mother and sister didn't drive). But whenever one of our warriors came home on leave, we made a special effort to go to the river, often taking other service men who were buddies. The Wolkings welcomed them all, and indeed, went out of their way to entertain the "fighting men" with a little libation and boat trips on the river. I, of course, was always invited to go and enjoyed every trip.

About this same time a neighbor of ours in Oakland, the Salkelds, whom we had introduced to the Wolkings, decided to buy the cabin next door up river. It was your basic river cabin. On the main floor was one large room and a very small kitchen with an ice box and a two burner stove. A very narrow deck ran the length of the cabin.

Downstairs were two small bedrooms and a very small bathroom. The downstairs area was reached by an outdoor staircase. The whole cabin sloped toward the river. The Salkelds had two children, Curtis and Florence. Because I was a good friend of Curt I was often invited to accompany them on their trips to their cabin. So started the next chapter of my Fitch Mountain experience.



The Woking House

Even though I was staying next door with the Salkelds we were always welcome at the Woking home. They basically left their front door open to us. We were free to use their row boats and often spent the evening in their beautiful home singing around their piano.

In the summer of 1942, when I was 14 years old, we somehow convinced our parents that we were old enough to spend a month in the Salkeld cabin on our own. There was three of us: Curt, Dick Meyers and me. Curtis's father drove us to the cabin. My mother gave me five dollars and I am sure Curt and Dick also got some money. We soon realized that we were not going to last the month without more subsistence. We needed to find a way to make some money. Ultimately we came up with two solutions: pick prunes or hops. I opted for the prunes because it was within walking distance of the cabin at an orchard adjacent to the golf course. It paid 12 cents a lug and I averaged about a dollar a day. Dick and Curt went for the hops because it paid more. The down side was they had to get to town in the morning and be taken to

Hopland by a labor contractor. Both jobs were hard work over long days. We came home tired and dirty and since the cabin wash facilities were rudimentary we would take the soap and go to the river and bathe *au naturel* and wash our clothes. We could pick and choose the days we worked so we still had time for recreation. On those days we would swim, lie in the sun and on occasion take a boat trip to the Healdsburg dam by the bridge. Going downstream was easy, but rowing back upstream built some muscle. We often rowed up to Camp Rose to swim and swing on a tree rope to show off to the girls on the beach.

There was a squadron of P 38's stationed at Hamilton Field north of San Rafael. They frequently buzzed up the river at low altitude which gave everyone a thrill. At night we would sometimes walk up to Del Rio Woods. The walk back was usually after dark and the Milky Way was on full display. We kept busy by singing songs. One song I remember singing was "Deep In The Heart of Texas," which was popular at the time and included a verse—"the stars at night are big and bright." On Sunday, being good Catholic boys, we would walk into town to attend Mass and do some grocery shopping. If there was a concert in the park we'd stay for that.

Life was not that simple after that wonderful month. I entered High School in 1943, and because gasoline was rationed, it became increasingly difficult to get transportation. Compounding that was the death of Curtis's mother. Problems at home caused Curt to move to the cabin, live alone, and attend Healdsburg High School. He played center on the school's varsity basketball team. We did all we could to support him and made every effort to visit and attend his games. But getting there was a problem. We sometimes hitchhiked and on occasion

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were able to drive one of the cars owned by my other friends. (I got my driver's license when I was 15 because I was the only one left at home that could drive) While there we did all the rowdy things boys do when left alone, and we were always welcomed at the Wolking house, allowed to use their boats, and entertain ourselves in their lovely home. With Curt's connection at the High School we met some local girls. One name I remember was Passalacqua, two girls that lived on a prune orchard north of town. On occasion, if we had "wheels", we would drive to Rio Nido and Guerneville to dance to the big bands and flirt with the girls. It was all great fun!

Around 1944 Bill Wolking decided to quit the liquor business and took a job as the manager of the Villa Chanticleer which, at that time, was a lovely Victorian converted to a resort and restaurant. He hired Curt as a busboy. One summer night we went to pick up Curt after work. When we got there a fire broke out. By the time the Fire Department got there it was all they could do to contain the fire and keep it from starting a forest fire. We helped as best we could but the place burned to the ground. It was all over by about 4:00 A.M. but then a funny thing happened. The restaurant had a meat locker and someone discovered, in the ruins, that the meat was cooked to perfection. In our effort to save as much as we could before the fire got out of control we had managed to retrieve bread, some condiments, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, and knives. The picnic tables were spared so Bill Wolking, in his usual style, invited every one to stay and have a party. It was a great feast and served to mask the tragedy that had just unfolded. I went back the next day and took a picture of the ruins which I still have.

I graduated high school in 1945 and soon joined the Army. I had bought a 1930

Model "A" roadster so when I came home on leave it provided transportation to the cabin to visit with Curt who, being a year younger, was a senior in high school at the time. I also had met a girl in Oakland who would ultimately become my wife and mother of my five children. I took her on a few day trips to the cabin where she met Curt and got a chance to see where I had spent so much of my youth. She also got to experience the magic atmosphere of the Wolking's home.

Except for a brief drive through town a few years ago I haven't been back since I married in 1952. I am almost afraid to. I have so many wonderful memories of that place and that time. I hear Camp Rose is closed; Del Rio Woods is not what it used to be; the Chanticleer is now a community

center; the Salkeld cabin has been torn down and replaced by a new home; the prune orchards have been replaced with vineyards; Healdsburg is now a tourist town; and even the old Catholic church has been replaced with a new structure. In conversation with the new owners I've learned the Wolking house is still magnificent, but the centerpiece of the main room, the marvelous stone fireplace, has been replaced with a metal stove. The one constant seems to be the river and it just "keeps rolli'n along." RRR



Top photo, left, John Foster and friend on the deck of the Wolking house, Middle row, left, the boys on the beach with Curt on the Far right and John next to him. Bottom, right, John and his Model A Roadster.



ARTIFACTS

by Holly Hoods

ARTIFACT: 19TH CENTURY ALCOHOL MEASURING KIT FOR WINE, DONATED BY GEORGE GREEOTT

Donated to the Healdsburg Museum by George Greeott in September 2009, this alcohol measuring kit was designed and made in France in the 1880s. The brass and glass kit still contains the original instructions, written in French. John Greeott regularly utilized this device to measure the alcohol content of wine during the years he operated the Alpine Winery, 1893-1920s. The winery, which started on Mark West Springs Road, moved into the former Nelligan Winery on Piner Road in Santa Rosa, and then to Chalk Hill Road. John's son, George Greeott, just donated a large number of turn of the century artifacts from his father's winery to the Healdsburg Museum in September. These artifacts are featured in a new wine history display by Janet Sbragia Pisenti and Holly Hoods, "Celebrating the Grape," currently on exhibit in the Museum gallery.

Sources:

Hoods, Holly and Janet Sbragia Pisenti. Interview with George Greeott, September 2009.

Peninou, Ernest. *History of the Sonoma Viticultural District*. Santa Rosa: Nomis Press, 1998.



19th Century alcohol measuring kit for wine.

ARTIFACT: COOPER TOOL, "CHAMFER KNIFE," DONATED BY LAWRENCE BIAGGI,

For centuries, the creation of, and repair of, wooden barrels and tanks has been the skilled trade of the cooper. The exacting work of barrel making requires numerous, very specific tools to cut, shape and bind the wooden staves together into water-tight barrels. This chamfer knife was donated to the Healdsburg Museum by Lawrence Biaggi in 1998. It measures approximately 7 inches long and has a curved iron blade and a wooden handle. It weighs approximately 12 lbs.

This tool was used by Biaggi in his barrel-making work in San Francisco and Healdsburg during the 1930s through the 1970s. Biaggi worked as a cooper for the George Windeler Company on Gerard Avenue in San Francisco for a number of years before moving to Healdsburg in the 1950s. Here he worked with Lidio and Alfred Bellagio in the Bellagios' cooper shop behind the Bellagio family home at 523 University Street, across the street from Recreation Park.



Chamfer knife, a cooper tool.

Working out of this home cooper shop, Lidio Bellagio was the premier cooper in Sonoma County from the early 1930s through the 1950s. His barrels became highly sought after in the post-Prohibition wine industry because of his exacting standards, well-crafted products, and low prices. Lidio's loyal winery customers

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included: Pedroncelli, Foppiano, Gallo and Italian Swiss Colony in Sonoma County; and Beringer, Napa Co-op and Christian Brothers in Napa County. He stood behind his work 100%, and would make emergency repairs on-site if a tank ever sprang a leak, doing whatever was necessary to make the tank hold.

When Lidio's son, Alfred, came home to Healdsburg from the Air Force in 1956, he asked to join his father in the cooper profession. As Alfred took on more responsibility in the business, he raised his father's rock-bottom prices and changed the company name to "A. Bellagio Wood Tank Company." Lawrence Biaggi started working with the Bellagio father and son in the late 1950s. Sometime after that, Biaggi's former employer, the Windeler Company, went out of business. Biaggi and Alfred Bellagio bought much of that company's cooper equipment and went into partnership together in Healdsburg. Lidio semi-retired in 1961 at age 65. He quit driving and stopped doing the heavy work. Lidio died in 1978.

Alfred Bellagio bought out Lawrence Biaggi's share of the business in the 1970s when Biaggi was ready to retire. Biaggi retained a few of his cooper tools, which he donated to the Healdsburg Museum in the late 1990s. This artifact is one of Biaggi's donations from that time.

Alfred Bellagio passed on the skills and knowledge of the cooper trade to his stepson, Gene Nelson. Nelson has operated "A. Bellagio Wood Tank Company" on his own since Alfred's death in 1989. He specializes in wooden water tanks. The cooper tool pictured here is currently on display in the Healdsburg Museum gallery with a host of other tools of the cooper's trade. Additional cooper tools on exhibition were donated by George Greeott and Charles Scalione. Please be sure to visit the Museum to see more of the fascinating technology of barrel-making on display in the current "Art of the Cooper" exhibit by Holly Hoods. **RRR**



Lidio Bellagio

Sources:

Bellagio, Gino and Mike. Interview with Holly Hoods, 1998.

Biaggi, Lawrence. Interview with Holly Hoods, 1998.

Hoods, Holly. "Over a Barrel: the Life of Lidio Bellagio, Healdsburg's Master Cooper." *Russian River Recorder*, Summer 1998.



Jesse Harrington, James Miller photo, 1968

RRR READERS REMEMBER JESS

Two *Russian River Recorder* readers sent comments about last issue's article about Alexander Valley blacksmith, colorful Jess Harrington:

A local farmer was in Jess Harrington's blacksmith shop, complaining about his troubles. Jess picked up a little anvil and tossed it to him. Surprised, the man caught it, "What do you want me to do with this?!" Jess replied, "Tie it around your neck and go jump off a bridge! You got too many problems!"

---As told to Jack Zanzi

I had an interesting conversation with Jess Harrington while he was fixing something for me. Jess asked if we had the land across from the new Alexander Valley School. "Yes," I told him. He said he went to the school in its old location (near the Piña house). Jess asked if I noticed the big steep bay field up above the Hoot Owl Picnic ground with an eroding trench forming in it. I replied "yes." He told me that steep bay field was a great spot for Alexander Valley school kids. They would take old cardboard boxes to the top of an open bay field and ride them, fast as heck, down the hill. The only trouble was that they wore down the bay and the erosion began. You can still see the erosion today.

---Russell H. Green, Jr.

Jess was kind of a tough guy. When he would go hunting up in Pine Flat for a few days, all he would take with him was a rifle, a blanket and a couple of sandwiches. He'd sleep on the ground.

--Jack Zanzi

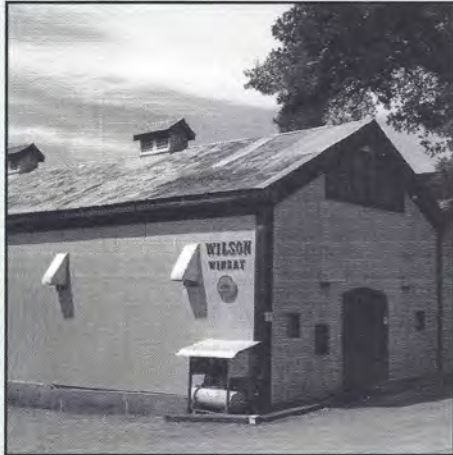
Jess's dad, Dan Harrington, bought that blacksmith shop from C.B. Wilson, my ancestor.

--Gary Wilson

100 YEARS OF WINE HISTORY

AT WILSON WINERY

by Holly Hoods



Wilson Winery, 2009

BUILT TO LAST

This year, Wilson Winery is celebrating 100 years of winemaking in the old “tin barn” at 1960 Dry Creek Road, which Ken and Diane Wilson have owned since 1994. It should be no surprise that this building is still around to celebrate its 100th birthday. It was built to last.

In April 1909, Ernest Gaddini hired contractor George Kunz to construct a winery at 1960 Dry Creek Road. Gaddini specified that the building had to be strong and fireproof. And with good reason: Ernest still suffered from injuries he had sustained when trapped in the rubble of a collapsed building during the 1906 Earthquake. He insisted on massive supporting structural timbers and a lot of concrete underneath his new building.

Fire-resistance was also a huge priority. Construction on the new corrugated iron winery began in May 1909, less than a month after the original Gaddini Laurel Springs Winery on Chiquita Road burned down. The Chiquita fire was apparently

arson--the spark ignited by anger, jealousy and resentment. Worst of all, it was most likely a Gaddini family member who lit the match!

OUT OF THE ASHES OF LAUREL SPRINGS

Ernest Gaddini was the second generation of his family to operate a winery in northern Sonoma County. His father, John, an Italian immigrant, had purchased 89 acres of hillside land on what is now Chiquita Road in 1883. John built a wood-frame house and planted 50 acres to Zinfandel. He and his wife, the former Elizabeth Passalacqua, nicknamed “Gummy” by her family, were the parents



John and Elizabeth Gaddini

of three children: Clara, Ernest and Olive. In 1902, John purchased 160 acres of land on which to plant more grapes and to erect a winery. The spring-fed land, dotted with bay laurels, inspired Gaddini to name his winery “Laurel Springs.” John’s enjoyment of the property was all too brief. He died two years later in 1904. Oldest daughter, Clara, and her husband, John Auradou, moved

onto the Chiquita Ranch and managed the Laurel Springs winery with Clara’s brother, Ernest Gaddini. One morning in April 1909 it all ended. The Laurel Springs winery, fermenting room and distillery burned to the ground.



Elizabeth Gaddini, circa 1905

A NIECE’S ACCUSATION

Olive Gaddini Bacigalupi, John and Elizabeth’s daughter, minced no words at age 95, when she described the fire at her family’s Chiquita Road ranch. In a 1996 oral history interview with Joe Vercelli, “Ollie” asserted that the Laurel Springs Winery fire was deliberately set. She declared that her late father John’s “no-good brother, Domy” destroyed the winery because of his misdirected passion for her mother, Elizabeth. Ollie explained how her father had always supported his “gambling, womanizing deadbeat” brother, Domy, who lived in San Francisco.

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According to Ollie, John Gaddini had essentially paid his brother money to stay away down in San Francisco. When John Gaddini died in 1904, Domy's free meal ticket ended. He was forced to move up to Healdsburg and work at the winery in order to get any income from the family. Domy brought a vicious mastiff dog that he kept chained to the door of the winery. Domy turned out to be a surprisingly decent worker, but he became fixated on his brother's widow, insisting that she marry him. Elizabeth refused. Domy persisted. Fed up with the constant harassment, Elizabeth finally made her son, Ernest, evict him from the ranch. He left, furious.

DOMY'S FLAMING REVENGE



Winery, distillery and tasting room, Gaddini Winery before fire.

According to his niece, Domy took revenge against the family. Ollie Gaddini Bacigalupi recounted the tragic story:

Domy was the only one who could get near the winery because that dog wouldn't allow anybody near it. So in the night, three buildings: the winery, the fermenting room and the distillery, there were three fires, one fire in each building. So that was set, and it was set by Domy, because no one else could have got near the place because that dog would have chewed them up. That dog didn't make a sound! And Domy knew where every faucet was and he

opened up every faucet in all those buildings and the tanks didn't have one drop of water.

Just before the fire, Ernest Gaddini had traveled to New York on a wine selling trip. He returned triumphant, having sold all the inventory of wine that was in the winery, approximately 100,000 gallons. According to Ollie:

Ernie came back loaded with orders and carloads of new barrels. The whole inventory was sold. Everything that was supposed to be sold burned up. The three buildings at one time, separate fires, so you know it was set! And the winery was full of wine and the barrels, the shipping tanks broke, and wine flew down our creek into Dry Creek and the Russian River. Our wine filled it! We lost everything. The thing burned to the ground because we had no water to fight it. This was almost a total loss. We only got \$10,000 in insurance. It wouldn't even pay for one building. All the new cooperage burned up too, so we almost went broke.

“NEW WINERY ON GADDINI PLACE”

Fortunately for the Gaddinis, Elizabeth and John had previously purchased another parcel on Dry Creek Road, which Elizabeth now owned free and clear. The Gaddinis took the \$10,000 insurance money, borrowed more money, and built on the Dry Creek Road parcel. That building, today, is Wilson Winery's “tin barn.” In May 1909, the *Healdsburg Enterprise* announced the construction of the new building with a front page headline: “New Winery on Gaddini Place.”

Work has started on a new winery of 500,000 gallon capacity on the Gaddini Ranch, Dry Creek. The former



Healdsburg Wine Company

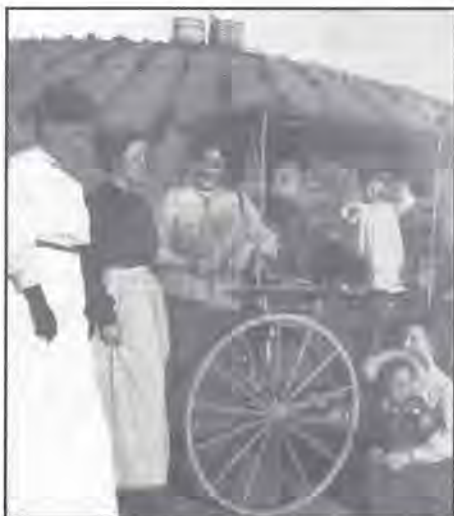
winery back of Chiquita was recently burned and the new location is much more desirable than to rebuild on the old site. Carpenter George Kunz has the contract, and the new winery will be 64 x 86 feet and 20 feet high. It will be of corrugated iron and ironed inside throughout, making it absolutely fireproof as not a piece of wood will be exposed. The floor will be of cement and the arrangements throughout are in line with modern winery construction.

In addition to the large winery building, a distillery, 30 x 40 feet, is also being erected. Everything will be in readiness for the coming season's vintage. The winery is being erected on the old fruit dryer site and is convenient to the proposed railroad up Dry Creek.

HEALDSBURG WINE COMPANY

The new winery was ready just in time to receive the harvest in the fall of 1909. In August 1910, Elizabeth Gaddini split the Dry Creek acreage, deeding 35 acres to her son, Ernest, and 42 acres to her daughter, Clara Auradou. The winery and distillery were located on a tiny two-acre “island” in the middle between the two

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Water tanks on Gandini Winery, Chaquita Road

larger parcels. Ownership was passed on to Clara, Ernest and Olive in 1910. In August 1911, the Gaddini children sold the winery to a partnership, "the Healdsburg Wine Company." Daniel Scatena, Eugenio Massoni, Eustaquio "Gino" Belli and Ernest Gaddini formed the original company of four equal partners. Ernest still suffered from his earthquake injuries, and could barely work because of a persistent wracking cough. He soon sold his 25% of the business to Pasquale Massoni, Eustaquio's son-in-law, and moved to Lake County.

Daniel Scatena, who lived in San Francisco, was a liquor distributor. He came from a distinguished Italian family that was respected in the grocery business and the wine industry. His brothers and cousins founded Roma Wine Company and Scatena Brothers Winery. Coincidentally, Sylvestro Scatena, Daniel's brother, built the Matheson Street bungalow where the Wilson Winery owners live today.

BONDED WINERY #303

During Prohibition, some wineries were fortunate to secure permits to make legal wine. The Healdsburg Wine Company was able to survive by filing and painstakingly renewing winemaking permits every year with Prohibition authorities. Every month

the owners would have to file an inventory form to account for the wine on hand. The permits gave them permission to "sell wine for sacramental or other non-beverage purposes." The permit also conferred "the authority to purchase and receive wine from others having approved permits to sell the same, such wine to be used only for the purpose of blending with wine manufactured at Bonded Winery #303." Descendants of the winery owners still retain the business files with the permits and the tax returns. Letters to the Brooklyn, New York distributor reveal that wine sales back east were not always smooth. A July 1928 letter from Louis Sclafani on Sclafani Brothers Grocers' letterhead reported the following problem:

This is to inform you that we had 130 barrels of your wine in our warehouse and that we have had them destroyed under the supervision of the Prohibition Department... In view of this fact, we will appreciate it if you will take in consideration our loss and we hope that you will help us to stand this great loss by giving us a substantial allowance.

The Healdsburg Wine Company had no sympathy, according to their scathing letter in response. They demanded full payment. Other business disputes are evident in the surviving records. Selling sacramental wine was clearly a mixed blessing for Healdsburg Wine Company during Prohibition.

FROM REPEAL TO WORLD WAR II

According to wine historian, Jack Florence, when Prohibition ended in 1933, most of the 17 wineries that had been operating in Dry Creek Valley were gone. Only seven survived: Frei Brothers, Canata Winery (now Pedroncelli), Healdsburg Wine Company, Pieroni, Del Carlo, Oneto and Holst. Most of them wobbled and then closed during the Depression. Peter Holst

retired from selling wine after emptying his cellar of 14 year old wine in 1933. Pieroni Winery on Lytton Springs Rd. and Del Carlo Winery on West Dry Creek Rd. closed during the late 1930s.

A 1937 *Directory of American Wineries*, published by *Wine Institute and Wine Review* magazine listed the following wineries operating in Dry Creek Valley: Frank Bella, Frei Brothers, Edward Norton, Emilio Oneto, John Pedroncelli, Sebastino Pieroni, A. Rafanelli and Healdsburg Wine Company. The total production for the valley was approximately 500,000 gallons. WWII took a toll on wineries in Sonoma County. Healdsburg Wine Company managed to hold on.

1950S WINE MARKET

Stacy Belli, the last surviving member of the wine partnership, sold the Healdsburg Wine Company parcel with the winery and equipment to Louis H. Botlin of San Francisco in 1949. Botlin retained Stacy as manager, and the winery continued as it had for a few more years. The wine was sold by the barrel to regular customers in North Beach and Oakland. Stacy's sons, Dan, Nick and Mike, remember the winery before their dad retired in approximately 1957. The cooperage and storage tanks were all wood. The winery did a lot of blending of "the big three", zinfandel, petite sirah and carignane. The alcohol fumes would be so potent that all the doors had to be kept open when they worked in the winery. The wine was delivered by truck to the Bay Area in barrels, mostly to established Italian customers in North Beach who would bottle their own. Dan Belli remembered that Victor and Astolfo Pioli bottled the wine under the label "Old King Cole." For many years the company sold wine to Angelo Petri of San Francisco and Gallo. After Stacy Belli retired, the winery shut down for almost a decade.

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Chris Fredson Winery

NEW ERA OF FREDSON WINERY

Chris A. Fredson became part of this winery's history when he purchased the 1960 Dry Creek Road property in 1966 and put the winery back into production. The Fredson family has been making wine in Sonoma County for five generations. Chris's father, Israel Fredson, a Swedish immigrant, founded the Cypress Hill Winery in 1887 in Windsor on what is now Old Redwood Highway near Eastside Road. Cypress Hill was closed by Prohibition, but Chris opened his own winery after Repeal on his ranch in Geyserville. The Chris A. Fredson Winery, Bonded Winery #658, was established at 18821 Old Redwood Highway in 1933.

In 1966, the State of California condemned the Fredson Winery's Geyserville property to make way for the new 101 freeway. Chris Fredson then purchased the old Healdsburg Wine Company building in 1967, and shifted his bulk wine operation to Dry Creek. The winery needed a lot of work to return to operation. Handyman Clyde Taylor was hired to repair the roof, redo the foundations, and take down and reconstruct the redwood tanks. In 1973, Chris's sons, Donald and Leonard, took over ownership and management of the

Fredson Winery. According to a 1983 interview in the *Press Democrat*, Leonard and Donald Fredson shared the business responsibilities and "did not like the idea of tasting rooms or complex marketing programs." Donald concentrated on the vineyards and Leonard on the winemaking. Josephine Fredson kept meticulous tally sheets of the "white and black" grapes and growers.

The Fredsons never bottled under their own label, preferring to sell bulk wine wholesale. For more than 20 years the Fredsons sold 300,000 gallons of wine a year to Peter Mondavi at Charles Krug Winery in Napa Valley. Jo Fredson recalled that there were no contracts between Fredson Winery and Krug. They did business on a handshake for years. They bought grapes from small growers in the Dry Creek and Geyserville area, producing blends of zinfandel, carignane and petite sirah. They used redwood, open-top fermenters, and topped the tanks with a hand pump, recalls Bob Fredson, Chris's grandson.

WILSON WINERY

In 1994, Ken and Diane Wilson bought the Fredson Winery and gave it a new look, as well as a new name. It had been out of operation for a few years, so the Wilsons first made some repairs and a few enhancements to the 1909 building, including adding the very first tasting room to the building. With award-winning wines, the Wilson Winery tasting room has become one of the most popular destinations in Dry Creek Valley.

The Wilsons bought the first of their Sonoma County vineyard properties in 1980. Today the couple grow grapes on more than 200 acres in Dry Creek Valley. Diane Wilson is a respected winemaker. The Wilsons' winery holdings currently include Matrix Winery on Westside Road, Delormier Winery on Hwy 128, Mazzocco Winery on

Lytton Springs Road and the former Soda Rock Winery in Alexander Valley. They are proud to carry on the 100-year tradition of winemaking at this property. RRR

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HEALDSBURG'S FIRST WINERIES

by Michael Haran



Montepulciano Winery

It seems fitting that during our annual grape harvest, we take a look at the early history of the industry that wines, dines and supports our town. Not only does Sonoma's wine industry account for about 40% (\$20 billion) of our county's annual gross income, but it has also fostered other businesses such as the one billion dollar per year tourism industry. All of this has transformed Healdsburg (like it or not) into an upscale market including designer shops, restaurants and hotels with full service spas. One wonders what George Miller would think of all this.

Prior to George Miller Sr. establishing Healdsburg's first commercial winery, wine was made by many small home producers for their personal use and as part of the barter system which was prevalent in northern Sonoma County before the establishment of banks and the beginning of our modern economy. In a letter that Lindsay Carson (brother of famed explorer Kit Carson) sent to his great-grandfather in 1857, he wrote "money is scarcer than I have ever known."

It seems that one of the first things any European settler did here was to plant grapes. The Russians at Fort Ross are credited with the establishment of the first vineyards. The Franciscans at the Sonoma Mission first planted grapes in 1823, about five years after the Russians planted their first vineyard. Most of the early vineyards featured Mission grapes. In 1860, Davenport Cozzens was listed as the first wine producer in the Dry Creek Valley. His ranch, which is now the site of the Ferrari-Carano Winery (8761 Dry Creek Road), featured a post office, saloon and grocery store. The site was known as Cozzens Corner and was operated by Cozzens and his son for some thirty years.

In 1864, A.J. Galloway was credited with establishing Dry Creek Valley's first vineyard. Gene Cuneo, felt that Galloway's vineyard, which is now the Cuneo Ranch (2470 Dry Creek Road, was primarily planted in Zinfandel. To give some idea of the grape varietals being grown in the area in 1883: 395 acres were planted

to Zinfandel; 240 acres to Mission; 64 acres to Malvoise; 50 acres to Golden Chasselas; 18 acres to White Reisling; and 40 acres to other varietals.

As an aside, it is interesting to note how land values, today by far the most costly element of any vineyard, of the period were little more than an incidental. The following is an actual cost accounting reported by Agoston Haraszthy (founder of Buena Vista Winery) when he planted 100 acres in January 1858:

Six men with nine horses for deep tillage and six horses for shovel plow - \$231.60

Horse hire and feed - \$255.00

Blacksmith - \$30.00

18 men to layout, stake, Dig holes and plant vines - \$892.68

Cost of land - \$170.00

Miscellaneous - \$55.36

Total - \$1,634.64

It is believed that Healdsburg's first commercial winery was established in 1862, during the Civil War, by George Miller Sr. A native Swiss, Miller came to Sonoma County in 1853. He was first a partner with his uncle Felta Miller (along with Samuel and Thomas Heald) in a saw and grist mill located on Mill Creek off of Westside Road.

Of interest, it was local lore that Catherine "Katie" Miller, Felta's wife, was a problem. This story is one of Sonoma County's most told legends and tales.

It seems Katie liked her hooch. Felta would often hide the "jug" from Katie who was known to appear at the back door of some of Healdsburg's early saloons. Felta and some friends were leaving for a Fourth of July celebration in 1854, and he was concerned as to how to conceal a keg of whiskey that was



Gene Cuneo

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in the house. Felta got an idea. He had one of his friends climb a tree and, unseen by Katie, tie it securely out of reach. After a search she spotted the "treasure" high in the tree. After diligent thought she came up with a brilliant solution. She carried out a large washtub and placed it directly beneath the keg. Procuring her husband's rifle, she peppered the keg with several bullet holes. Katie was found by the returning party in close proximity to her favorite tippie, having had as much "independence" as was good for her, according to William Shipley in *Tales of Sonoma County*.

When Miller sold his interest in the mill back to his uncle, he and his wife Ursula bought about 12 acres that is bordered today by College, University, Grant and Powell Streets from the estate of Colonel Rod Matheson who was killed in an 1862 Civil War battle. After clearing, he planted eight acres in Mission and Hamburg grapes (6.5 to Mission and 1.5 to Hamburg) with the remaining four acres (the southeast corner of the property) reserved for the construction of the distillery and family home. The name of the winery was the Healdsburg Fruit Distillery, which produced "Quality wines and brandies distilled from grapes, apples and peaches." Both Ursula and their daughter Celia, (who was Healdsburg's May Queen in 1869), worked the winery with Miller.

Some time before 1867, Miller moved the winery to the southeast corner of West (now Healdsburg Ave.) and Grant Street. He may have also taken in a partner during this time. A man named Mr. Fried was said to have worked with Miller at the winery.



George Miller

The coming of the railroad in 1871 brought Healdsburg a boom in prosperity. With the trip from San Francisco now taking only four hours, the tourist trade took a sharp upturn, as did the sale of agricultural products to the now easily accessible Bay Area markets. In 1872 George Bloch and Alex Colson opened the first Dry Creek winery and produced quality wines from their 14 acres (around 1500 Dry Creek Road) of Mission and Zinfandel grapes. The Zinfandel grape had arrived from the East Coast during the Gold Rush and was first used as a table grape in San Francisco.

In 1873, a Frenchman named John Chambaud built a stone winery along the north side of Hudson Street, a little west of Front Street. It can be argued that Chambaud's winery was the first in Healdsburg since this winery was actually within the city limits,



Chambaud Winery circa 1909

whereas Miller's first location was not. Chambaud grew none of his own grapes. His winery's 20,000 gallon capacity was welcomed by the local grape growers. Vineyards were growing rapidly in the area and not all the grapes could be sold in the San Francisco market. Chambaud bought and crushed (using mostly Chinese labor) 200 tons of grapes for his first vintage.

In the first half of the 1870's several factors led to the first boom in Sonoma County's wine industry (a cycle that's been repeated ever since). First, the coming of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 opened up the Eastern U.S. markets; second, the French Phylloxera epidemic opened the European market to California wines for the first time. This caused a boom in both grape growing and wine making. In 1873 California wine production jumped 40% to 2,636,000 gallons. In the same year, Healdsburg's wine was selling for 30 cents per gallon and brandy was selling for \$1.50 per gallon. By 1876 the price of wine dropped to 10 cents per gallon.

In 1877, Miller sold his winery to Mr. A.E.S. DeWiederhold (a winemaker from British Columbia), but kept his home and the 12 acres of grapes. Miller then opened a butcher shop in downtown Healdsburg. He gradually transplanted his old Mission vines and had a vineyard of desirable dry red varieties by the early 1890s. DeWiederhold changed the name to the Fairview Winery.

The depression of 1876 forced John Chambaud to sell his winery to a cooperative group of vineyards organized as "The United Vineyard Proprietors Company" for \$4,000. Chambaud stayed on as foreman until he moved to Cloverdale in 1880. The cooperative changed the name of the winery from Chambaud Winery to the Healdsburg Winery.

The depression of the mid 1870s set the stage for a dramatic rebound in the early 1880s. In 1877, Chambaud produced about 20,000 gallons of wine; Miller produced about 5,000 gallons; and Bloch & Colson produced about 5,000 gallons. In 1882, the Healdsburg region wine produced was 382,000 gallons. The Simi and the Gobbi brothers' timing was perfect.

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Pietro and Giuseppe Simi bought the Healdsburg (Chambaud) Winery in 1881 just in time for the next boom in the Sonoma County wine industry. Giuseppe Simi arrived in California from his native Tuscany in 1859 and worked for a time as a miner and later a produce farmer, renting 2,800 acres of land in Sacramento County, 1,840 acres in Kern County and 1,600 near Pescadero. Pietro sold the produce and made wine in their building at 429 Green Street in San Francisco.



Pietro and Giuseppe Simi

In 1868, Giuseppe moved to Healdsburg to buy grapes for the brothers' San Francisco winery. After they bought the Healdsburg Winery and, catching the wine boom, soon outgrew the Hudson Street location. In 1883, Giuseppe bought 126 acres just north of Healdsburg. They cleared the land and planted 116 acres of mostly Zinfandel. They built a stone winery on the site and named it Montepulciano in honor of the Tuscan winegrowing town where they were born. The annual output was 70,000 gallons of wine through the 1890s. Giuseppe was always in charge of the winery, while Pietro ran the business in San Francisco. The Simi Winery is the longest continuing running winery in the Healdsburg area.

Meanwhile, DeWiederhold sold the Fairview Winery to Peter and B. Gobbi in 1882. Gobbi renamed it the Sotoyome Winery and moved it to the 300 block of West Street (Healdsburg Ave.). In 1884, a cousin, Julius Gobbi bought out B. Gobbi. They made about 60,000 gallons of wine annually and their wines had a "fine reputation, which commands ready sale in San Francisco as soon as prepared for the market. They also manufacture grape brandies, and the product of their distillery never has to wait for a market."

Both cousins were from an Italian town named Dongo which is near the northern end of Lake Como. Both men's fathers were vineyardists and wine producers. In 1869, Julius's family moved to Ukiah where his father planted a vineyard. This is where Julius learned the business of vine growing and the rudiments of wine-making. Peter came to California in 1873 and worked in the dairy business in Petaluma and Bloomfield until he moved to Healdsburg and bought the Fairview Winery.

In the 1880's Peter and Julius built a commercial building at 312 Center Street which still bears their name. Peter retired in 1895, but Julius ran the operation for some years to come. Both men had a fine reputation and were active in the Healdsburg community.

DeWiederhold kept his vineyard and built a small private winery that was maintained by his widow, Alice, until 1892, when it burned down. This was one of the numerous temperance movement winery fires around this date and was presumed the work of the fanatic "Drys."

Today there are over 250 wineries in Sonoma County with eleven distinct and two shared American Viticulture Areas including the Russian River Valley, Alexander Valley, and Dry Creek Valley, the last of which is known for the production of high-quality Zinfandels.

In 2007 the Sonoma County grape harvest amounted to over 198,000 tons, exceeding Napa County's harvest by just under 30 percent. About 80% of non-pasture agricultural land in the county is for growing wine grapes—63,825 acres of vineyards with over 1800 growers. The most common varieties planted are Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Zinfandel. The overall 2007 average price per ton was \$2,081 up 5% from 2006. RRR



Pete Gobbi

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Sonoma County Vintners Association

THE WPA LEGACY IN HEALDSBURG: 1935-1943

by Holly Hoods



Chamber of Commerce Building, circa 1954

BACKGROUND

Between 1929 and 1940, the United States suffered a cataclysmic economic downturn that ushered in the Great Depression. After the stock market crashed on October 24, 1929, banks failed; businesses toppled; livelihoods were lost. Unemployment grew from 1.3 million to a staggering 12.1 million people. The production of goods and services dropped 30 per cent nationwide. The National Recovery Act of 1933 became the federal government's first step to provide assistance. This effort was followed the next year by the State Emergency Relief Act (SERA) and the Civic Works Administration (CWA), a forerunner of the WPA. In 1935 the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to organize light public works projects, stimulate the economy and put people to work as part of the "New Deal." Under the direction of Harry Hopkins from 1935-1939, this program—later renamed the Works Projects Administration—became the federal government's major public works effort.

SELF HELP AT FIRST

City documents and historical newspaper records, archived at the Healdsburg Museum, reveal impacts of the WPA on the local economy. Newspaper articles, dating as early as 1930,

demonstrate how Healdsburg civic leaders initially stepped up to try to combat unemployment. Food drives and clothing drives were held. The news headlines told of the escalating efforts of local leaders as the economy plummeted: January 1931- "Addition to Reservoir to Help Jobless"; September 1931- "Plan to Give Work to Needy Told at Meet;"; January 1932- "Second Fund For Jobless Aid Started." Accounts show that the City Council was backed by the Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis Club, the American Legion and the PTA in efforts to put local people to work on civic projects. An unemployment committee, headed by A.W. Garrett of Garrett's Hardware, was organized by the Chamber of Commerce in October 1931. That fall twenty men were hired to repair sidewalks; two women were hired to work in the city library; four women were hired as seamstresses to repair old clothes for the poor. Ranchers who had paid work to offer were encouraged to hire laborers through the unemployment committee.

FROM SKEPTICS TO BOOSTERS

At the inception of the WPA program, Healdsburg, like many skeptical local government agencies, feared that the WPA would be "just another relief program with its constant companions: red tape and inefficiency," commented Mayor W.R. Haley in a *Healdsburg*

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Mayor W.R. Haley, second from right, at groundbreaking ceremony.

Tribune article, 27 February 1936. Upon closer investigation of the grant requirements, however, the Healdsburg City Council concluded that the WPA offered an opportunity too good to pass up. The City's objective quickly changed from how to minimally comply with the program to how to receive the maximum amount of funding benefits. In 1935, the Healdsburg City Council undertook a survey to estimate the community needs and the seasonal supply of labor. From this, they prepared a proposal of public works projects, which they submitted to Washington, D.C. Healdsburg became the first city in the Northern California District to obtain WPA funding for some of its public works infrastructure projects. The Northern California District spanned the distance between San Francisco and the Oregon border.

BOOSTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

By February of 1936, an average of 113 men were working on WPA jobs in Healdsburg. The government program provided an average monthly payroll of \$5869 to the local workforce. Healdsburg civic leaders couldn't have been happier. According to Mayor W.R. Haley, the projects were "the best business deal the city has made in a great many years." He touted the WPA program for funding seven "worthwhile and permanent civic works," all of which would have had to have been done in the next few years.

Under ordinary conditions, the total cost would have been borne by the local taxpayers, said Mayor Haley. Under the WPA program, the lion's share of the cost was carried by the WPA, including not just the cost of labor, but materials and equipment rental as well. The contracts required that, other considerations being equal, all material, equipment and supplies would be purchased locally, which also boosted the local economy.

Many of the projects were street improvements, located within the city limits. Other jobs targeted rural county roads, such as Dutcher Creek Road and Geysers Road, improved during 1936-37. WPA workers were also employed in the fields during harvest. In 1937 an extreme labor shortage in the hop fields necessitated the cessation of almost all WPA projects in Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino counties. That August, Captain C.C. Woodward, head of the WPA district office in Santa Rosa, reported that virtually all persons employed on WPA projects had been transferred to private employment in harvest fields. Projects remained closed until all harvest work had been completed.

WATER SYSTEM: PIPES, SEWERS AND STORM DRAINS

One of the most immediate and important projects was to upgrade and update the municipal water system. The old water system had used narrow, wrought-iron pipe, which, by 1936, had become insufficient for the City's needs. For the previous 12 years, the City had been gradually replacing and repairing the rusting iron pipe. Under the WPA contract, the last 9,000 feet of the old pipe were removed and replaced with four-inch cast-iron pipe. Nine thousand feet of pipe were laid, including the digging and backfilling of 4000 yards of earth, the installation and connection of 97 copper consumer services, the installing of 17 new valves in existing mains and the placing of four new fire hydrants. According to Mayor Haley in a March 1936 interview with the *Healdsburg Enterprise*, the WPA bore the brunt of the cost for the water system improvements, resulting in "a very considerable saving to the taxpayers of Healdsburg."

In January 1935, thirty men were put to work removing approximately 4,100 feet of vitrified sewer pipe from the intersection of West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) and the railroad crossing to Dry Creek. To improve the drainage, the grade was increased along the sewer line, and the vitrified pipe was replaced by 8-inch concrete pipe. Eighteen men worked on the reservoir.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

The Mission Revival-style Healdsburg Grammar School at 400 First Street was built in 1935 under the SERA program, just before

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implementation of the WPA. Although the school represented a \$75,000 investment from the community, much of the work was done by SERA crews.

In January 1936, Paul Crabb, the principal of the Healdsburg High School, received a telegram from Representative Clarence F. Lea stating that President Roosevelt and Controller-General McCarl had both approved the WPA grant of \$25,000 to improve the high school grounds. Proposed improvements to the school grounds included: erecting an iron fence around the property, laying an underground sprinkling system, putting in turf, making a football gridiron, a running track, a playground and tennis courts. Curbs, gutters and sidewalks would be laid the full length of the property. That same month, the newspaper reported that a carload of cement for the City's WPA project of building curbs and gutters and repairing sidewalks, had arrived, and was being stored in Dennes and Haigh's grocery warehouse. Many of the curbs and gutters built throughout Healdsburg during this time are still in use today. The WPA construction dates can be seen etched in the concrete.



A view from Tayman Park Golf Course.

WPA IMPROVEMENTS AT TAYMAN PARK

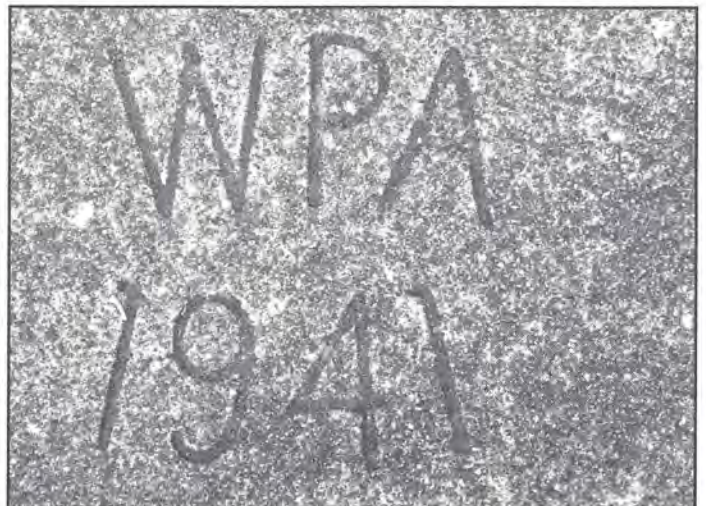
Tayman Park Golf Course also came in line for some WPA-financed improvements, thanks to fortuitous timing. Founded by Col. C.F. Tayman in 1922 as a private club, Tayman Park had gradually dwindled in membership during the Depression from 106 members paying \$100 each to almost no one paying anything. In 1934, the City of Healdsburg purchased the equity in the property for \$1 per share from the few remaining members in exchange for paying off the \$10,000 mortgage, which had been held by Dr. C.W. Weaver. This mortgage had been bequeathed to the Salvation Army's Home at Lytton upon the death of Dr. Weaver. His goal had been to provide a secure source of revenue to build a hospital at the Home. The City authorities made a deal with

the Salvation Army to settle the mortgage on the golf course for \$6,000 cash. The City-owned golf course property was therefore able to qualify for WPA funding. The 1940 Diamond Jubilee edition of the *Healdsburg Tribune* proudly described the many WPA improvements at Tayman Park:

Water has been piped to all fairways, which are now kept green the year around; greens were rehabilitated or rebuilt; foot bridges over ditches rebuilt; the old clubhouse modernized and a complete kitchen and equipment installed; a caretaker's house and starting house built; tennis courts laid out; roads improved and new tools and equipment installed.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Perhaps the most visible reminder of the WPA in Healdsburg today is the Chamber of Commerce building at the south end of town. In February 1936, the Healdsburg City Council hired architect John I. Easterly to create plans for a two-story civic building, approximately 20 by 30 feet in size, on the city's lot on "lower West Street" (the west side of Healdsburg Avenue just north of Mill Street). Easterly was the same architect responsible for designing the Grammar School on First Street, completed the previous year. The new building included a public lobby and office space on the ground floor with a private office and a ladies' restroom. The second floor was equipped with a large committee meeting room, a men's lavatory and a storeroom. The federal government supplied the labor wages and some of the building materials for this civic building. The total cost of the project, according to records, was \$11,906. Of this amount, \$9,439 came from federal funds and \$2467 came from city funds. Seventy-three years later, this WPA building continues to serve the community as the center for the Chamber of Commerce. It remains as a lasting legacy of the federal-local government partnership that was the WPA. RRR



Inscription on sidewalk.

I REMEMBER

By Cecil Petray, age 84 in 1986

1906: I remember the terrible rumble of the 1906 earthquake as the tremor came and went by the house. The noise sounded like a high-speed train passing.

1908: My mother received her diploma from a Correspondence School. She had passed tests in Taxidermy. As far as I know she was the first woman taxidermist in Sonoma County. She developed a profitable business in stuffed deer heads mounted on plaques, making buckskin from deer hides, tanning large hides with the hair for floor rugs, and stuffing small animals and one quite large sturgeon. We lived on a ranch in the country. My father worked for the County Road Commission part time. He would leave before daylight in the morning and arrive home after dark at night. For the use of two horses, one wagon, and his labor, he received \$2.50 per day.

1910: In the northeast part of Healdsburg, at the home of a family named "World," I was swinging in the apple tree when I saw this crippled old man walk out to the outhouse. He was Wyatt Earp's brother. They had wanted my father to take care of him while Wyatt had a small job to do. Dad could not do it, so the World family kept him. In a few days Wyatt came back, with two bodies tied on a horse. He picked up his brother and left town.

1911: I remember Halley's Comet showing clearly in the night sky. I remember going into Healdsburg, in the bed of the wagon,

always seeing people at Kuck's Corner where the road goes into Alexander Valley. I remember stopping at the Cerri and Maggenti Store, across the street from the old Safeway store, to buy imported Swiss cheese. I remember Lincoln Beachey flying the first plane to the Cloverdale Citrus Fair.

My father tells of the last grizzly bear killed in this area. Dogs bayed at the bear in the roots of an oak tree in front of the Oriental School house. A Mr. Smith came with a loaded rifle and waited until the bear growled at the dogs. He shot the bear in the mouth, killing him with one shot.

Geyserville was quite a rough town in the early days: three hotels, five saloons, one pool hall, two blacksmith shops, one butcher shop, and two combination grocery and hardware stores. The story goes that on Sunday most of the men gathered in town for drinking, horse play, and swapping stories. This Sunday a dog fight started, and one man kicked another man's dog. Then the shooting started. When it was over, there were five men lying in the street with gunshot wounds.

Healdsburg's street-cleaning department: one man, one pushcart, one push broom, and one shovel, and he kept the streets clean all over town.

(Born in 1902, Cecil Petray grew up on a Geyserville ranch and worked as a mechanic. Cecil was an active Museum supporter in the 1970s and '80s, and was an invaluable history informant to then-Curator Hannah Clayborn. This excerpt is a one-page reminiscence that he submitted to the Museum in 1986. Cecil passed away in Sparks, Nevada in February 2000.)