

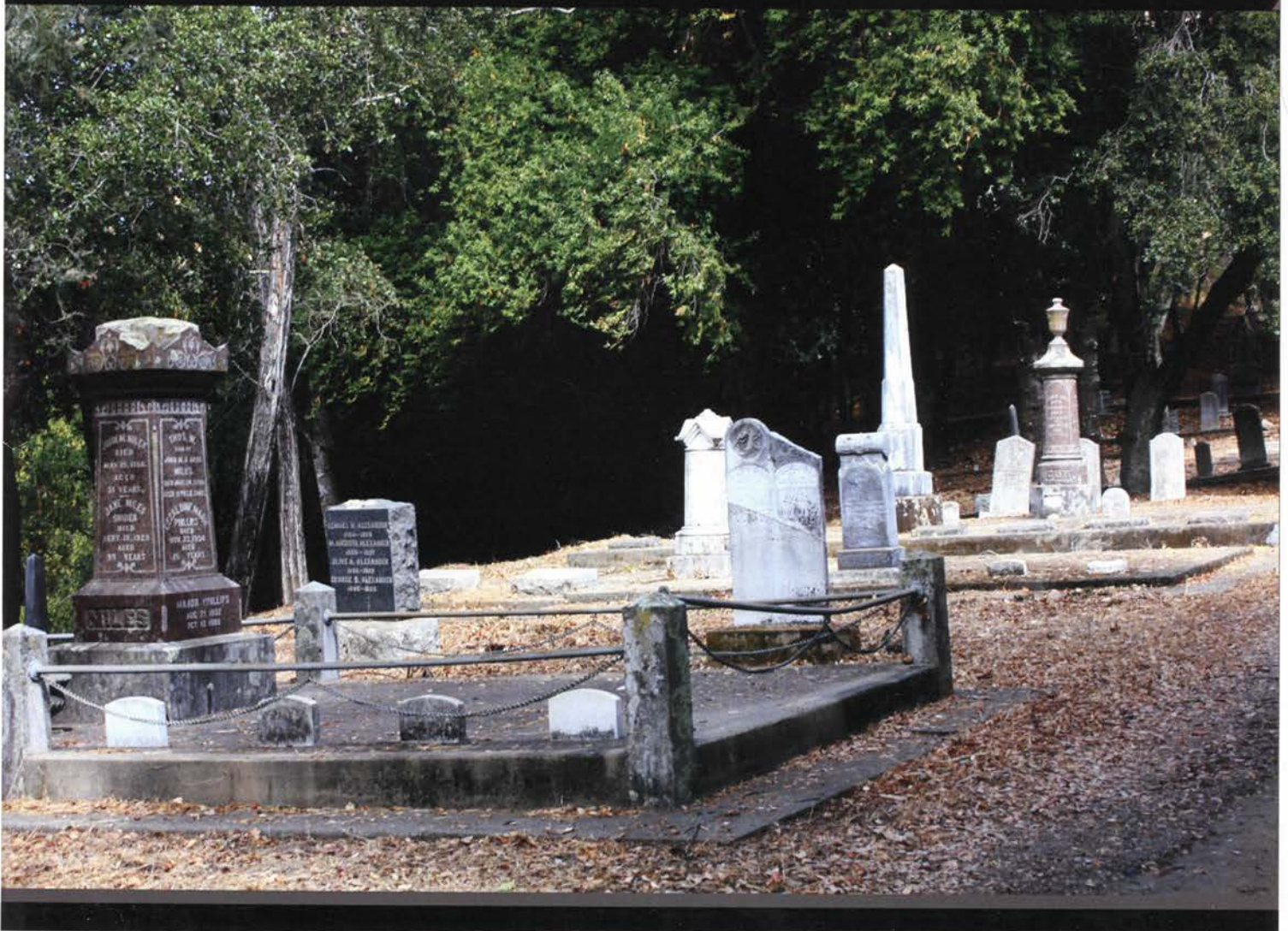


RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

WINTER 2016 • ISSUE 131

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society

DISCOVER OAK MOUND CEMETERY



In This Issue

This issue of the *Russian River Recorder* is a themed issue, expanding on the Museum's current exhibit, "Discover Oak Mound Cemetery." We have reprinted some pertinent historic articles as well as new material contributed by Museum staff and volunteers. Assistant Curator Whitney Hopkins presents a historic overview of the cemetery and an article about tombstone symbolism, featuring evocative photos from Oak Mound, more of which are on display in the gallery. Project Manager Jim Dreisback has written an update on the cemetery restoration and our future plans. Ann Carranza reflects on the annual Healdsburg Literary Guild readings at the cemetery's "tipsy fountain." Healdsburg High School student intern Olivia Christie contributes a spooky legend of the cemetery, shared by her schoolmates.

Several writers have submitted profiles of some of the more fascinating individuals buried at Oak Mound. Kay Robinson highlights military servicemen, profiling one soldier from each of eight wars. Jane Bonham introduces Frances McGaughey

Martin, educator, lawyer and leader of the Sonoma County suffragist movement. Ann Howard highlights Geyserville orchardist, Andrew Bouton, a notable Temperance man. Keith Power profiles pioneer women Louisa and Mary Walker and Martha Young, vanguard of westward migration and settlement.

Selected articles from the 1922 *Healdsburg Tribune* and the 1889 *Sonoma County Tribune* provide historic context into monuments in the cemetery and burial practices for the poor. We have also reprinted articles by former Museum curator Marie Djordjevich about the history of death and undertaking in Healdsburg and the death of Col. Rod Matheson by *Tribune* staff writer Paula Lombardi.

We hope that this publication encourages you to visit the Healdsburg Museum exhibit, "Discover Oak Mound Cemetery," and inspires you to get out and discover Oak Mound Cemetery for yourself.

Holly Hoods, Executive Director/Curator
Pamela Vana-Paxhia, Editor



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

The Official Publication of the
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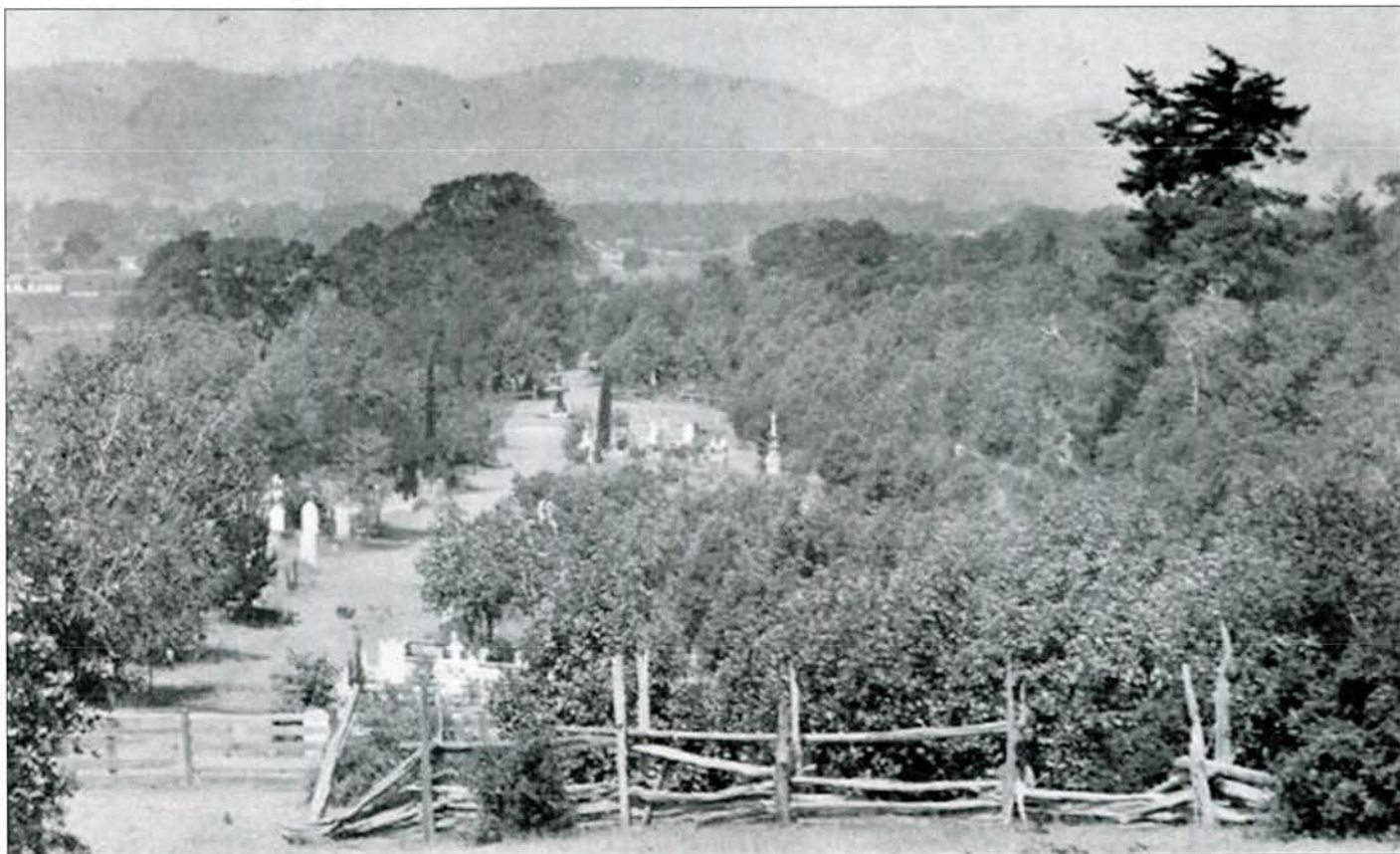
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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

West from Reservoir through Oak Mound Cemetery, 1877 – Joseph Downing, Photographer

Matheson's Oak Mound: A Brief History of Healdsburg's Cemetery

by Whitney Hopkins

Reprinted from Russian River Recorder, Winter, 2005

The Healdsburg Museum's archives contain a variety of documentary items that contribute to our knowledge of Healdsburg's history. One unique collection in the archives is the Oak Mound Cemetery records kept from 1884 to 1959 by several generations of the Matheson and Luce families. These records take up approximately 25 books ranging from large canvas-bound ledger books at the turn of the century to small spiral notebooks in the 1950s. The books were donated to the Museum in 1992 by Sarah Lee Calhoun, the niece of Jirah and Margaret (Grove) Luce. In 2005, many of these records were carefully transcribed by Museum volunteer Jenny Allen. While the majority of the books purely record burials and cemetery plots sold, several of the earlier books, kept by Jirah and Nina (Matheson) Luce were multi-purpose. In addition to cemetery accounts, the books used from 1900 through 1910 also include ranch, orchard and vineyard accounts, as well as the rent collected for each baseball game played on the Matheson ballpark. While the Luce record books could inspire any number of topics for investigation, the following is an examination of the history of Healdsburg's Oak Mound Cemetery.

Although Oak Mound Cemetery was established early in Healdsburg's history, it was not Healdsburg's first cemetery. Harmon Heald, an unsuccessful gold miner from Ohio and

Healdsburg's namesake, arrived at the present site of the town in 1851, and the following year opened a store with his younger brother, George. At that time the pair was squatting on the Rancho Sotoyome, owned by the Fitch family. It was not long after the Healds' arrival that "the first death and funeral" occurred. George Heald died early in 1853. Since no cemetery was yet established, Heald was buried beside a cluster of madrone trees in an area that was "thought to be sufficiently out of town." The site of this burial was on the city block where St. John's Church and School now stand, in the center of East Street bounded by Matheson and Tucker Streets. (Today the cemetery is marked by a metal sign.) This location served as the graveyard for only six years. When Harmon Heald laid out and subdivided the town in 1857 after purchasing the land, he donated lots for a school, four churches, the Plaza, and a cemetery. The land donated for the cemetery had already been in use for this purpose for four years. Burials in this early graveyard included Harmon Heald's wife in 1857 and Harmon Heald himself in 1858. However, as early as 1857 city leaders already realized that the town was encroaching on the cemetery, and began to discuss ideas for relocating the cemetery.

Selection of New Cemetery Site

After Harmon Heald died, Healdsburg residents Roderick Matheson, William Macy and Ransom Powell united to select a new location for the cemetery. In 1859 they chose an oak-studded knoll, a small piece of Roderick Matheson's 300-acre farm that was "situated one-fourth of a mile northeast" of town. (Today the address is 601 Piper Street.) The cemetery rested on a "spur from the low wooded foothills" with an avenue extending east and west the full length of its crest, from which the smaller alleys branched in opposite directions down its sloping sides. In addition to oaks, the cemetery had many manzanita and madrone trees. It was surrounded by a fence. Although not without complaints on the part of some citizens, those individuals previously buried in the East Street cemetery were disinterred and reburied in the new cemetery. In August, 1859 following the reburials, "Oak Mound Cemetery" was dedicated.

Not long after Oak Mound's inauguration, Matheson (who had donated the land himself) was

buried there. While his wife and children remained in Healdsburg, Matheson, who had grown up in New York, was swept up in the Civil War. He volunteered, and was named Colonel of the "First California Regiment," 32nd New York State Volunteers. He died in 1862 at the age of 38 as a result of wounds received in battle while leading Union troops at Crampton's Gap, Maryland. His body was transported from the battlefield back to Healdsburg with much fanfare. His wife, Marie Antoinette, or Nettie, lived the rest of her life in Healdsburg on a widow's pension and died in 1884.

Cemetery Management

While there is less information available on who was managing Oak Mound during its first two decades, the ownership and operation of the graveyard had reverted to Col. Matheson's heirs by the 1880s—probably following the death of Matheson's wife. Unfortunately, five of Matheson's six children died before the age of 30. This left his daughter, Marie Antoinette or "Nina," born in 1855, as his only direct heir. In 1886, Nina Matheson married a prominent local rancher's son, Jirah Luce. Born in Massachusetts, Jirah came to California with his parents when he was still a boy. The Luce family had settled on a ranch near Healdsburg. Following their marriage, Nina and Jirah Luce moved into the Matheson family home at 751 South Fitch Mountain Road and took on the management of Oak Mound Cemetery, in addition to the Matheson farm and baseball field. The Matheson and Luce family continued to make additions to the cemetery over the years as the cemetery filled up. The first addition, known as "Matheson's Addition," was made in 1889. This was followed by a number of successive Luce additions in 1912, 1915 and 1923. Nina Matheson Luce died in 1920, and Jirah Luce in 1921, leaving three children.

One of their children, Jirah Luce, born in 1890 and named for his father and grandfather, took over management of Oak Mound Cemetery. Luce, a graduate of Healdsburg High School, operated the cemetery for forty years. In 1959 when he was ready to retire, Luce finally sold the cemetery to John Galeazzi, gravestone producer and owner of North Bay Monument Company. Galeazzi operated Oak Mound for over thirty years until his retirement. The cemetery was annexed into the city of

Healdsburg in 1987. In 1991, when The Greens housing development was being built, the cemetery was sold by Galeazzi to Scott Robbins and Victor Bacci, who continue to privately own and operate Oak Mound Cemetery, Inc.

Cemetery Appearance

Since its inception the citizens of Healdsburg have taken an interest in the cemetery's appearance. As early as 1870, it was reported in the newspaper that hogs and cattle were roaming through the graveyard and destroying the plants and shrubs set out to decorate graves. Shortly after the cemetery's dedication, a group of women decided that the cemetery should have water pipes installed so that they could keep the plants surrounding their loved ones' graves green. They organized themselves into a society known as "The Ladies Industrial Society of Healdsburg," and after "a series of sewing circles" raised enough money so that in 1876 the Healdsburg Water Company installed pipes and hydrants along the main avenue of the cemetery. At that time there was also enough money raised for the purchase of a bronze fountain to decorate the center of the main avenue (on top of the hill).



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Oak Mound Cemetery fountain, 1885

Local clubs erected memorials, such as the G.A.R. who put up a monument for unknown Civil War veterans in 1922. Individuals spearheaded projects, including Julius Myron Alexander, who advocated improvements to the entrance of the cemetery, such as a new redwood gateway arch in 1932. At several points in time associations were formed to take charge of improvements and beautification of Oak Mound. In 1926, for instance, it was reported that Oak Mound Cemetery Association had 150 members. It is hoped that today, as in the past, Healdsburg residents will continue to take pride in the picturesque and historic "City of Eternal Sleep."

Note: If you have old photographs of Oak Mound cemetery or the Luce family that you would allow the Museum to copy for our archives, this would be greatly appreciated.

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Of Death and Undertaking: Growth of the Profession in Healdsburg, 1850s – 1920s

by Marie Djordjevich

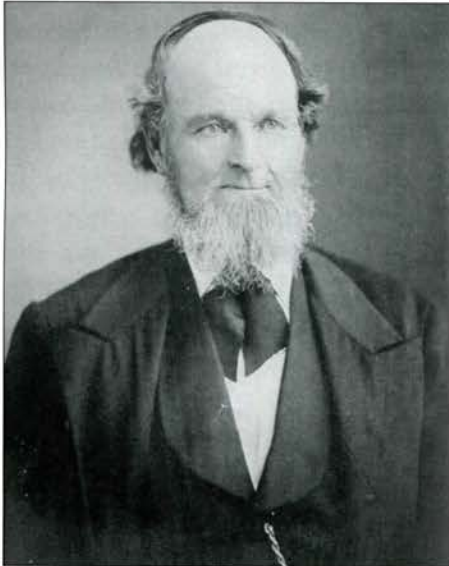
Reprinted from *Russian River Recorder*, Autumn, 1998

Death, as the inevitable end to life, has been dealt with in various ways by different cultures throughout the centuries. In “frontier America” in the 19th century, of which Healdsburg was a part, death was practical and part of everyday life. It was not a separate occurrence, needing a separate industry. That came later, towards the turn of the century, when embalming became standard practice, coffin-making became specialized, and the “funeral director” became common.

However, in the 19th century in most small towns, coffins were sold side by side with furniture. Cabinetmakers made coffins along with household furniture and furniture dealers offered undertaking services along with the coffins.

Pioneer Undertaking

Healdsburg’s first undertaker was John (J.C.) Downing, who came to Healdsburg in 1857 with his wife Mary Jane, and three children—Ellen, Joseph Henry (J.H.), and Clarence. J.C. built his furniture and undertaking business which was situated on Center Street. J.C.’s son, Joseph Henry, joined him in the business until 1869, when he went east to study photography. He returned to Healdsburg and opened a studio on Center Street in the early 1870s. J.C. Downing died in 1875, but Healdsburg did not lack undertakers.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg’s first undertaker John (J. C.) Downing

John Young and Peter Grist opened a cabinet shop under the name Young and Grist in 1859,

where they made and sold both furniture and coffins. By the 1890s Grant Cook had opened a furniture business and undertaking supplies store, which he operated until 1902 when he sold the business.

Rites and Rituals

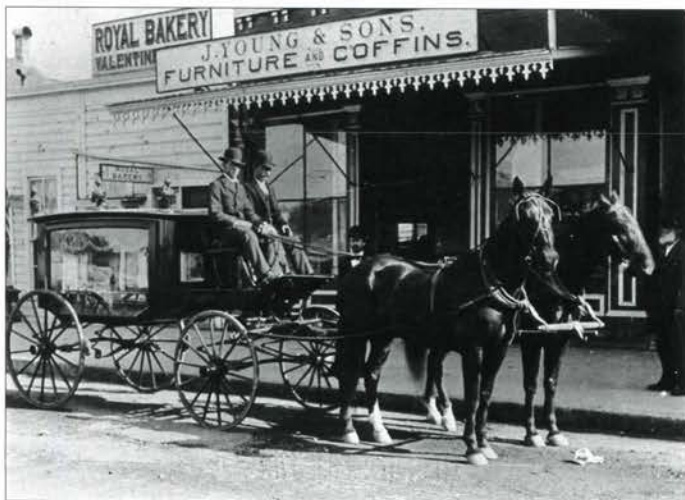
In the 1800s funerals and the rituals surrounding them were social and familial. The body would lie “in state” at the family home in the parlor until the church or cemetery service. The undertaker was the furniture dealer who provided the coffin. At that time the coffin was usually hexagonal and vaguely body shaped (pike) as opposed to the standard rectangular casket that became the norm after the turn of the century. The undertakers would offer very rudimentary and basic service: delivery of the coffin, and maybe transportation to the church or cemetery.

Transporting of the body and coffin involved wagon use, and usually the store’s delivery wagon became the hearse for the occasion. The color of the horse told volumes: “If white horses pulled the wagon, the driver was delivering a patented wire-bottom bed or some other piece of household furniture; if the horses were black, people on the street were expected to remove their hats and pay proper respect to the dead person passing by.” Some furniture dealers/undertakers had an actual hearse, and in 1879 the *Healdsburg Enterprise* announced that Young and Grist built a room in their shop to house their hearses (whereas most undertakers at the time were furniture dealers first

and undertakers second, Young and Grist—and all the following incarnations of Young—concentrated heavily and more and more on the undertaking aspect.)

Changing Times

By the time the century turned, the undertaking business was changing. As the frontier towns became more and more urban and houses became smaller, formal parlors were omitted from the architecture. Many furniture and coffin stores began adding or refitting existing space for a funeral parlor, which would take the place of the house parlor room where the body would lie. It also would create a space for services, as this *Healdsburg Enterprise* blurb conveys: “T.G. Young’s new undertaking parlor being erected on West Matheson Street will be a one story brick, 40 x 60 feet. The room will especially fitted up for every convenience in the undertaking line and will permit the holding of funeral services in the building if at any time this may be desired.” (*Healdsburg Enterprise*, May 13, 1905)



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

J. Young & Sons Furniture and Coffins Store, Matheson St.

The profession of the funeral director was coming into being, and undertaking became a more formalized and advanced business. The hearse, oftentimes a delivery wagon or a closed carriage in early times, gradually became an ornamented vehicle, with plate glass sides so that mourners could see inside to the coffin. The coffins themselves evolved, becoming rectangular, and sometimes made of materials other than wood (i.e. guaranteed not-to-leak metal.)

Healdsburg’s undertakers began evolving as the profession evolved. Jeffreys and Sons, who had purchased the business from Grant Cook in 1902 and were located on the corner of North and West Streets in the Daly Building, incorporated for use some newer equipment that the undertakers in larger cities were using in their businesses, i.e. “National Burying Device” for lowering caskets into the grave (*Healdsburg Enterprise*, May 14, 1903).

Changing Hands

Healdsburg’s furniture stores/undertaking businesses changed hands frequently in the later part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th. Jeffreys and Sons, who after being on the forefront of undertaking innovations, sold the business to James Skee in 1903. Skee became a well-respected furniture dealer, as well as undertaker. His undertaking parlor at the date of his start was described favorably: “The windows are filled with plants and ferns, and the room is well arranged for its purpose. Mr. Skee has an up to date establishment throughout.” (*Healdsburg Enterprise*, September 1, 1904) A few months later, Skee, now established in Healdsburg, was highly touted: “As funeral director he ranks foremost in his profession.” (*Healdsburg Tribune* December 22, 1904) Skee’s furniture/undertaking business was located in the bottom of the Odd Fellows building on West Street (now Healdsburg Avenue). He survived the 1906 earthquake, re-establishing himself and expanding at the same location after the temblor. Skee remained in the furniture and undertaking business in Healdsburg for several years, finally selling all his interests in 1924.

Clarence Curtis bought an undertaking business from James Skee in 1914 (Skee at one point had two businesses) and proceeded to establish himself as one of the town’s eminent undertakers. Curtis was a graduate of the Hennesey School of Embalming and worked for the Golden Gate Undertaking Company in San Francisco. He also spent four years as Fresno County coroner, and then three years working in San Rafael. He opened new parlors in Healdsburg in November of 1914 on Powell Street (now Plaza Street.) This was a state-of-the-art place at the time: “The reception room is neatly furnished with couch, chairs, desk and telephone. The chapel has a seating capacity of

nearly one hundred and is arranged to meet the needs of the funeral gathering. A ladies' dressing room adjoins the chapel. The furnishings throughout are attractive and modern. The morgue room is reached from the alley from the rear of the building. It is equipped with every convenience for its purpose. Altogether Mr. Curtis' rooms will doubtless come up to the best standard of the undertaking parlors of the large cities. (*Healdsburg Tribune* November 5, 1914)

Curtis also kept abreast of the new inventions and technologies that were advancing his profession, and as a result, was owner of the first Cadillac auto hearse in northern Sonoma County. This was in August of 1918 and others soon followed suit.

Curtis' wife Ethel also had embalming and undertaking experience and assisted her husband in the business. When Clarence died in March, 1920, Ethel ran the business on her own for a few months. Unexpectedly she received an offer to buy from San Franciscan Mr. Nuttman. Nuttman wanted the business for his fourth son J.K. (all other three sons were in the undertaking business in the Bay Area). The offer came as a complete surprise to Ethel Curtis and she sold and retired. Son J.K. Nuttman only ran the parlor until March 1921, when he retired from the business and left for Santa Clara.

Embalming Matters

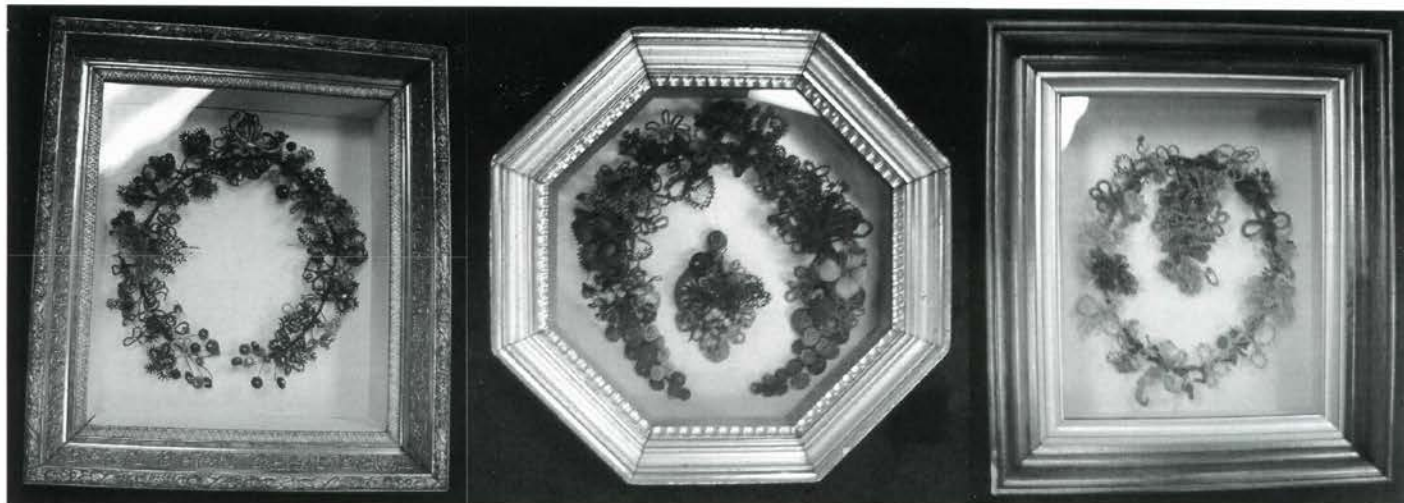
Clarence Curtis was an experienced and degreed embalmer, which became more the required background in the 19th century. The purpose of embalming was to halt or arrest the decay process of the body (so it could be laid out for a longer period of time.) In the early part of the century refrigeration was tried, but by the 1880s the chemical procedures were perfected enough and the necessary techniques and equipment were available to keep a corpse on view for several days. The embalmers were also skilled at the public display of the body—closing the eyes and mouth, inserting false teeth if necessary, sewing the lips shut and tinting the face with cosmetics. By the turn of the century, many undertakers were also experienced embalmers, or had one working for them. (James Skee was assisted in his undertaking business by C.C. Chase, a degreed embalmer from New York City.)

Young Endures

When Nuttman left Healdsburg and retired from the undertaking business, it was left to the Young family to remain as sole proprietors of this type of business in town. As mentioned earlier, the Young firm was started back in 1859 when John Young and Peter Grist opened a furniture and undertaking business under the name of Young and Grist. Later, John's son Thomas became interested in the business, which then continued as John Young and Son for many years. After the death of John Young, the business continued expanding under the tutelage of Thomas G. Young. When Thomas died in December of 1919, his widow continued the business for a month. It was then announced that son Fred Young "has resigned from his commission in the United States Government Air Service and returned to his boyhood home in Healdsburg where he will take charge of the undertaking business left by his father." (*Healdsburg Tribune* February 11, 1920) Fred set about remodeling the mortuary parlors on West Matheson Street inside and out. Young died in 1943, but the parlors that bear his name still exist and function in Healdsburg today.

Sources:

Healdsburg Enterprise: February 27, 1879; March 14, 1903; August 1, 1903; May 13, 1905; May 2, 1914; January 3, 1920; January 10, 1920.
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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Examples of Victorian hair wreaths

Victorian Mourning Jewelry, Hair Wreaths

by Holly Hoods

Human hair wreaths and jewelry may be unsettling to us today, but they were a common type of sentimental accessory in Victorian America. Often pieces of jewelry were designed with engravings for a message or a significant date. Mothers would wear locks of hair in a necklace of a husband or son at war, while men at war were adorned with the locks of a loved one at home.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

A pair of hair earrings

Human hair was also used in mourning jewelry and wreaths. The hair of a deceased loved one would be obtained and crafted into a piece of jewelry or woven with fine wire into intricate flowers. These artistic creations were meant to be decorative and beautiful, designed with intent to be a constant reminder of the loved one who was lost.

Death Customs in the U.S. - 1850-1900

Curtains would be drawn and clocks would be stopped at the time of a person's death.

Mirrors were covered with crepe or veiling to prevent the deceased's spirit from getting trapped in the looking glass.

Family photographs were also sometimes turned face-down to prevent any of the close relatives and friends of the deceased from being possessed by the spirit of the dead.

A wreath of laurel, yew or boxwood tied with crepe or black ribbons was hung on the front door to alert passersby that a death had occurred.

The body was watched over every minute until burial, hence the custom of "waking." The wake also served as a safeguard from burying someone who was not dead, but in a coma. Most wakes lasted three to four days to allow relatives to arrive from far away. The use of flowers helped to mask unpleasant odors in the room before embalming became common.

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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Col. Roderick Matheson, ca 1861-1862

Civil War Hero is One of City's Early Citizens; Colonel Matheson Dies for His Country

by Paula Lombardi

Reprinted from the Healdsburg Tribune, July, 17, 1985

An idealist, a patriot, an adventurer, a politician – all of these descriptions seem to fit the character of Colonel Roderick N. Matheson. An immigrant to the United States, this early Healdsburg settler died a hero for his adopted country.

Born in Inverness, Scotland in 1825, Matheson immigrated to the U.S. with his parents when he was 15 years old. According to the *Illustrated History of Sonoma County, California*, published in 1889, the Matheson family settled in New York, the city where Matheson would meet his wife, Antoinette Seaman. Years later, Matheson's letters to his beloved Netty – written from the battlefields of the Civil War – would provide a touching and meaningful glimpse into the life of a man torn between duty to his country and love of his family at home.

As a young married man, Matheson first tried his hand at real estate in Cleveland, Ohio and then at importing back in New York. But like most

adventurous men of the time, news of the California Gold Rush and the stories surrounding it finally convinced Matheson to move out west.

In 1849, the native Scotsman set sail for California via Cape Horn, says the *Illustrated History*, and after a seven-month voyage in which the crew staged a near-mutiny and the vessel was almost shipwrecked, Matheson arrived in San Francisco. An article on the life of Matheson, written by Frances D. Davis in 1969 (*Colonel Roderick Matheson, A True American*) describes the San Francisco of 1849 as a "compound of tents and canvas tenements."

Matheson's fascination with gold mining was short lived and it wasn't long after his arrival in California before he became involved in San Francisco's public affairs. The *Illustrated History* states he was named Controller of San Francisco in 1852 and two years later received the title of General of Division of the Mexican Army and Resident Commander of Mexico in San Francisco.

Moving to Healdsburg

Four years after his arrival on the west coast, Matheson sent for his wife and family. In 1856 they moved to Sonoma County.

The Mathesons built their home here in 1857 on what is now lower South Fitch Mountain Road, close to the Tayman Park Golf Course. The home, in its renovated form, still stands today. According to the 1983 Healdsburg Cultural Resource Survey, the building was originally constructed in the classical Greek style. It was extensively remodeled in 1904 and then again in 1920 to give the Georgian-style appearance it has today. Nina Luce Rose, the granddaughter of Roderick and Netty, still lives here in Healdsburg [in 1985].



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Roderick Matheson, ca 1850

Loyal to Lincoln

Although a public-spirited man, it was Matheson's service to his country during the Civil War that brought him most of his fame. A description of Matheson's war experience is detailed in Davis' *A True American*. Matheson, says the report, was a strong supporter of Lincoln and traveled to Washington to be present for the president's inauguration ceremony. He was 35 years old when he left for Washington. Neither he nor his

family could have known they would never be together again.

One of Matheson's first letters home to Netty, according to Davis' story, says "Lincoln is President and the South promises to secede. What is to be the consequences God only knows."

Matheson was ready to come home following the inauguration when Lincoln called for the formation of a militia of 75,000 men loyal to the U.S. to fight the confederacy. As one of Lincoln's advisors, it was natural that Matheson would sign up.

His first letters home to Netty were positive ones. Davis' article quotes one written on April 22, 1861, just as Matheson was being sent to New York on "special business" for the president: "Everything is in the wildest excitement; New York is alive and bustling with bayonets. God help the poor misguided fools of the south for evoking such wrath on their own heads. Slavery is doomed!!!"

Slavery was doomed, but Matheson was not aware of the long, hard war which lay ahead. The South proved a more formidable foe than expected. As a colonel in the army of the north, Matheson spent the next year dealing with bad weather, worse battles and miles of treks across the country. Subsequent letters reflect his longing for his family.

In Davis' story, she quotes a letter from Matheson to his wife: "Netty, my love, what would I do or give if you were by my side, that I could look into your face and get your approving smile for trying [t]o fight and sustain your country and now mine. Do you think that I may, by and by, be considered to be an American?"

Matheson's army career ended tragically at the Battle of Crampton's Gap on the Potomac River on Sept. 11, 1862. During a successful charge up the mountain pass, a ball hit Matheson in the right leg. The wound was to prove fatal. Eighteen days later, Colonel Roderick Matheson was dead. He was only 37 years old.

A hero to his country, Matheson's body lay in state first at the governor's mansion in New York, then again in San Francisco and was finally laid to rest at Oak Mound Cemetery here in Healdsburg.

It was a relatively short life for the young man from Inverness, but Colonel Roderick Matheson's heroic actions have left their mark on Healdsburg's history.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Frances McGaughey Martin

A Woman of Superior Ability

by Jane Bonham

Frances McGaughey (McG.) Martin, buried in Oak Mound Cemetery, is remembered as a notable suffragist in Sonoma County. She was a powerful personality who was that and so much more!

Frances Grier McGaughey was born about 1847 in Gettysburg, Adams County, Pennsylvania. She died the 14th of November, 1923, age 76, in Santa Rosa, California, and was buried in Oak Mound Cemetery in the Martin family plot, alongside her husband Edgar Martin (deceased in 1882 at age 39) and their daughter Edna (deceased in 1884 at age 6).

Frances was known for her pleasant manner, intelligence and superior ability in all she pursued. She is particularly remembered for her humanitarian spirit and commitment to the protection and advancement of women and children. Frances was well educated and practiced two consecutive careers: first, as an educator and then as a lawyer. Her commitment to excellence and capacity for perseverance were forged in a lifetime of opportunity that was also mightily challenged by personal loss.

The Family Farm

Sometime in the late 1830s Jane Walker married Hugh Ferguson McGaughey, a railroad contractor. In the early years of their marriage, the family moved frequently as Hugh's work took them to various railroad construction project sites.

By the time third-born Frances (Fanny) was three years old, the family moved near Macomb, McDonough County, Illinois. Hugh had saved enough to buy a farm and settle down in one place.

The family grew and prospered. Between 1850 and 1860 the value of the farm increased six fold. Hugh and Jane had sufficient resources, personally and financially, to provide a sound educational foundation for their children. Of the four brothers who survived to adulthood, two were physicians and two were successful farmers. In addition to Frances' career success, her two sisters were also professionally accomplished: one a physician and the other a pharmacist.

An Early, Profound Loss

Hugh and Jane both died in 1863 within 16 days of each other, leaving 72-year-old Grandmother Ann Walker and seven children at the farm. At sixteen, Frances was the oldest daughter living on the farm at the time of their deaths. Two of her three elder siblings were out of the area and the third may have been away at school.

Anabel, the oldest daughter, had married in 1859 and by 1863 was traveling as an Army nurse, following her husband, Absalom Stuart, who had enlisted in 1861 as an assistant surgeon with the 10th Missouri Volunteers in the Civil War. Andrew, the second eldest son, enlisted just eight days after his brother-in-law.

The oldest son, James, may have been at school at the time of his parents' death. He attended Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor and in 1867 graduated from a two year program in the Department of Medicine and Surgery. A college degree was not required for enrollment, however students had to know enough Greek and Latin to write prescriptions. James may have been in preparation for medical school during this time.

Three Sisters Reunited

In 1864, Anabel and Absalom Stuart returned to Macomb. Now in poor health, Absalom was forced to resign from the service due to injuries and exhaustion. Returning to the farm, it is easy to imagine that Anabel would find comfort and support for both her husband and herself.

When Anabel left home, Frances was twelve and the youngest daughter, Elizabeth, was three. Now, Anabel could look to her sister Frances, a seventeen-year old young lady, as a helpmate. Elizabeth, now nine years old, was able to take on increasing responsibilities. In return, all the children still living at home must have found great comfort in the stability and competence of their big sister. At her funeral service, it was recounted that "Dr. Stuart acted as the mother for the rest of the children and her surviving brothers and sisters affectionately testify to her love and care and responsibility."

In 1866, Elizabeth accompanied the Stuarts to Winona, Minnesota, where Absalom built a successful medical practice. With Absalom's encouragement, Anabel began to study medicine. Later in California, Anabel became the second

woman graduate from the Medical College of the Pacific.

Frances McGaughey, Teacher

Frances attended St. Cloud Normal School a predecessor of St. Cloud State University, which opened on September 13, 1869. The first building the College inhabited was Stearns House, a resort-hotel overlooking the Mississippi River, which was remodeled to accommodate classrooms and assembly halls. The School started with a modest enrollment of 40 women and 10 men, and graduated its first class on June 30, 1871. Among the fifteen graduates of this first class was Frances G. McCaughey.

To support herself during the long midterm break (and perhaps also to put lessons learned into practice), Frances applied for a summer job as a teacher and was placed in a rural part of the state 90 miles from her school. Undaunted by the sparse conditions and primitive boarding place she found there, Frances completed the summer post and returned to school. She graduated with honors and became a teacher in schools in St. Cloud and Minneapolis, completing the two year obligation for her training.

Go West Young Lass

Frances appears to have been the first of her siblings to discover the West; in fact, none of the McCaughey sons ever left the Midwest. By 1874, she was in California. In 1876, sister Anabel and her family (including Elizabeth) moved to Southern California, hoping that the warmer weather would improve Absalom's health. They arrived in Sonoma County in 1881.

Frances first applied to teach in Alameda and later in Healdsburg, where her application was accepted as first assistant. In 1875, she became the principal of Healdsburg schools, a position she filled for two years until her marriage. On May 31, 1876, Frances retired to join her husband, Edgar, on the Martin ranch. On August 17, 1879, daughter Edna Bell is born to the happy couple.

An Intimate Loss

In the 1880 census Edgar, Frances and Edna are found in Mendocino Township. (At the time, Healdsburg was included in Mendocino Township.)

There is a check mark in the “sick or disabled” box beside both adults. In fact, fully one-third of their neighbors are marked as sick.

Sometime not long after this the couple moved their household to Santa Rosa to reside near the Stuarts, Anabel and Ambrose, both physicians. Shortly after the move, Edgar became quite ill. On August 7 1882, Edgar Martin succumbed to consumption and heart disease. It was reported: “[Edgar] was of a generous-hearted, jovial disposition and most devoted to his family, who fairly worshipped him in return; and the widow and little daughter left are inconsolable.”

Three Sisters United, Again

Three months later, on November 9, Frances gave birth to their son, Edgar, Jr. Once again, Anabel, Frances and Elizabeth formed a team united to weather the storm, with a devotion built over decades.

In March of 1883, Frances made a commitment to the future, which would bode well not only for her children, but for the many children whose lives she will touch. She goes back to teaching and is glad of a vacancy at the Hamilton school near Skaggs Springs. In the next year Frances accepted the Sebastopol school offer of the position of principal, followed in the next year by a move to the Sonoma schools’ principal role. There she served until in 1886 – the first woman elected to the position – she was elected on the Republican ticket as Superintendent of Schools and subsequently re-elected to a second term in 1890.

A New Career

In January of 1895, Frances retired from the office of Superintendent in order to follow a career in law. She studied in the law offices of A.B. Ware in Santa Rosa and was admitted to the Bar by the State Supreme Court in December, 1895. Frances opened her law office in Santa Rosa in February of 1896, preferring a probate practice, with a reputation for carefully watching out for the rights of widows and orphans.

Credited as a heroine in winning the vote for women in October 1911, Frances was described as a woman “with an oratorical bent” and “the natural choice for leader of the Political Equity Association

of Sonoma County, when the suffrage campaign was organized in 1910.”



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Frances

It was reported in the 1917 newspapers that she temporarily sat on the judge’s bench to issue a divorce decree on behalf of a Sebastopol farm wife (although actually it was signed by the judge), with the following commentary: “Martin was an appropriate choice for a gender statement. A leader in woman suffrage causes, she was one of the three McGaughey sisters – Dr. Anabel McG. Stuart was a physician and Elizabeth McG. Bennett was a pharmacist – who put Santa Rosa at the forefront in women’s rights at the turn of the century.”

Sources:

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Gregory, Tom, “Mrs. F. McG. Martin, Attorney at Law, Santa Rosa,” *History of Sonoma County*, Historic Record Company, 1911.
Robinson, Jeanne, “Meet the Suffragists of Sonoma County, California!” and “Discovering Women’s History in Your Community,” *National Women’s History Project*.
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The Sonoma Searcher, “The McGaughey Sisters of Santa Rosa,” Vol. 41, No. 2, Spring, 2014.

Veterans at Oak Mound Cemetery

by Kay Robinson

This article highlights just one Healdsburg veteran in each of the eight wars that has occurred since California's Bear Flag Rebellion. These veterans are buried at Oak Mound Cemetery; some were killed in action, some returned home, living well beyond their service to their country.



Source: findagrave.com

Gravestone of Thomas Alexander Owens



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Nathan S. Clark

Mexican American War

Thomas Alexander Owens

Thomas Owens was born in McMinn County, Tennessee on March 4, 1825. He served for one year as a volunteer in Company H of the 2nd Tennessee Infantry under Captain Lowry as a private. He mustered in at Kelly's Ferry near Chattanooga, TN, saw service in the Mexican-American War and mustered out in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1847.

In July, 1849, Thomas married Nancy P. Rice, also of Tennessee. Their first child followed in April, 1850. The Owens family moved from Tennessee in late 1859 to Arkansas. Thomas served three months in the Civil War and moved to California in 1874, spending a decade in Solano before moving to Healdsburg in 1885.

Upon his first application for military pension, Thomas received \$20 per month; Nancy received \$12 per month after his death. Thomas died of "old age coupled with neuralgia" on January 11, 1911.

Thomas A. Owens is buried in Lot 264 of Luce Addition #1.

Civil War

Nathan S. Clark

Few diaries exist of our earliest Healdsburg residents, but Nathan Clark did keep a diary of his Civil War experience. (A copy is included in the Museum's collection.)

Although Nathan was anxious to join the war movement alongside his older and younger brothers, friends urged him not to hurry. When the Union Army suffered a setback in the summer of 1862, he told a friend "it was time to take part in the strife." Nathan was eventually assigned to the 20th Maine Volunteers. His journey began on the Merrimack River in Boston to the Potomac River. He reported incidents of measles, fever, poison oak, smallpox, feeding starving "Reb" soldiers, execution of deserters and, of course, the death and injuries of war. Nathan participated in battles at Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and Rappahannock, mustering out as a First Sergeant.

Nathan Clark and his family moved to California sometime between 1870 and 1900. He died on May 30, 1903.

He is buried in the Matheson section, lot 241.



Source: findagrave.com

Gravestone of Henry Carsten Kester



Source: Norma Passarino

Peter Passarino

Spanish-American War

Harry C. Kester

Although his headstone is inscribed Henry Carsten Kester, he was known locally as Harry Kester, a fairly recent immigrant to Healdsburg prior to his death. In 1925, Harry was living in Sebastopol. In early 1926, he purchased the Palms Apartments on Matheson Street from J. M. Proctor. At the time, Harry stated that "important improvements are to be made to the property."

Harry was a native of Illinois and his wife Susan was originally from Kansas. His obituary in September 1933 listed his name as Harry T. rather than Harry or Henry C. leading to some confusion.

Both Harry and his wife are buried on the north-facing sloped lawn north of the hill.

Tribute from *TogetherWeServed.com*:

"He was my best friend in the Marines. We went to the Defense Language School in Monterey. Tom had been in almost every major battle during 1968. He was at Hue during Tet. Then he was sent to Khe Sahn afterwards then to battles in Cua Viet. These...were the toughest battles ever fought over there. He made it through all of them. We would sit together in a fox hole whenever we saw each other and talk about home. His girlfriend Becky Wattles used to send me cookies, too."

- Buzz Adams, Massachusetts

World War I

Peter A. Passarino

Peter "Pete" Passarino was born on Christmas day, 1893, in Healdsburg. During the Great War (aka World War I), he was stationed and received training in France as an airman. He was a pilot and also served as an interpreter for officers as he was conversant in Italian, German and Spanish.

A decade after the war, the *Healdsburg Tribune* published an article about his service: "For several years, the Italian government has tried to locate an American who fought with the Italian troops during the great war, and they finally got hold of him about a week ago, and, as a consequence, Peter A. Passarino of Healdsburg, then a sergeant, has been awarded a medal for distinction in the war for the unity of Italy, 1915-18. The act for which the award is made concerned the capture [by allied forces] of a detachment of enemy troops of which Passarino was an officer." The bronze medal he received was coined from enemy metal.

Pete returned to Healdsburg and, with his two brothers, Sanator and Joseph, opened a fruit cannery in the French-American Wine Company building on Front Street.

Peter Passarino died on April 4, 1976 and is buried in Lot 57 of the Luce #1 Addition.



Source: Healdsburg Tribune

Aldo Bellagio

World War II Aldo Bellagio

Aldo came from a large, well-established Healdsburg family. The eldest son of Lidio and Palmira Bellagio, he was followed by four brothers and two sisters.

The Bellagio family business was building wooden tanks, a craft brought over from Italy in the 1920s. In fact, the Bellagio Wood Tank Company is still a thriving business in Healdsburg today.

Aldo was a New Year's Day baby of 1924 and went to Healdsburg schools. He enlisted in March, 1943 and was sent to the Middle East where he trained as an aerial gunner and radioman. His task was to assist in flying supplies over "the Hump" (the eastern end of the Himalaya Mountains) to China in support of Chiang Kai-shek.

Taking off from Habbaniya RAF Station west of Baghdad, their C-46 carrying 3 crew and 27 passengers landed in Bahrain. Leaving Bahrain the plane crashed in the Red Sea. His death on September 22, 1944, was first (erroneously) recorded as being in France; that was later amended to "near Arabia."

Aldo is buried in the family plot at Oak Mound Cemetery in Section 5, Block 19.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

James (Jimmy) R. LeBaron

Korean War James R. LeBaron

James, "Jimmy," also came from a long-standing Healdsburg family. His grandparents were Oscar J. and Lora LeBaron who leased Walden's Geyser Peak Winery. His parents were James Oscar LeBaron and Lucille Gathergood LeBaron.

Jimmy enlisted in the Air Force in December, 1950 and was assigned to the 371st Bomber Squadron. His group was based in Okinawa.

His B-29 bomber was reported downed during a raid over the Yalu River. He was listed as Missing In Action on September 13, 1952.

Jimmy was awarded the Purple Heart and the Air Medal for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight.

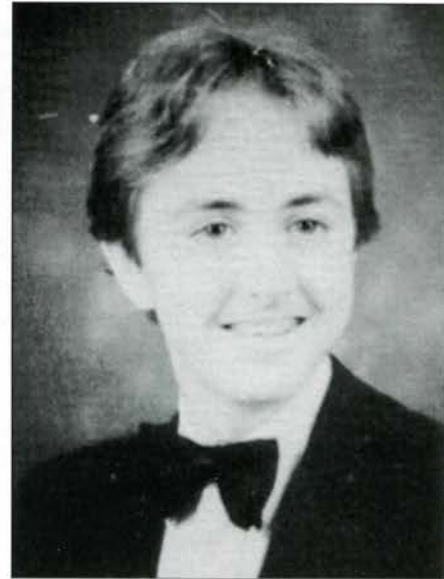
One year later a follow-up story confirmed that he was still unaccounted for, perhaps a prisoner of the North Koreans. To this day he is one of many MIAs who gave their lives for this country.

James R. LeBaron's headstone is found in the pathway between Sections 4 and 5.



Source: Kay Robinson

Thomas Miles Phillips



Source: Healdsburg High School

Michael A. Hall

Vietnam War

Thomas Miles Phillips

“Tommy” Phillips grew up in Dry Creek Valley on land his great-grandfather bought in 1856, a stone’s throw from the “old adobe.”

The son of Major and Rena Phillips, he was a farm kid. He picked prunes, drove a tractor and participated in hi-jinx with his buddies. Tommy was also an accomplished musician, playing both the trombone and piano.

After graduating from Healdsburg High in 1966, Tommy enlisted in the Marines in February, 1967 and, with his knack for foreign languages, was enrolled at the Defense Language School in Monterey, CA with the task of learning Vietnamese. He arrived in Vietnam in late 1967 and participated in many major battles. From the *Healdsburg Tribune*, he “wrote of the beauty of Vietnam and of its many interesting aspects and never, save once, of any action he had seen.” Tommy died of injuries inflicted in friendly fire when an ammo dump exploded near his tent.

Corporal Thomas Phillips was laid to rest in the Miles-Snyder plot at the top of the cemetery near his parents and great-grandparents in the Oak Mound Section, Lot 177.

Tommy is also remembered annually with the award of the Thomas Miles Phillips Memorial Scholarship at Healdsburg High School.

Gulf War

Michael A. Hall

According to his father, Allen Hall, Michael had a love of flying. As a teenager, Michael took flying lessons at the Sonoma County Airport and ultimately flew solo.

After graduating from Healdsburg High School in 1984, Michael’s love of flight carried him into the Air Force and into armed conflict in the Middle East. In the course of his service, he met and married his wife, Dennie, from Alabama and was based in Germany for three years. While in Iraq, he was flying goodwill missions for the United Nations, bringing supplies to Kurds in remote mountainous regions. The helicopter he was piloting was mistakenly shot down, along with another helicopter, by U.S. Air Force F-15 jets in Northern Iraq in April, 1994. Michael received the Purple Heart.

We remember Michael in three special ways: his ashes were scattered by his wife over the ocean near Panama City, Florida, the site of their engagement; in a headstone marker in Milton-Freewater, Oregon where his mother lives; and in the naming of the Michael A. Hall Park in Windsor.

There are scores of other veterans, men and women, who served their country. Some were lucky and came home; others were not so fortunate.

Look for the many inscriptions to patriotism and military service on other gravestones in Oak Mound Cemetery.

Life and Death of a Soiled Dove: Mollie Hanafer Beamin

by Holly Hoods

The stories of the people buried in Oak Mound Cemetery are diverse and compelling. The following account of the death of Mollie Beamin, the 30-year old “tenant of one of the disreputable houses of north Healdsburg,” provides a fascinating window into the seedy local underworld of the late 1800s, as well as local customs for burying the indigent. The interviews with bar owner Ed Pruett, Madam Lucinda Walker and boyfriend Frank Crocker, the callous companions of the suicidal woman, are recounted exactly as reported in the Coroner’s Inquest. (Special thanks to Sandy Frary and Katherine Rinehart for the copy of the Coroner’s Inquest.)

“About the Ugliest Old Battleaxes You’d Ever Want to See”

In the late 1800s, Ed Pruett’s Kentucky Saloon was Healdsburg’s hotspot for illicit activity, anchored by Eli and Lucinda Walker’s “boarding house” (brothel) and the Twilight Livery Stable next door. This den of iniquity was located at the southwest corner of Healdsburg Avenue at Piper Street where the Edward Jones Investments office is today. At the time, this area formed the northern fringe of town on the other side of the (Norton) Slough, then an unchanelled swampy expanse of water that branched eastward from Foss Creek across Healdsburg Avenue, ending at Johnson Street. (The slough separated the city limits from the red light district.)



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Slough and bridge

Dr. William Shipley, who lived in Healdsburg in the 1880s and 90s, described in his memoir, “Tales of Sonoma County,” the close connection of the saloon and the whorehouse:

Next door [to the Kentucky Saloon] was a deadfall which could be entered through a door in his saloon. The women housed in this birdcage were about the ugliest old battleaxes one would ever want to see.

Kentucky Saloon was a hub of criminal activity from 1878 until 1893 when it burned down in a fire of suspicious origin that also burned down seven houses occupied by prostitutes. Ed Pruett and Eli and Lucinda Walker presided over the “sporting life” of Healdsburg for more than two decades, flaunting an ever-increasing real estate portfolio and figuring prominently in many notorious events. Madam Lucinda raised eyebrows and made local news with her brazen behavior: fined for using vulgar language, being drunk in public, brawling with other women in the street. Alcohol and substance abuse were mainstays in the life of “sporting women.” They proved to be the undoing in the case of emotionally unstable Mollie Beamin.

A Suicide, Determined to Die, The Desperate Deed Deliberately Consummated, Left to Suffer and to Die; Disappointment in Love the Cause of the Rash Deed – A Fallen Woman Ends Her Life with a Dose of Poison (*Reprinted from Sonoma County Tribune, Oct. 12, 1889 and Sonoma County Coroner’s Inquest record*)

On Wednesday night a tenant of one of the disreputable houses in North Healdsburg named Mollie Beamin took an overdose of laudanum with suicidal intent from the effects of which she died early next morning. The deceased spoke of her intention to destroy herself for several days previous, but no attention was paid to her threats because they

were believed to have been made in jest. She took the poison in the presence of Ed Pruett in his saloon on West Street, north Healdsburg. She stated at the time that she was taking it for the purpose of killing herself; but Pruett paid no attention to the warning declaration and did not send for a physician till two and a half hours afterwards, too late to save the woman from death. Justice Coffman was informed of the facts and on Thursday morning he impaneled a coroner's jury and held an inquest.

Below we give in detail the testimony adduced at the inquest and the verdict of the jury:



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Lucinda Walker c. 1880s

Lucinda Walker being first duly sworn testified as follows: I knew deceased. Have known her about three years. Her name is Mollie Beamin, at least that is the name she goes by. I last saw her alive about 10 o'clock last night, October 9th, 1889. She was then in a sound, deep sleep. I saw her at Ed Pruett's saloon at about 9 o'clock P.M. She said she was going to kill herself. Ed Pruett said she wouldn't, she dared not; he wouldn't let her. She took a bottle from her bosom and, before Pruett could get to her, she drank the contents of the bottle. The word on the bottle said "laudanum." It was a one ounce bottle. Mr. McRossie went to her and took the bottle away, and she said she knew what she had done. She had killed herself. She said she was tired of life. She said she sent by Frank Crocker to Whitney's for the laudanum. Her home was in my house in Healdsburg. Ed Pruett, Frank Crocker and J. McRossie were in the house at the time she took the poison.

Ed Pruett under oath testified as follows: I knew deceased; have known her probably eight years. Her maiden name she told me, was Hanafer—Mollie or Mary Hanafer. She married one man by the name of Beamin and he died. She went by the name of Beamin here; since then she was, or pretended to have been married a year ago at Fort Bragg to a man by the name of Farmer. I do not know whether her true name is Farmer or Beamin. She was about 28 or 30 years old. She died last night at about half past one o'clock a.m., October 10, 1889. Her death was caused, I suppose, by her taking laudanum. I saw her take something out of a bottle. She was behind the bar in my saloon and I was standing on a box in the center of the bar room lighting the lamp. She said she was going to kill herself, and I said: "Ah! You ain't spunky enough." She said, "I ain't?" and took up the bottle and drank the stuff off, and said, "I am going to die, I have taken laudanum." Some time after that I sent to have Dr. Weaver come over. I thought at first it was all a humbug and didn't think much of it. She had been saying for several days that she was going to kill herself. Said she had the blues. Her folks, I think, live in San Francisco or Oakland. She had had no trouble lately that I know of. Frank Crocker got the laudanum for her and I gave him a hard deal for it. I scolded him and told him he ought not to have done it. She had been crying for several days, saying that she had the blues and was going to kill herself. She and Crocker had a little spat some time ago but I suppose it was all made up.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Dr. C. W. Weaver

C. W. Weaver, under oath, testified as follows: I am a regularly authorized physician in Healdsburg and vicinity. I was called about 10 o'clock last night to see deceased. I found her narcotized with opium and unconscious with low respiration, low stertorous breathing and pupils of the eyes contracted and pulse about 35 and she was unable (to) swallow. These symptoms all indicate opium poisoning. I inquired what she had taken and a bottle was brought that had cooked opium in it. Laudanum is tincture of opium. There was only a little of the gum in the bottle. Under ordinary circumstances one drachm of opium will cause death. I could not get her to swallow anything, and so put a stomach pump in and poured two glasses of warm water down her throat and drew it off. Nothing came away except mucous and water with a very little of the opium. She revived a little so she could talk, but her system had absorbed enough of it to cause her death. She kept talking and saying, "God knows I love that fellow." She mentioned no name. She asked why we didn't let her die, and I thought she was getting over it and went home. The laudanum must have been in her system two hours or two hours and a half at least before I was called. If I had been summoned at once her life could have been saved. (I) have seen the body since death and made an examination of it. From the examination and my previous knowledge of the case I can say the cause of death is opium poisoning from taking laudanum.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Typical 19th century laudanum bottle

Frank P. Crocker, being duly sworn, testified as follows: I knew deceased. Have known her about four years, and I have seen her nearly every day lately, and I was on good terms with her, and I had conversed with her a good deal lately. She had not appeared to be in low spirits or despondent that I noticed. She had not threatened to kill herself in my presence, or expressed any desire to die. I had not heard from anyone else of her making threats to kill herself, and I saw her yesterday evening. She called

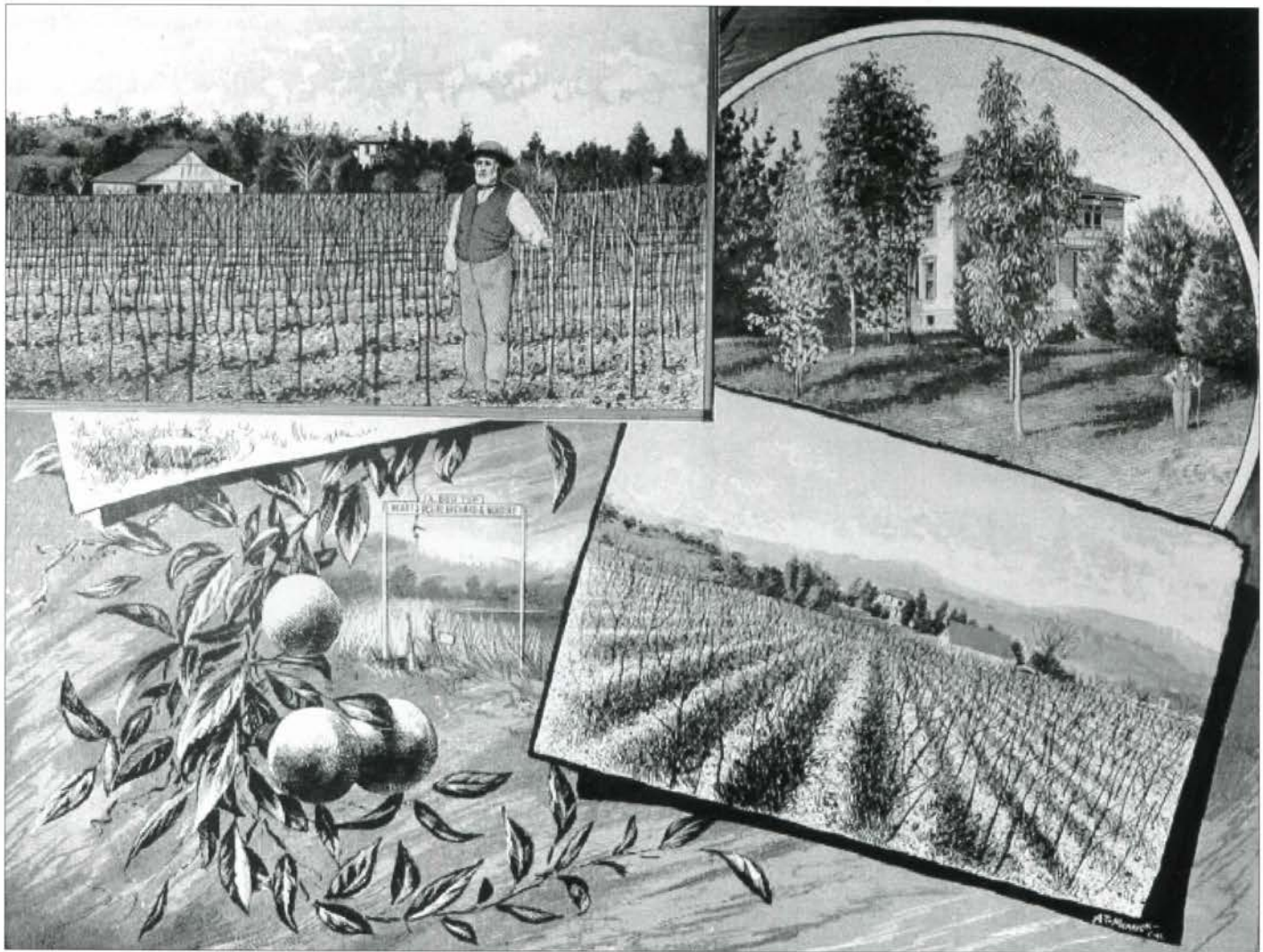
me to the door of Ed Pruett's saloon at about half past four to half past five and asked me to come over to town and get twenty-five cents worth of laudanum, and I asked her what she wanted with it and she said she wanted to use it as medicine. I came over to Whitney's drug store and got the laudanum from the clerk. She did not say in what way she wanted to use it. I gave her the laudanum in Pruett's saloon, and she took it in her hand and I stepped outside the door. Quite a little while afterwards I saw her with it in her hands behind the bar. I was then in the saloon, and my father, Mr. McRossie and myself were at the bar drinking. Deceased was attending bar at the time, and she turned around, took up the bottle of laudanum and says: "Pruett, do you dare me?" And he said, "You ain't game," and with that she drank from the bottle. I could not say how much, and spit a part of it out. Mrs. Walker then took the bottle and threw it in the stove. I had no idea what she wanted with the laudanum. I had never had any trouble with deceased. Nobody seemed to want to send for a doctor, and I had nothing to do with it. I had some idea what effect laudanum would have, but I did not think she had taken enough to do any harm.

Verdict of the Coroner's Jury

"We the jury summoned to inquire into the above entitled cause, having inspected the body of the deceased and heard the testimony taken in the case, do find as follows: That the name of deceased is Mollie Beamin, aged about 30 years and a resident of Healdsburg, Sonoma County, California; that she came to her death at about half past 1 o'clock a.m., October 10th, 1889, at Ed Pruett's house in said city of Healdsburg, from opium poisoning, caused by an overdose of laudanum administered by herself with suicidal intent. H. M. Keyes, F. D. Newland, Andrew Price, J. M. Alexander, C. H. Pond, N. C. Hamlin, M. Bond. Dated October 10th, 1889.

The deceased was interred in the Oak Mound Cemetery, Healdsburg, yesterday. A collection was taken up on the streets to defray the expenses of the funeral.

Mollie Beamin was buried in an unmarked grave in "Potter's Field," a burial area for the poor. Ironically, Frank Crocker ended up also killing himself with laudanum in 1901. He is also buried in "Potter's Field."



Source: "The History of Sonoma County or Pictures of the Garden World," 1889

The residence, orchard and nursery of Andrew Bouton. The sign reads "A. Bouton, Heart's Desire Orchard & Nursery."

Heart's Desire

by Ann Howard

Buried in Oak Mound Cemetery is one of Sonoma County's most ardent temperance advocates, Andrew Bouton, fruit rancher of Geyserville. An innovative entrepreneur and talented plantsman, Andrew is credited with several inventions and improved developments of select fruit varieties. In his later years, Andrew fully embraced the tenants of the temperance movement holding several important positions in Sonoma County temperance organizations.

Born on April 10, 1831, in Cortland County, New York, Andrew Bouton was the son of Nathan and Maria (Gee) Bouton. Nathan was a farmer, a surveyor and a schoolteacher.

Andrew came to California in 1858 by way of the Panama route. With his previous experience in the fruit and nursery business in New York, Andrew first found employment managing the

orchards at Oak Knoll Farm in Napa. After two years, he managed the entire estate.

The Start of a Successful Entrepreneur

Andrew's talent for inventing various tools and devices to improve farming was first revealed during his tenure in Napa. He exhibited a fruit wagon and horse-hoe for corn and orchard use

during the 1864 Napa Fair. Andrew also received a patent on a cultivator in 1865.

In 1868, Andrew came to Sonoma County and purchased a 120 acre parcel approximately five miles north of Healdsburg on the Cloverdale Road from Thomas Miller. This would ultimately become Heart's Desire Orchard and Nursery.

On just a ten acre portion of the property, Andrew grew all the varieties of fruit trees best adapted to the local soil and climate, selecting the hardiest rootstock and using the best grafting systems. He put out seedlings and grafted below ground so the graft would take root. Approximately 25,000 trees were sold each year locally and in a broad wholesale market.

HEART'S DESIRE ORCHARD

— AND —

NURSERY!

SEVERAL THOUSAND FRUIT TREES,
Etc., are offered for sale this Winter at the above Nursery, located 4 1/2 miles north of Healdsburg, on the Cloverdale road.

The trees are better for all localities than those raised in low and irrigated nurseries.

For further particulars call at the Nursery, or address
A. BOUTON,
Healdsburg.
7-7-11K

Source: Russian River Flag

Advertisement in the Russian River Flag, June 24, 1875.

In his 25-acre orchard Andrew raised plums, prunes, peaches, apples and cherries. They included varietal names such as Centennial, Purple Guigne, Royal Ann, Early Purple, Napoleon Biggereau and Black Tartarians.

Local newspaper editors often wrote of the large, prolific and tasty fruits that he brought into their office. In May, 1869, Andrew was described in the *Russian River Flag* as

"a practical as well as a theoretical horticulturist and pomologist [a branch of botany that studies and cultivates fruit.] Mr. A. Bouton, a fruit grower of experience, gives us the following recipe for making grafting wax. He says he has used more than a half a

ton of it and finds it the best and cheapest that he has ever known: Six lbs. rosin [a solid form of resin obtained from pines and other plants], one lb. beeswax. Melt together. When cooled a little add one pint linseed oil and stir well. Then pour the mixture into water to stiffen, and work it into rolls or balls convenient for use."



Source: Harry Bosworth

Andrew Bouton at Heart's Desire Orchard and Nursery with his c. 1885 home in the background. Surprisingly, the crop in the foreground is tobacco. Andrew Price, Photographer

More Inventions, Better Results

Also that year Andrew received a patent on a double cultivator, which was found to be of particular value in cultivating orchards, vineyards and corn fields.

The wings extend two and a half feet on either side, thereby allowing a loosening of the soil close up to the trunks of fruit trees without injuring the lower branches. It can be adjusted to any practical depth and also to cultivate both sides of a row of corn at once, that is not over waist high, or to cultivate between rows of corn or grapes from five to eight feet apart. It has ten shares [two edged blades that usually lay flat to slice weeds], which may be raised from the ground at pleasure. Two horses work it easily. These cultivators may be seen at Mr. Bouton's farm...He has two or three of them

left for sale, and will also sell county rights. They can be manufactured to sell at \$55.00.

In 1873, Andrew reported that the Mission grape was not profitable. In early 1876, editors of the *Flag* tasted samples of very fine raisins made from the White Muscat and Mediterranean grapes. That year single grapes measured 3 inches in circumference!

Mr. Bouton, as the newspaper editors called him, often contacted the various local papers to report on frost damage and published his idea to rid cut worms by stirring of the soil to expose cut worms to sunlight which does not accord with their ideas of life. His prunes – the Hungarian, Fellenberg (a German or Alsatian) and the Petit prune d'Agen, a small but choice French variety...were compared to a local grower of Healdsburg, Mr. E. Morgan's French prune. In 1881, he brought a small branch with several twigs bearing in the aggregate 115 peaches of the Briggs Bed May Variety into the *Flag* office.

Forever a Bachelor

In 1882, Andrew was about to make a fortune in fruits. His marital status had remained unchanged despite the sense that Andrew was regarded as *a robust bachelor and not so bad looking either. He is a good catch for some good young lady who would like to help him make a home.*

Apparently, there was at least one young lady who would lay claim to Andrew's heart. In 1885, he had a large home deemed to be *elegant in design and very commodious* built for his bride-to-be. Tragically, she died, according to Lucille Wisecarver Rose.

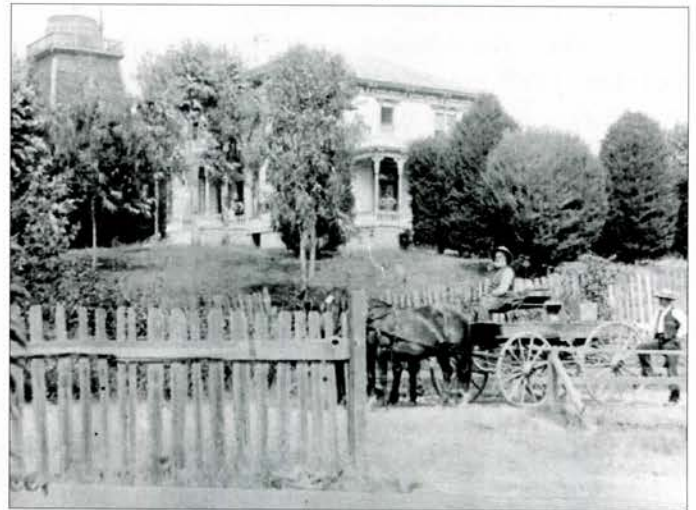
Andrew was not left without a wide circle of friends. As reported in the "Geyserville Gayeties," *Russian River Flag*, March 3, 1886:

"the numerous friends of Andrew Bouton, Esq., paid him the deserved compliment of a large surprise party. Arriving at the magnificent mansion, to their dismay they found its large-hearted owner absent. Nothing daunted, the marriageable young ladies persisted that they were not to be bereft of the pleasures anticipated, and they proceeded to arrange in a highly artistic manner, a feast worthy of a kingly court. In the meantime, Mr. Bouton had been sent for

and arrived at the most opportune moment, a surprised though pleased recipient of an ovation worthy of a genial neighbor and honest man, such as Mr. Bouton is known to be. Dancing, singing, lively conversation and vivacious repartee filled the hours till near midnight when all retired with pleasant memories of the occasion."

The article included a list of all who attended, worthy of a census taker on that day, and included separate lists of the "Misses" and "Messrs.," (i.e., the single women and men.)

Andrew resided there as a bachelor until his sudden death in 1890 at the age of 58.



Source: Harry Bosworth

Heart's Desire Orchard and Nursery, before 1890. Andrew Bouton built the home in 1885 "for his bride-to-be, but she died. So he lived there as a bachelor" until his death in 1890. The house still stands vacant and in disrepair across from the Trentadue Winery, about three miles south of Geyserville. Andrew Price, Photographer.

Branching Out Beyond the Farm

In 1868, Andrew became the District Clerk for Independence School District. In the 1870s, newspapers published dates when visiting pastors held church services at the Bouton School House, which was certain to have become the Independence School of which he was a trustee in 1882. The Independence School still stands on sloping hills to the west.

Embrace of the Temperance Movement

Although he was identified with the Republican Party since its organization, Andrew was inclined to the enforcement of Prohibition, being an ardent temperance worker. He became a member

the Geyser Lodge of Good Templars, No. 166, in 1873 as W. Chaplin.

He also served as the President of the Band of Hope under the auspices of Star of Hope Lodge No. 32, I.O.G.T., a temperance organization as well as a society for the purpose of guarding children against profanity and the use of tobacco. In 1873, sixty-two children were members.

During the same year, Andrew was among a large number of farmers who assembled at the Masonic Hall in Healdsburg to organize a Grange of Patrons of Husbandry. In January 1874, he was installed as Gatekeeper to welcome visitors and new members at the largest gathering of Grangers that ever assembled in Sonoma County.

The *Healdsburg Enterprise* reported in October, 1888 that Andrew had been placed on the Prohibition ticket as candidate for County Recorder. "Mr. Bouton is a thorough temperance man," they declared.

A Sudden End

In 1890, Andrew died suddenly from diabetes and was buried in Oak Mound Cemetery. He was 58 years old. The newspaper reported *Peace to His Ashes*.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Andrew Bouton's newly reset gravestone

Only Andrew's older sister, Samantha, and Edward, one of his younger brothers living in the

East, survived of his many siblings. Edward had lived with Andrew from 1873-1876 and returned to visit Healdsburg in September, 1890.

The inscriptions on Andrew's recently reset tombstone attest to the sincerity of his belief in the temperance movement: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" on one panel. Another panel reads "Touch not, taste not, handle not, intoxicating liquors." The third panel is of a large anchor, possibly symbolizing values he believed in, as in the Christian religion - stability, confidence and certainty.

Among later owners of Heart's Desire were McMinn, Hildebrand, and Wisecarver. In 1959, Joseph Trentadue purchased the land. His heirs, son Leo and his wife, Evelyn Trentadue, are the current owners.

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Russian River Flag, Healdsburg, CA, 1869-1882.

Sonoma County Marriages, 1847-1902.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

A portion of the historical section of Oak Mound Cemetery before and during the clean-up phase of the project

Oak Mound Cemetery Restoration

by Jim Dreisback, Project Manager

The start of the Oak Mound Cemetery restoration began in earnest just about one year ago. The idea of restoring the historic section of the cemetery had been discussed for the past three years. After two years of negotiations with the cemetery owners and input from one of our city council members along with a member of the local press, we came to an agreement with the owners that the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society was the right organization to bring the old cemetery back to life.

Once we were given the green light to proceed with the restoration, I called upon three individuals to help formulate a plan: Matthew Thompson, retired City of Healdsburg arborist, Jay Tripathi, owner of Gardenworks, and Bob Hopkins, owner of Hopkins Vineyards. They became my “go to” team.

With a plan in hand, I reached out to members of our local wine industry to request help with the initial clean-up. The most amazing thing happened. Everyone I contacted not only agreed to help us, but they also offered to contact other people they knew in the industry to help. Within weeks we had built a consortium of vineyard management companies and vineyard and winery owners who offered their field workers to begin the restoration.

On the first day of the scheduled March, 2015 clean-up, 36 people showed up to work. The

results after just two days of hard work were unbelievable. We had tamed the beast! Poison oak, blackberry vines and scotch broom were removed. Trees were trimmed. Grass and weeds were mowed.

It was time for the tree work. Since the project had started to receive some contributions, we were able to hire a tree service company to begin removing the downed, dying and unsafe trees.

A second two day clean-up effort in August saw the same type of response from the wine industry that we had experienced in March. This time we concentrated on removing the debris that had built up on the ground over the past decades. With the help of a group of dedicated workers and the loan of a tractor, we were able to remove 240 yards of unwanted material. Doing so uncovered many gravesites and headstones that had been hidden for many years.

Now that the grounds have reached a manageable stage, we are focusing on other aspects of the restoration. We have surveyed all of the headstones that need repair and have started the process of fixing the 162 identified sites. We are also in the process of installing a kiosk that will display a map of the historic section of the cemetery in order to assist visitors who are attempting to find particular gravesites. Our future plans include permanent markers on the ground that will also assist in locating individual gravesites.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Gary Galeazzi resetting a monument

Curator Holly Hoods and I have also started reaching out to the various service groups in Healdsburg. Our dual purpose is to educate them on our efforts and request that their group adopt a section of the cemetery that they can help maintain. We have completed our presentations to the Healdsburg Garden Club and Kiwanis Club. The Masons, Sunrise Rotary and the American Legion have all shown interest in the project and future presentations to other groups are planned.

Building an up-to-date and accurate database has also been an important goal of the project. In the past, Museum volunteers had built a searchable database from the museum's card file records and historical hand-written journals. The determination was made to update these records by borrowing the card files from Oak Mound Cemetery and comparing each and every record to verify that our entries were correct and add any new records. This is a very time consuming process since we estimate there are over 9,000 records to review. Once all the records are up-to-date, it will be a simple task to add any new burials. This process will yield a database that can be searched and sorted by any data field.

Another aspect of the project that is dear to the heart of anyone who has visited the "mound" section of the Oak Mound Cemetery is the central fountain. Sponsored by the Ladies Industrial Society, this fountain was constructed in 1876. A restoration in 1976 helped keep the fountain from further deterioration. During our fundraising effort, the Museum received several requests for the fountain to be restored. The dream of restoring the

fountain to its former glory is coming true. With the generous donation of material, labor and money from several businesses in Healdsburg a beautiful fountain is in the near future. To the amazement of all involved, the statue that topped the fountain many decades ago, "Leda and the Swan," will be back. She is currently a part of the Museum's "Discover Oak Mound Cemetery" exhibit until it is her time to once again grace the fountain.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

The new "Leda and the Swan" on display in the Museum

There is still much work to be done. You may donate to specifically support this project by mailing a check to: Healdsburg Museum – Cemetery Restoration, P.O. Box 952, Healdsburg, CA 95448. You may also donate with a credit card by calling the Museum (707-431-3325) during our regular business hours. A donation box is also located at the cemetery entrance.

Thanks to everyone for their support in assisting the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society to restore the historical section of Oak Mound Cemetery. We promise that this will be a community treasure that everyone can enjoy and a place where Healdsburg's history lives.



Source: Holly Hoods Photo

1922 G. A. R. monument

Hero Dead Are Remembered in Fine Exercises; Many Attend Ceremony at Cemetery When Stone is Unveiled

Reprinted from Healdsburg Tribune, June 1, 1922

While the whole country was observing Memorial Day with special exercises designed to honor the memory of those who served and died for their country, Healdsburg on Tuesday remembered her hero dead with a ceremony of special significance and beauty, when the fine granite monument purchased by the Ladies of the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic] was unveiled at Oak Mound Cemetery.

There were scores of people in the cemetery when the parade of war veterans and their sisters, wives, mothers and little ones arrived there at 9:30 a.m. after winding slowly toward the sleeping place of the dead from the clubhouse. The parade was preceded by the beautiful silk colors of Sotoyome Post of the American Legion, by a color guard and firing squad of uniformed legion men, a representative group of legionnaires ununiformed and by the Lytton band. Following it came the automobiles, consisting of veterans of other wars, school children, Ladies of the G.A.R. and members of the American Legion auxiliary. The Healdsburg exercises were declared to be the best attended that this city has ever known.

At the ceremony, the Memorial Day address was delivered impressively by Rev. C.W. Brinstad, who touched on the services rendered by those whose memory the people had assembled to honor. No better speaker than Dr. Brinstad could have been secured for the occasion. As he has done for years, Walter Storey, active G.A.R. man, called the roll of the dead, sounding off the names of the scores of veterans of the Civil War who sleep beneath the sod of Oak Mound Cemetery, as well as the numerous dead of the Spanish-American, Mexican and the World wars.

The unveiling of the memorial to the Unknown Dead disclosed a block of enduring granite, appropriately and beautifully engraved, which has been secured to replace the wooden shaft around which the exercises of Memorial Day have previously been centered.

Other numbers on the program included the singing of "America" by school children and the recitation by H.R. Bull. Mr. Bull recited an appropriate poem, "The Blue and the Gray."

The decoration of graves, the firing of three volleys over the earth where sleep the dead, and the blowing of taps concluded the day's exercises.

19th Century Gravestone Symbolism

by Whitney Hopkins

Cemeteries, including Healdsburg's Oak Mound, are outdoor repositories of history and art. 19th century gravestones contain more than simply names and dates of birth and death. They often convey a message through their imagery. They are also a sign of their times. While the meaning of a funerary symbol can often have multiple interpretations, here are some examples of the visual symbolism seen in Oak Mound.

Carvings of weeping willows became very prevalent on gravestones in the early 19th century, and are found on the early grave markers in Oak Mound Cemetery. The use of this graceful symbol reflected the young United States' growing interest in ancient Greece. Beginning in 1762 with the publishing of *The Antiquities of Athens* by Stuart and Revett, which produced the first accurate surveys of ancient Greek architecture, Great Britain, Europe and eventually the United States began copying Greek style in architecture and interiors. This emulation even carried over into funerary art. For the United States, the comparison between ancient Greece and its democracy with the former colonists' "grand new experiment" in government was inspiration for copying everything Greek.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Weeping willow with urn

Gravestone carvers created weeping willows alone or with Greek-inspired urns, obelisks, or monuments. The most obvious meaning of a weeping willow would seem to be the "weeping" part for mourning or grieving for a loved one; however, the weeping willow was not just a symbol for sadness. A native of Asia, the weeping willow is a fast growing tree that can reach fifty feet high and fifty feet wide. It tolerates most any soil and roots

easily from cuttings. Because of this, willows are often the first trees to appear in a disturbed site, giving them a reputation as "healers and renewers." In many cultures, the willow is a sign of immortality.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Draped urn

A revived interest in classical Greece in 19th century America also led to the prevalence of the draped urn in cemeteries, even though cremation was uncommon at the time. The urn is thought to symbolize the return of humans to ash, or dust, from which God created man. The meaning of the drape on the urn can mean many things. Some feel the drape symbolizes the veil being lifted between the living and the dead. To others it symbolizes humans shedding their bodies to rise to Heaven. The drape can also symbolize the protection of God over the dead.

Another classically inspired monument is the broken column. Sometimes grave markers of columns were intentionally made to look broken. The broken column is considered to be a symbol for the end of life, and more specifically, life cut short.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Broken column

In addition to Classical Greece, Christian symbols are commonly found on 19th century Oak Mound gravestones. The dove is a frequently seen animal symbol in funerary art. It is a symbol of purity and peace, and a symbol of the Holy Ghost.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Dove

Lambs usually mark the graves of children, and particularly infants, symbolizing innocence. The lamb is a symbol of Christ who is referred to as the Lamb of God.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Lamb



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Rose

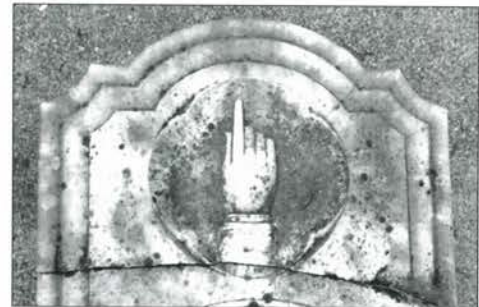
In Christian symbolism the red rose became a symbol of martyrdom, while the white rose symbolized purity. In Victorian-era cemeteries, the rose frequently adorns the graves of women.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Shaking hands

Hands that appear to be shaking are usually a symbol of matrimony – a husband and wife reunited in Heaven. If you look carefully at the sleeves, one usually appears feminine and the other masculine.



Source: Whitney Hopkins

Hand pointing up

A hand pointing up symbolizes that the soul has risen to Heaven.

We invite you to take a stroll through Oak Mound Cemetery to look at the beautiful, artistic and historic gravestones.

Source:

Keister, Douglas, "Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography," 2004.



Source: Lauren Carriere Photo

“Witch’s” Cabin, 2016

The Witch’s Cabin

by Olivia Christie

Healdsburg High School Student Olivia Christie tells this contemporary ghost story about Oak Mound Cemetery which prominently features the old reservoir building at the top of the old graveyard.

A walk through the cemetery alone was enough to make my friends and I shake with trepidation. Of course, it would be a complete lapse to let our fear show. If completed, the dare we sought to complete would make us the elites of the 5th grade class and would definitely prove our bravery and audacity. So the gang hiked on, far into the oldest section of the Oak Mound Cemetery, to visit the witch.

Little is known about the mysterious and sinister witch who lives at the top of the cemetery, though legends of her are whispered on the town’s schoolyards and playgrounds. It is common knowledge that she hangs bones in her windows and on the fence surrounding her home and casts spells on those who disturb her. She only leaves the cabin at night, to scour the graveyard for anyone with a pulse that she could make a meal out of.

Only the bravest would think to journey near her abode and only the craziest of dares could

convince local children to shimmy underneath her fence and enter the cabin for themselves. As all the legends and horror stories crossed our minds, and the witch’s cabin came into view, we promptly turned around and sprinted back to Giorgi Park to play a game that didn’t involve potentially being transformed into a toad.

In reality, the supposed “Witches Cabin” is only an old reservoir building, however, that doesn’t stop this relatively new legend from grabbing the curiosity of local youth. It feeds the imagination of Healdsburg’s kids – an imagination that is constantly threatened by the growing use of technology interfering with the adventurous energy only children seem to possess.

The “Witch of Oak Mound Cemetery” has made a lot of treasurable memories and her story continues to frighten and excite children to this day.



Source: Jim Dreisback

The Oak Mound Cemetery fountain in its pre-restoration “tipsy” state.

Under the Tippy Fountain

by Ann Carranza

We gather under the trees to the west of the tipsy fountain. We’re a ragtag group; some dressed elegantly, others casually as the mood suits. Sporting papers and books from which we’ll read, we greet each other with reverence and irreverence. Some of us walk among the headstones before the readings begin; some practice silently, lips moving, eyes thoughtful. Some visit Harmon Heald’s grave every year. Others chat in groups, catching up with friends not seen since last year’s readings.

When the Healdsburg Literary Guild began its annual Graveside Readings at Oak Mound Cemetery, it invited writers to bring “reverent or irreverent” poetry and prose to honor the living or the dead. Event founders, Laurel Olson Cook and Simon Jeremiah, brought people, poetry and prose together near the fountain to read and celebrate both life and death.

Since that first event in 2000, Guild members and visitors gather on Memorial Weekend Sunday.

Laurel passed away in 2009. Simon still writes. They left a thoughtful legacy event where Healdsburgers can pause to reminisce and remember.

In “Living Among the Dead,” an essay Laurel wrote for the Guild’s 2007 anthology, *A Day in the Life of Healdsburg*, she paid tribute to Oak

Mound Cemetery and its denizens after a walk among the tombstones.

“I am seated among the dead—people who once had lives, whose names we townspeople recognize (Heald, Matheson, Foppiano) and many we don’t—nineteenth-century lives so many of which were foreshortened by disease, accident or war. They are now forgotten it seems...I savor the thought of friends gathering here every year to recite poetry and laugh, to be irreverent in this place made solemn only by centuries of consensus that it should be so.”

Laurel ended her essay with:

“I urge you to recite your verses in this place when I am gone, and hear me clap loudly and long. Then toss your water bottles in the rusty can by the tall redwood tree and depart laughing, knowing well that I can no longer smell the flowers and you have life left to live.”

This piece is read each year at the beginning of the program in remembrance of Laurel and in tribute to both the living and the dead. The event is now open to the public. For more information, visit <http://hbglitguild.org>.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Oak Mound Cemetery gravestones of Mary Walker, Louisa Walker and Martha (Marthy) Young

Pioneer Vanguard

by Keith Power

There are three historic headstones in a row in Healdsburg's Oak Mound Cemetery that together form a unique female narrative of an American family in the vanguard of settlers crossing the plains.

The first headstone marks the grave of Mary Walker who was pregnant and raising four children on a Missouri farm in 1840 when her husband bundled them into a wagon and set forth with a party of fur traders and missionaries. Oregon, and then California, was their destination. She died in 1856.

The next stone marks the grave of Louisa Walker. She was the baby Mary gave birth to on January 14, 1841, three months after reaching Oregon. Louisa was an infant in arms when her family joined a perilous expedition south into Mexican California, reaching Sutter's Fort in October, 1841. Louisa died at the age of 22, a "worthy member" of the Methodist Church South in Healdsburg.

The third stone marks the grave of Martha Young, Mary's unmarried older sister who was born

during the presidency of George Washington. The beloved spinster aunt in the Walker family, she bore the rigors of the trail west at the age of 50. After she died in 1870, affection apparently overcame decorum and the name above her grave was spelled "Marthy" Young.

Two other headstones in the row of five mark the graves of a son, William, who died in 1878 and the husband of Mary, Joel P. Walker. A well-known Indian fighter and trail blazer, Joel gave an account of his wilderness travels before his death in 1879 at the age of 81.

1840s Journey West

Joel Walker married Mary Young, a native of Tennessee, in 1824 after he returned to Independence, Missouri from establishing a trade route through hostile territory to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The couple settled on a family farm near Independence until the spring of 1840 when they

loaded up two wagons and started off on a three-month trek to Oregon, not yet an American territory.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Joel P. Walker

The Walkers tried farming in Oregon's Willamette Valley where their daughter was born, but the restless head of the family said in his account they were "making just about a living."

The United States Exploring Expedition (1834-1842), a government-financed project to chart navigation hazards and spread American influence in the Pacific basin, was ashore in Oregon at the time in mid-September, 1841. Walker learned of the expedition's plan to send a small military party overland into California accompanied by local trappers and settlers. The official list of the civilian members of the party includes: "Mr. Walker and family, consisting of his wife, sister, three sons, and two daughters."

It took a hard month's journey for the party to find its way south through the mountains and along the Sacramento Valley to Sutter's Fort, the trading post established by Swiss-born John Sutter on the American River. Sutter hired Joel Walker to help manage his agricultural operation. The advent of travel-worn Mary Walker and baby Louise caused a stir.

Hubert Howe Bancroft, the author of California's magisterial first history, made a footnote that Mary "brought with her a child less than a year old." In the larger historical scheme of things, he wrote: "Mrs. Walker seems to have been the first

American woman in the Sacramento Valley, or who came to California by land."

There was a controversy over who owned the title. Nancy Kelsey, a young mother with a year-old daughter, and her husband, Benjamin, were members of a party from Missouri that crossed Utah and Nevada and struggled into California through the Sonora Pass in 1841. By Bancroft's own meticulous count, her party arrived at Sutter's Fort some 20 days after the Walkers.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Walker homestead

The Walker family's residence in California was relatively brief. Joel Walker's narrative said in the spring of 1843 he rounded up livestock to drive back to Oregon to sell to the increasing numbers of settlers from the East. He recalled the move back north was beset by Indian attacks. It was primarily undertaken, according to a commentary provided by family descendants, to seek "better schooling for the children." The American Methodist missionaries in Oregon offered the only American schoolhouse this side of Missouri.

The cattle sale was successful and the family farmed on a large claim until 1848 when word of the discovery of gold dramatically changes the prospects for Americans in California. This time the Walkers sailed south to San Francisco aboard the bark *Honolulu* out of Boston. They bought a ranch in Napa County, but ultimately moved to Sonoma County where they made their home with their son, John, a former gold miner, who had extensive land holdings around Sebastopol.

Mary Walker, born on April 15, 1800, died there on August 15, 1856. She was buried in Healdsburg's original cemetery located around present-day Matheson and East Streets. In 1858, her grave and the graves of the other pioneers were moved to Oak Mound Cemetery. The last Walker to

be buried in the Oak Mound family plot was Joel Walker in 1879.

Mysterious Location

Past discussions over the importance of the Walker's pioneer legacy have been accompanied by a note of puzzlement from local historians who wondered why a family from the west county around Sebastopol would be buried in a plot in Healdsburg's north county cemetery. They could find no record of the family living in town around the time of Mary Walker's death. A headline in a *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* story in 1985 spoke of a "Grave Mystery."

The answer may be found not in residency but in religion. A history of local churches published in the *Healdsburg Enterprise* in 1915 records that a "small number" of Methodists organized themselves into a congregation under

Reverend Samuel Brown in 1856. This was the church that Louisa Walker served so well. It appears likely the mother of the Walker family was given a Methodist funeral service in Healdsburg before being interred there.

Renewed Interest

The sweeping restoration of the grounds of Oak Mound Cemetery has renewed interest in the Walker family plot and revived plans to erect a memorial plaque drawing attention to this singular treasure of California's early pioneer history.

"The idea for a memorial had been discussed in the past, most recently in the 1980s," said Museum Curator Holly Hoods. "Now that the dedication and hard work of our volunteers has made Oak Mound Cemetery more beautiful and accessible, it may finally be the time to recognize the Walkers' contribution."

Third Class



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