

RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

Published by
HEALDSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY
JULY/AUGUST
1980



COOKIES FOR THE MEN: Sampling some of the cookies being sent to the men of the 1st Bn. 7th Inf. Reg., adopted by the town of Healdsburg, California, are Capt. H.H. Thompson, a veteran of the Unit, Smith Robinson, Chairman of the "Healdsburg Adopted 1st Bn. 7th Inf. Reg. Committee", and Lt. Col. W.K. Walker of the 6th Army Hq. *Photo Credit - U.S. Army*

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Post Office Box 952, Healdsburg, Calif. 95448

Issue No. 17

July/August, 1980

* * * * * * *DON'T MISS OUR SEPTEMBER 25, 1980 MEETING* * * * * *

Vice President Francis Ritz has done it again....he's arranged to have another excellent program for you to enjoy on Thursday, September 25th. So tell all your friends to join us at 7:30 p.m. in the town hall to hear one of the country's leading authorities on the canned food industry. Betty Zumwalt is a well-known author who resides in Windsor. She has published three books - her latest titled "Ketchup, Pickles, and Sauces" - being just hot off the press only a week ago. We will learn the history of such old companies as Heintz, DelMonte and the California Packing Company, as well as view old advertisements and pepper sauce, pickle and chetney bottles. But that's not all folks---we will also enjoy a slide program on the above subject. What more can we ask? Sounds great!

* * * * *

With regard to our July meeting, it certainly was a success. It was difficult to take an actual count of people in attendance, but to say between 80 and 100 would be pretty close. Jack Trotter, past Museum Trustee, gave an excellent presentation on "Custer" and held the close attention of the audience with his superb slide show. Unfortunately, the bulb burned out on the projector and Jack was unable to show the remainder of colored slides on loan from the Smithsonian Institute. Members were extremely interested in learning such detailed information about the Indians. Following the meeting, homemade ice cream (cart and all) and a delicious cake were enjoyed by all and graciously served in such a beautiful fashion by our Hospitality Chairman Frances Etchell, with the help of Dr. Ritz. The decor was outstanding, tying in well with the Museum's Military Show in a very patriotic manner. Appreciation is extended to those members who assisted in the making of the ice cream. Members were invited to join in with a sing-a-long of a variety of tunes, both military, as well as 'oldies'. As was noted, the piano

sorely needs tuning, plus a little additional attention in order to make itself presentable in the future. And what a creative job our Museum Curator did in the Museum. Hannah may be small, tipping the scale at about only 100 pounds, but she certainly is capable of doing a man-size job when it comes to arranging displays and moving cases around. Hannah put together the Military Display for the summer months (originally intended for showing Memorial Day, but held up pending repair work necessary on the Museum roof) and can be enjoyed by the public through August. You've done a terrific job, Hannah, and we know you have been commended by many members of the community who have dropped by to see the show. A big thank you is extended to the members of our organization who turned out in full-force for the last meeting, as well as to those who so generously placed military items in the Museum on loan for the current display. We trust you will all be in attendance at the meeting on September 25th!

"OUR FRIEND, SMITTY ROBINSON"

Press Democrat
Oct. 9, 1977
Gaye LeBaron

Readers of the Healdsburg Tribune were treated to a little photo quiz last week. The subject was nostalgia. The photo was of three young men and the caption gave clues--one of them, it said, received national publicity for his good deeds and has one of the largest buildings in town named in his honor.

People who don't know about Smith Robinson might be mildly surprised to know that the one with the national recognition and the building named after him is the one black man in the trio.

Smith Robinson was a remarkable man. For nearly all of the 32 years he lived in Healdsburg he and his mother and father, Elozora and Jessie Robinson, were the only blacks in town. Smitty was also, without question, the town's leading citizen.

NOW DON'T make the mistake, in this age of sophisticated race relations, of assuming that Smitty was a kind of pet shoeshine boy or an example of rural tokenism. Not so. He was a creative and energetic member of a town that would have loved and honored him for his contributions regardless of his color.

Still, in a time when Sonoma County's black population was just about in proportion to the Robinsons and the town of Healdsburg---three to 4,000---it makes his accomplishments seem even larger than life.

SMITTY, the son of a laborer, was born in Perris in Riverside County and came to Healdsburg with his family in 1920. He graduated

from Healdsburg High and Santa Rosa Junior College, where he was an outstanding football player, and went off to Berkeley with high hopes of making the Cal varsity. At Cal he became ill and doctors diagnosed his illness as a heart condition resulting from a childhood ailment. They advised him to restrict his activities.

He came to Healdsburg to prove that his weakened heart was strong in spirit. He took a job as a handyman at Healdsburg General Hospital and plunged into community activities.

He organized a youth choir at the Federated Church that grew to more than 40 voices and sang all over the Bay Area.

He helped to coach the Healdsburg High football team.

He founded the alumni newsletter, that he wrote and sent to former Healdsburg students. He wrote to Healdsburg service men in World War II.

He raised funds for every youth project in the area. None were too big to tackle or too small for his efforts.

THEN, IN 1951, during the Korean War he took on an entire battalion.

Col. Fred Weyand (who later advanced to General)*, married to a former Healdsburg girl, Arline Langhart, wrote to his wife about his unit's need for soap, stationery, news from home and other necessities. Smitty took over. His enthusiasm led the way for the people of Healdsburg to "adopt" the First Battalion of the Army's Seventh Infantry.

The grateful soldiers, overwhelmed by the response, named the battlefield they were defending "The Healdsburg Line." There was jubilation in Healdsburg when, under fire, the U.M. forces retreated but the Healdsburg Line held.

Smitty was the Chairman, the organizer and the author of a newsletter called "Smitty's Scoopes," that kept the link forged between the town and the troops. The battalion responded by donating funds for a flag pole at the high school and a thank-you barbecue for the whole town. Smitty made the arrangements--and opened a trust fund for needy children with the money left over.

IT WAS only right that when the nation began to recognize Healdsburg's efforts Smitty should get much of the credit. The Reader's Digest was first to write about the First Battalion and Smitty in December of 1952.

"He wanted to be a minister," the Digest writer said, "and so he is a minister without frock who goes about Healdsburg visiting the sick with a bouquet and a batch of fresh bisquits, cheering the discouraged, working tirelessly on community projects."

Time Magazine mentioned his good work for the Army. Then Ralph Edwards got in on it.

Everyone in Healdsburg knew except Smitty--and they were all about to burst with the secret. They told him he had been invited to Los Angeles to confer with a black religious leader. A friend got him to accept a ticket to the show.

*(added)

And it was Smith Robinson, This is Your Life!

AFTER THAT, it was Ebony magazine--a two-page spread with photos of Smitty and the mayor, Smitty walking down the middle of Healdsburg's main street. The Negro History Bulletin wrote about him. He became nationally known as the Ambassador of Good Will.

In 1960 his heart condition worsened and doctors advised him to curtail his activity. He had to leave his job at the hospital and tried to support himself and his mother (his father died in 1953) by selling magazine subscriptions. The town rallied to his aid with a huge civic dinner at the Villa Chanticleer. That, along with County-wide fund appeals, raised more than \$10,000 for the Smith Robinson Fund.

SMITTY died three years later and as his friends gathered at Oak Mound Cemetery plans were already under way to name the new gymnasium at Healdsburg High School the Smith Robinson Gym.

Next Sunday the Smith Robinson Gym will be filled with Smitty's old friends, hundreds of grown-up "kids" who sang in his youth choirs at the Federated Church.

Some of the members get together every year, but this year the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Tribune have worked on the project, moving the potluck dinner and sing-out from the church to the gym and seeking out long-forgotten choir members.

It will be a joyous occasion, an unusual celebration. The bond will be affection for the only black man in town, dead these 14 years.

They all remember Smitty.

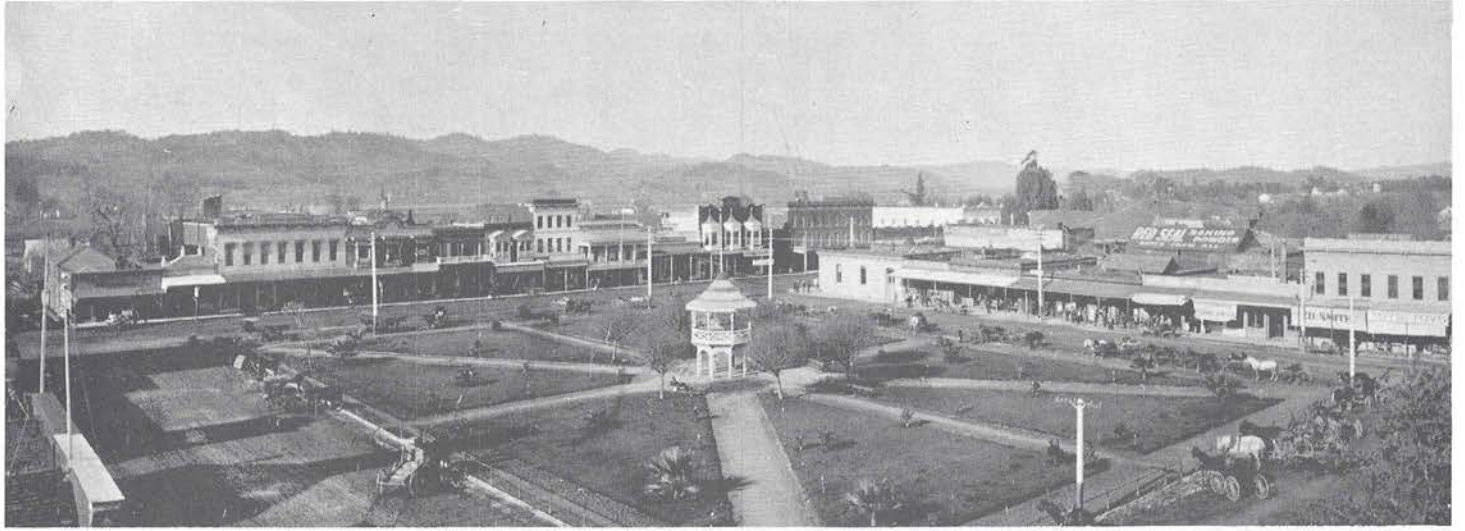
Editor's Note: This article seemed fitting to print in this issue as there are several photos of Smitty taking their place in the Military display at the Museum, including those taken at the White House. Smitty had a marvelous collection of countless scrapbooks, containing numerous letters and photos collected by him, and which have found a home in the Edwin Langhart Museum. Please note the photo selected to be used on this issue's cover.

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Once again it is time for the Society's nominating committee to gather their choice of officers to serve for the year 1981. President Branern will announce his appointments of the 5-member committee at the September 25th meeting. Then at the November meeting, the Committee will announce its selections. Nominations will also be taken from the floor, followed by election of officers. These new officers will assume their duties at the January meeting.

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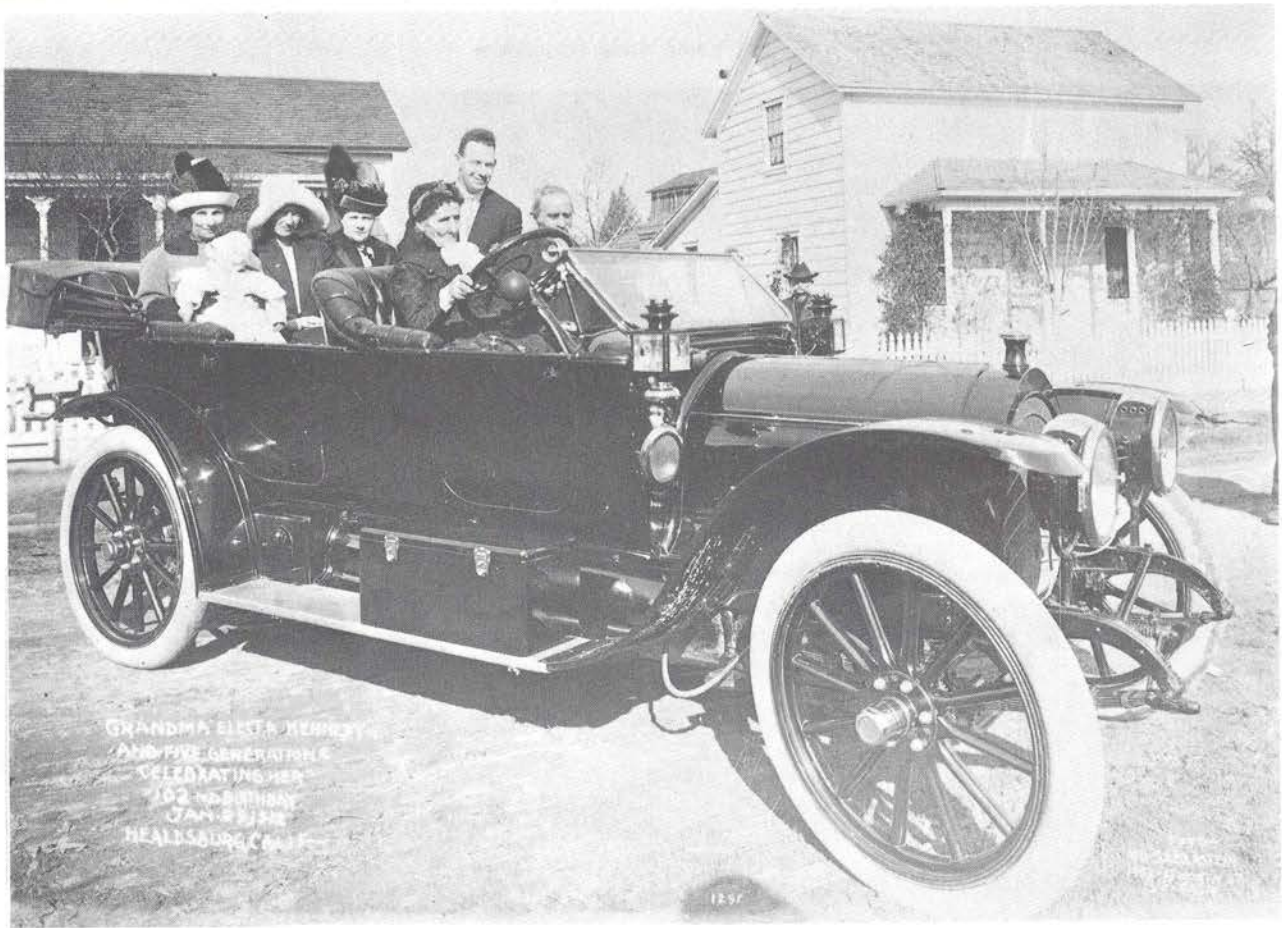
The Museum Board of Trustees and the Healdsburg Historical Society appreciate greatly the beautiful display case donated by Holtzen's Jewellery Store. It's truly a magnificent piece.



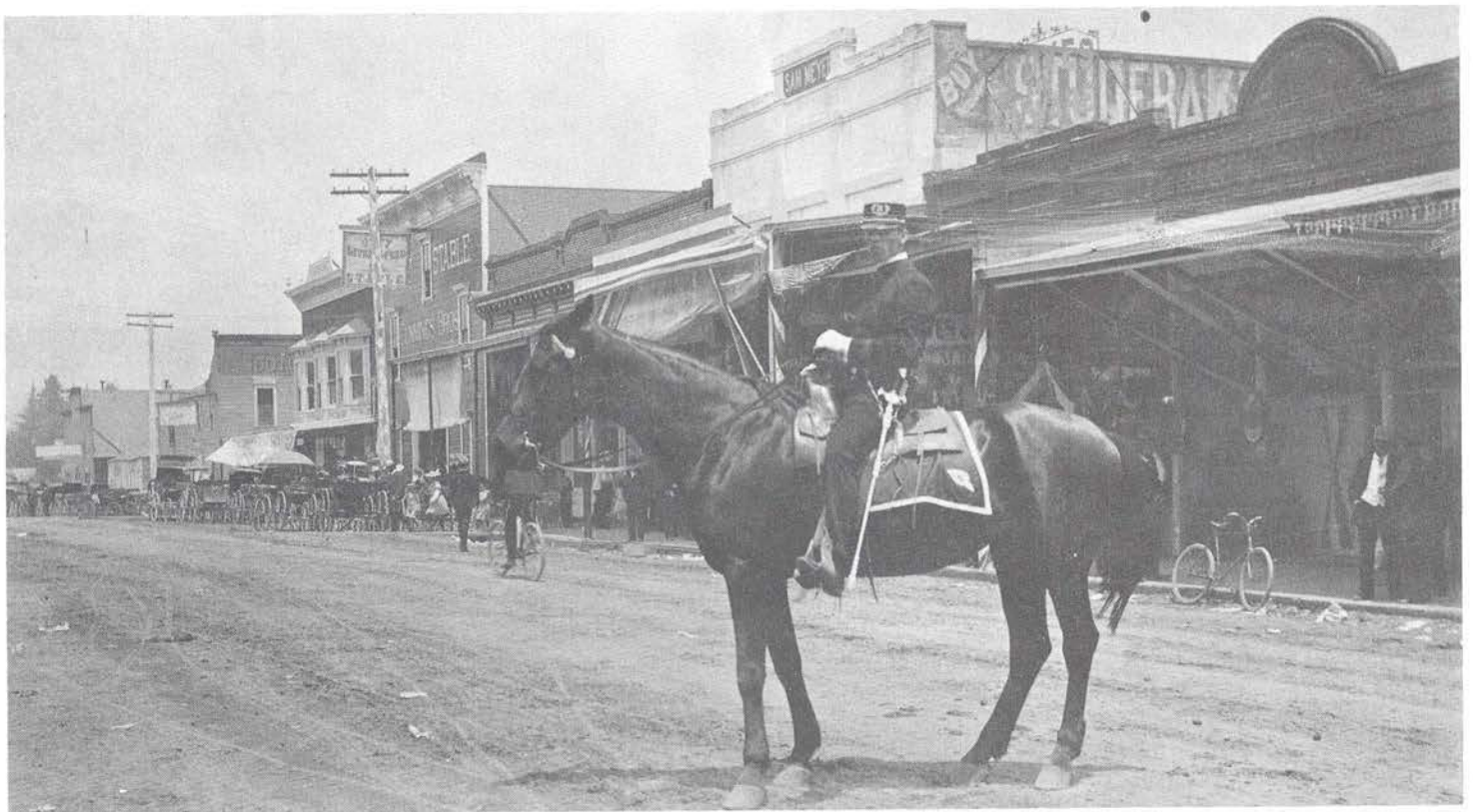
Healdsburg Plaza, July 4, 1899



Healdsburg Plaza, July 4, 1899



**Grandma Electa Kennedy and Five Generations Celebrating her 102nd Birthday.
January 29, 1912, Healdsburg, California**



West Street Looking North - 1903

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF A MUSEUM
AND ITS OPERATION

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(This is Part II of a series of articles based on information researched by the editor:)

Museums are concerned with objects. Objects are the starting point of a museum, of a museum field, and, properly, of any activity of the museum. Objects justify museums. One determines the kind of museum he has by the kinds of objects in the collections and the uses to which the objects are put. Of all the kinds of educational, public service, and cultural institutions that exist, only the museum is founded on the principle that selecting and preserving objects is of importance to people today and in the future.

The assumption is that all objects can be fitted into some kind of museum or into a department or section of a museum or can be used in a special exhibition. Objects should be categorized by their potential use. A collection of furniture might belong in a history museum, in an art museum, in a botanical museum (thinking of the materials of which the furniture is made), or in a museum of technology (science and industry). The value of the objects depends on how well they serve in accomplishing the goals of the museum. In an art museum, for instance, the objects must give aesthetic pleasure, convey emotion, stimulate the imagination, and inspire. In another kind of museum the objects must contribute to education and intellectual stimulation.

In both cases, objects also serve these ends indirectly by attracting visitors. An Egyptian mummy may accomplish more in attracting people, who then see other exhibits, than it does simply as an exhibit. Objects may also serve in less obvious ways, such as for research, reference, prestige, and entertainment. Again, research becomes an important facet of the museum, as curators are well aware.

Museums are firmly grounded in man's "instinct" to collect. Whatever the motivation of individuals, museums collect to preserve objects of apparent or possible value that otherwise might be lost to the future, and to bring objects together for use.¹ These are really the same justification (public education, broadly speaking). The difference is only that a museum curator does not always have a specific use in mind for an object when he/she decides to preserve it. Fortunately, the City of Healdsburg had, in Ed Langhart, a person who was deeply concerned with preservation long before the existence of our museum.

What do individuals collect? Objects that are impressive and attractive because they are old, expensive, associated with a famous person or place, bizarre, from a remote corner of the earth (today, from the moon; someday, from another planet), the result of adventure or much labor or patience.

1. G. Ellis Burcaw, Introduction to Museum Work, 1976.

Sonoma County Democrat:

March 3, 1859

SOTOYOME GUARDS

The newly organized infantry company at Healdsburg bears the above name. It is composed, we understand, of about seventy members, many of whom have seen service.

At the organization meeting, on the evening of the 16th ult., the following officers were chosen:

Captain, L.A. Norton; 1st Lieut., Roderick Matheson; 2nd Lieut.,

G.W. Peterson; Bvt. 2nd Lieut., G.W. Grannis; Sergeants, C.E. Hutton, John N. Bagley, James E. Fenno, J.J. Maxwell; Corporals, Sylvester Smith, J.F. Murphy, William Riley, V.C.W. Hooper.

On motion of G.W. Grannis, it was unanimously resolved, that the thanks of the company be tendered to Maj. Wm. Neely Johnson, of Santa Rosa, for favors done the company at the County seat, and for the interest he has manifested in its behalf.

Officers and Directors of the
HEALDSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Francis Branern....President	Alice Grove.....Corresp. Sect'y.
Francis Ritz.....Vice President	Robert C. Jones...Director
E.B. Christensen...Treasurer	Major Phillips...Director
Norma Voss.....Recording Sect'y.	Frances Etchell...Director
	Jan Harrison.....Director

Newsletter Editor: Jan Harrison

Healdsburg Enterprise: March 13, 1889

A BIRTHDAY PARTY

Mr. and Mrs. John Gunn, of this city, gave a birthday party to little Freddie Miles, at their home on last Saturday afternoon. Invitations were issued to the many friends of Freddie, who made the occasion, his sixth birthday, a happy one.

Each brought with them a gift for Fred, who entertained them in royal style. The following little folks were present: Alice Haigh, Edna Biddle, May Phillips, Bessie Shipley, Maud Alexander, Ethel Sargent, Bessie Wicks, Nora Terry, Arthur Haigh, Chester Biddle, Drury Terry, Jessie Powell, Willie Payne, Wade and Mack Stone, and Freddie Miles. Miss Nettie Powell assisted Mrs. Gunn in entertaining. Mrs. R. Powell, Mrs. Zane, Mrs. Warfield and Mrs. Ed Phillips were also present.

ADDRESSES

Edwin Langhart Museum (Hannah Clayborn, Curator), 133 Matheson Street, Healdsburg, Ca. 95448;
 Healdsburg Historical Society, Post Office Box 952, Healdsburg, Ca. 95448;
 Russian River Recorder, c/o Editor, 812 Jack London Dr., Santa Rosa, Ca. 95405; (The editor welcomes comments and suggestions)

Recording Secretary Norma Voss has recently mailed out reminder notices to members who are delinquent with their dues. Please re-join.

From "Tales of Sonoma County"
by Dr. William C. Shipley, and
Published by the Sonoma County
Historical Society, June, 1965
comes the following:

A NEAR ACCIDENT

It was in the days when Ben Leard was city marshal, Dick Kinslow was a night watchman and each evening at 8 pm in winter and 9 pm in summer the old bell in the ancient tower in the center of the Plaza would toll out the hour of curfew and all the small boys would scamper for home unless it was a special occasion or an adult was with him.

In those days there were fewer trees in the square and they were much smaller for they have grown a lot in half a century; also there was no green lawn to add to its beauty, so in the spring the wild grass grew high and in the summer it turned yellow in the sun.

It was also in the days of torch light processions, the firing of anvils and the burning of great piles of cordwood and boxes in the middle of the streets at the four corners of the plaza together with such pyrotechnic display at the times afforded, when something was needed to rouse the enthusiasm of the benighted populace, or when some great political victory was to be ratified.

Of course the band played for pay, someone would orate, the people would shout and cheer and altogether they would have a grand and glorious time. It also happened that the local republican party and the G.A.R. (not an alphabetic relief bureau) were the proud possessors of an old brass smooth bore cannon with a four or five inch bore. This old gun was mounted on wooden wheels and must have been with Andy Jackson at the battle of New Orleans for it looked just like the guns behind the breastworks as pictured in the history books of our school days.

On the evening in question, perhaps they were celebrating the election of Benjamin Harrison as president of the United States; in addition to all the other features as previously mentioned, the old gun was being fired at regular intervals from the intersection of Powell and Center sts. The gun would be sponged with water, dried with a swab, the powder charge inserted, some paper or rags used for wadding, the hole would be rammed home with a rammer, the touch hole filled with powder and with a long iron rod, one end heated red hot the gun would be fired and my, what a roar, it would rattle windows, shiver your timbers and make your ears buzz.

All was going smooth as horse feathers, the noise, the fireworks, the enthusiasm of the crowd were at fever heat, the climax of the celebration was about to be reached when some smart boy, when no one was looking, chucked a rock about as big as a man's fist into the mouth of the loaded gun just to see what would happen.

The gun was fired and with the explosion there was a scream as the rock hurtled through the air just missing the bell tower, the tree tops and the heads of the people on the sidewalk across the plaza and crashed with a sickening thud and a shower of glass through the front window and into the brick wall of the Wm. Ruffner store, which

was on the ground floor of the old Odd Fellows building. No one was hurt but a lot of folks had the scare of their lives, the old brass gun was fired no more that night and perhaps never since.

What has become of the old relic is a puzzler, for it should be among the prized exhibits of the old home town.

CREDIT IS GIVEN THE EDWIN LANGHART MUSEUM ARCHIVES FOR PHOTOS USED IN THIS ISSUE OF THE RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER.

THE SALOONS

Back in the good old days, long before the people of this country got bunked by the 18th amendment, good whiskey sold in Healdsburg for 10¢ a glass and you could help yourself; beer was 5¢ for a large schooner; fancy drinks were unknown. Those hard-headed, hard-shelled, copper-riveted men of that day liked their firewater straight. In those days we had saloons, the prohibitionist and temperance fanatics calling them gin mills, grog shops, open doors to perdition and opprobrious names. There was sawdust on the floors, gaudy pictures and bright lights, women and infants under 21 were not allowed to enter their swinging doors. The average saloon keeper of that time held himself above such indecencies.

In looking over the list of thirst emporia of the 80s and 90s, there was Rodie Gilbride, a good honest Irishman who ran the Oaklawn House and Bar down by the depot. There were oak trees about the place, but no lawn. He catered to the depot crowd and did quite a flourishing business because many citizens and railroad men had business at the railroad station and naturally became thirsty.

Out on the northern fringe of town across the slough there was Ed Pruitts Kentucky Saloon. Next door was a deadfall which could be entered through his saloon. The women housed in this birdcage were about the ugliest old battleaxes one would want to see. Occasionally they would parade about the plaza in an open hack driven by Slade Capell for one of the livery stables.

Down in the heart of town Ike Gum and Al Zane had a bar at the corner of Matheson and West sts. They were both family men, their wives and children attended the Methodist Church. King & O'Leary, two more good Irishmen, had a bar and wholesale liquor store about the

middle of the block on West st. The Pinion Hotel run by Johnnie Grater, a German, and the Sotoyome Hotel, then owned by John Young, each had bars and catered to a fairly high class trade.

Pat Lannan, another son of Erin, had a bar at the corner of Center and Powell sts. A man by the name of Barlow, who was short, fat and asthmatic, and his wife who was a wonderful cook, supplied the hors d'oeuvres, which was appreciated by his clientele, had a bar next door to the Farmers and Merchants Bank. He also prided himself on serving the elite of the city. J. Fried, a good honest German and his son, Henry, ran the Bank Exchange Bar, next door to the Healdsburg Bank on the spot to be occupied by the Bank of America. Fried had two sons and three or four daughters. The daughters were noted for their good looks and were popular with all.

In those days there were five Irishmen, two Germans, some native born Americans and one or two of the unknown racial strain, in the liquor business. Most of these men prided themselves on the high class of the goods they offered to the public and frowned on the common drunk as a nuisance.

Card games, sometimes for high stakes, flourished in their back rooms, as at that time there were few called professional gamblers who inhabited the downtown section whenever there was a chance to make a cleanup, for gambling among some of the male element both in town and out in the country was a means of excitement. The local gamblers were not the gun toting, knife wielding, blood and thunder boys of the early west; they were smooth, polished gentlemen who took good care of themselves and did no manual labor. Some even, on occasion, attended church.

It takes all kinds of people to make a world. It is said that there is even honor among thieves, but when it comes to the oldtime bar-keep of those bygone years, we have to admire them and say a good word for their deeds, their charities and their efforts for the benefit of their community.

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Editors Note: Please keep in mind that I am not an historian. I do put my full effort into the preparation of this newsletter. It has been my pleasure typing this publication since its first edition on July 4, 1976, and serving as editor for 1979 and 80. It would be greatly appreciated if members could assist me by submitting articles of interest for publication. My address is listed at the bottom of pg. 6. Thank you.