



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER



Fall 1992

Issue 43

Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society

• *The boys all had hobnail boots* •



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V E N A D O

S t e w a r t W a d e



I would like to take you from Healdsburg to a place out Mill Creek that once was known as Venado. Venado was named by Stillman Batchelor, a mining engineer who had worked in Mexico. I believe I remember his saying it meant venison.

I first traveled the road to Venado as a little boy in 1919. My family and I drove from my Grandmother's San Francisco home to Healdsburg in our 1915 Dodge touring car. To traverse the rough road to Venado we had to go by riding behind a team of horses in a small spring wagon. The transportation was rented along with a driver, Frank Lynch, from Farnsworth's Livery Stable. Frank later became my father's foreman. He was a slightly built man who had been a sailor on sailing ships. He always was called on to shinny up our school flag pole

when we were careless enough to pull the rope through the pulley. Frank was never without his quid of Star Plug chewing tobacco. He carried his quid in a little pouch of skin in his cheek. When he made a profound statement he would always wiggle his nose and shift his chaw from one cheek to the other.

Frank said it would take us about three hours to get to our destination. The road was very rough and for much of the way there was no road, only the stream bed. Now I'll tell you a little about the Mill Creek Road and some of the things along the way.

Just after passing Nate Cox's home on the lower Westside Road was the turn west that was the start of Mill Creek Road. It started with a steep slippery hill known as Hopper's Hill. This was one of the hills used by car dealers

to demonstrate how good their new cars were. My father put many loads of gravel on this hill as the roadbed was clay. There were also several springs that kept it slippery much of the wintertime. At the top of the hill where the road leveled out was a school that sat all alone in a big pasture. No homes could be seen from where it was located. This we thought was an awfully big school. They had more than 30 students. After passing the school the road descended to Rickman's home. This hill was, of course, called Rickman's Hill. In the pasture beside the road were the stumps of an old vineyard that we were told was killed by the phylloxera disease. Wilda Rickman was a wonderful, pretty, and very popular girl, but much older; she was in high school. The remarkable feature about Wilda was that she was born with only one arm, yet was quite an accomplished pianist. Mr. Rickman and his son had some kind of a problem when they were caught operating a still.

Next on the left was the Clawson house. Frank Lynch and his mother lived there till my father built them a home on our ranch. In recent years Woodley and Margaret Frampton live there. Farther up the road was Mrs. Scott's home. She lived there only part of the time. I can't remember much about her except that she had a prune orchard off Rickman Hill. This furnished my first lesson in prune picking. It had the hardest ground that a tree could grow in. I believe my knees

still show the scars.

A little farther down the road was widow Peterson's chicken farm. We kids heard rumors that there had been some romance between bachelor Lynch and Mrs. Peterson.

The road forked here. The road to the right went up Ward Creek. This is where Collier, Valette, Ward, and Oltman lived. Mr. Oltman was quite self-sufficient; he even grew his own tobacco.

Going on up Mill Creek to the right was a beautiful big home owned by Dr. Bennett. No one ever seemed to live in this big home. The Shrivens lived on the property and had some kids about my age. Mr. Shriver grew many varieties of delicious mellons. He managed the Bennett farm.

At this point the road entered the redwoods. One of the landmarks in the woods was a beautiful spot with a stand of old trees and a cold spring that ran the year around. My father kept a barrel there which was always filled with a steady stream of very cold water. This was a popular picnic spot for Healdsburg people. It was known as Barrel Springs. This was a fantastic spot to stop and water the horses.

After that the road passed Foshes, Nickolettes, and Puccionis, and then passed the Gray home. Mr. Gray won the county fiddling contest held in Santa Rosa.

Along in this area there was one place where wild bleeding hearts grew. There was another little area where



wild Easter lilies grew, just as they did on the back side of Fitch Mountain.

On coming to the place Palmer Creek intersects Mill Creek, Mill Creek made a sharp turn. Palmer Creek Road had to cross a very high bridge. I was always glad I didn't have to go over this deep gulch. There was a little hunch-backed Indian who lived up Palmer Creek and drove a big wagon pulled by two teams of mules. He hauled wood to the hop kilns down Westside.

My father also hauled wood for these kilns on a big wagon pulled by two mules, wheelers, and two horses, leaders. The lead team had bells mounted on the harness. These gave notice that a big wagon was on the way. If you were in a buggy or small wagon, you were to pull out in a turnout. All of the Mill Creek Road was one way the way you were going.

Just before reaching

Huckleberry Hill was a sharp turn in the road. We called this Dead Man's Turn because when cars just started to traverse the new road three failed to make the turn. Their cars turned over in the stream. One, the driver, escaped unhurt. One had a broken arm, while the third was caught under the car and killed. My father, as usual, was called to the scene to help. When he got there the unhurt driver was chastising the other survivor for moaning and complaining about his broken arm. He was telling him that he shouldn't make such a fuss, as that fellow who was under the car was hurt much more and wasn't making a sound. Since there was no sign of a bottle, my father started searching and found where the driver had taken the remains of a gallon wine jug and hidden it up the hill in the brush. It was necessary to have this for evidence.



In this area just before making a sharp turn to go up Huckleberry Hill was a secret spot where a rare wild orchid grew in profusion.

On my first day of high school, Stanly Stuart drove Mildred, his sister, my brother and me in a Model T Ford to school. Mr. Stuart and my father purchased this car for our commute. On the way home we had to get out and get the burning logs and branches out of the road on Huckleberry Hill so we would not burn the tires. The night before my first day in school I had spent most of the night on the fire line. The little sleep I did get was on the ground.

Just a little farther up the road was a secluded spot where big logs had been stacked up to form a bear trap. By the '20s there were no more bears in the area. Old timers said there were many at one time.

Then there was an area called Bear Flats. This was a popular place to camp and picnic among the many large redwood trees. These trees had in the past been badly damaged by fire and weren't desirable for lumber in the old days. When World War II came along, all these trees were logged and a beautiful spot was destroyed.

Most of Mill Creek was

logged in the late 19th Century. This was 40-50 years before I moved there. Now it is 40-50 years after the last logging, and the country has almost returned to as it was in the '20s.

The next home was a log home owned by Mr. Honor and his son Ralph. They raised prize imperial prunes. Three of them totaled one pound. The Honors were the only family to have electricity. It was generated by a Delco system generated by a gasoline engine and stored in wet cell batteries. Mr. and Mrs. Honor had made their money in Alaska. He had a mule, and she had a donut shop. One son, Ralph, worked the farm with his father and another son, Herbert, who became a doctor. The last I remember he was in the Philippine Islands.

Across the road from Honor's home, when I was a boy, you could still see the big sawdust pile left by the mill that once stood there.

Just beyond Honor's and set back from the road was a group of houses. Perhaps it was a resort at one time. It was then Camp Rosenberg, a Boy Scout camp. This was a gift to the Scouts by the Rosenberg family who owned the clothing store, Rosenberg and Bush in Healdsburg.

After Camp Rosenberg was a small house owned by the Lawlers. Before they moved in Jack Corvall lived there. (Someone should write a story about Jack and his brother.)

CONTINUES PAGE 9

COMING

SONOMA

COUNTY:

THE

UNTOLD

STORY

OPENS

February 3

1993



MUSEUM NEWS

Director's Desk

This is an anxious time for museums and libraries across the country. The economic outlook for any publicly supported cultural institution in California has been publicized as especially grim.

Yet, so far, California museums have not seen the crippling budget cuts that were once projected. The much publicized staff layoffs at the Oakland Museum never materialized. The Sonoma County Museum lost only 25% of its County funding. The Petaluma Museum lost less than 10% of its City funding. The Mendocino County Museum's budget actually increased, as did the city budget for the Ukiah Sun House (from \$135,000 to approximately \$142,000!)

This may be due to the fact that these county and municipal governments realize that good museums are a draw for visitors from surrounding communities. When those visitors come to a museum they also spend money in local shops and restaurants. That is an economic reality.

In a special "Answer Book" section of the September 13, 1992 *Press Democrat* newspaper the City of Healdsburg is described. That article mentions the three most notable aspects of the town: the historic plaza, the historic homes, and the Healdsburg Museum.

Those of us who value history know that the job the museum is doing (preserving and exhibiting our heritage) is worth more than money. But if an economic justification is needed, it is there.

Let's hope that through the difficult financial times ahead, City officials and the public remember that history can be more than an "extra service" or frill. It can become, as it has in Healdsburg, a highly visible and marketable aspect of the community.



NOW SHOWING

*California Costumes
1860-1960*

Our current exhibit, *Style and Reality: California Costumes 1860-1960*, has been very warmly received. Weekend attendance has been good, and the show earned feature articles in the *Healdsburg Tribune* and the *Petaluma Argus Courier* (the latter a full-page spread in color). The exhibit will also be featured in an upcoming issue of *Sonoma Style* magazine.

Drawing on the best of the clothing collections at the three largest museums in the county (Healdsburg, Petaluma, and Santa Rosa), this exhibit is a visual and intellectual treat. A text traces the history and sociopolitical influences of our clothing over a 100 year period.

Originally scheduled to run through October 25, the exhibit has now been extended through the holiday season. Projected closing date is January 10, 1993. Don't miss it.

COMING SOON

*Sonoma County:
The Untold Stories*

There are certain subjects which museums have historically ignored--crime, scandal, vice. Other important stories never made the local newspapers. "Everyone" in town may have known the truth, the real inside story, but it was never recorded in print.

As now planned, our next special exhibit will investigate some of these more mysterious areas of Sonoma County history. A few of the subjects investigated will be the lucrative illegal industries surrounding Prohibition, the connection between the Sonoma County resort industry and prostitution and gambling in the Nineteenth Century, unsolved murders and crimes, drug addiction in proper Victorian society. Who really pulled the strings in Sonoma County politics in the last century? What were the stories that could not be told in the official county histories?

Watch for *Sonoma County: The Untold Stories*, opening February 3, 1993-- unless we lose our nerve.

CHRISTMAS EXHIBIT

Cancelled

One of the biggest problems now facing the museum is lack of staff time. Struggling with a loss of 38 percent in paid staff time, the Museum Board had to make some difficult decisions about our program--the things that paid staff do at the museum.

Although the *Annual Christmas Antique and Collectible Toy Exhibit* draws

our largest crowds all year, we cannot devote the staff time to an exhibit that stays up for only six weeks. Until the staff budget can be restored, the museum will have only two special exhibits per year, each up for a six-month run.

STAFF

Verna Lafon, Editor
Curt Sloan, Assembly



ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Thank you

The following generous people have donated artifacts to the museum collection since our last publication:

Lena Sarzotti
Howard Dencler
Jane St. Claire
Sara Calhoun
Stanley Arata
Rena Phillips
Mrs. Howard Allen
Otto Hoefler
Verna Lafon
Lois Tolles
Ralph Hamilton
Wardine Herrick
Lily Ossipoff
Janet Erickson
Marie Lauritzen
Lovella Winset

SOCIETY NEWS

by Phillip Smith

Historical Symposium

Enjoyable and informative were the two adjectives most often uttered by the 120 registrants, their families, and friends attending the Conference of California Historical Societies' Northern Symposium held in Healdsburg September 25-27. This positive response was well earned by the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society, the symposium's host.

Registration, not an easy operation considering the variety of activities offered, was smoothly managed by society members Betty and Don Reukema, Verna Lafon, and Assistant Curator Elaine Maryse Solari Friday afternoon at the Healdsburg Museum. Concurrently, tours of the downtown plaza area were escorted by the museum's Curator Hannah Clayborn. A reception and dinner at the Villa Chanticleer (ably catered by Western Boot) were held Friday evening. Society President Bill Caldwell served as master of ceremonies, Mayor Carla Howell welcomed the participants and Conference President John Shea introduced various conference officers. This was followed by keynote speaker Professor Dan Markwyn of Sonoma State University whose subject, *Americanizing Early Sonoma County: A Process and a Place*, was well presented and well received.

Saturday morning

began with a breakfast cheffed by John Muir (he's almost as good as Todd) with culinary help from Marny and Bill Caldwell, Phil Smith, and Norb Babin at the Villa for the conference's regional vice-presidents. Thereafter, the morning was devoted to hour-long workshops--Narrow Gauge Railroads in the Redwood Empire conducted by Harry Lapham and Sherman Boivin or Pomo Indian Arts and Culture led by Foley Benson and American Fashion 1850-1950 directed by Inez Brooks Myers or Antique Firearms conducted by Robert Voliva. Each registrant was afforded a choice during each time period.

Following distribution of box lunches prepared by the Ya-Ka-Ama Forestry Camp, the registrants broke into two groups. One group traveled by bus to the Geysers geothermal area. The other toured the Eastside/Westside Roads historic agricultural area with stops at Hop Kiln and Korbel wineries.

Saturday evening was highlighted by Glenn Burch's talk on *Colonial Sonoma County: The Spanish, Mexicans, and Russians*. Mr. Burch's speech was preceded by a barbecue conceived and orchestrated by Bill Caldwell (Bill again) with help from Darcy and Celso Rosales and Mary Citti, steaks; Eleanor Zak, side dish; Marny Caldwell, salad.

The event concluded on Sunday morning at Adel's Restaurant with the conference's Board of Director's meeting and

breakfast.

Rich Iverson served as wine steward at each dinner, balanced the books, and assisted all committees efficaciously. Conference immediate Past-president Jim Voss and conference North-Bay Regional Vice-president Norma Voss, Healdsburg Historical Society members, helped coordinate the symposium together with Curator Hannah Clayborn who also schematized the programs and workshops. The American Legion served evening libations, and the Healdsburg Parks and Recreation Department handled the efficient use of the Villa.

Norb Babin and Phil Smith co-chaired, on behalf of the society, the event and its presentation with a lot of help from many other society members.

A GREAT AFFAIR

by Norbert Babin

1992 Zinfandel Hop

This note is to thank all of you for your great support. The Sixth Annual Zinfandel Hop held this year was one of the most successful fundraising events we have held. Most of all it was just a fun event. Those who attended were treated to great barbershop quartet singing, both by a men's and a women's group. With several wineries pouring Zinfandel and White Zinfandel at Hop Kiln, and the Mendocino Brewing Company again pouring the light, medium, and dark beer; there was a good amount of cheer.

The red tail ale received the usual raves, especially from those who have never had a chance to taste it before. John says the brewery will be expanding, so the product will be more readily available in the marketplace. The wine people tell us that 1992 will be a great year for wines, so plan ahead.

In addition to the liquid refreshments, we had a huge assortment of hors d'oeuvres prepared by several members, including donations of items from local merchants. They could not have been better. We had an oyster bar which was thoroughly enjoyed thanks to our shuckers Don Reukema, John Muir, and Phil Smith.

There were so many people who assisted in making the Zin Hop successful. And to all of those who assisted in the many different ways, the Healdsburg Historical Society wants to thank you. I am not going to mention all of the people lest I forget to include someone. However, we owe a debt of gratitude to Verna Lafon for handling the silent auction which turned a nice profit. Further, Betty Reukema helped in so many ways that she was named the Zinfandel Hop Queen (Betty and Verna were also instrumental in the success of the Healdsburg Historical Society's sponsorship of the California Conference of Historical Societies Symposium held on September 25-27).

As I wrote in the last two *Recorder*s, the City of Healdsburg's financial situation has made it all the more necessary that the

Healdsburg Historical Society find ways to provide funds that will allow our museum to continue to operate more efficiently and retain its reputation as a first-class museum. In this regard, museum people from throughout the State of California came to the conference in September, and their comments about our museum were most gratifying to those of us who participated in that event. And it makes us very proud of the efforts that have been expended over the past years.

Our raffle was successful. There were 29 cash prizes awarded in the total amount of \$750. I will not give you a list of all of the winners, but Fred Naber won the \$150 prize. Fred and Fern, his wife (our corresponding secretary), were very pleased. It is a nice award for all of the work that they have contributed to the society.

The result of the financial success of the Zinfandel Hop is that we achieved our goal of providing a large portion of the annual salary for our part-time Assistant Curator Elaine Maryse Solari. Ms. Solari's salary is an obligation which the society has had to assume, and the reaching of that goal gives us the hope that we will be able to keep the museum open as much as possible so that it can continue to serve the community.

Thanks for your support, and we look forward to seeing you at our next event. We need you.

THANK YOU

Hop fund raiser

We would like to thank the following people for their generous contributions to the silent auction at our Zip Hop fund raiser:

Rena Phillips
Rhea Bain
Evans Pottery
Elsie Passalacqua
Zelma Ratchford
Judy Babin
Betty and Don Reukema
Eleanor Zak
Joan Passalacqua



DOCENT REPORT by Susan Bierwirth

Fall 1992

At the spring docent meeting Carol Clark requested that her job be filled by someone new. Knowing how hard she worked to organize the docents, I volunteered to attempt scheduling and coordination. All seems to be continuing well, although I mistyped a few phone numbers and thusly perturbed a few ladies. Many pardons to them and many thanks to Carol for a job well done.

On October 10 the museum docents gathered for their annual luncheon to celebrate the year of hard work. We have lost several faithful volunteers who are unable to continue their work at the museum, but several new names have been added to the roster. If anyone is interested in volunteering a few hours a month at the museum, please call me, Susan Bierwirth, at 433-5432.

MEMORIUM

Society member

We regretfully acknowledge the society member who has passed away:

Lee Hoy

WELCOME

New members

Peter Allan
Paul Barber
Joanne Claus
John Cross
Anna Darden
Shirley & Leslie Davis
Joseph & Sheila Menzies
Pressley Mathorn
Frank & Virginia Norman
Kathleen White Polaire
Peter Rugh
Robert & Donna Sauers
Richard & Carolyn Weston

VENADO

Continued from page 5

One day while Jack was away his neighbor across the creek came over and sawed the supports, on the downhill side, almost through. He left just enough to support the home so it wouldn't fall over into the road. He then put a very large charge of dynamite under the house below Jack's bed. The idea was that the explosion would get Jack in his bed and tip the home over into the road. He made two mistakes. First the charge went off before Jack got home, and second was that the charge was so strong that it didn't topple the house; it blew a big hole in the floor. When the neighbor was questioned why he did this, his reply was that Jack kept him awake all night by throwing biscuits at his home. I never had the desire or opportunity to try Jack's cooking. I understand the neighbor spent the remainder of his life at Napa.

A little farther was the turnoff to the Bill Smith and Mitchell homes. The Mitchell place was purchased by my father, after he and Stillman Batchelor dissolved their partnership. The Smith place was purchased by my aunt and her husband, Major Cooper.

Next came the last place where there was no bridge. It was called the Ford. Finally about 1925 my Father built a bridge. This was the first to have reinforced concrete sills to hold the long stringer logs that spanned the stream. I remember what a difficult time he had convincing the county supervisors that it should be



wider than they wanted it to be.

Just beyond the bridge was a big redwood stump on which three mailboxes stood. These were not little rural boxes you see today. They were about as big as dog houses. The mail and groceries came three times a week by stage. Either Frank Lynch or Steve Farnsworth would drive a one-horse, box-like wagon. The reins came from the horses through a hole in the box to where the driver sat. When the mail came we left a note for the mailman as to what groceries he was to bring to us the next time he came. He would shop at Imrie and McClelland's just across the street from Farnsworth's livery stable.

When we first lived in Mill Creek we didn't have telephones. Later about 1924 my Father and Sam Stuart decided we should have phones. They got seven families to go along with them, and they installed their own system. What a thrill it was to be able to crank the phone and talk to a neighbor or to central. Central usually was Pearl who knew everything that went on in and about Healdsburg.

Where Angle Creek joined Mill Creek there must have been an Indian campsite because after every heavy rain we would find among the bits of old charcoal many small, well-shaped bird arrowheads, a few larger arrowheads, and occasionally a spearhead. These were made from a black volcanic glass that we believed was brought in from Lake County.

Just beyond the spot that we called the New Grade was a group of remains of several buildings. One of these old piles of lumber was known as Bachelor's Hall. Later on Byran Stuart built a home on the old foundation. Below this building and on the old road was a cool, secluded spring surrounded by moss and maidenhair ferns. This is where we got our water by bucket for our school. My brother and I kept a big rainbow trout in this spring.

In a short distance the road widened to allow a sharp turn to the left for Stuart's Road to enter Mill Creek Road. This wide spot was fairly level and served as our school's playground. Daniels School with its six to twelve pupils was located on a steep hillside

above the road. The year after I left this school the county graded a playground and piped in water. Someday I hope someone will write a story about this wonderful little rural school.

The next home up the road was a big log home owned by the Coots family. Walter Coots sometimes worked on the road for my Father. Mrs. Coots was a beautiful, remarkable woman. She had been a Ziegfeld Follies dancer and still danced at the annual musicals put on at the Healdsburg Legion Hall. I remember her doing a thrilling dance number with Elmer Sandborn. We didn't know much about dancing but we were impressed that anyone could kick as high as they did. CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE

• *Bob & I often carried our guns to school* •



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