



• RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER •



SPRING 1993 • HEALDSBURG MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY • ISSUE 44

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COVER • 1936 FERRY AT MERRYLAND BEACH (MEMORIAL) BY 101 BRIDGE. BUILT AND OWNED BY LEONARD AVILLA. THE ARK OPERATED BY JULIA AND GINO SBRAGIA.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

• BILL CALDWELL •

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT our annual meeting on February 26 was a great success. Following a delicious potluck dinner, we had election of officers and board members.

Our officers for the new year are President Bill Caldwell, Vice-president Norbert Babin, Recording Secretary Leslie Davis, Correspondence Secretary Fern Naber, Treasurer Richard Iverson, and board members Ben Gagliardo, Jack Soracco, Eleanor Zak, Phil Smith, Don Reukema, John Cross, Verna Lafon, Susan Bierwirth (Docent Coordinator) and Betty Reukema (Membership Chairman).

Our program for the evening was the showing of the television program *This is Your Life*, Smith Robinson, with an introduction by Earl Osborn. We were pleased to have two of Smitty's sisters and a niece as our special guests.

We are looking forward to an elegant dinner at Madrona Manor as our spring fundraiser. The date has not been set, but we will send out a flier giving details soon.

If you haven't seen the new show at the museum, be sure to drop in. We have had a wonderful attendance so far.

Again, we need volunteers to work on several projects. If you are interested in helping, give us a call. We'll find a good spot for you.

• *The Ark during December, 1937 flood* •



VIEW FROM THE ARK

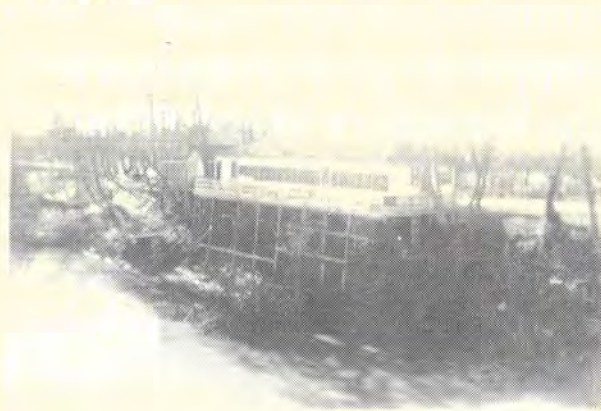
As told to Fern Naber
BY DOLORES & JOHN NABER

MY DIDN'T IT RAIN! WE welcomed this season's bounteous rain after the many years of drought! We remember the storms of '86, floods in the '60s, and the winter of '55. However, according to old timers in Healdsburg, the flood of 1937 was THE FLOOD!

Dolores and John Naber, as youngsters, lived beside the Russian River along Healdsburg Avenue.

John viewed the river with his parents, John and Clara Naber, managers of the Merryland Auto Camp, and Dolores with her mother and stepfather, Julia and Gino Sbragia, proprietors of the Ark across the river.

The Ark was built above the river across the road from the Plantation on Kennedy Lane. Both food and drinks were served. Delicious italian food included spaghetti, steak, cioppino, polenta, and fresh fish from the river.



• *The Ark after December, 1937 flood* •

As the river crested in December, 1937 the Ark was truly an ark, surrounded by water-- Russian River and the flooded Basalt Bridge on the east, the Old Redwood Highway on the west, Magnolia Drive on the south, and Front Street on the north.

Most of the people watching from the Ark were standing on the porch, on the river side. No one thought of the maximum weight or the number of people the building and its underpinnings were supporting. Fortunately, the structure stood firm.



• The railroad bridge December, 1937 •

• 101 bridge December, 1937 •



One thoughtful person had brought a huge metal cable, tied it to a tree on one side of the Ark, pulled it around the entire building, and "secured" it to a tree on the other side. Theoretically, if something happened, the cable would save the Ark.

People came to witness the scene of rising water, dangerously close to the railroad bridge, just under the rails. Loaded railroad cars were put on the bridge to hold it down. Logs floating on the river would splash water up on the tracks.

The flood of '37 brought the demise of Leonard Avilla's ferry boat rides. During the summer, vacationers and locals enjoyed the ten-cent rides. In the winter, the ferry was pulled up on the beach next to the skating rink, as high as it could get. During the night as the water rose, the ferry turned on its side and was badly damaged. It was later repaired and thrived for awhile in Lake County at Clearlake.

One casualty near Grant Avenue, south of Healdsburg, was a fish company's truck. The chain driven Mac truck, which made daily trips from San Francisco to Eureka, turned over in approximately four feet of water in a low spot where the freeway crosses over Redwood Highway (Healdsburg Avenue) today.

• *Looking east from Ark December, 1937* •



NABER UPDATE--In the 1940s John's parents retired, and Dolores' folks sold the Ark. The Ark later burned. John served in the Merchant Marines during World War II. Dolores stayed in Healdsburg. This year they celebrated 43 years of marriage. Dolores remarked that John had traveled all over the world, then came home to Healdsburg and found her. Then she added, "I was here all the time!" Thanks, John and Dolores, for sharing some of your memories. [][][]

V E N A D O

Continued from last issue

S t e w a r t W a d e

MR. AND MRS. GRAY LIVED NEXT door in a home they had shipped piece by piece from a dismantled home in San Francisco. Mrs. Gray was a dear, little lady. She remembered our birthdays with cards for many years, even after we left the Healdsburg area. Farther on, and just before coming to H. M. Hall's, to the left of the road was a swampy area that was an old bear "waller". Henry Hall was a retired bachelor who had been a mining engineer. He was responsible for Stillman Batchelor and my Father moving to Mill creek. Hall's home was at the foot of a very steep hill called The Ladder. This was not only steep and narrow but was very slippery on rainy days. On my first trip to this area, I was very relieved to find I could ride over it and didn't have to climb a big ladder.

At the top of The Ladder the road forked to the left and went to the Red Slide Ranch, the magnesite, and to Humphrie's home, while the other fork went on to Venado. Humphrie's home was a large, rambling place with a big redwood stump in the front yard. This stump was so large that it served as a dance floor. The Humphries had been entertainers and had wonderful musical instruments. My favorite, that they let me play, was a base viola. We once went with great expectations to see Mr. Humphrie who was an actor in a movie. What a let down. It was when we just got a glimpse of him as a cowboy in a barroom brawl. His Mother was married to an Oriental prince. Among the wonderful things she

brought to Mill Creek was a royal Persian cat. This cat founded a dynasty of cats. Not only did it establish a line of Persians in the Mill Creek area, but Healdsburg, Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and as far as I know, even Walnut Creek.

The road that forked to the right went through Venado to the Doy Ranch, owned by Jack Corvall.

Stillman Batchelor and my father built a two-story redwood log house at the location later called Venado. The home originally had running water that came from a spring up in the valley by way of a V-shaped trough cut in a series of connecting logs.

Mr. Batchelor was like an uncle to my brother and me. He later started a post office and called it Venado. When I first saw this area in 1919, it was like a tumbled-down ghost town. Only three structures were still standing. One of these we lived in while my father was building the log house. Another that later became the post office is where my Grandmother and I slept. I remember spending over a month in bed in this place, suffering and recovering from poison oak poisoning. My poor concerned family tried everything to get me some relief. After the tried-and-true calamine lotion didn't help, an old-timer told us that the only relief would be "coon" grease. Needless to say, I recovered. I never since recovering from this poison oak ended have ever had poison oak again. Later on when in grammar school, we boys would tattoo ourselves with the sap from poison oak plants.

The third standing cabin we called the Skunk House. Behind this place was a large hole in the ground where the former occupants had operated a counterfeiting plant. Later

on a skunk got under the house and marked it for his own exclusive abode.

This area named Venado had been a commune. I don't believe the counterfeiter had planned to share the wealth with the rest of the community. The only family that remained in the area from the original commune group was Sam Stuart's.

They purchased a place up the hill above Daniel's School and next door to Mr. Samuelson. Mr. Samuelson always wore bib overalls and took care of his invalid wife. Every year he would bring boxes of fruit to our school. When cherries got ripe, he would stop at school and invite us up to pick all the bing and Royal Ann cherries we wanted.

Mr. Stuart and my father were good friends. Every year after they purchased Ford trucks, each would load his truck with apples and prunes and drive to Sacramento Valley. They would camp out there, shoot wild ducks and geese. They also would trade their fruit for sweet potatoes and rice. Mr. Stuart was the first of the nine Mill Creek families to have a radio. It was a battery-powered squeaker. Our whole student body went up to listen to our new president give a speech in 1924.

Here are some of the stories that are left to be told.

About Nate Cox, his old car, his suit and top hat, and the notches on his revolver.

About William Collier's big diamond that he lost and found.

About all the things that happened at Daniel's School.

Stories about wild pigs, rattlesnakes, trap lines, and fighting wild forest fires. [] [] []

SOCIETY NEWS

• MEMORIAL DONATIONS •

DONATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED from the following:

- Eunice and Horace Edrington for Larry Foxworthy
- Robert and Carol Evans for Pressley Mothorn
- Lois and Guerdon Miller for Dorothy Hogue
- Rosaline Maher for Maxine Bell

• PATRON MEMBER •

Grant Canfield

• NEW MEMBERS •

- Betty Myers
- Jerrie Myers
- William McDowell
- Jean King

• IN MEMORY •

WE REGRETFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE the following Historical members who have passed away since our last publication:

- Pressley Mothorn
- Maxine Bell
- Dorothy Hogue
- Larry Foxworth

STAFF



VERNA LAFON

CURT SLOAN

• D O C E N T R E P O R T •

Susan Bierworth

OVER FORTY DOCENTS HELP TO make the museum a more interesting and enjoyable place for visitors. Thanks to the wonderful job that they do as spokespersons, the docent program continues to grow. Nearly every month another visitor to the museum decides to join the docent program to help staff the gift shop, do research, answer questions, and watch over the exhibits. In March two training sessions for the current exhibit were given to provide docents with a better understanding of Sonoma County's secrets and untold stories.

• H E R I T A G E A W A R D S •

Pat Schmidt

THE SECOND ANNUAL HERITAGE awards were announced at the society's January meeting.

The awards are given in recognition of outstanding preservation, renovation, and maintenance of local homes and commercial buildings. Of the nominations submitted, all of which were excellent examples of preservation, the three winning awards were:

Preservation and restoration, Katherine Fairlee, Gregg Neilson, 642 Johnson Street, formerly the Dr. Swisher home.

Commercial, Jimtown Store, Highway 128, Alexander Valley, owned by Carrie Brown and John Werner.

Lifetime maintenance, the Pordon-Clement home, 702 Johnson Street, owned by Mrs. Gridley (Letitia) Clement.

MUSEUM NEWS

• D I R E C T O R ' S D E S K •

WE HAVE BEEN DOING OUR BEST to keep the museum running smoothly this year despite considerably reduced staff hours. Currently the museum has a part-time director/curator and a part-time assistant who are responsible for all museum and research library operations, including all technical aspects of the care and documentation of collections, exhibits, administration, and much of the clerical work for both the museum and the society.

We have had good luck in finding volunteers who are willing to help in organizational, planning, and policy-making capacities. But we are still in great need of volunteers who are willing to learn the technical tasks and clerical duties that so often eat up the bulk of staff time.

I am pleased to note that we now have a mailing committee which has taken over the burden of bulk mailings from the museum staff. Here are some other areas where we could use your help.

Research library. Volunteer to take over research requests by mail and help walk-in researchers. Estimated training time 40 hours. Minimum requirement five hours per week.

Newspaper indexing project to assist indexing chairman. Estimated training time 20 hours. Minimum requirement five hours per week.

Gift shop development.

Volunteer to assist chairman scout out new gift shop merchandise, such as local crafts, and help with inventory

and reordering. Estimated training time five hours. Minimum requirement 10-15 hours per month.

Artifact cataloging. Volunteer to work with staff in accessioning and documenting collections. Estimated training time 80 hours. Minimum requirement five hours per week.

Clerical and computer. Volunteer willing to learn museum's Macintosh computer system to aid in clerical requirements for every area of operations--exhibits, special events, publicity, society, museum administration. Estimated training time 80 hours. Minimum requirement anything.

Light groundskeeping. Museum staff and docents manage to do a good deal of the interior janitorial work at the museum, but we have recently had a complaint about the condition of our grounds. Since City Parks and Recreation crews now consist of two men to maintain all of the parks in town, a little volunteer assistance would be appreciated. Estimated training none. Minimum requirement two hours per week.

If you think you could find the time to be a museum regular in any of these capacities, please call Hannah at 431-3325.

• N O W O N E X H I B I T
S O N O M A C O U N T Y :
THE UNTOLD STORIES •

HISTORICALS HAVE ALWAYS known that what is written and celebrated about the past is usually not the whole story. The illegal, immoral, or just plain unpleasant parts of our history tend to be forgotten for the official record. Although well known to the people of that era, these events and

activities were rarely discussed openly, and so fade to the background as time passes.

We are very pleased to report that our current exhibit, *Sonoma County: The Untold Stories*, has been very well received and has increased attendance considerably. The display takes a careful look at some of these lesser-known aspects of everyday life in Sonoma County, and uses many artifacts, fascinating stories, and photographs to interpret those subjects.

Some illegal activities in the past, like bootlegging during Prohibition, were big business in many parts of the county and helped bolster a flagging local economy. Dairy ranchers, farmers, and a surprising number of other respectable folk were drawn in by the huge profits, while many county officials cooperatively looked the other way. Prostitution and gambling, constants on the fringe of accepted society, are also included in the new exhibit.

Drug addiction was as much a problem in Victorian society in the last century as it is today. One of the differences was that proper Victorian matrons could purchase their opium, cocaine, and alcohol in innocent-looking medicinal elixirs at the local pharmacy.

As in every part of the world, racial prejudice reared its ugly head in early Sonoma County. The general public is seldom aware that the state of California sanctioned a form of Indian slavery in the mid-1800s, or that early agricultural labor shortages led to the illegal kidnapping and sale of Indian children to local farmers.

After they had built the railroads and many county roads and labored in the quicksilver mines, Chinese laborers

were harassed and driven from some parts of Sonoma County in the latter part of the century. In some otherwise "Christian" towns these hard-working Chinese were assaulted, had their property destroyed, and were sometimes even murdered.

The new exhibit also takes a second look at some of the unsolved cases in the county crime annals. Famous episodes, like the public lynching of the gangsters that murdered popular County Sheriff "Sunny Jim" Petray in the 1920s, are reexamined along with other lesser-known cases.

Customs of death in the Nineteenth Century and Anti-Unionism in Sonoma County agriculture are also examined through text, artifacts, and photographs. On the lighter side various other mysteries are recalled, including UFO sightings in the 1800s.

Sonoma County: The Untold Stories opened February 3 and runs through August, 1993. A reception for the exhibit was held for society members on February 18. The museum is at 221 Matheson Street, and museum open hours are Wednesday through Sunday 12 to 5 pm. Admission is free. For more information call 431-3325.



• RELUCTANT FAREWELL
TO CURATOR'S ASSISTANT •


SINCE JULY OF LAST YEAR I HAVE had the pleasure of working with Elaine-Maryse Solari, who has been assistant to the curator at the museum. As this part-time job is basically a training position funded by the society, we regularly have to say farewell to our good workers, who are ready to move on to better-paying full-time jobs.

Elaine-Maryse came to us last summer with very high credentials. She is working on a second career, already having distinguished herself in the legal field, graduating magna cum laude from Santa Clara University School of Law. Now Elaine-Maryse is earning her master's degree in cultural resources management from Sonoma State University. Besides her museum work she has done an impressive number of archaeological and research projects over the last few years.

After leaving the museum at the end of March, Elaine-Maryse plans to devote more of her time to those projects, perhaps developing a specialty in historic research for archaeologists.

I and museum volunteers will miss her bright and stimulating ideas and the talented help that she has offered over the last eight months. We all wish her the best of luck.

*Sonoma County:
The Untold stories*



HEALDSBURG MUSEUM

NOW THROUGH AUGUST, 1993

HEALDSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

• ED LANGHART, FOUNDER •

• 1 9 9 3 O F F I C E R S •

President	<i>Bill Caldwell</i> 15450 Pozzan Rd.	433-3888
Vice-president	<i>Norbert Babin</i> 1650 S. Fitch Mt. Rd.	433-1552
Recording Secretary	<i>Leslie Davis</i> 1315 Woodside Dr.	431-8220
Correspondence	<i>Fern Naber</i> 726 Brown St.	433-3811
Treasurer	<i>Richard Iverson</i> 1444 N. Fitch Mt. Rd.	431-8088



• B O A R D O F D I R E C T O R S •

<i>John Cross</i>	230 Second St.	433-6555
<i>Ben Gagliardo</i>	346 Bailache Ave.	433-2710
<i>Verna Lafon</i>	722 University St.	433-2668
<i>Don Reukema</i>	330 Prune Tree Dr.	433-0384
<i>Phil Smith</i>	141 North St.	433-6594
<i>Jack Soracco</i>	681 S. Fitch Mt. Rd.	433-2056
<i>Eleanor Zak</i>	540 Sunnyvale Dr. (Also Gift Shop Coordinator)	433-3059
Membership	<i>Betty Reukema</i> 330 Prune Tree Dr.	433-0384
Docent Coordinator	<i>Susan Bierwirth</i> 511 Fitch St.	433-5432
Curator	<i>Hannah Clayborn</i> 221 Matheson St.	431-3325
Assistant Curator	<i>Elaine-Maryse Solari</i> 221 Matheson St.	431-3325



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