



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER



Mabelle Shelford and Florence Barnes, May 27, 1904 (Museum photo donated by Mildred Black).

Cover Story:

Museum as Community
by Curator Marie Djordjevich

Also in This Issue:

- **Ralph Rose, Healdsburg's Olympic Champion**
- **A Window Into Healdsburg's Past**
- **A Look at the Museum's Artifacts**

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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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In This Issue

Summer 1996 !

In this issue of the Russian River Recorder we are pleased to pay tribute to the Healdsburg Museum's 20th Anniversary, founded in 1976, the year of the Bicentennial, by Edwin Langhart. It was through his vision and efforts that Healdsburg today has a well established history museum, one of which the entire community can be justly proud. Many local residents, of course, deserve equal billing because without the dedication of the many volunteers and board members the Museum could not have reached its 20th year. Our talented curator Marie Djordjevich, in her article about the new exhibit, gives us a first hand account of how the Museum works and its place in the Community. It is an illuminating, well-written and informative piece, *MUSEUM AS COMMUNITY*.

We also pay tribute to a man who caught the essence of Healdsburg and the community through his many photographs which were donated to the Museum by his family. Recent Sonoma State graduate Rachel Rarick served as an intern at the Museum for a number of months and her job was to catalog the hundreds of Silberstein photographs. And through this she came to know the man and the community. She shares her experiences with us in her article *A Window Into Healdsburg's Past*.

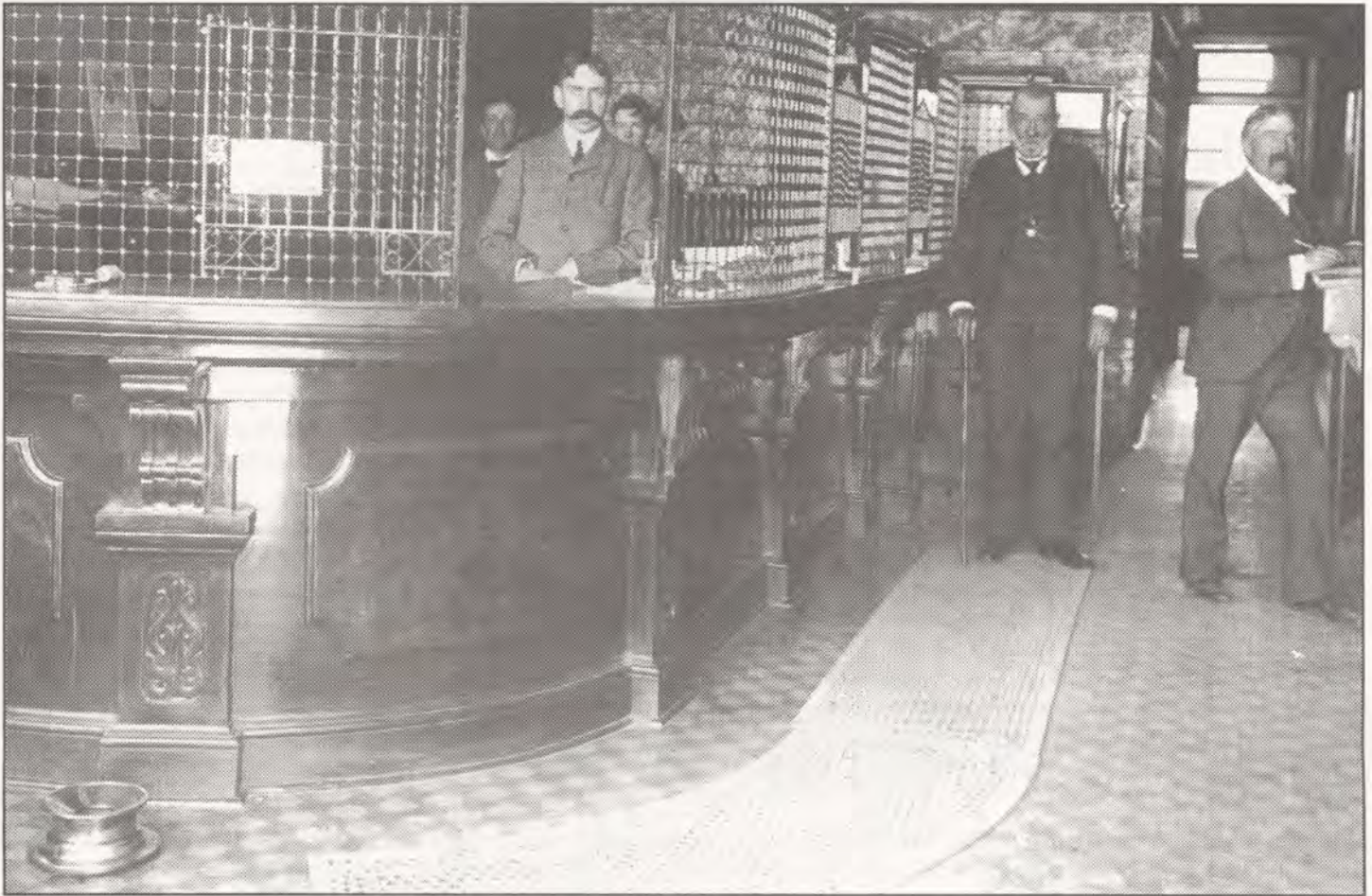
The 26th Summer Olympics are being played out in Atlanta, Georgia this year and in commemoration of this special event Darrell Barbieri, Healdsburg High School's Athletic Director, gives us a fascinating account of the achievements of one of Healdsburg's renowned athletes, Ralph Rose, a three time Olympic Champion. It was Darrell who made the presentation this year inducting Ralph Rose into the Healdsburg Hall of Fame. Darrell tells the Ralph Rose story from the viewpoint of an athlete, showing great admiration for the accomplishments achieved by Rose in his short life span.

The Museum, through the generosity of community residents, has many artifacts which the general public never sees, primarily because of a lack of space to exhibit them. However, at the suggestion of Museum board member Bob Rawlins we are going to publish photos with accompanying information about the valuable artifacts hopefully in each issue of the Recorder. To start off the series we asked Curator Marie Djordjevich to pick out the artifacts and to give their history. You'll find this interesting bit of nostalgia on Page 3.

Summer 1996 ! A significant time. In this issue we have tried to capture this significance with Marie's account of the Museum As Community and our special tributes to Ralph Rose and Mervyn Silberstein.

Arnold Santucci
Editor

C O N T E N T S



*Farmers and Mechanics Bank, August 1901. Shown are George Warfield at the wicket, E. H. Barnes with the cane in the center and Dr. W. Weaver at the right.
(Museum photo from Genevieve Warfield Estate)*

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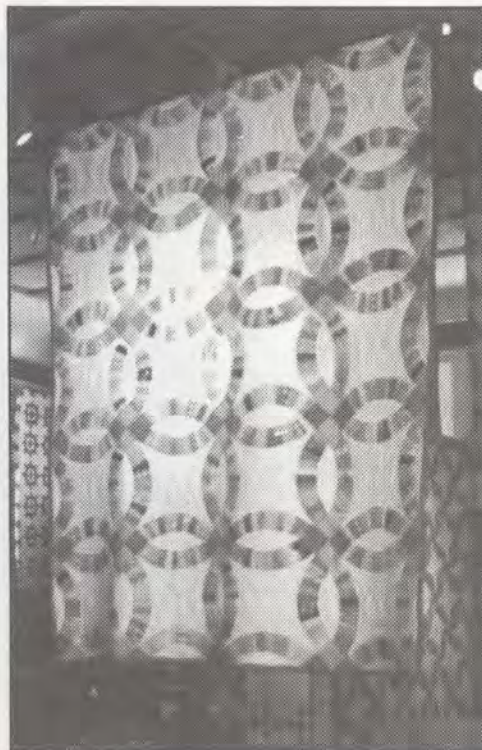
The story of an outstanding athlete

by Darrell Barbieri

Double Wedding Ring Quilt

Healdsburg Museum Collection #369-62
Gift of Alice Burgett

Top is hand stitched, quilting done by hand. Binding sewn on by machine but turn over sewn to back of quilt by hand. Most of patches are cotton, few rayon based fabrics and some lightweight, loosely woven summer weight dress voiles. Prints are typical of 1925-1930. Piecing is very well done, quilting less so. Peach/white geometric print cotton backing. (Healdsburg Museum cataloging description)



Quiltmaking has a long and varied history, stretching back several thousand years, and becoming increasingly sophisticated in early American times. Quilting is possibly the oldest American craft, brought to America with the colonists. Quilt patterns were passed from quilters to quilters through such things as fairs and quilting bees, and different patterns were popular at various times. The double wedding ring pattern was created in the late 1920's, and was a favorite pattern for showing the variety of multicolored prints made possible with improved synthetic dyes.

Letters From The Past

Letters from the past are good documentary materials. From them we can get a sense of what life was like first-hand--through the words of eyewitnesses. The following letter was taken from our Burgett family ephemera file. The first Burgett in Healdsburg, William, a brickmason, came in 1875 to work in the brickyard of his relative, Henry Mizer, on Powell Avenue. In 1879 he married Elizabeth Walker, and they had three sons--William Jr., Robert and James; and two daughters--Nettie and Laura.

Letter

Healdsburg Museum Collection, #369-420
Gift of Alice Burgett

3409 Grove, Oakland
Christmas time 1928

Dear Libbie,

Your beautiful box was left here this morning and has made me very happy. Although last night after reading your letter I could not sleep, and all sorts of hours I lay worrying about you. You are certainly at a distance from me or I would be right there by you. And you are not very well. Dear girl let me know if you are down sick and need me and if able to travel I will hurry down to you.

You ought to be warm and out of chilly draughts. This is going

to be a hard, cold winter and lots of sickness is possible. If I had a home of my own I would want you with me. For I know how to do for you my dear little girl. Girl of many years of love.

You have all those men to look after you, and of course they will do all they ought to for you. You need warm rooms, warm clothing, warm food. Especially hot soup every day. Soup is cheap, easy to make and is nourishing. Beef or chicken or mutton or oyster is fine for a person in winter.

And eggs, toast, roasted potatoes.

Oh--Libbie I worry about you. I want you to be well so I can see you again. Up here if possible when weather is just right. I am a widow, alone and have to take care of myself but shall keep a grip all ready to start for you if you need me.

I would make it more comfortable here for you and for me too. Because your house is not fit for a delicate person in any but summer time. Too draughty.

(Please see page 5)

3409 Grove Oakland
 Christmas time 1928,
 Dear Libbie,
 Your beautiful boy was
 left here this morning and
 has made me very happy.
 Although last night after
 reading your letter I could
 not sleep. And all sorts of
 hours I lay worrying about
 you. You are certainly at a
 distance from me or I would be
 right there by you. And you
 are not very well. I can
 not let me know if you
 are down sick and need
 me and if able to have
 will hurry down to you.
 You ought to be wa-
 out of chilly draughts
 is going to be a ha-
 winter and lots of
 is possible. If I
 home of my own I w-



Libbie Burgett
 (Museum photo donated by Alice Burgett)



Nettie Burgett
 (Museum photo donated by Alice Burgett)

And you have - maybe - not a comfortable room for a hot bath - very necessary for anyone who wants health.

A well-equipped bath and toilet you ought to have had all these years. Of course your four men need them too, or will if they ever get sick.

Morella and I had many a worry about you - after we made that visit and she always had her funny jokes. Said she had "scooted" all over Sonoma Co. in the night and rain and "scared to death of the dogs."

I was afraid of them too. Poor Morella: she is at peace now. She had several strokes of paresis (sic) and had to go - as we all must.

She had worked very hard after her husband's death. He left her the home and some stock but not much money. Leona and husband have it all now. She was down here and asked after you. Very often spoke of you.

This is a long letter with not much in it, I fear, that you care for.
 My affectionate regards to you all,
 Aunt Nettie

P.S. I must speak again about your wonderful Christmas box. I have handled everything over and over.

It is Healdsburg, my old home. It tells of the wild things that I once knew. The scents of those dainty flowers and leaves fill this room. Reminds me of the ranch too.

Do you remember that long teetery foot log? And how I made you walk it? I do believe yet that it did you good. Made you steady on your feet. I took a lot of care of you when you were a tiny baby crossing the plains, too.

Enough for now --
 Aunt Nettie

A Window Into Healdsburg's Past

by Rachel Rarick



Mervyn Silberstein and Friend, 1910

When I came to the Healdsburg Museum in January I had absolutely no idea who Mervyn Silberstein was. I was given a box of his photos and told to go to work. In the following months I would come to know Silberstein quite well, not only through his photographs, but also through his scrapbooks and his journal. I now leave with a tremendous amount of admiration and affection for him.

Mervyn David Silberstein was born in San Francisco in 1885. His father Jacob Silberstein purchased a dry goods store in Healdsburg in December, 1896, so it was around this time that the family moved to this area. They appear to have lived above the store (which still exists on the corner of what is now Healdsburg Avenue and North Street) for a few years before moving to another house at 226 North Street.

While he was in high school, Silberstein was very involved in drama and athletics. He graduated from Healdsburg High School in 1903. Fellow classmates included Victor Burnham, Maude Robinson, Harvey Frost, Ethyl Williams, Charles Noury, Lucille Bolles, Prudence Lewis and Russel Galloway. He also was good friends with Will Livernash and Ralph Rose. (see article about Ralph Rose in this issue written by Darrell Barbieri - ed).

Silberstein was very creative and artistic. He also had a great sense of humor as is apparent from his journal and his cartoons. The entries in his journal tell of a young man who loved to pull pranks and tease the girls. One of the most fascinating and amusing entries is his description of his graduation ceremony:

Dr. Swisher delivers a mixed conglomeration of facts, to the effect that our class was one of the best classes that ever graduated from the H.H.S. and that the teachers and trustees had very little or no complaint to make against any of the class. Us boys get to te-he-ing when he tells about our rep for not destroying anything and being a very orderly class. He soon runs out of talk and sits down. (Diary of the Last Month in the Healdsburg High School, #626-1).

Silberstein had fun with his photos, too. He often decorated them and added humorous captions. He also liked to have fun with his name; sometimes he spelled it "Mervin Silberstein" or some combination with the real spelling. His friends often just called him "Silver."

The Silberstein collection is both extensive and diverse, consisting of approximately 623 photos and additional paraphernalia such as his journal and his scrapbooks. Roughly 90% of the photographs were taken by Silberstein. The remaining photographs are either of him or were taken in professional studios. With a few exceptions, the collection encompasses the years 1903-1913. The photographs fall into numerous categories including agriculture, athletics, people, transportation, the Russian River, industry and residences.

Though he moved back to San Francisco in 1910, Silberstein left his heart in Healdsburg. He often returned to document Healdsburg athletics and photograph the area. In later years, Silberstein would become very involved in planning reunions for former Healdsburg residents. He married Lillian Swanson in 1926. They had one daughter, Gloria Silberstein Brown.

Mervyn Silberstein died in San Francisco in 1957. Though he has been gone for several decades, Silberstein still communicates through his photographs. I can not help but feel grateful that Mervyn Silberstein had such a passion for photography for he has left behind a priceless window into Healdsburg's past.

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Mervyn Silberstein in a formal pose. This photo was taken in 1903 when Silberstein was 18 years old.



Photos From The Silberstein Collection



A photo of the J. B. Prince Residence taken by Mervyn Silberstein in 1912. Standing in the front garden of the Prince home, located at 219 Piper Street are, left to right, Mrs. Firebaugh, Mrs. Prince, Mr. Prince and Eloise Prince.

A notation on the back of the photo reveals "I was born here - Eloise"

(Photo by M. Silberstein)



*His mother
Hannah Silberstein*



*His father
Jacob Silberstein*



*His sister
Daisy Silberstein*



*Silberstein's wife Lillian
and daughter Gloria*



Healdsburg Plaza, 1886 (Museum photo donated by Gertrude Bush Krauss)

Museum as Community

Marie Djordjevich, Curator

A good museum attracts, entertains, arouses curiosity, leads to questioning and thus promotes learning. The museum can help people only if they use it; they will use it only if they know about it and only if attention is given to the interpretation of its possessions in terms they, the people, will understand (John Colton Dana, museum professional, 1909)

These words written 87 years ago still epitomize the museum enterprise. A museum is a teaching institution, yet it is informal, self-directed education, dependent on the interest of the viewer. Ideally, the museum will educate in an entertaining and understandable way. It might then motivate the visitor to ask questions, read further, visit other places and eventually return to the museum.

There are many different types of museums, of which history is one. History museums are powerful resources. They are keepers of our communities' cultural and historical past. The essence of the history museum enterprise is to give us a view, an interpretation, an understanding of the past and how we evolved. They link the past with the present and the future, and enrich learning opportunities for the communities in which they exist.

Museums: A Brief History

In classical times the museum was a temple dedicated to the Muses, who were keepers of things such as the epic, music,

love, poetry, oratory, history, tragedy, comedy, dance and astronomy. These early museums did not house many objects for they were places of study. In the ancient world, however, the Greeks did have some collections, which consisted of objects acquired during conquests of other people. In Western Europe during the Middle Ages, the idea of the museum was confined to churches, which collected and housed richly ornamented religious objects, and art objects brought back from the Crusades. The Crusades also added to or built the private collection of the noble class. In the 16th century museums consisted of galleries that housed pictures and sculptures, and cabinets which were filled with all different kinds of objects. At this time, museums were still private, and reserved for the upper class.

In the late 17th century, the museum began to open up to the public. In America museums began to develop in the 18th century, and by 1900 the museum was considered a place of education. The modern museum is seen as consisting of five aspects: collection, conservation, research, exhibition and education. While these five aspects are being extensively discussed and debated among museums today, they are still seen as the basic responsibilities of the museum. Museums collect objects, preserve them for the future, and exhibit them to further education.

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History and the Healdsburg Museum

The five functions of museums--collection, conservation, research, exhibition and education-- are basic to most museums; however, various museums concentrate on different subjects and have different purposes. The Healdsburg Museum is a history museum and is concerned with the people, events, cultures, objects and ways of the past. Our purpose is to assemble views of Healdsburg's past--the achievements and disappointments, the actions and decisions, the celebrated and the mundane--and to relay them to our present community. In short, we seek to put together the varying pieces of the area's life. In doing so we hope to give people a sense of what it was like to have been here at a particular time. We want to illustrate the interconnections between the past, the present, and the future: the study of history can put our lives in a larger context, by linking us with what has gone on before. Ultimately, history tells us who we are, what we have been and where we are going.

History is not static. It is a "dynamic, continuous flow of human experience" (Alexander). The challenge then, for history museums, is to convey this evolution, this link between past and present, and to do so using three-dimensional objects, photographs and documentary evidence and records. One of the characteristics of a history museum is that it creates contact between the visitor and objects that were part of the events, customs, perspectives and lives of years past.

To Collect

At the heart of many museums is their collection. Most museums collect because they believe that objects are a way to tell us about nature, culture, society and the human condition. They are a way to learn and teach about what went on before.

As emphasized, the Healdsburg Museum is a small history museum, and like most of its kind confines its collecting to a specific geographical area. Our focus is Healdsburg specifically and northern Sonoma County generally. However, we sometimes collect items that may not be local, but are indicative of a certain era (i.e. 1920's, WWII, fashion trends). Right now we are collecting things starting from the 1800's up to 1950. We accept objects of historical significance, which means anything that can contribute to our knowledge of Healdsburg's history. There are many kinds of artifacts that contribute to this historical understanding and that we hold in our permanent collection. Some examples of what our collection consists of include textiles--clothing (men, women, children), quilts, rugs; tools, planes, plows, irons; Native American artifacts--baskets, stone tools; documents - letters, maps, newspapers, deeds, photographs.

Photographs are an important part of the Healdsburg Museum collection. As with the rest of what we collect, we look for pho-



City Hall in its original splendor, Circa 1890

tographs that emphasize the history and culture of the Healdsburg area. Photographs are visual histories. Photography helps people to understand their world and the world that used to be. Photographs are an important link to and record of the past. They can illustrate different aspects from a written record; therefore, they have documentary value as resource materials. Photos offer us a fixed examining of life's aspects: they show us customs, preferences and styles; allow us to observe celebrations; to watch people at work, at play, at home; to see how they courted, married, and raised children; coped with stress, hardship and the changes in their lives.

We have thousands of photographs and they are used for various activities. Perhaps the most prominent use of photos in the museum is in the exhibits. Enlarged photos are used to supplement and contextualize the artifacts and text. We also use photos for research--to see what something or some one looked like at a particular time, to trace societal patterns and attitudes, to create links between eras.

And Conserve

Conservation is the care and preservation of objects in the museum. One of the things museums strive to do is conserve the objects in their care for the use, study, education and enjoyment of future generations. In many ways however, the museum functions of conservation, exhibition and research are at odds with each other. The pure conservation of an artifact would mean keeping objects in dark, humidity - and temperature - controlled environments, free from dust, pests, and other environmental hazards, as well as protected from being touched, moved or subjected to other human hazards. This is unrealistic, therefore many procedures are followed to ensure that the life of an artifact, document or photo is stable. Temperature, light, dust, pests and handling are

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constantly monitored, both in storage areas and exhibition areas. Many items are placed in acid-free boxes with acid-free tissue and/or paper. Acid-free materials provide a stable environment around an object. Photos are placed in mylar sheets for protection from handling, and are filed in acid-free boxes. Documents too are protected by mylar and acid-free materials. These are only some of the methods museums use to protect their collections, and it is a responsibility that must be constantly met.

Story and Discovery

The aim of museum exhibition is to educate and communicate with its audience, and to do so in an entertaining way. Exhibits are good ways of demonstrating and interpreting former customs, activities and ways of life through the use of historic artifacts and other interpretive materials (such as photos, documents, maps, ads, etc.). Much thought goes into planning an exhibit. An exhibit starts with a concept, an idea, around which a story line is then developed. The objects selected for the exhibit help tell the story, and in many ways dictate the methods of display and interpretation. We must decide on the proper environment for the items being displayed, and this concerns problems of lighting, hanging and mounting; we have to think about the effects of colors, backgrounds and textures; and we need to consider the placement of objects, photos, interpretive materials and text.

The text is an important aspect of the exhibit communication process. The text--or story line--helps integrate all of the elements in the exhibit, as well as identify objects, photos and other materials. A good exhibit label needs to attract attention, convey information in a concise, understandable way, and motivate the viewer to look at the whole exhibit. Labels are the basic way a museum changes objects into storytelling that communicates effectively.

The Healdsburg Museum has two different types of exhibits--permanent and temporary. The permanent exhibit consists of artifacts from the museum's collection. It tells about the prehistory of the area, the Pomo and Wappo peoples, the settling of the town, the journey across the plains, the Mexican rancho period, and displays many objects from Healdsburg's past.

The temporary exhibits change three times a year. The winter show is traditionally an antique and collectible toy exhibit. The other two exhibits deal with themes from Healdsburg's and northern Sonoma County's history. Temporary exhibits use both objects from the museum's collection and objects that people loan specifically for the exhibit. Loans are important to the museum. Not only do they give us more diversity, but loaning an item to the museum for exhibition purposes allows its history to be shared.

Sharing history is what we are all about, and the more we know, the more we can share with our visitors. Doing research is the way to discover new things. In other words, research is about uncovering history. Documents, artifacts and photos are a direct link with earlier days, preserving eyewitness observations, capturing sights and sounds, and gauging the conditions of the time. At the museum we do research for our own purposes. We research information for exhibitions; we do

research to date and identify photos and documents; to make connections between photos, objects, people and events, between ideas, between the past and the present.

The Healdsburg Museum has a plentiful research library. It contains many types of records useful to people who are researching family members, homes, Healdsburg's history, and special topics of interest (i.e. agriculture, transportation, Russian River, etc.). Our research materials are varied. The first place most people look when researching a topic is our newspaper index. We have local newspapers, most on microfilm, from 1865-1982. We are continually indexing the papers and are complete to 1933. The indexing includes births, marriages, deaths, family relationships, businesses, organizations, schools, churches, city and surrounding areas, and other topics. Besides newspapers, we also have available for research maps, documents (letters, receipts, records, deeds), census records, atlases, tax records, marriage, birth, death, cemetery records, cultural resource study for house research, subject and people ephemera files, books and photos. The wide variety of items allows for much cross-referencing.

Education Responsibility

How can museums--as multidimensional, socially responsible institutions with a tremendous capacity for bringing knowledge to the public and enriching all facets of the human experience--help to nurture a human citizenry equipped to make informed choices in a democracy and to address the challenges and opportunities in an increasingly global society? Museums can no longer confine themselves simply to preservation, scholarship, and exhibitions independent of the social context in which they exist. They must recognize that what we are calling the public dimension of museums leads them to perform the public service of education--a term we use in its broadest sense to include exploration, study, observation, critical thinking, contemplation and dialogue (Excellence and Equity)

Education has always been an implicit museum function. The aim of most museums is to educate the public about some subject. In recent years, the museum aspect of education has become a "hot topic" in the museum profession. The museum world is seeking to make education a vital and active museum enterprise. In May of 1991 the American Association of Museums Task Force on Museum Education published a report seeking to define the role of museum education for the public. Entitled "Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums," this report outlined the responsibilities of museums in terms of education, challenging them to define their educational mission in active terms, to strengthen and expand their educational role in their communities, and to actually plan an ongoing role for active education in their institutions. The task force emphasized a commitment to sharing knowledge with the public, and declared that museums "are, or should be, important social and community centers." This brings us to the heart of what the museum really is: a community-oriented institution, striving to be educational yet active, vital and participatory.

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The Museum as Community

The Healdsburg Museum as a local history museum has the responsibility and privilege of preserving and interpreting our community's history. We are, in essence, the living memory of the community. We find the connections that link one generation to the next, and keep them for the future to know. We are not a mausoleum however. We have a stake in a vital community, and want to be responsive to present community interests. We want to:

- make an effort to complement existing community services
- be concerned with broadening the populations that we serve and providing them with relevant and informative programs both in the museum and community
- bring the community into the museum, helping them to understand how to use its resources, exhibitions and staff
- continue to be a stimulating and exciting place to involve visitors in learning

We have a responsibility not only to the community of the past, but to our present community as well. History is always evolving. You are part of the events that are making history today. You, as our community, are an integral component of the museum experience. Your participation is needed, valued and wanted. This is your place.

Alexander, Edward P.

1979 *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History

American Association of Museums Task Force on Museum Education

1991 "Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums" Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums

Ames, Kenneth L., Barbara Franco, L.Thomas Frye

1992 *Ideas and Images: Developing Interpretive History Exhibits* Nashville: American Association for State and



Anita Fitch and J. D. Grant family, Josepha Carrillo Fitch on right.
(Museum photo donated by Jack Trotter)

Local History

Kyvig, David E., Myron A. Marty

1982 *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History

Pitman-Gelles, Bonnie

1981 *Museums, Magic and Children* Washington D.C.: Association of Science-Technology Centers

Ralph Rose: Healdsburg's Olympic Champion

by Darrell Barbieri

(This the second in a series of articles saluting Healdsburg's four World Athletic Champions honored by a monument and plaques in Healdsburg's Plaza Square. The first article which appeared in the Spring, 1996 Russian River Recorder paid tribute to Dr. Edward Beeson, who set a high jump record in 1914 that was unbroken for ten years. In this issue, Darrell Barbieri, Healdsburg High School Athletic Director, pays a very special tribute to an outstanding athlete, Ralph Rose. Mr. Barbieri earlier this year had the pleasure of making the presentation inducting Ralph Rose in the Healdsburg Hall of Fame).

It is most appropriate that in this Centennial year of the Modern Olympics, we remember a three time Olympic champion who has a special part in our local history.

Ralph Rose was a man pronounced by European royalty as "The Greatest Athlete in the World." He was named the best track and field athlete of the first decade of the twentieth century by the

(Please see page 12)



Ralph Rose, Healdsburg's Olympic champion, was the first high school athlete to put the 12 pound shot more than 50 feet. He threw a record 16 pound shot 51 feet. (Museum photo, donated by Albert Worden)

International Track Federation. He was, until his death, a unique and gifted athlete and, in the world of international athletics, in a class by himself.

Ralph Waldo Rose was born March 17, 1885, the son of Judge J.W. and Martha Rose. He graduated from Healdsburg High School in 1904. At that time he stood 6' 6" and weighed 235 pounds which made him a giant of a man for those times. While a student at H.H.S. he won three state track and field championships. When he was a sophomore he won the high jump with a height of 5' 10 1/2" using the difficult scissors kick. When he was a junior and a senior he won the shot put. He was the first high school athlete to put the 12 pound shot more than 50 feet.

The summer following his graduation Ralph was selected to be a member of his first Olympic team. He represented the United States and competed in the St. Louis Games of 1904. Even though he was so young his impact on international track and field competition was immediate. He won a bronze medal in the hammer throw, a silver medal in the discus, and a gold medal in the shot put where he, incidentally, broke both the Olympic and world records.

Ralph returned home to Healdsburg the talk of the sports world. He spent the next year working on his father's farm. He then decided to attend the University of Michigan and study law. He chose Michigan because his father was an alumnus and because it was one of the two top track and field schools in the nation. Stanford was the other school. He spent only two years at Michigan but while there he was major force in the collegiate track and field world. Ralph won national titles in the shot put, discus and hammer throw. Phenomenally, in one afternoon, he set seven world records in various shot put events!

Ralph eventually held nine world records in shot putting. Some of these records are in events long since forgotten but are still considered major accomplishments. He was the world record holder in the 8 pound, 12 pound, 14 pound, 16 pound, 28 pound shot, and the 16 pound shot thrown with both hands.

After his years at Michigan, Ralph returned to Healdsburg. He took the California bar examination which he passed with honors. He set up practice in town and planned a happy future near his family and many friends. At this time he began his association with the Olympic Club in San Francisco. He competed in many track meets as a member of the club and achieved some of his most memorable feats.

In 1908 Ralph became the first man to put the 16 pound shot more than 50 feet. A year later he reached a record of 51' 3 1/2" which

stood for 18 years. Also in 1909 he competed in an invitational meet held in Healdsburg and put the 16 pound shot 54' 6". Although this was a tremendous feat, it could not be considered for a world's record because the Healdsburg gathering was not a sanctioned meet.

During those Olympic Club days, Ralph won the national championships in the hammer throw, the discus, the shot put and, in a new addition to his skills, the javelin throw.

When the London Olympic Games were held in 1908, there was no doubt that Ralph Rose would compete for the United States. He was in wonderful form and again won the gold medal in the shot put. It was at those Games that he became world famous for something else besides sports. He began an Olympic tradition that is followed to this day by every American flag bearer in the opening ceremonies Parade of Nations. It is not known why he did it, but Ralph, as the flag bearer, did not lower the Stars and Stripes as he should have when he passed the King of England in the march. It was noted around the world that this breach of etiquette had occurred, but Ralph was so popular and so well-known, it did not create international disfavor of the Americans. This year, in the centennial celebration of the Olympic Games, our flag bearer will not lower the flag yet again.

At the Stockholm Olympics in 1912, Ralph won two more medals: a silver medal in the shot put and a gold medal in an event discontinued - the two-handed shot put. A wonderful photograph exists showing Ralph being crowned with the symbolic laurel leaves of the victors by the King of Sweden. All of the medals Ralph won are in the safe-keeping of the Olympic Club of San Francisco.

At the peak of his fame and prominence - an athlete described by many as the "perfect man" - he had only one year to live. He had established his law practice, was successful in every track and field event he entered, enjoyed friends and teammates all over the world, then was struck down by typhoid fever. After a brief illness he died on October 16, 1913 in San Francisco at the age of 29.

His body was brought to Healdsburg by train accompanied by many, many friends and admirers. His funeral was officiated by the Healdsburg Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West of which he was a past president. Twelve pallbearers were needed to carry his casket. He is buried at Oak Mound Cemetery next to his mother who predeceased him. His death was reported in newspapers and magazines all over the world and he was mourned by the entire sports world.

Healdsburg's own Olympic Champion, Ralph Rose, will be remembered with pride this summer as we watch the 26th Summer Games from Atlanta, Georgia

Healdsburg Historical Society

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