



# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society

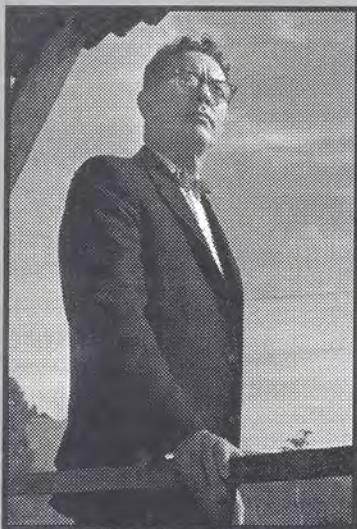
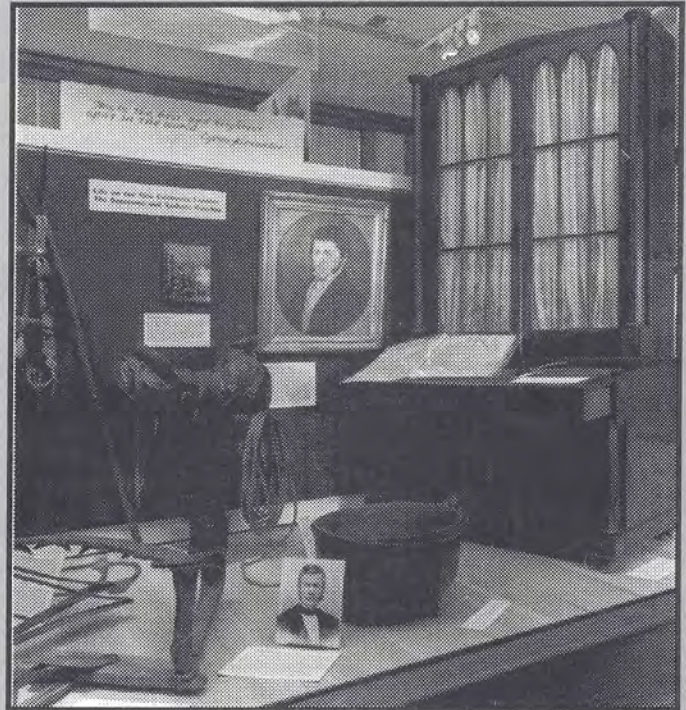
## History Fever:

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HEALDSBURG MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Edwin Langhart, Founder

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### RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

*The Official Publication of the Healdsburg  
Museum and Historical Society*

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## IN THIS ISSUE

This is an exciting time for the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society -- a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of what today is an institution that brings much pride to the Healdsburg community.

Our curator Marie Djordjevich, in her feature article, gives us a vivid and well researched account of how the Museum came to be established and the accomplishments of the many who worked to achieve the ultimate goal - a history museum that reflects its title, and once described by Gaye LeBaron, the noted columnist and historian, as "one of the best small museums in the West."

At the same time a very special tribute is paid to the founder of the Museum and Historical Society, Edwin Langhart, by June Maher Smith, who accurately tells us that "Ed Langhart gave Healdsburg a priceless gift - our heritage."

With these two articles we have tried to bring to our readers - and supporters - the vision and generosity of one man, but also the vision and generosity of the entire

community in the support that has been shown - financially and otherwise - over these past 25 years.

Also in this issue our Research Curator, Holly Hoods, shares with us an unusual and fascinating oral history -- an interview with Effie Robinson, who talks about her childhood and growing up in Healdsburg as a member of the only black family - and a well-liked and well-respected one - in the community.

And back with us this issue is one of our contributing writers, Milt Brandt, who recalls vividly going on a double date out past Pena Creek in a Model T over 60 years ago. We know you'll enjoy this account of life in 1940.

Vision and generosity, not only of one man, but of the entire community, is what has brought us to this point - celebrating 25 years of history,

Arnold Santucci

Editor

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## HISTORY OF



## SERVICE

*Ed Langhart  
Navy Seabee  
1943*

Ed Langhart was known as "Mr. Healdsburg" because of his sincere interest in his home town and his efforts to preserve our history and heritage. Before there was a museum in town, researchers would seek out Ed at his office and he would find answers to their questions; or find the person who knew the answers. He was admired and loved by the citizens of the town who appreciated his local knowledge and his sense of humor.

Sequester Edwin Langhart, Jr., was the son of Sequester Edwin Langhart, Sr., and his wife Lora Arline Langhart, who came to Healdsburg in 1914. His mother was a teacher at William Booth School at Lytton and his father opened a photo studio upstairs in the Kruse building on the south side of the Plaza (now the site of The Inn on the Plaza). For 50 years Sequester, Sr., photographed Healdsburg citizens, school classes, and graduates, displaying some of his work in a case alongside the stairs which led up to his studio.

Ed and his twin sister Arline were born in 1915. He also had a younger sister, Eladore. During Ed's school years he was known as "Zeke," and later on he became known as Ed. He was on the tennis team at Healdsburg High School, and was art editor of the yearbook in 1932. He went on to attend San Jose State University and the Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design. Putting his talents to work, he briefly worked as a designer in the construction business in San Francisco. During World War II he joined the U. S. Navy's Seabees and was sent to Scotland and then to France.

After the war he returned to Healdsburg, worked in construction for a while, and then was elected City Clerk in 1948. A year later he married Chrystal Hildebrand Butts, and was soon designing the home they built on a hill in the northeast part of town, near the cemetery. They moved in during the summer of 1951 and spent the next 28 years raising their children, Melinda, Carolyn, and Jeffery, and relishing life in Healdsburg. Ed enjoyed his family-his daughter Melinda says he was a wonderful father. His great sense of humor made even yard work a happy time for the children; and their annual vacation fishing trips to Dunsmuir were unforgettable. Weekends might include a picnic to the coast, a visit to San Francisco, or a day at their hunting camp on Geysers Road. Of course, they enjoyed the river here at home-canoeing with their father was a treat! There were family reunions that introduced the children to their heritage, and Ed came home for lunch each day that he wasn't due at a meeting.

# ED LANGHART GAVE HEALDSBURG A PRICELESS GIFT - - - OUR HERITAGE

By June Maher Smith

Chrystal and Ed had been active members of the Healdsburg Country Dancers for many years before their marriage. They enjoyed playing bridge with friends and Ed continued to play an occasional game of tennis. He was a member and officer of the Healdsburg Kiwanis Club, on the Salvation Army Lytton Springs Advisory Council, chair of the Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation, member of the American Legion Post 111, and E Clampus Vitus. In addition he was active in many civic and historical organizations, including secretary of the Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmen's Association and a charter director of the Sonoma County Historical Society.

Ed's career at City Hall spanned 26 years and his long time love and knowledge of Healdsburg history grew and grew. In 1960 he designed what was then the "new" City Hall. The old three-story building with its ornate façade was torn down and in 1961 the new modern building was dedicated at the corner of Center and Matheson Streets. Included in Ed's plans was a special Archives Room for the many historical documents, photos and memorabilia of Healdsburg's

*Continued page 4*



*The Langhart Family, Circa 1940: Seated, Lora Arline and S. E. Langhart, Standing, Eladore, Ed and Arline*



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past that he was collecting. In addition to his official job with the city he was the unpaid Curator of what was to be the Museum collection.

After many years as City Clerk, Ed was named Healdsburg's first City Administrator in 1970, and then the first City Manager three years later. He was a fiscal conservative and was against downtown Healdsburg's parking meters, which were finally torn out. When Ed retired in August of 1974 he was appointed the first Official Archivist and Historian of Healdsburg. He was also named chairman of Healdsburg's Bicentennial Committee. This gave him the chance to go ahead with his long-time wish for a Healdsburg Museum. As Jan Harrison, Ed's executive secretary, said, he was so liked and had so many friends, they were more than willing to listen to him as he pushed for a Museum to be opened in 1976. Also in 1976 Ed founded and was first president of the Healdsburg Historical Society; soon 400 members were signed up. Six hundred people attended the Bicentennial 4th of July Celebration at the Villa which he chaired.

The Bicentennial Committee, composed of 50 active members, achieved its goal—the Healdsburg Museum officially opened on December 14, 1976. It was housed in part of the building at 133 Matheson Street, which the city had recently purchased. Ed planned the remodeling of the space, made the signs, built the storage areas, refurbished cabinets, did some of the electrical work, and much more. Chrystal, who was also trained in design, made the drapes and helped where needed. Of course, the committee pitched in, too. It took many hands to bring about Healdsburg's first Museum, but Ed was now the official Curator (still unpaid) and at last had space to display and care for the collection.

In 1978 Ed was honored by the Conference of California Historical Societies. He was presented with the organization's Individual Award of Merit at the annual meeting in Bakersfield. The letters written by local citizens to support his nomination for this award were full of praise for Ed and his integrity. Currently, the people I interviewed for this article were saying the same good things about him. Among the other positive attributes they pointed out were his great sense of humor, the people's respect for him, his untiring efforts and his ability to go above and beyond what was expected, his role as a "spark plug" to inspire others, and his leadership.

In the few years he guided the Healdsburg Museum, Ed and his corps of volunteers did the same things that we now depend upon our two paid staff members and 100 volunteers to accomplish. He was the writer for, and editor of, the *Russian River Recorder*; he gave museum tours to school classes; he saw that the museum was staffed with receptionists; he changed the displays; helped researchers; catalogued the collection, and oversaw the newspaper indexers. In his spare time he spoke to various civic and school groups. All this without a salary!

When Ed died in February of 1979, the whole community was shocked and felt a great loss. At the time of Ed's funeral, Congressman Don Clausen had a flag flown over the Capitol in Washington, D.C. It was then sent to Chrystal. To honor Ed, the name



Chrystal and Ed Langbart with children, Carolyn, Jeffrey and Melinda, May 1953



Council member Felix Lafon, left and Ed Langbart in front of City Hall Matheson and Center Streets, circa 1971

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of the Museum was soon changed to Edwin Langhart Museum. Eight years later the name was again changed to Healdsburg Museum, Edwin Langhart founder and that is still the official name. A few months after Ed died, his portrait was painted by James C. Vanderbilt, well-known Sonoma artist and prominent historian. Vanderbilt used a small passport photo as his guide. You can see this beautifully framed portrait hanging on the wall near the Museum's downstairs entrance.

**E**dwin Langhart gave Healdsburg a priceless gift-our heritage. We continue to build on the collection he started. One thing to remember is that not all of Ed's books and documents are in the Museum. The Healdsburg Branch Library has several shelves dedicated to the "Langhart Collection." Librarian Catherine Bassett tells us that the collection continues to grow with the publication of local history books. The library's catalog is online, so researchers worldwide can learn what old and new local titles are available. Someday in the future the Museum staff hopes to have its inventory online. Little did Ed know how widely his collection would be used by researchers.

Ed, and Chrystal, are buried on the hill in Oak Mound Cemetery, a short distance from Harmon Heald's grave. Thus, the man who gave us the Plaza and the man who gave us our heritage are both resting in our historic cemetery.



City of Healdsburg Logo used for many years, designed by Ed Langhart

Sources:

Melinda and Dennis Hill

Evelyn Iversen

Neil Iversen

Roy Lowe

Jan Harrison

Catherine Bassett

*Healdsburg Tribune*, Feb 20, 1969, Jun 26, 1975, Feb 22, 1979.

*Russian River Recorder*, No. 12, Apr 1979.

Conference of California Historical Societies Award of Merit Application, Mar 28, 1978

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## ARTIFACT: PHOTOGRAPHS-DOCUMENTARY VALUE AS RESOURCE MATERIALS



Photograph: Ed Langhart looking at a cannon in the City Archives room, 1964

This photograph does two things to illustrate "Artifact".

1) It shows an artifact from the Museum's collection, a cannon. This cannon was part of the equipment of the Russian River Rifles, home guard militia, organized in Healdsburg during the Civil War period. The cannon later was used for patriotic celebrations and political rallies.

2) It is itself an "artifact" - part of the Museum's collection. Photographs are visual histories. They are an important link to and a record of the past. They can illustrate aspects different from those in a written record, therefore they have documentary value as resource materials. A photograph and written material together can tell a more complete story.



HISTORIC



EVENT

# HISTORY FEVER: THE BICENTENNIAL AND THE CREATION OF THE HEALDSBURG MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 25 YEARS OF HISTORY -

By Marie Djordjevich

*Res. 94-75 Establishment of a Museum -- the City Attorney presented a proposal to establish a museum fund for the funding of the museum to be located in the front portion of the Arbor building. After discussion a resolution "Resolution of the City Council of the City of Healdsburg establishing special fund (Museum Fund)" and designated No. 94-75 was offered by Councilman Giorgi, who moved its adoption, seconded by Councilman Badger, and duly adopted on roll call vote. (12-15-75)*

Today the Healdsburg Museum is owned by the City of Healdsburg, but is funded, managed and operated by the volunteers of the Healdsburg Historical Society. Twenty-five years ago the Museum, the Historical Society and the City began the journey that would bring them where they are today.

## Bicentennial Fever

Just prior to 1976 "bicentennial fever" was sweeping across the nation, and Healdsburg was caught up in the excitement. Healdsburg had its own Bicentennial committee chaired by retired City Manager Edwin Langhart. This committee worked on Bicentennial activities that could be put into two categories. The first were short term: two days of city activities for the fourth of July weekend, which included things such as bicycle races, a tennis tournament, bocce ball, horseshoe pitching, canoe races, soccer games, a marathon foot race around Fitch Mountain, a band concert in the plaza, a street dance on Plaza Street, and a City barbeque at Villa Chanticleer. The second kind of Bicentennial activity dealt with long term goals: the establishment of a historical society and the opening of a city history museum. In 1975 the City had established a fund to raise money for a new city museum, to be opened in 1976.

## "Mr. Healdsburg"

The establishment of a city museum was a long time goal of Edwin Langhart. Langhart was a born and bred Healdsburger. He had a great love for history and for Healdsburg, and found a way to combine these two aspects. He served first as City Clerk and then as City Manager, giving 26 years of service to the City of Healdsburg. While fulfilling his professional duties he was also fulfilling a personal passion - he avidly collected both stories and artifacts concerning Healdsburg history. In fact, because of his unending efforts to collect and preserve Healdsburg history, Ed was called "Mr. Healdsburg". Ed also kept a room in a corner of City Hall that was used to store artifacts, and he constantly added to the collection. After years of collecting, researching and preserving Healdsburg history, Ed was named the City's first archivist and historian. All of this work culminated in the establishment of the historical society and the museum.

## The Healdsburg Historical Society is Born

The Healdsburg Historical Society was established first. On January 29, 1976 the first meeting of the Historical Society took place. The meeting, with over fifty people in attendance, was called to order by Ed Langhart. Topics of discussion included: charter membership, by-laws, election of officers, committees, fundraisers, and the establishment of the museum and the historical society. At the February 26 meeting officers were elected for the first year, and they were: Ed Langhart, president; Rose Demostene, vice president; Carol Barbieri, recording secretary; Jan Harrison, corresponding secretary; Billie Jo Haley, treasurer; and Jack Relyea, Bob Hassett and Barbara Beeson, members of the Board of Directors.

From the beginning the Healdsburg Historical Society, though a separate entity from the museum at that time, was intertwined with the museum:

*"The society, a non-profit organization has been started to help in recording the history of the Healdsburg area through the*

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The "old" Museum at 133 Matheson Street, originally the Healdsburg Tribune, built in 1949, then the Arbor and now the Senior Center.

collection and preservation of historical materials. It will work as the "citizen's arm" for the city's new museum, particularly with regard to fundraising." (HT 1-1976)

High on Ed Langhart's priority list was the cataloging of historical materials which were "stacked to the ceiling" in the city's archives. Ed also proposed that the society begin a catalog of old Tribunes and other papers [The Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society's newspaper index is the cornerstone of our present research library. Indexing of papers still continues]. Another of Ed's ideas was to publish a quarterly historical journal which would make use of historical photographs and drawings, oral histories, remnants of early writings, and original scholarly historical articles [The Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society's Russian River Recorder today is a testament to Ed's vision].

On July 6, 1976 under the provisions of the government code, the City Council established the museum. City Ordinance No. 608 reads partly as such:

**AN ORDINANCE ADDING ARTICLE XI TO CHAPTER 1 OF THE HEALDSBURG CITY CODE, TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC MUSEUM IN THE CITY OF HEALDSBURG, PROVIDE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A MUSEUM BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND TO ESTABLISH THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE MUSEUM BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The City Council of the City of Healdsburg does ordain as follows:

SECTION 1: Article XI is added to Chapter 1 of the City Code to read as follows:

**SEC. 2-110. Public Museum established**

There is hereby established in the City of Healdsburg a public museum for the collection, safeguarding and display of natural and historical objects.

The ordinance goes on to describe the management - Board of Trustees - of the Museum, and establishes the Museum as being free

to the public.

On October 7, 1976 during a regular meeting of the new Board of Trustees of the Healdsburg Museum (president Brad Witherell; secretary Alice Grove; members Darrell Barbieri, Bernice Auradou, and Jack Trotter) the first order of business was to appoint a curator for the Museum. It was moved by Bernice Auradou and seconded by Darrell Barbieri that Ed Langhart be appointed the curator. The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

By the end of 1977 the Museum was firmly established. In February 1978 Gaye LeBaron wrote in the *Press Democrat*, "Healdsburg has one of the best small museums in the West."

**A Sudden Transition**

The Museum, as well as the Healdsburg community, experienced a major loss when Ed Langhart passed away on February 16, 1979. The City mourned, and immediately the City Council voted to rename the museum the Edwin Langhart Museum in his honor.

In May 1979 the City Council hired Hannah Clayborn as the Museum's curator. The museum continued to function at 133 Matheson Street in conjunction with a community center that opened in May 1979 and shared the building space.

In January 1985 the City Council, citing the idea that the name Edwin Langhart Museum caused confusion to outsiders who might think that it was a privately funded and operated museum, one whose collection revolves around the person of Ed Langhart, voted unanimously, 5 - 0, to change the museum's name to the Healdsburg Museum, Edwin Langhart founder.

An angry outcry from the supporters of the museum's Langhart name arose, and amid the controversy the City Council put the motion to a revote on March 19th. Again, this time by a vote of 3 - 2, the Council voted to call it the Healdsburg Museum, Edwin Langhart founder.

One year later, in June 1986, the museum building at 133 Matheson Street was slated for remodeling as a Senior Center, and the Museum moved across the street to 132 Matheson Street, an old storefront window building.



Interior of the Museum at 133 Matheson Street, circa 1984, now the Senior Center. Shown here are John Youngblood, April and Andrew McDonald.

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### A New Place to Call Home

The Museum was not to be in the storefront for long. Back in 1978 John Short, Chairman of the Library Board, had suggested to the Museum board and Curator Langhart that the board support the building of a new library for Healdsburg, and the relocation of the Museum into the Carnegie Library building. Ten years later this suggestion became a reality when the opportunity arose for the Museum to make the move. The public library did have a new Healdsburg building, and the old Carnegie building was vacant and free.

The building was available, but it needed to be completely restored and refurbished in order to become a viable home for the Museum. In 1987-8 a successful fundraising drive by the Healdsburg Historical Society, fueled by Ed Gauer's donation of \$110,000 in matching funds, raised over a half million dollars for the building's restoration. Architectural Resources Group, Neves Associates, and Eddinger Enterprises completed most of the work on the interior and exterior of the building.

Procedures done on the building included both major interior and exterior renovations, including: the addition of a complete handicapped access system and interior elevator, new electrical wiring, plumbing and heating systems, earthquake safety measures, carpeting, a new interior stairway, and sprinklers and other features to protect the collection. Two large exhibit platforms were created upstairs, and a receptionist/gift shop area was designated.

On May 1, 1990 the Museum celebrated its "Grand Opening" in the Carnegie building.

### Another Transition

For two years the museum ran as usual in the Carnegie building. The City maintained the building, contributed funds, and salaried the Curator. The Historical Society continued to fund Museum projects and paid for assistant curators. Then, in 1993, due to budgetary concerns, the City cut their museum funding. The position of the curator was cut to half time, and then eliminated. The Historical Society, concerned about the potential loss of the Museum, tried to find a solution.

The City of Healdsburg and the Healdsburg Historical Society did come to a joint agreement. The entities of the Healdsburg Historical Society and the Healdsburg Museum became one organization with one Board of Directors. The City of Healdsburg retained ownership of the collection and the building. They agreed to continue the upkeep of the building, including all building maintenance and utilities. The Historical Society was to fund, operate and manage the Museum.

Then-assistant curator Claire Rithner became the curator, and helped the museum in its time of transition. Also, help with the tran-



*Mr. and Mrs. Ed Gauer donated \$110,000 in matching funds for the restoration of the present Museum building.*

sition came from dedicated volunteers. In January 1994 the Healdsburg Museum Volunteer Association (HMVA) was formed by a group of dedicated volunteers headed by Betsy Bippart, who recognized that the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society Board of Directors would need organized assistance to face the task of managing Museum operations without funding from outside forces. HMVA is still a vital part of the Museum's operations.

### History Lives! at the Healdsburg Museum

The Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society struggled gamely to keep the Museum afloat. Due to their tenaciousness and dedication the organization made a remarkable turnaround. Today the Healdsburg Museum, Edwin Langhart founder is a thriving and busy place. The Museum employs one full time Curator and one part time Research Curator. There is a Board of Directors to guide the organization, over 100 volunteers to fundraise and help get things done, and a membership that numbers over 500 to help support the operation. The Museum's research library serves a thousand people a year, and the exhibits attract both locals and tourists in large numbers. In just a short amount of time the Museum has become financially solvent, and is proud to have accrued an endowment fund of over \$600,000.

Every year the Museum works to mover closer to the professional standards for museums set by the American Association of Museums. Above all, it sticks to the original mission set forth by Ed Langhart: to record the history of the Healdsburg area through the collection and preservation of historical materials; to actively foster the appreciation of local history through programs and activities.

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## ORAL



## HISTORY

# EFFIE ROBINSON: REFLECTIONS ON A HEALDSBURG CHILDHOOD

Excerpts from an Oral History Interview with Holly Hoods, March 2001

### Early Background

My parents were Jessie C. and Elzora (Harper) Robinson. They were married December 26, 1901 in Georgia. I really don't know anything about

their early life together. I just know immediate social conditions before they left the state - which was racial unrest and rioting. So they decided that they would leave. People have asked why did they settle in Northern California? They came with a family named "Gordon" and the Gordon family settled in the East Bay. Coming from a rural community in Georgia, they wanted to live rurally.

The family moved first to Southern California, then later to Ft. Bragg, and eventually located in Healdsburg in 1919. My father had had experience, of course, working on small farms and he worked for a few people in Healdsburg, including the Passalacguas. I don't know how many years it took for him to get settled in [as groundskeeper of] the golf links [Tayman Park]. It seemed like a natural transition for a person who liked to work out of doors.



Robinson family in front of their house at 414 Grant Street. Fitch Mountain in the background. Pictured (left to right): Front row: Deborah Turner, Genevieve Munson (Bayan), holding dolls. Second row: Effie Robinson, Elzora Robinson, Elizabeth "Betty" Robinson Turner, Irene "Mattie" Robinson Wildy. Third row: Kathleen Robinson Munson, James A. Robinson, Rev. William Turner, Smith "Smitty" Robinson.

### First Black Child Born in Healdsburg

In our family, there was an older sister who drowned up near Eureka. Then there was Mattie Irene who came with [my parents] to Healdsburg; then a brother Smitty (Smith); then James; Kathleen; then a sister Elizabeth who we called Betty; and then I, Effie; then Genevieve, who

died when she was a senior in high school. I was the first one of our family born in Healdsburg. I was born in 1920. I believe I was the first black child born in Healdsburg, and Dr. Stone was the physician. We were the only black family in town when I was growing up.

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### Afterward

*"I think the biggest tribute we can pay him is to continue our interests in Healdsburg's past and future" (Jan Harrison, Ed Langhart's secretary and Historical Society Charter Member after the death of Langhart)*

What is so important about the past? What should you care about things that happened long ago? Since the Healdsburg Museum is a history museum we are 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 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.

Ed Langhart knew this, and he imparted this philosophy through his words and his actions. His dream of a history museum to house the history of the region he loved was fulfilled. For twenty five years the organization has laughed and cried, but above all it has endured. So, in this year, 2001, the year of the twenty fifth anniversary of the Museum and Historical Society we look forward to the years to come as well as looking back at the years that have passed.

And we remember: *The Healdsburg Historical Society and the Healdsburg Museum, which owe their genesis to Ed's intellect and energy, stand as living monuments to him. Through these institutions we will be able to continue to contribute to the mission which was so important to Ed - the understanding and appreciation of human history in the Healdsburg area. (Richard N. Lerner, Anthropologist).*

### Sources

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Historical Society & the Museum Healdsburg Museum Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, 1976-9  
Healdsburg Tribune February 1976, May 1976, June 1976, February 1979  
Letter to the Family and Friends of Edwin Langhart from Richard Lerner, February 22, 1979  
Press Democrat February 13, 1966



## My Parents

One thing I remember about my parents was the tremendous importance of education to them. They knew that this was the main route to a better life for their kids. And I have been so impressed by the intelligence of each in different directions. My father, for a person who had very limited education—perhaps only sixth grade or around there—my father could do math by himself. And he taught himself harmony. When my brother James was at USC doing graduate work in harmony, my father could talk to him about it. And he taught himself, from math books, to do math himself.

My mother was intelligent also, but demonstrated strong social intelligence: in the community, being part of it; helping her kids be a part of it; and helping her kids associate with everybody. And my mother had the most incredible kind of self-confidence. I remember one time we were at Golden Gate Park, looking at the pretty flowers, and there was a small party of diplomats there, and my mother was talking to the head of this delegation, and she said, "Oh, I wish you could see my garden in Healdsburg!" And he loved it! He just loved it.

We picked this up from her, because my father did not have this confidence in dealing with a broad range of people. He was happy and felt safe with his church. He was not a community person like she was. He was authoritative at home—not authoritarian, but authoritative. He was "the Father." He was clear and interested. But he was not a broad community person.



Effie Robinson

## Family Values

Besides education—studying, there was great, great importance put upon behavior. I don't ever remember my parents saying, "Because you are black and would stand out in this community," but certainly I got that message, and that we had a responsibility to behave. Another thing is that I don't ever remember my parents saying that we should not talk to, or associate with, any particular person. I remember a boy who was my age, in my class, who was considered the "bad boy." But my mother didn't treat him as a pariah at all. She saw him as someone who needed help and as someone who needed love. Her attention to him and faith in him paid off, because he grew up to be a respected citizen—a fireman who we knew later in his life.

## Religious Faith

My mother was sort of known as a mother in the church, a pillar of the church. And even when times were really bad, such as when [her son] Smitty was dying and other things, she would still go on Sunday morning, because it was part of her strength. All of us went with her to the Baptist Church. My father went to the Pentecostal

Church, but again this was where he had greater comfort. They were so fond of him. He had the same attachments there that we had at the Baptist Church. It was interesting. But when we became adolescents we went to the Presbyterian Church (Methodist-Presbyterian Federated), but we went there because we seemed to have more in common with the peers there. Smitty later became leader of the choir.

## Cultural Appreciation

Many of our friends were Catholic, and I remember especially the Giamettis. Our parents would let us go to special things with them, such as twelve o'clock mass and special ceremonies such as that, which I think for Protestants brought up in the South it was a very open attitude to let your kids experience. People were so afraid of people becoming Catholics or whatever, but we were allowed to.

My interest and knowledge about the Italian culture has lasted all of my life. And if I had money I would go to Italy every year. I love Italy! I felt very close to Italians, both the everyday kind of life and the culture. I learned a lot about opera from the Passalacquas. One of the Passalacqua brothers—the one who worked in the bank—was a famous tenor. I remember hearing him sing a great deal. And Mrs. Giametti, an Italian woman, taught me to do some Italian cooking. I remember I wasn't tall enough, so she had a little stool in her kitchen I stood on. And I would stir sauces! Another thing about family values: we didn't have liquor in our house—and certainly our family would not have let children drink wine—but when we ate at the Giamettis, my mother let us have a little wine because Mrs. Giametti

put water in it for her children. And my parents didn't see that as evil. Isn't that interesting?

## Importance of Identity

My parents, especially my mother, fostered learning about other people, as long as you could maintain what you are. And that's a good thing to teach kids. Our parents taught us to know who we were. Part of it was through continuation of the fear they had in Georgia; part of it was protecting their kids by good behavior—preparing us for the possibility of discrimination or name-calling. Part of it was teaching us not to be afraid—not to capitulate—but to expect and report to the teacher, so that we weren't exploited in any way. They taught us not to allow ourselves to be exploited, but not to allow ourselves to be overly aggressive—which was kind of a good balance, because they didn't want us to be overly submissive either. They taught us to tell them what had happened during the day, and had the kind of attitude like, "let us handle this along with you.", rather than letting us get ourselves into trouble. And for a family that was the only black family that was really good sense.

## Race Relations

They also taught us that in times of trouble there were people in Healdsburg whom we could count on as friends. Mr. Passalacqua became our attorney, and was our attorney for years and years and years. And the Passalacqua family was a family that we were taught as children would help in times of trouble. And when I was a child, during labor trouble, a man was lynched in Healdsburg. And I remember the fear that that evoked in our

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# A DOUBLE DATE OUT PAST PENA CREEK

by Milt Brandt

On Friday, August 13, 1999, the Healdsburg High School Class of '39 had their 60th class reunion at our Picnic Grounds on the Russian River. This gave me a chance to meet some classmates that I hadn't seen for many years. I happened to be in the class of '40, but had many school friends in the class of 1939. One special friend was George Hinkle. Special, because of an incident that took place when we were in high school over 60 years ago. The few times I've had the pleasure of seeing George over the years, we always greet with, "Do you remember the double date?"

It all started with one of the few high school dances. George and I coincidentally had the same idea about dating a couple of fair-haired maidens for the dance. He would ask Maxine and I would ask her sister Margaret. This seemed like a great idea, if they would go with us. The only catch --- I don't think George really knew at the time exactly where they lived. The invitation was accepted by the sisters, so transportation was the next obstacle. My family had a big old straight-eight Hupmobile that was plenty hard on gas when I could get it. George asked me if I knew anything about disconnecting a speedometer. I assured him that this had been performed in the past for several other friends and there would be no problem.

George volunteered his family car, about a 1925 vintage "Model T" sedan, the pride of the Hinkle family. Ol' Pop Hinkle kept it in perfect shape, with the help of his two sons, Ed and George.

Since our dates lived in Upper Dry Creek Valley, across Pena Creek at the end of Pine Ridge, mileage and gas consumption had to

be preplanned. Gas was no big deal since we had a pump at our house on the ranch. All that was needed was the speedometer cable disconnected and transportation was A-OK.

I lived one mile south of town so that had been taken into consideration when reconnecting the speedometer. The disconnect was a breeze; George and I were on our way. The "Model T" ran like a clock and was one of the few "T's" that had a speedometer which was installed on the front wheel. This gave Pop Hinkle full control over Ed and George when they borrowed the "T." The trip past Pena Creek was uneventful and the girls seemed to enjoy every minute of it, but kept reminding us of their curfew imposed by their father. I had a slight acquaintance with their dad, my father knew him. He wasn't exactly the type I would like to meet after bringing his daughter home late.

After the dance we headed straight for home and it was fortunate we did, since a ground fog had started blanketing

Upper Dry Creek Valley. By the time we dropped the date off, the fog had really settled in. I was a little concerned of George's ability to stay on the road due to his unfamiliarity with the road. Pena Creek had a one-way bridge on a curve which wasn't the easiest to negotiate when there wasn't any fog. "Model T" lights weren't the greatest in clear weather.

We made it across Pena Bridge and George started gaining confidence in the road, so we picked up speed. The next turn to watch for was a 90 degree left turn where Yoakim Bridge Road continued across Dry Creek and met the main Dry Creek Road to town. Due to the fog and increase of speed, we had arrived at the turn-off sooner than George expected. I shouted and pointed to the turn-off since we were about to pass. George was startled and cranked the "T" to a hard left. "Model T's" had a nasty little habit of "jack knifing" when turned too sharply. This put us out of control; George over-corrected halfway around the turn and immediately "jack knifed" the "T" the other direction to the right. Not able to stop, we left the roadway, went over the bank and headed for a large barn. There was no

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## Effie Robinson

family. I don't remember otherwise feeling afraid in Healdsburg.

Why did my parents come to Healdsburg and why did they stay? There's something about Healdsburg. . . in spite of some troubles we had and never had them as a family, I'm just talking about individual things at school in spite of that, there was something about Healdsburg that felt "fair" to them. They apparently just never feared assault on us or that someone would hurt us. In the process of growing up, I've gotten a great deal of skepticism and real kind of irritation from some black friends, who wondered, "Why in the world would you want to stay there?" And the feeling that there is something . . . not quite right about a black family being content to stay in a white community. They said "you must have been very lonely." When I first came down to college in San Francisco, I anticipated that every black person I saw was a relative! And so I would be so friendly,

wanting to talk to everyone. My friends would say, "For Heaven's sakes, you don't know them!"

It's an interesting thing that white people [in Healdsburg] would say that they learned positive race relations from the Robinsons. I'm glad. You know, when you think about teaching each other about the other race, it just couldn't have been a better experience then. Because every day, on both sides, you're testing, and obviously nobody got terribly hurt. And it's interesting, because I know I have black friends who don't really believe that I could feel as safe as I feel with some white people. They absolutely don't believe it. . . And yet, in the process of growing up, one is vulnerable to hurt by people, white or black. So I have learned that one doesn't totally embrace anyone until after testing and friendship develops. I have friends of all races.



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chance to stop. With the speed we had gained going over the bank, it was goodbye "T." Fortunately we made it between two fence posts in a large corral. Boards flew off the posts. George's driving skills amazed me -- without hesitation, he pulled the "T" full throttle, spun a doughnut in the middle of the corral covered with cow and horse manure, jammed in the "low pedal" and we went way out between the two posts where we came in. The "T" spun, scratched and clawed its way back on to the road. George wheeled the "T" to the right and we were on our way, slicing through the fog.

This gave us the topic of conversation for the trip back home.

When we reached Nardi's corner north of

town, or what was known as the "Mile House," it was hook-up time for the speedometer cable. I felt down on the floor boards of the "T" for the cable, which would have been no problem to screw back together. My finger ran across a hole where I was sure it had previously been. Without lights of any kind, we decided to strike a match and look under the "T."

This was when we got the real shock of the evening. Now there was less than half of the speedometer cable left. It had been dragging all the way up Dry Creek and back. George dropped me off and went home to dream up some kind of an excuse for the missing cable.

George's story about the vandalism on

the "T" at the high school evidently worked. Pop Hinkle could never figure out why the trip to Healdsburg was now only five miles instead of the usual six.

To this day, I still can't figure out how we got out of that corral and up the bank keeping the "T" in one piece, without a scratch. I'm sure the next time we meet, there will be the familiar question, "Do you remember the double date out past Pena Creek?"