



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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Healdsburg 1960 - 1980: An Overview A Time of Transition

by Marie Shobe • Page 3



Left to right, L.L. Sauers, William Carroll, J.E. Carriger

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221 Matheson Street

P. O. Box 952

Healdsburg, CA 95448

(707) 431-3325

Marie Shobe, in her excellent feature article titled *Healdsburg 1960-1980: An Overview* tells us that this was a "time in transition." There were many changes going on and these changes affected the whole community. There were some turbulent times and the three years that developer Larry Wilson tried to change the look around the Plaza were very significant. However, there were some positive elements — the new city hall, the new hospital and the freeway bypass.

This is Marie's last article for us. Since becoming a mother (a baby girl named Anna Jo) in August she opted not to return to the museum as its curator. We will miss working with her on the *Recorder* and other projects. We started out working with her almost 8 years ago and we always appreciated her professionalism through her tenure here and her willingness to help in many capacities. She has left an indelible mark on our museum for which we are grateful. And we wish her well in her future endeavors.

Our extremely capable Research Curator, Holly Hoods, in her article about community leaders has picked four very interesting men who left their mark on Healdsburg. They helped guide Healdsburg through these often difficult times. Of course, these are only four of many who gave of themselves for the good of the community.

And Charlotte Anderson has done a remarkable job in ferreting out interesting information about entertainment and sports during the 1960s to the 1980s.

Our next issue for 2003 will end our series, in which we have attempted to give our readers an historical, birdseye capsulized review of the 100 years, 1900 to 2000, in which Healdsburg changed from a town founded by Harmon Heald to what is now a trendy and widely known community.

Arnold Santucci
Editor

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HISTORIC



OVERVIEW

HEALDSBURG 1960-1980:

- AN OVERVIEW -

A TIME OF TRANSITION

by Marie Shobe

Introduction

The first thirty years of the 20th century were a time of growth for Healdsburg. The town was growing and developing, and in these years established its major infrastructure – modern electricity, water and sewer. Healdsburg became an agricultural center, as grapes, hops and prunes became the big three economically. The coming of the railroad opened up new markets for farming and ranching, and also was a boon to the tourist population of the area. Healdsburg's resorts – especially those on Fitch Mountain – became very popular vacation destinations.

While Healdsburg was developing internally during its first thirty years, its second thirty years were greatly affected by outside circumstances. Beginning in 1929 the country entered the period of the Great Depression, and Healdsburg, being an agricultural/farm-based community was hard hit. Farm income dropped, stores closed, businesses failed. Healdsburg citizens were generous with their help to themselves and others during this time. President Roosevelt's government relief programs of the WPA and CWA helped provide Healdsburg with new buildings and updated infrastructure. With the end of the Depression in 1939, Healdsburg faced a new outside challenge as soon as 1941 when the United States entered World War II. WWII deeply affected the Healdsburg community, and everyone was involved in war activities in some way. From serving in the military to participating in salvage drives, victory gardens and civil defense, Healdsburg citizens rallied to the cause and worked to contribute to the war effort. In the meantime, Healdsburg's resorts continued to thrive, the town adopted a battalion during the Korean War, and agriculturally it entered a time of transition, as the hop and prune industries collapsed.

The period stretching from 1960 to 1980 can be characterized as a time of transition for the town of Healdsburg. Agricultural bases had changed or were changing, and this in turn affected the downtown area.

Agriculture

As noted in the preceding issues, in the years leading up to 1960 Healdsburg underwent some big agricultural changes. These changes greatly affected the town and its surroundings.

By 1960 all the hop fields and yards had closed, ending a long and prosperous 70-year hop run. The biggest agricultural change affecting Healdsburg at this time was with the prune industry. Prunes and Healdsburg had been synonymous since at least the turn of the century. By 1924 Healdsburg was calling itself the "buckle of the prune belt", and its nearest competition was the Santa Clara Valley. But by the 1960s prunes were a fruit on a downslide. Lack of consumer interest and demand – a 1965 California Prune Advisory Board survey showed that people liked prunes, but did not eat them – bad marketing, increasing production and drying costs, and the emergence of Sonoma County as a home of more and more premium wineries spelled the demise of the prune industry. By the end of the 1970s most of the prunes were gone, and many of the acres of prune orchards were replaced by the now ubiquitous vineyards.

Downtown Healdsburg and Larry Wilson

While agriculturally Healdsburg was changing its base cash crops, downtown Healdsburg was undergoing a change as well.



Larry Wilson

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The prune to grape transition created a sort of lean time, and the downtown area suffered commercially. Then in 1973 a man named Larry Wilson began buying up land and buildings around the Plaza. For five years, until 1977, the Larry Wilson development dream held Healdsburg captive.

The 1976 *Healdsburg Tribune* front page opening line states: "The world discovered Healdsburg's "Howard Hughes" this week, but his plans for a \$23 to \$28 million renovation of the downtown remain largely a mystery." For three years Wilson had been buying Plaza land in an effort to purchase all of downtown. While he kept his eventual plans for the area quiet, early artist renderings of his concept showed a "Plaza of the Flags", with many flags around the square. The secrecy of the plans, coupled with rumors and the flag drawings caused Healdsburg residents much concern and the feeling that Healdsburg would become a "Disneyland". Planning Commissioner Pat Stratton is quoted as saying, "We don't want a Disneyland. We want to live here and go to Disneyland" (LeBaron 1989). Wilson declared that his plans included 6.5 to 7 acres in downtown, centered around the Plaza, and going partly north on Healdsburg Avenue, and partly on Center Street to North Street. Rumors circulated that he already owned 98% of the buildings and land in question; however, "cooler heads estimated that he traded a lot of paper but little money and that he had options on 80% at the most, never 98" (LeBaron 1989).

Meanwhile, as a landlord, Wilson was also getting low marks. Many renters complained about their rent going up, while repairs were ignored. City Manager James Stanfield remained neutral on Wilson, saying, "that the developer has a right to buy property and charge rents as he thinks best" (HT 5-1976). Wilson defended his actions by saying that raising rent on his properties is "necessary to cover his investment, insurance, and debt costs" (HT 6-10-1976).

Wilson proposed a three-step renovation plan. The first step was the removal of metal awnings from the buildings, the addition of hanging flower baskets, cosmetic improvements, and wire pendants (his famous flags). Step two included the demolition of certain buildings, and the construction of two museums (one a free public museum, and the other a commercially run venture that would include exhibits from local wineries), and the construction of senior housing (which would incorporate Federal funding). The third step involved "the marriage of stage one and stage two" said Wilson, but he did not elaborate further.

One of the prevailing concerns among the city council members was that many of the buildings were dangerous and not up to code, and would have to be repaired, not just outfitted with new facades. "All of Wilson's buildings will have to be brought up to building code

specifications to assure public safety," councilman Robert Sauer stated (HT 6-1976). "...some of your buildings are junk and a little bit of painting and changing the façade isn't going to do it," charged councilman Allan Beer (HT 6-1976). Wilson believed that the merchants should pay into repair and renovation costs. Most city council members did not want to get involved in the economics of the situation. "We're not going to put money into buildings that won't pay, we'll close them all," Wilson stated. Unfortunately, his words came true. Because of the high rents and the lack of repairs, many tenants either moved their business elsewhere, or went out of business. New tenants were few and far between (Healdsburg was not yet "on the map"), and basically "Wilson and Associates stopped commercial enterprises around the plaza cold" (LeBaron 1989). In 1977 a *New West* magazine cover photo showed Wilson "flipping the bird" to City Hall and the Healdsburg "hicks". Soon after this, Wilson sold his properties to Lawrence Herrington, who in turn sold them as well. Meanwhile, due to the lack of commercial business in the Plaza, it became a hangout for bikers, and a place proliferated by drugs and violence.

While Larry Wilson managed to have a detrimental effect on the growth of downtown Healdsburg, he did seem to have some foresight. He said that "Healdsburg will experience a major growth in tourism in the next ten years," (HT 5-1976) and that proved to be correct, more than he probably even realized.

New Construction

Despite the somewhat bleak economic outlook of Healdsburg and its central Plaza at this time, there were definitely new things happening in and around Healdsburg. Downtown may have had a ghost town feel, but Healdsburg continued to build as a community in other ways.

City Hall

During the period of 1960-1980 Healdsburg's City Hall was demolished and replaced. A brief history of City Hall will put those particular events into context.

Healdsburg's first City Hall was a very grand building located on the corner of Center and Matheson Streets. It was completed and dedicated in 1886. Throughout its 72-year history the building was in constant use. It housed not only the city offices, but also at one time or another: the post office and postmaster's stationery store; the public library; the firemen's meeting places and living quarters; the school gymnasium; the express and telegraph company; the

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City Hall dedication, July 12, 1961

police department; the Chamber of Commerce; and the California State Forestry, Healdsburg Station.

In 1954 the Poulsen building next door was gutted by fire, and the City Hall withstood some of the fire damage. By the late 1950s calls for the building's demolition were voiced. Other factions wanted to spend money to preserve the venerable old building. A 1958 election included a proposal of a \$235,000 bond to go for construction of a new City Hall. The voters rejected it. In 1960 there was another election, this time concerning a five-part \$450,000 multiple bond issue - \$210,000 of it for a new City Hall. The measure passed.

In October 1960 the Healdsburg City Council awarded the demolition contracts to Empire Wrecking and Demolition of Santa Rosa. By December there was an empty lot at the corner of Center and Matheson Streets, and on December 19, 1960 the ground breaking for the new City Hall took place. Many local and county businesses participated in the construction of the new building: Standard Structures (Healdsburg); Malm Metal Products, Inc. (Santa Rosa); Western Builders (Santa Rosa); Luciani Pump & Metal Co. (Healdsburg); Don Dowd Co. (Sebastopol); and Castagnetto and Suacci (Santa Rosa).

The new City Hall was dedicated on Saturday, July 15, 1961 at 2:00 p.m. Ceremonies were led by Mayor Art Ruonavaara and City Council members Douglas Badger, L.L. Sauers, William Carroll and J.E. Carriger. After the formal dedication, an open house followed.

Part of the dedication ceremony included the burying of a "time capsule" in front of the entrance to the City Hall. A marble plaque with the date and the Masonic emblem on it indicated the capsule's location in the concrete. The capsule was a solid 12 x 16 x 24-inch copper box filled with various items and documents considered historical and interesting to the time. Among the items put in were photographs of the Plaza and the old City Hall, a set of plans and specifications of the new City Hall, copies of annual reports, a bottle of wine, a box of prunes, and copies of the Healdsburg Tribune.

Healdsburg's second City Hall served the community for thirty-seven years.



Ground breaking for the new city hall, December 2, 1960. Left to right, J.E. Carriger, with shovel, L.L. Sauers, Don Price, Edwin Langhart, Art Ruonavaara, William Carroll, Jess Ratchford, Waldo Iversen and Douglas Badger, with shovel.

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Sitting officially for their photographs in the new city hall Council Chambers are members of the city council. The council met for the first time in the beautiful new chambers with the semi-circular table on the dais at the west end of the room on July 17, 1961. Left to right, L.L. Sauers, William Carroll, Mayor Art Ruonavaara, Douglas Badger and J.E. Carriger.

Healdsburg General Hospital

A decade later, Healdsburg was building again for the community, this time the structure was the hospital.

Healdsburg had had a hospital since 1908 when Dr. Seawell opened a five-room sanitarium on North Street (the present day Camellia Inn). In 1918 Dr. Sohler opened up his own sanitarium, and in 1920 the two doctors combined their practices into one hospital in the T.S. Merchant building on Lincoln and Johnson Streets. The hospital operated successfully until 1929, when it was partially destroyed by fire. A new Healdsburg General Hospital was built on the same location, and was fully modern and up-to-date when opened. This hospital served the community for 43 years.

In 1968 the hospital was sold by Drs. Emerson Meyer, Clinton Robinson and Frank Sohler, Jr. to Chanco Medical and Electronic Enterprises, Inc. The new owners began planning for a new facility. In 1969 four acres on University Street were prepared for new construction.

The new hospital was very modern and up-to-date. It had 62 beds, conventional x-ray and diagnostic x-ray units, orthopedic surgery, cystoscopic surgery, a physical therapy center, an inhalation center, an extensive laboratory and sterilization, two lounges each

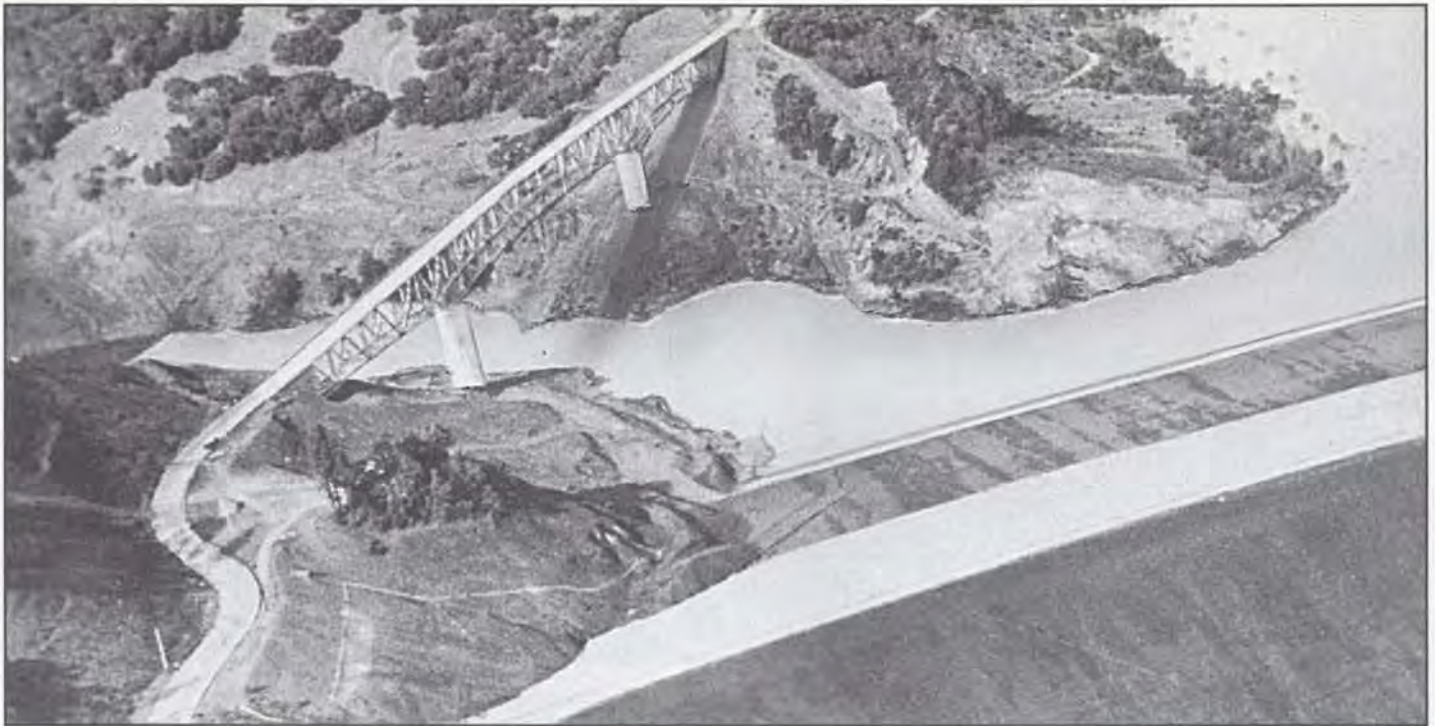
for doctors and nurses, a pharmacy, a kitchen and dining room, an emergency ward, a large administration center, an intensive care and pediatrics wing, and a maternity ward. "This hospital is so good it's almost worth getting sick to get into," joked Dr. Edward Neal, Master of Ceremonies at the hospital's opening.

The opening and dedication of Healdsburg General Hospital at 1375 University Street occurred on Saturday, January 8, 1972. Besides the ceremonies, there was also an open house to the public. Up to 2000 visitors came to see what the town's new health facility looked like and entailed (Healdsburg's entire population in 1970 was 5410, so this was an impressive showing). Healdsburg was quite proud of its cutting-edge hospital facility.

Warm Springs Dam

One of the more controversial constructions of this period was that of Warm Springs Dam. The issues surrounding the creation of Warm Springs Dam and Lake Sonoma are complex and highly charged. Warm Springs Dam and Lake Sonoma were authorized for the purpose of flood control, water supply and recreation. It was a project full of difficulties, with people fervently falling on either side – those for the dam and its stated purpose, and those opposed.

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1967 the Warm Springs Dam -Lake Sonoma was dedicated, preparatory work was begun and the first major contract was awarded and road relocation workj was begun.

People opposed for reasons such as: they felt the water would be put to urban use, rather than agricultural; the project was a waste of taxpayer money; the recreation draw would cause vineyards to succumb to housing developments. Native American Pomo peoples were opposed because their homeland would be flooded over, and they would lose their sedge beds – materials for basketmaking.

The first ground breaking for the dam took place in 1967; however, legal and political battles stopped the project. Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) fought to install the dam. 15 local businessmen, farmers, ranchers and professionals who supported the dam formed CCI in the 1970s. The group lobbied citizens and local, state and federal officials for the dam project, its reason being that it was good for flood control and water distribution. After years of studies, referendums and legal battles, the project was given the go-ahead. The second groundbreaking occurred in 1978. The dam was completed in 1983.

Freeway Bypass

The Redwood Highway stretched from the Marin side of the Golden Gate Bridge through Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte counties of California, and Josephine County of Oregon. In many cases the highway ran straight through towns, including right down Healdsburg Avenue. As more and more peo-

ple began owning and driving cars, as Healdsburg and the north counties became vacation destinations, and as large trucks were used more and more to haul loads of goods, traffic congestion and noise in the downtown area became intolerable.

In November 1960 the Healdsburg freeway bypass officially opened with ceremonies. City Vice Mayor Doug Badger and Chamber of Commerce president Don Moore officiated, and removed the barricade. City attorney Jess Ratchford spoke to commemorate the opening: "The Department of Highways, through its capable engineers has complied with the majority wishes of the citizens and businessmen of our community by annexing this freeway in the particular area where we believe it is most beneficial to our community. The thunder and noise of truck traffic over and through the main thoroughfare of our city is rapidly diminishing. Tomorrow it will be practically eliminated. The businessmen along our main street will, tomorrow, heave a deep sigh of relief, roll up their sleeves and commence to rebuild and revitalize "old" West Street into a new and thriving Healdsburg Avenue" (HT 11-1960).

The freeway bypassed Healdsburg and extended north as far as Lytton. In 1964 Highway 101 was extended from Lytton to Cloverdale, and then to Eureka.

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In November 1960 the Healdsburg freeway bypass officially opened with ceremonies.

Conclusion

The period starting in 1960 could be characterized as a time of transition for Healdsburg. On the agricultural level Healdsburg underwent some massive changes, losing both the hop and the prune industries. The grape and wine industry was just starting up again, and had yet to have a huge impact on the area. This agricultural downturn, as well as the involvement of Larry Wilson in the downtown area, had a negative commercial effect, and the downtown area became abandoned.

However, not all was bleak. The impact of the automobile on the area was continuing, this time with the installation of the Highway 101 bypass. Community commitment was seen in the many construction projects undertaken in this period, including a new City Hall, a new general hospital, and Warm Springs Dam.

Future look: The 1980s proved to be a time of turnaround and growth for Healdsburg, thanks to the growing popularity of wine and the economic viability of grapes. Healdsburg also experienced a commercial renaissance. The Plaza was reclaimed, and Healdsburg began eyeing the future in new ways.

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FOUR WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE:

HEALDSBURG COMMUNITY LEADERS, 1960's - 1970's

by Holly Hoods

The decades between 1960-1980 were a time of economic transition in Healdsburg, as they were throughout California. In 1960, the population of Healdsburg was only 4,816. The city was small enough—and it still is!—that “ordinary” citizens could have extraordinary influence through participation in civic life. This article spotlights a few of the people in 1960-1980 whose vision, dedication and ongoing community involvement helped shape Healdsburg and its future.



Art Ruonavaara

Art Ruonavaara was Mayor of Healdsburg and served on the City Council from 1954-1963. Ruonavaara, who came to Healdsburg in 1933, still lives here, as does his brother Clarence. He remembers his days in city government fondly, but downplayed the importance of his own role when interviewed for this article. “I was just one of a bunch of people who were in there,” he claims. Al Barbieri, Waldo Iversen, Doug

Badger, Felix LaFon, Ed Langhart, Jack Quinby, Bob Sauers, Bill Lucius, and Jack Grove were other active citizens during the same time period.

Ruonavaara characterized his approach to city politics as being responsive to the will of the community. “We just let the people do the suggesting and we did what they wanted,” he commented.

During Ruonavaara’s tenure as Mayor, a new City Hall was built at the corner of Matheson and Center streets. The 101 freeway bypass to the city was also constructed, banishing the traffic of the highway from the center of town. Beautifications to the Plaza during this period included new landscaping, a sprinkler system, paved walkways and a new fountain.

Married to Dorothy Ackerman in 1938, the genial Ruonavaara owned and operated “Art’s Service,” a gas station on West Street (now “Healdsburg Avenue”) for decades. In 1962, he left the Mayor’s office to serve as a district Supervisor, an office he held for eight years. City Clerk and historian Edwin Langhart praised the accomplishments of Mayor Ruonavaara (and the City Council), declaring, “Measured in terms of achievement, 1960 was a milestone in the city’s 94 years of corporate government.”

Doug Badger

Doug Badger was appointed Mayor in 1962, taking over the position from Art Ruonavaara. Badger, a member of a pioneer Santa Rosa family, had moved to Healdsburg in 1925 as a child. Active in

many fraternal organizations including Rotary Club, the American Legion, and the Masonic Lodge, he also played third base for the Oddfellows and the Prune Packers baseball teams.



Married to Florence Fiege in 1941, Badger was elected to the Healdsburg City Council in 1951. He served for the next 24 consecutive years, including five terms as Mayor between 1962-1973. Badger owned Redwood Electrical in Healdsburg for 25 years and was a member of the Healdsburg Lighting Committee, which financed the lighting and managed Recreation Park during its baseball heyday.

Badger was Mayor in 1963, the year that Healdsburg adopted a General Plan to guide the basic growth and development of the area over the next 25 years. The Planning Commission, with Clyde Cook as chairman, and Jack Grove, Dan Harper, Ernest Nisson,

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Herb Solem, Ray Wainscott and Adolph "Zip" Barbieri considered land use, circulation, population densities and forecasts to create the shape that Healdsburg took over the next 25 years. A comprehensive Zoning Ordinance was passed in 1965.

Badger also served as Healdsburg's delegate to the Northern California Power Agency and was one of the founding members of its Board of Directors. He worked with E.M. "Milt" Brandt in the local group, "Citizens for Community Improvement" in support of the Warm Springs Dam. Described by Al Barbieri as "one of the most dedicated men [to the City of Healdsburg] I ever knew," Doug Badger died in 1985. Badger Park is named for him.



Byron Gibbs

Byron Gibbs is another individual who was well known for his involvement in community programs and activities. A graduate of San Jose State University, Gibbs came to the Healdsburg School District from San Rafael Boys' School in 1930 to be an athletic coach and eighth grade teacher. He married Lucretia Butler Burton in 1936, with whom he raised four children. In 1942, Gibbs was appointed principal of Healdsburg Elementary School. Three years later, he

became Superintendent of the District.

Named Healdsburg Citizen of the Year in 1959, Gibbs sponsored many programs to benefit local youth, and also helped establish Fitch Mountain Elementary School. He was the first president of the Future Farmers Country Fair board, remaining in office for six years and serving on the board for 23 years. Gibbs retired from the school district in 1965. He died in 1988. Gibbs Park was dedicated in honor of his life of service to the community.



Edwin Langhart

Without Edwin Langhart, writing an article about Healdsburg's history would be difficult, if not impossible. Langhart, known as "Mr. Healdsburg," was appointed by the City Council as the city's first historian and archivist. Langhart collected photos, newspapers, deeds, city records and local artifacts in a tireless effort to chronicle Healdsburg's history. He established the first city archives of any community in Sonoma County.

In 1976, Langhart chaired the city's Bicentennial Committee, which energized local interest in the city's history. He then established the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society. Langhart's integrity and enthusiasm for preserving Healdsburg's history encouraged many people to donate

locally significant items to the Museum. The Healdsburg Museum, Edwin Langhart Founder, now has one the finest regional collections and archives in the state.

Langhart was born in Healdsburg and lived almost all his life in service to his beloved community. A graduate of San Jose State University, he was elected Healdsburg City Clerk in 1948. Langhart served the city from that position and as City Administrator, and finally as City Manager, retiring in 1974.

Married to Chrystal and father of three, Langhart still managed to be active in a number of other organizations. He was a charter director of the Sonoma County Historical Society, a 26 year member of the Healdsburg Kiwanis Club, chairman of the Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation, member of the Salvation Army Lytton Springs Advisory Council and member of the American Legion.

Edwin "Zeke" Langhart died at the age of 63 in 1979. Jack Grove, an 11-year veteran of the Planning Commission, commented: "All the good things of life in our beautiful little city and its surrounding valleys were represented truly by Ed's spirit and life or community service." Jan Harrison, his secretary at City Hall and with the Historical Society, agreed: "I think the biggest tribute we can pay him is to continue our interests in Healdsburg's past and future."

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ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORTS: 1960 - 1980

WATER SPORTS, AMATEUR THEATRICALS, FAIRS AND TOURS

by Charlotte Anderson

"After all, it is the river that first gave Healdsburg life, and it is the river that still nourishes us. City water comes from wells sunk near its banks; farmers depend upon it and its tributaries for irrigation water; and thousands of visitors each year look to it for recreation. Canoeists make well-known use of the Russian, most Healdsburg youngsters learned to swim in it, and picnickers flock to Memorial Beach," (Michael Meacham, News Editor, Healdsburg Tribune, August 28, 1975).

The 1960's and the 1970's were great years on the Russian River and at Memorial Beach. The "summer dam" went in before Memorial Day, creating "Lake Sonoma," and stayed in until after Labor Day. Boating, water skiing, swimming and swim lessons kept the area very busy.

In 1960 a Swim and Ski Festival, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the Healdsburg Boat Club, covered two days. An AAU-sanctioned swim meet began the competition which included seven events for men, women and youngsters plus the "famous" one-mile free style for both men and women.

The following year there was an expanded ski and boat show. Tommy Davis did a barefoot ski and "shoe ski". A five-man pyramid was formed by Arnold and Frank Lelouran, Bob Skover, Frank Robinson and Len Williams. Jack Hurt and Wayne Calvert performed a tub ride and Bob Skover rode the disc.

All this activity attracted a major water ski manufacturer to Healdsburg. A headline in the *Tribune* (September 1, 1966), announced that "Future Water Sports Mecca Draws Ski Company." It was reported that Bob Maher, owner of Maherajah Water Ski Company leased the S. Duval Bell quonset building (now housing the Healdsburg Classics Antiques) on Healdsburg Avenue for the manufacture of one of America's top quality skis. The skis cut from laminated pieces of Eastern Ash became a "must" for serious skiers.

Healdsburg's Centennial Year's Ski and Boat Show found the banks of the Russian River, the Railroad Bridge, and the "Highway" bridge loaded with spectators. Boats and skiers raced each other over a 1/4 mile strip. Dave Stevens of Healdsburg won the 2-1/2 mile timed ski race.

While there was no Ski and Boat Fest in 1968, the swim meet, containing the State's only mile river race, was held once again. The AAU



A five man pyramid was performed at the 1961 ski and boat show at Memorial Beach.

swim races always have been the culminating event of the summer swim program. Again this year Rich Scramaglia headed the program which brought almost 300 local children. He had able assistance from Sandie Brooks, Diane Selzle, Marta Thompson, Lynette Crapuchettes, Ruth Uboldi and Kathy Savoie.

Although the Ski and Boat Festival returned in 1969, attendance continued to slip. In August 1971, there were some top out-of-county skiers on the river having been invited by Maherajah Ski Company (and using Maherajah Skis) showing their stuff. In 1973 Memorial Park was being given a "face lift" but swim lessons and the meet continued. Although the Bicentennial calendar for July 3 and 4, 1976 only showed one river event, canoe races, a major feature of the 4th was the annual marathon foot race around Fitch Mountain and back through town to the Plaza, 8.2 miles. The race was won by 24-year-old Hersh Jenkins of Rohnert Park in 43:36.5, a good two minutes ahead of Healdsburg's Bill Jensen.

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There have been quite a few trophies for Frank Robinson since the days he started water skiing with the Healdsburg Boat Club. Robinson, the son of Mrs. L.N. Kirkpatrick of Healdsburg, entered competition speed skiing at age 33. He retired at age 38 after winning Skier of the Year and the Clear Lake 60 mile marathon. He also held Northern California High Point Championships. Born and raised in Healdsburg and active in high school sports, after his graduation from high school in 1952, he took up skin diving, sky diving, flying and motorcycles. He began skiing in 1961 and participated in his first ski race in 1966 — a race he will never forget as he “took a drink” (wiped out) and broke nine ribs and punctured a lung. After a long recovery he was determined to speed ski and set himself up with a strenuous training schedule which paid off when in 1967 he was Skier of the Year. Robinson retired at age 38, planning to water ski for pleasure with his family. (Healdsburg Tribune, February 24, 1972).

From 1973 to 1978 the Russian River was the site of Inner Tube Racing. The *Healdsburg Tribune* of July 5, 1973 announced that the “National Tube Title at Stake — Del Rio to Camp Rose.”

It all started appropriately enough with a session at Camp Rose Inn and someone suggesting that “hey, let’s have an inner tube race.” And so out of light talk and friendly rivalry, the Fitch Mountain Tube Racing Association was born and the first sanctioned National Tube Racing Championship was scheduled for July 4, 1973.

To an elite, racing inner tubes is nothing new. The uninitiated may think it an easy matter to jump on some old tube and float-paddle one’s way to glory. Not so. Any pro can tell that skill, cunning, and most importantly, moxie are needed. You don’t just plop down in the river and head for the other end. You plan, pace yourself, learn the river. As the first national test proved, upsets are likely.

Three heats were held to establish the best times in two divisions: the sleek auto inner tubes and the fatter, slower truck tubes. Racers could do anything they liked to get tube and body down the river, provided they didn’t whack each other, touch bottom or pull along the bank. They also had to stay with the tube.

When the racers first appeared around the bend in their final sprint to the finish line, 11-year-old Mike Ward was comfortably in the lead and set a national record of 13:54. Dennis Step finished second with 15:42. In the ‘truck division’ Otto Goode splashed in 15 flat with George Sager next with 15:3. Leland Stanford won for the ‘70ish crowd.

In 1974 the Tribune reported that “a record high purse of \$25” was up for grabs in the second annual International Tube Racing Championships. Defending champion was Mike Ward who was also holder of the course record of 13 min. flat set in the qualifying race. Della Gehres became the first female qualifier and was shortly joined by Susie Pero.



Water skiing at Memorial Beach.

However, it was a novice who won the main event. Joe Brandt just kept paddling and beat off Mike Ward’s challenge to win in 13 minutes. Ward was second with 13:03 and Brian Ward was third.

In 1978 the Tribune reported that “the great tube race, dormant in 1977, has been revived.” The results were reported as follows: Joe Brandt used an inner tube from a large truck to win his third straight Fitch Mountain International Inner Tube Race, setting an official race record of 12:02 on the official “unmeasured mile” from Del Rio to Camp Rose, Mike Ward was again a runner up at 12:28 and Dennis Step was third in 13:22.

Keglers

During this time bowling became an important past time for Healdsburg residents. In fact, a number of Healdsburg people had long been so interested in the sport of bowling that they had traveled to Santa Rosa to compete. The opening of the Healdsburg Lanes in 1959 by Ray Stark and Bruno Rodella led to great local interest. (There were even two local lanes at one time when Solar Bowl was in business). In the twenty years that followed there were many leagues: men’s, women’s, mixed and juniors. There were also many types of tournaments to keep people interested and involved.

In 1961, two women’s teams went to the State Tournament in Bakersfield. Ned’s Beefburgers with Dorothy McClain, Ida Sizelove, Rex Tregaskis, Jonnie Winter and Alva McClain captured 21st place.

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In 1962, Healdsburg women bowlers finished "in the money" in the State Tournament in Sacramento. The leader was Dorothy McClain. Others placing were Lorine Knutson, Jonnie Winters, Vi McMillan, Vivian Zak, Betty Simon, Norma Cousins, Kathy Bellagio and Rex Tregaskis.

At the beginning of 1963, there were 70 teams! In the Service Club league, the Kiwanis had 3 teams, Ready, Willing and Able. They entered three five-man teams in the State Tournament in Stockton. The members were 1. Bud Knutson, Virg Bottarini, Bruno Rodella, Waldo Iversen and Walt Wright; 2. Burnett Bidwell, Larry Carson, Byron Gibbs, Gerry Miller, and Fran Branern; 3. B.K. Van Cleave, Jim Steele, Jerry Hodges, Tom Beahm and Ken Gonsalves.

In April, 1966, the Mid-Town Cafe team won the Healdsburg Bowling Lanes Sponsors' Perpetual Trophy tournament, with the large trophy going to Dick Barrett, owner of the Mid-Town Cafe. Team members George Barry, George Willey, Gene Luciani, Dale Faust and Joe Kondra received individual trophies.

In 1967 members of the Kiwanis Club attended the 22nd State Bowling Tourney coming home with \$846 in cash prizes!

Junior Bowlers, coached by Dale Faust, did well in 1971 winning awards in state and county competition. Three years later the Juniors competed in the California Junior Championships in San Diego. This was Junior Bowlers 10th straight year at this event and they always brought home at least one trophy. In this year 8 trophies were captured led by Craig Carrothers and Don Cribbons.

In 1977 Bill Seaholm of Rohnert Park bought the Healdsburg Lanes. He made major renovations and held a grand opening in September of 1978. However, bowling in Healdsburg came to an abrupt halt in October, 1978 when a fire caused major damage to the Healdsburg Lanes. The gutted building remained for almost a year but was finally completely removed by Mitchell L. Mitchell, owner of the Mitchell Shopping Center. Avid bowlers went to Cloverdale for games, but the days of 60-70 teams comprising 300 to 350 bowlers were over. As Ray Stark would say at the end of his weekly column in the *Tribune*, "That's 300!"

Theater Fledgling Productions 1960-1974

Stage plays in Healdsburg in the very early '60's were mainly presented by the Healdsburg High School Drama department under the direction of Mary Uboldi. In the spring of 1963 some of "Mrs. U's" former drama students from 1945 to 1961 met with her to plan a

benefit variety show for Skip Atkinson, a Healdsburg High School student who had been in a horrendous automobile accident. The show, largely built around music, featured two bands, choruses, solos, a quartet and specialty acts. Production and musical directors were Mary Uboldi, Bob Taylor, Joyce Peters and John Terry. Acting and material direction by Don and Frankie Osborn. Putting in hours of preparation and costuming of numbers were Linda Jones, Deanna Gaskins, Linda Loveland, Bob Nelson and Joyce Pateson. Tom Evert was the M.C. for the evening and the two bands were the Romantics and the high school band featuring Clem Houg, Valerie Vescova, Chet Strech, Arnold Young, Jeff Butts, Les Thompson, Lori Shaffer, Bill Webb, Ken Rader, Jim Cox, Jerry Engelke, Don Vanucci, Jan Halverson, Larry Madarus and Steve Sawyer. The show was a huge success, not the least of which was the opportunity for 16 years worth of alums to interact.

In July, 1964 a group spearheaded by Jim Parker, met in an attempt to get some type of little theatre group started. Naming themselves the Balcony Players, the group scheduled their first play, "Say Hello, Say Goodbye," a comedy written and directed by Parker. The September offering included Parker, Marion Purcell, Ben Benzmilller and Linda Loveland. The second production performed in late November, and also written by Jim Parker, was a satire on Hollywood called "Above the Smog." In the ensuing year, the Balcony Players gathered members and offered one-act plays, a revue and a melodrama, "Gaslight Capers" directed by Joan-lee Woehler, Healdsburg High School's new drama coach. Further attempts at a little theatre group were postponed but Joan-lee Woehler kept entertainment alive and well with her lavish spring musicals at the high school.



Barbara Reese and Kathy Smith in one of the Balcony Players production, circa 1965.

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It wasn't until 1972 that the Believers II was formed, a community expansion of Believers I, the high school drama group. Andy Dickinson was the public relations chairman and Joan-lee Woehler and Lou Sbrana were directors of the group's productions,

The Camp Rose Players

For the bicentennial celebration in 1976, a group of people gathered in the basement of Camp Rose Inn to discuss putting on a play, an original written by Jane E. Moore, based on Mary Stewart's story about Josefa Carrillo and Henry Delano Fitch. Jane had help from some of the regulars at the inn including Vincent Campanella. Another customer, Bill Slattery, wrote all the original music and played it with John Born on marimba and Sara Anna playing the violin. The basement area of the inn was converted into a stage and theater and *Josefa and Captain Fitch* was performed.

After their successful run in August, 1976, the group formed The Camp Rose Players. *Josefa's* director James Scally went on to direct the next three successful productions, *Cinderella* had Valeria Barnes as Cinderella, Willie Lamberson as the King, Ron Hogan, the prince and Francesca Trouette as the Fairy Godmother. *Cinderella's* mother and step-sisters were played by men: Jim Scally, Jack Armstrong and Charles Baker.

The Camp Rose basement, referred to as Miss Kitty's Playhouse at the Camp rose Inn, became the site for more productions, including *No Sex Please, We're British*, *Something's Afoot* a musical spoof of the Agatha Christie murder mystery *Ten Little Indians*; and *Snow White Goes West*.

In 1978, the productions were *How's the World Treating You?*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *The Apple Tree*. In addition, the Players gave a young playwright a stage for his works. Bill Nagel, a 23-year-old Healdsburg High School graduate who began thinking seriously of a play writing career while at the University of Washington, presented two one-act plays called *Lost in the Jungle* and *The Big Schlep*. The latter included local regulars Bill Nagel, Mickey Sheehan, Sara Anna, Pete Foppiano and Vivian Lowers.

Tours, Fiestas, Fairs

The oldest annual Country Fair, St. John's, continued through the two decades with its 14th fair in 1962. Featuring a Fun-O-Rama, a ravioli dinner, a pancake breakfast, a chicken barbecue, entertainment and a concert as "usual" fare, the organizers added special events over the years. In 1964, Jack, the docile donkey from Lorin Paulsen's Key Rock Camp, took children on "sulkie rides." 1966 introduced a fence-painting contest in a decor suiting the Mexican Village theme.

In 1967 for the Healdsburg Centennial and St. John's 19th annual fair, fence painting featured scenes from Healdsburg's history, a jumping frog contest (bring your own frog or rent one!) and Asti

Mayor Pat Paulsen was the headliner star.

For their silver jubilee in 1975, St. John's had a Monte Carlo style Casino night, fair booths, a special art booth, unique dolls, and initiated a hof-brau style family dinner. St. John's used this fair to help fund many of the school's necessities.



Alexander Valler 4-H Club members left to right, Betty Beffa, Jeff Rollisberger and Peter Proschold, circa 1960.

Future Farmers Country Fair

The second oldest annual country fair, the Future Farmers Country Fair, held its 13th annual fair in 1962, billed as a "community supported event unique, outstanding in the West," according to the *Healdsburg Tribune*. A twilight parade, locally sponsored booths, animal and project exhibits, food and a fabulous auction were its staples. From time to time new events were added. In 1964 car clubs were allowed in the parade. In 1965, a new event at a venue away from Recreation Park was added especially for the increasing number of children "who love horses but do not have other animal projects." It was a 4-H light horse halter class held at the Russian River Riders' Hoofbeat Park. It was not a riding class but the horses were led through a specified routine on a halter.

The Healdsburg Centennial year, 1967, featured the first "Sir Rusty", a choice whole beef steer that could be won for \$1 donation!

In 1971, the Country Flea Market made its first appearance among the many stalls.

The FFCF celebrated its Silver Anniversary in 1974 by staging the largest auction in Fair history at \$45, 278.

"Ag Is Great in '78" was the motto for that year which saw Mickey Mouse, in person, leading the Twilight Parade riding in the city's old

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fire truck. Mickey later handed out parade awards at Recreation Park.

1979 Kid's Day and Pet Parade were full of youthful exuberance even when the greased pole climbing event was cancelled because someone made off with the pole ! Once again, a new auction record was set with totals amounting to \$74, 482.



Prune Orchard, circa 1963

Prune Blossom Tour

Healdsburg's first annual Prune Blossom Tour, held in March of 1961, was approximately 40 miles long including Fitch Mountain, Alexander Valley, Geyserville, Asti and Dry Creek. Tours began downtown at the Chamber of Commerce office which gave out brochures, maps, free coffee and prune samples.

In 1962, the tour was held on two weekends because the blossoms were late. Some Bay Area clubs and organizations began coming by chartered bus. Approximately 1300 out of towners visited over the two weekends with a great number stopping at the Villa for a picnic.

Added attractions in 1963 were prune cookies baked by 4-H cooking classes and on Sunday an old-fashioned country luncheon was served by the Russian River Farm Bureau in the Alexander Valley Community Hall for \$1.35. 240 attended.

As they did in 1963, the Timber Crest Farms hosted visitors in 1964 who wanted to be shown the handling of prunes in making gifts and other types of packs. A new addition, in St. Paul's Hall, was the Spring Exhibition of Healdsburg Arts featuring paintings, ceramics, mosaics, glass painting, weaving, photography and sculpture.

In 1965 a record 1500+ visitors representing 19 states and 7 foreign countries checked in at the Chamber of Commerce office and many more made individual tours. On the Sunday there were 4 bus loads and 15 airplanes flew into Healdsburg Municipal Airport bringing 40 persons for the conducted tour.

1967, '68, '69 and '70 found the tour expanding and each year setting new records for attendance. In 1971 there were again more people and more buses, and a two-hour live broadcast by Santa Rosa radio station KVRE.

1972 brought registration to the Villa where coffee and prune cookies were served, bags of prunes were for sale, and the Healdsburg Arts and Healdsburg businessmen had displays. There was an antique show at the Alexander Valley Church and an old-fashioned country luncheon at the Alexander Valley Community Hall.

The 17th annual Spring Blossom Tour in 1977 had such a crowd that everything at the Villa was gone by 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. 26 buses and numerous cars brought 1500 customers to the Alexander Valley Hall luncheon.

1978 — The people came on Saturday and it rained and they came on Sunday for a beautiful day and the prune bags sold out. Florence Wheeler and "bakers" at the Healdsburg High School made over 3,000 prune cookies. She said her recipe was developed from a *Healdsburg Tribune* article when the Blossom Tour first started. That recipe wasn't for 3,000 so she just multiplied. Food columnist Mildred Howie had "a jim dandy recipe" this week (March 23, 1978) for the average homeowner; but not for 3,000 cookies !

The Blossom Festival in 1979 was as successful as ever with bus loads of sightseers routed from the Plaza, around Fitch Mountain with stops at Camp Rose Inn, Del Rio Woods and the Villa Chanticleer where prunes packed by the Senior Citizens Club and prune cookies made by Florence Wheeler's Living Skills class were distributed.

Prunerama

In one of the biggest shows in Northern California ever devoted to one fruit, prunes were spotlighted during a two-day Prunerama in January, 1963. The show, attracting over 6,000, was sponsored by the University of California's Agricultural Extension Service and the Prune Growers of Sonoma County. It featured exhibits and displays on Sunsweet's 10 acre plant on Healdsburg Avenue. Attractions included prune displays showing processing and packaging in various designs; agricultural machinery; farm chemical displays; a candy kitchen where 4-Hers prepared prunes in a number of ways; and a small forest of nursery trees. One of the highlights was a collection of farmer-made equipment — some of it old, some Rube Goldberg like but all ingenious and effective.

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Wine Fest

The first annual Russian River May Wine Fest at Healdsburg, California was held on the Plaza in 1972. Since it was the first, the organizing committee decided the affair would be local, small and informal. The bread, cheese and gourmet food booths were used by Shoffeitt, Hickory Farms, Geysers Peak Winery, Molinari and Son Salami and Sausages, Marin Cheese, Butils Bakery and Garrett Hardware. The wineries, Trentadue, Martini and Prati, Italian Swiss, Simi, Korbel, Windsor, Foppiano, Pedroncelli and Cambias served over 3,000 tastings.

The next year the Wine Fest expanded to 11 wineries under chairmen Fred Haley and Bob Mascherini. French bread, cheese and salami were served and entertainment was continuous.

The Bicentennial year, the 5th annual Wine Fest, had 15 wineries and nearly 10,000 tickets were purchased to taste wine.

In May 1978 the Chamber of Commerce was assisted by the Russian River Wine Road. The largest crowd of the 7-year-old event, 6,000, had taste choices from 21 wineries, musical entertainment and street dancing, craft booths, snacks and full lunches. Special Wine Fest T-

Shirts designed by Healdsburg artist Kathy Birdsong were sold and logo wine glasses were used for tastings.

In 1979 over 6,000 people showed up and consumed 2,161 bottles of wine. When the 8,000 tickets were sold, the Chamber members went to the wineries' booths and recycled 1,000 more! The Chamber and Wine Road grossed \$16,000 from ticket sales, glasses and t-shirts, about \$2,000 more than 1978. This event looked to be a "keeper"!

Centennial Year

It was during this time that Healdsburg celebrated its Centennial. 1967 saw a number of planned activities during the ten days of the celebration, August 19 through August 27. Such diverse activities as sidewalk sales to Whiskerino contests to talent and drama shows to Warm Spring Dam groundbreaking ceremonies, parade, soccer match, swim meet and ski and boat show as well as the reading of the city charter and a short history of the city by then Mayor Doug Badger.

The period of 1960 to 1980 was a period of transition for Healdsburg (see Marie Shobe's article in this issue of the *Recorder*). However, the residents, for entertainment, focused on continuing and enjoying traditional projects and programs.



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