



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SPRING 2006 • ISSUE 92

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



*W.B. Whitney's Pharmacy in the 300 block of West Street
(now Healdsburg Avenue), April 18, 1906*

Shaken and Stirred: The 1906 Earthquake in Healdsburg

by Daniel F. Murley Page 10

Undaunted: The 1906 Earthquake in Northern Sonoma County

by Holly Hoods Page 7

Also In This Issue:

**Pedroncelli Heritage:
From Prohibition to the Present**
by Holly Hoods Page 13

Pioneers in the Russian River Valley:

The Alexander Bennett Nalley Family
by Whitney Hopkins Page 4



HEALDSBURG MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Edwin Langhart, Founder

2006 Officers

Al Loebel, *President*
Ann Mahoney, *Vice President*
Ed Summerville, *Recording Secretary*
Ed Head, *Treasurer*
Chris Baldenhofer, *Ass't Treasurer*
Bob Rawlins, *Past President*

Directors

Mel Amato
Charlotte Anderson
John Bippart
John Cross
Anna Darden
Vince Dougherty
Lea Gilg
Lois Grace
Patricia Keadle
Dan Maraviglia
Kent Mitchell
Joe Norton
Keith Power
Kay Robinson
Frank Zak

Staff

Daniel Murley, *Curator*
Holly Hoods, *Research Curator*
Whitney Hopkins, *Collections*

Publication Staff

Arnold Santucci, *Editor*
Daniel Murley, *Associate*
Holly Hoods, *Associate*
Charlotte Anderson, *Associate*
Whitney Hopkins, *Associate*
Fran Lescalleet, *Distribution*
Amoruso Printing, *Printing*

RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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

221 Matheson Street
P. O. Box 952
Healdsburg, CA 95448
(707) 431-3325



John Jr. and Jim in the vineyard

Two pioneer families and the '06 earthquake are the focus of the Spring 2006 issue.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1906 earthquake, our two curators have collaborated on this historic event.

Research curator Holly Hoods has given us a detailed account of the quake and what devastation it caused in Northern Sonoma County.

Curator Dan Murley took advantage of the museum's extensive photo collection to recount the story of the quake and what damage it did to the community with before and after photos.

I believe that you will find these two articles interesting and very informative. And a fitting tribute to that period of our history.

In this issue we have also spotlighted two pioneer families — the Nalleys and the Pedroncellis.

Whitney Hopkins, who is in charge of cataloging the many items donated to the museum and utilizing the museum's ability to digitally scan photos given or loaned to the museum, has put together another excellent article about a Russian River Valley pioneer family, the Alexander Bennett Nalley family.

Research curator Holly Hoods has chronicled the fascinating story of the John Pedroncelli Winery family.

This "tied in" nicely with John and Jim Pedroncelli being honored by the museum at the museum's 8th annual "History Lives / Pioneer Award" which was held on March 16 at the Villa Chanticleer.

Two pioneer families — two very different stories, both extremely interesting and well written.

A SPECIAL NOTE: In the Winter 2005 issue of the *Russian River Recorder*, in Charlotte Anderson's article, "From Hello Girls to Direct Dialing", the name of one of the operators was misspelled. It should have read Norma Fradenburg Maffei. We regret the error.

Arnold Santucci
Editor



The Gobbi Building after the 1906 earthquake.



John, Sr. and John Pedroncelli with mother clone Zinfandel vine, circa 1960's.



Alexander Bennett Nalley Ranch, above Eastside Road, circa 1896.

4. Pioneers in the Russian River Valley: The Alexander Bennett Nalley Family

by Whitney Hopkins

In her daily work as Collections Clerk Whitney Hopkins comes across many fascinating stories and photos related to pioneer families. In this article she showcases and relates the history of the Nalley family. She illustrates the article with many photos donated by the family and now in the museum's extensive photographic library.

7. Undaunted: The 1906 Earthquake in Northern Sonoma County

by Holly Hoods

One hundred years ago on April 18, 1906 a major earthquake hit Northern California, bringing devastation to the Healdsburg / Santa Rosa area. Our research curator, Holly Hoods, in her article about this momentous event, has chronicled the quake's path of destruction in the county.

10. Shaken and Stirred: the 1906 Earthquake in Healdsburg

by Daniel F. Murley

Our curator, Daniel F. Murley, has also taken the topic of the '06 Quake and given it a different perspective. Using the numerous photos from the museum's extensive photo collection, he tells us about the devastation using before and after photos.

13. Pedroncelli Heritage: From Prohibition to the Present

by Holly Hoods

Chronicling the history of another pioneer family, Holly Hoods tells the interesting story of the Pedroncelli family and how it gained stature in California's wine industry. The Pedroncelli brothers, John and James, were honored on March 16 with the museum's 8th annual History Lives / Pioneer Award, a tribute well deserved for their devotion to their chosen field of endeavor and for their service to the community.

PIONEERS IN THE RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY: THE ALEXANDER BENNETT NALLEY FAMILY

by Whitney Hopkins

Because of today's technological advancements, the Healdsburg Museum is able to digitally scan and utilize your historic Healdsburg photographs, even if you are not willing to part with the originals. These digital copies can be added to our computer database and used to enhance research, museum publications and exhibits. The museum has been fortunate to take advantage of this opportunity on multiple occasions in 2005 and 2006. One collection of original photographs that was loaned to the Healdsburg Museum to scan (and return) were those from one of the early pioneer families in the fertile farmland of the Russian River Valley south of Healdsburg — the Alexander Bennett Nalley family. Their farm was located about 3/4 miles south of the intersection of Eastside Road and Windsor River Road. Family photographs were loaned to the museum by Nalley's great great grandson and his wife, Doug and Kristine Branscomb, who today still live on part of the original Nalley ranch at 9030 Eastside Road. Alexander Nalley's great grandson Barclay Nalley who lives in Healdsburg also shared several family photographs. With the help of newspaper articles, books, and conversation with Barclay Nalley and Doug Branscomb, the following description of A.B. Nalley and his family was compiled.

Alexander Bennett (A.B.) Nalley was born in 1827, in Nelson County, Virginia, but moved with his family as a young boy to Pike County, Missouri, where he grew up. Alexander's father William Nalley, also born in Nelson County, Virginia, had moved the family to Missouri in the 1830s when he purchased land there. William sold portions of land to settlers and managed the remainder of the land as a farm. Alexander was taught to read and write at home, probably by his mother Elizabeth, in addition to attending local schools for a short period of time. In his early 20s, just as he was about to enter a school in St. Louis, gold was discovered in California. Alexander gave up his plans for obtaining an education, succumbed to gold fever, and headed west across the plains shortly after 1850.

Once in California, Alexander Nalley staked out a claim along the Feather River with his younger brother Flavius Josephus. The pair mined with poor results. Eventually the brothers were able to save enough money to purchase miners' supplies in Marysville which they took back to the mines and sold for a profit. After realizing the high demand of miners for merchandise, Alexander briefly opened and operated several small general stores (in Forbestown and Poor Man's Creek) as well as a hotel. The brothers eventually built a sawmill and lumber flume, while they continued to prospect for gold.



Alice and George Nalley with grandchildren Andree and Barclay Nalley,
circa 1930's

By the fall of 1853 Alexander Nalley had settled in Sonoma County. The family legend, according to Barclay Nalley, was that Alexander heard about the bountiful agricultural land in Sonoma County from Captain John Sutter of Sutter's Fort (who had purchased Fort Ross on the Sonoma coast in 1841 from the Russian-American Company). Meanwhile, Alexander's brother, Flavius Josephus, returned to Texas where their family had moved from Missouri in the 1850s. Alexander took up a squatter's claim of 160 acres near Santa Rosa, which he farmed for several years. He then left the farm to open a general merchandise store in Santa Rosa for two years, before serving as Sonoma County's Deputy Sheriff and Under Sheriff. In 1858 he married Martha Crane (whose father

Continued on page 5

George was running a hotel in Santa Rosa), and several years later bought a ranch of 400 acres along present-day Eastside Road (south of Healdsburg) which extended from the Russian River across the valley up into the hills near Windsor. Doug Branscomb shared the romantic family story that his great great grandfather Alexander had stood up on top of the hills where the two redwood trees affectionately known as "Adam and Eve" grow, and had looked down on the Russian River Valley and decided where he wanted to settle. Alexander Nalley purchased the ranch from Lindsay Carson (brother of the famed scout Kit Carson) who had moved to the Healdsburg area in the 1840s, and lived there with his wife and children until 1861 when they moved to San Antonio, Texas, and Carson joined the Confederate Army.

When Alexander Nalley purchased it, the ranch had a small house on a hill (just above Eastside Road) which overlooked the Russian River Valley. This was where the Nalley family made its home for four generations. This house was built by Lindsay Carson. Barclay Nalley relayed that his great grandfather Alexander renovated and expanded the house. He also recalled the rambling house's seven different entryways, large back porch and Mission grape arbor.

From Santa Rosa, Alexander moved to the Russian River ranch with his wife Martha and young son, George (b.1859) - his only child who lived to adulthood. While the Nalley family had moved to the farm, they still kept up with family and friends in Santa Rosa and made many visits there. According to Doug Branscomb, George Nalley attended a school in Santa Rosa. They also were involved in business in Healdsburg and Windsor over the years. Alexander Bennett Nalley was one of the organizers of the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Healdsburg and served as a Director of the board until his death in 1907.

In 1884 George Nalley married Alice Day, the daughter of Santa Rosa grocer, Edwin Day. Briefly George operated a machine shop and foundry with the Philpott brothers in downtown Windsor, but spent the vast majority of his life on the ranch where he and Alice raised three children, Marion "Dixie" (b.1886), Ellen "Dimple" (b.1888) and Alexander Barclay "Ned" (b.1890). (Ellen is Doug Branscomb's grandmother and Ned is Barclay Nalley's father.) While the family enjoyed activities at the ranch, such as horse-

back riding, they continued to maintain their connection to the surrounding towns, including Healdsburg and Santa Rosa where the children attended school and played in musical groups.

Marion Nalley married in 1907 (Stanley Kohl) and Ellen Nalley married in 1910 (Louis Quinan). While his sisters had left the ranch after marrying, Ned Nalley was still a bachelor farmer in 1920 when he met his wife Charlotte Reeves. Charlotte, who was a registered nurse, met Ned after coming up to visit the Nalleys' neighbors, the Harrison Barnes family, after meeting them in the city where they had gone in search of a nurse for Mrs. Barnes. Ned Nalley married Charlotte Reeves in Mill Valley in 1921 and the couple made their home in the old Nalley farmhouse on Eastside Road where Ned continued to farm. Meanwhile Ned's parents, George and Alice Nalley, had built a new home - a small bungalow on a neighboring hilltop to the south of their first home. Their daughter Marion, who was divorced from her husband, moved back to the ranch to help her parents.



The Nalley house on Eastside Road, Circa 1892. Original section of the house was probably built by Lindsay Carson. Left to right, Alexander Bennett Nalley, Marion Nalley, Ellen Nalley, Alice (Day) Nalley with baby Ned Nalley, Martha "Mattie" (Crane) Nalley.

The last Nalleys to grow up on the ranch were Ned and Charlotte's children, Andree (b.1922) and Barclay (b.1926) who were both born in the old house with the help of Healdsburg's Dr. Sewell and Agnes (Walker) Grier. Today Barclay fondly recalls gathering eggs, feeding chickens, saddling the horses, milking the cows, and caring for orphaned lambs. His father taught him animal husbandry, and also constructed an aviary near their house much to Barclay's delight. The family kept a vegetable garden and fruit orchard near the house for their own use. On the ranch, hops, prunes, alfalfa hay and grapes were grown at various times - generally following the agricultural trends of the area. The Nalleys' hop kilns were situated south of the house on the eastern side of Eastside Road. Barclay recalled driving home one night to the sight of flames erupting from a hop kiln on a neighboring ranch, afraid at first that that it was his family's house burning. He attended the one-room Sotoyome School on the corner of Eastside Road and Old Redwood Highway through 8th grade and then went to Healdsburg High School.

In 1933 George Nalley sold off 240 acres to his neighbor Warren

Continued on page 6



Ned and Charlotte Nalley, circa 1921.

Jones, and he and Alice retired to a home on Hoen Avenue in Santa Rosa where they lived for the rest of their lives. Alice, in particular, had friends and social groups whose company she enjoyed in Santa Rosa. Their son Ned continued to live in the original farmhouse with his family and managed the remaining acreage; however Ned's sisters, Marion and Ellen, also had shares in the ranch. Unfortunately there was a family dispute pertaining to a bank loan, according to both Barclay Nalley and Doug Branscomb. In 1943, Ned Nalley sold his share in the farm to his sister Ellen and her husband Louis Quinan who were living in Sacramento where Louis worked with the National Harvester Agency. The Quinans, who had one daughter Martha (Doug Branscomb's mother), built a new home in the hills above the original ranch house, and later a second home. Meanwhile the Ned Nalley family purchased a home at 326 Matheson Street from Mrs. E. Pollock (formerly belonging to Dr. and Mrs. E.I. Beeson). They never returned to live on the family ranch. Barclay was in his senior year of high school and got a job working at Rosenberg and Bush Department Store. His mother Charlotte went to work as a nurse at the hospital, and his father worked in a variety of businesses including the hardware store, the fire department, and the county road maintenance. The family missed the farm, but made the best of their new situation, although they did not maintain good relations with the Quinan family.

Ellen Nalley Quinan lived on the ranch until her death in 1983. Ellen's daughter Martha raised her sons Doug and Roger Branscomb on the ranch, who in turn raised children there. Over time pieces of the ranch were sold off, and in 1971 Vimark Vineyards, who had acquired the land where the original Nalley farmhouse stood, burned the house down. Today Doug Branscomb and his wife Kris still live in a house built by the Quinans on a hilltop above Eastside Road. Both Doug Branscomb and Barclay Nalley like to recall the good times on the farm. Barclay, the last Nalley in the Healdsburg area today, remembers the best occasions as being the big family meals in the historic, rambling farmhouse and the wonderful holiday and birthday parties where friends and neighbors (including the Wattleses, Calhouns, Slussers, Joneses, Laughlins, Chisholms, and Wilsons) would come and enjoy each others' company on the Nalley ranch. [RRR]

Sources

Books

Guinn, Prof. J.M. "Alexander B. Nalley." History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Coast Counties, California. The Chapman Publishing Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1904, pp. 778-781.

"The Gordon and Henderson Families, Maria Louisa Carson's Forbearers." Carson family history. Author unknown, on file at Healdsburg Museum.

"The Nalley Family." From an interview with Charlotte Nalley. Vintage Memories: Dry Creek, Neighbors and Friends. Compiled and published by the Dry Creek Neighbors Club, 1979, p. 29.

Warner, Barbara R. The Men of the California Bear Flag Revolt and Their Heritage. The Arthur H. Clark Publishing Company for the Sonoma Valley Historical Society, 1996, pp. 444-445.

Census Records

U.S. Census, 1840, Peno, Pike County, Missouri
U.S. Census, 1850, Calumet, Pike County, Missouri
U.S. Census, 1860, Springfield, Limestone County, Texas.
U.S. Census, 1860, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California
U.S. Census, 1880, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, CA
U.S. Census, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, Russian River Township, Sonoma County, CA

Interviews

Branscomb, Douglas
Nalley, Barclay

Newspapers

Healdsburg Enterprise: 7 Aug. 1920, 8 Nov. 1934, 12 March 1937
Healdsburg Tribune: 4 April 1895, 4 July 1907, 7 Nov. 1907, 6 April 1910, 3 August 1910, 28 Dec. 1910, 24 Sept. 1943
Russian River Flag: 31 July 1873
Sonoma County Journal: 3 Sept 1858
Sonoma Democrat: 29 Sept. 1859, 14 March 1861, 3 October 1861
Sotoyome Scimitar: 20 July 1933, 5 March 1936

UNDAUNTED: THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE IN NORTHERN SONOMA COUNTY

by Holly Hoods

"Such a tremendous seismic disturbance has never, within the memory of man, been felt in this valley or county."

Healdsburg Tribune, April 26, 1906

Widespread Devastation

It took less than one minute on Wednesday April 18, 1906 for a natural disaster to transform the Bay Area and much of Sonoma County into chaos. At 5:13 that morning, slumbering residents were startled awake by a fierce jolt which grew into a 48-second seismic shudder of tremendous intensity. The shaking was accompanied by an ominous subterranean rumbling, punctuated by the noisy crashes of buildings collapsing, brick chimneys falling down, and glass shattering. A great cloud of dust emanated from the aftermath. As the shaken survivors ran from their dwellings in shock, they gradually realized what had happened and that they were lucky to be alive.

The earthquake's path of destruction was 20-40 miles wide, running 200 miles from Salinas in the south to Fort Bragg in the north. San Francisco was undeniably the scene of the state's greatest devastation and loss of life, as raging fires swept through the city, devouring what the earthquake had spared.

Santa Rosa was the hardest-hit local area. It was described after the earthquake as "a complete wreck." Every business house was in ruins, as well as the County Court House, the Hall of Records, the Carnegie Library and the new Masonic hall. There were over one hundred dead. On a smaller scale, Santa Rosa's damage paralleled San Francisco's, as fire followed earthquake and residents were left homeless. Most of the deaths and cases of serious injury occurred in the brick hotels and rooming houses where victims were crushed in their beds.

Word came quickly that Sebastopol, Glen Ellen, Windsor and Sonoma were also hit hard, but that Petaluma and Ukiah had relatively little damage. Due to the widespread catastrophe, Governor Pardee declared the next day a legal holiday in California.

Healdsburg Relatively Fortunate

Comparatively, Healdsburg considered itself fortunate. Although numerous business houses and residences collapsed, no one died in town. Still the losses were substantial at the heart of downtown. Destroyed were the Odd Fellows' Building at the corner of West St. [now Healdsburg Ave.] and South [now Matheson] St; the Cohen brick building adjoining the Odd Fellows' building to the east; S.J. Hall's brick building, the Red Men's Hall [a fraternal lodge building] and Whitney's Drugstore all on West Street; and the Grangers' block of stores on the north-west corner of Powell (now Plaza Street) at Center. Other severely damaged commercial downtown buildings included: the Union Hotel, the Carl Muller building, Henry Fox's Masonic block, the Sotoyome Hotel, the Kruse building and Quim Sewell's saloon.

Getting Out the News

Shared disaster briefly brought the two competing town newspapers together. When the roof from a neighboring building collapsed onto the *Healdsburg Tribune* office, publication as usual was out of the question. *Healdsburg Enterprise* staff graciously collaborated with their rivals at the *Tribune* to produce an Earthquake edition of the newspaper, published on the undamaged *Enterprise* press. The newspaper reported that the estimated losses of nearly 50 businesses and business owners ranged from \$100 to \$15,000. Every brick building in town was more or less damaged, and every family in town lost from \$25 to \$300. The average loss was \$1,800, substantial in 1906, yet the tone was optimistic: "*The business men of this city have taken their losses with good spirit, and the work of rebuilding is progressing as rapidly as possible.*"

Trouble at Odd Fellows' Hall

The Odd Fellows' Hall sustained the worst damage and represented the largest individual loss in Healdsburg. This structure—"the handsomest building in the city"—had been completed only a

Continued on page 8

few months earlier at a cost of over \$20,000. Except for a three-story apartment in the rear which somehow survived, the building was a total ruin and would have to be rebuilt. The collapse of the building spelled economic disaster for the businesses who rented shop space within the stricken structure. One such merchant, druggist C.D. Evans, was able to salvage only a little stock and some fixtures from his pharmacy before moving his business to the Rose Building next to Passalacqua's grocery store. Estimating his loss at \$700, he no doubt soon regretted the generous credit terms he had previously granted his customers. Four days after the quake, Evans pleaded in print: "PLEASE CALL AND PAY. THE ALMOST COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF OUR STORE LEAVES US IN BAD SHAPE AND WE EARNESTLY HOPE ALL THOSE WHO ARE IN OUR DEBT WILL CALL AND GIVE US WHAT ASSISTANCE THEY CAN".

Dramatic Rescue

The most dramatic episode in the quake aftermath in Healdsburg was the rescue of John G. Taylor. Taylor, a harness maker, was pinned under a mass of roof and bricks that fell from the Muller building next door onto the harness shop where he was working. He was trapped by fallen timbers for over an hour, seriously but not fatally injured. The press reported that "many willing hands" engaged in the rescue work to save him.

Damage on Eastside and Westside Roads

At the Nalley ranch on Eastside Road south of town, the earthquake split open a crack in the ground that ranged from six inches to six feet deep. A team of horses, hitched to a plow, fell into one of the cracks and had to be rescued by ranch hands lifting them out with ropes. Another huge fissure split the ground at the nearby Calhoun ranch, but caused no other damage.

Nearby Quake Victims

Several large stone hop kilns on Russian River hop ranches caved in during the quake. An unidentified Native American man and woman were killed at the Storey ranch on Westside Road when the hop kiln in which they were sleeping collapsed on top of them. It took would-be rescuers an hour to dig their bodies from the rubble.

In another unfortunate incident, two Healdsburg residents, Fred Miller and J.O. Anderson, were killed outside of town while

working at a quicksilver mine near Guerneville. When the earthquake struck, they were being hoisted from the mine shaft and were just a few feet from the surface. Evidently a huge rock, dislodged from the mountainside above, rolled down the slope and into the shaft, striking the skip and sending it and the men 400 feet to the bottom of the mine shaft.

Rumors and Fears

Communications were severely hampered between neighboring areas for the first week after the quake. According to a report from the Santa Rosa correspondent published in the April 19th SF *Call-Examiner*:

On the north, conditions are fully as shocking as here. There is no communication by wire or railroad between [Santa Rosa] and Healdsburg. Besides the wire all being on the ground, the bridges crossing the Russian River at that point are in the stream. This makes all communication by rail from the northern part of Sonoma County impossible.

The communication problems led to frightening rumors being reported and circulated as news. One New York daily erroneously reported the total destruction of northern Sonoma County:

[Santa Rosa] This city of 30 thousand people is in ruins. Its destruction is complete. Ten thousand people are homeless. One thousand people have perished. Not an extra vestige of apparel, not a single bit of household furnishing, not even a portion of food, but was devoured by the fire. Messengers also bring tidings of the destruction of Healdsburg, Geyserville, Cloverdale, Hopland and Ukiah.

Protecting Life and Property

Although two looters, caught in the act, were shot by the militia in San Francisco, there were no instances of looting occurring in Sonoma County. Yet fears persisted. A sensational article in the *Tribune/Enterprise*, "PREPARE TO PROTECT LIFE AND PROPERTY," ominously warned the people of Healdsburg and vicinity to secure their homes and be prepared to defend against approaching armed marauders. A report had reached Healdsburg that: *the thugs, thieves and rough element of San Francisco were taking to the country cities, and that the late train would bring some of this undesirable element to this city.* Fortunately this rumored danger never materialized.

Continued on page 9

Northern Sonoma County Relief Effort

Despite the initial hindrance of railroad disruption, the people of northern Sonoma County still found ways to help their neighbors in need. Many went by horseback or wagon to assist the residents of Santa Rosa (where the wrecked buildings would have covered a two-mile distance if placed side by side). On the night of the quake, Healdsburg city treasurer Ed Rowland assembled a stage load of supplies, including all of the lanterns in town, for the relief of the disaster victims in Santa Rosa. The *Healdsburg Tribune* reported his activities approvingly, since: "*Santa Rosa is absolutely without any food supply whatsoever and are depending upon the adjacent country for their food supply.*"

Robin Lampson, a youth in Geyserville during the 1906 earthquake, wrote vividly about his memories of the disaster years later. As soon as railroad service was reinstated, the Northwestern Pacific RR left one or more empty boxcars each day at every station along the route, appealing to the people of each community to fill these cars with any food or provisions they could spare.

With pride, Lampson described the generosity of Geyserville ("with about 40 homes around the small business section in 1906, couldn't have had a total population of 400 if one included all the farms within a 4-5 mile radius"). Yet within hours men, women and children began coming to the boxcar with baskets and packages and armloads of food. Lampson recalled, "*They brought loaves of homemade bread, mason jars of home-canned fruits and vegetables, sacks of potatoes, bags of dry beans, rice and sugar, and jars of fresh milk and newly-churned butter. As the day wore on, people from the town and nearby began bringing in cooked chickens and roasts of beef, veal and lamb. This went on for many days, with a new boxcar arriving empty in the morning and going out filled at night.*"

The strong spirit of cooperation and philanthropy prevailed throughout the state of emergency and the difficult aftermath. Sonoma County historian Tom Gregory, writing in 1911, characterized the general outlook in Sonoma County as "the indomitable desire to put up a good front and be cheerful about it." Undaunted and united, the survivors rolled up their sleeves and began to rebuild their homes, businesses and communities. One hundred years later, we can be grateful that they did.

"That we have been dazed, confounded and discouraged goes without question. But we have much to be thankful for, even in our loss. Let us have the courage of our convictions, revealing our faith in our own beautiful valley and the county of Sonoma, to restore it again to its former condition."

Healdsburg Tribune/Enterprise, April 21, 1906. [RRR]



The Muller building, far right Hall's Saddlery next door on its left.

Sources

Bronson, William. *The Earth Shook, the Sky Burned*. (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959).

The Call-Chronicle Examiner. San Francisco. April 19, 1906.

Gregory, Tom. *History of Sonoma County, California*. (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1911).

Healdsburg Enterprise, April-June 1906.

Healdsburg Museum historical photographs.

Healdsburg Tribune, April-June 1906.

Lampson, Robin. "Man at His Best," *Public Historian*. Fall 1975, pp. 99-102.

LeBaron, Gaye and Joann M. Mitchell. *Santa Rosa: a 20th Century Town*. (Santa Rosa: Historia, Ltd., 1993).

The Press Democrat. Santa Rosa. April-May 1906.

Rawls, James J. and Walton Bean. *California: an Interpretive History*. (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1968, reprinted 1993).

Reider, Cardinelli and Company. *Views of Santa Rosa and Vicinity Before and After the Disaster, April 18, 1906*. (Los Angeles: Reider, Cardinelli and Company, 1906).

SHAKEN AND STIRRED: THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE IN HEALDSBURG

by Daniel F. Murley

For the residents of the Parkview Apartments overlooking the historic plaza from Center Street, their view of the city's landmark central commons was significantly improved on the morning of April 18, 1906. The entire brick façade which separated their humble living quarters from the public view was now gone, lying in rubble in front of G.B. French's Furniture and Mattress store which occupied the ground floor space of the Gobbi Building on Center Street. "The whole front fell off into the street," were the words that Walter Murray, 95 year-old lifelong downtown resident recalled his father using to describe what happened to the fate of the brick structure.



The Gobbi Building after the April 18, 1906 quake.

"My mother (Lilly Nicholson Murray) told me her bed, which was on little wheels, rolled around her bedroom for about a minute or so." Walter's pioneer family lived at the time on the north end of West Street in a two story wooden building which no longer exists. It weathered the catastrophe of April 18, 1906 but many other local structures did not fare well. The huge quake left a destructive trail from San Francisco to Fort Bragg, and Healdsburg, though affected, was spared any loss of life.

The newly constructed Odd Fellows' Building, a proud symbol of progress in this growing North Bay town, was nearly completely destroyed. Along with it fell Cohen's brick building next door on Matheson Street across from the Plaza. The funeral parlor and furniture businesses of James Skee and the drug store of Clarence Evans which were located in the buildings were put out of commission. Evans would reopen his pharmacy later that year on West Street in the building of druggist W.B. Whitney. The W.B. Whitney building was destroyed by the April 18th event but was quickly rebuilt in the same location by Whitney. Clarence D. Evans' new enterprise was to become "one of the largest and



The Odd Fellows Hall shortly after construction was completed in 1905.



The Odd Fellows Hall shortly after the earthquake.

most modern drug stores north of the bay."

Diagonally across the Plaza at the corner of Powell and Center Streets, the building known as Granger's Store or the Red Man's Hall, lost its elaborate American eagle with widely spread wings. The eagle was flanked by colorful Native American caricatures, all of which tumbled into an ignominious heap on the sidewalk



The Red men's hall at Powell (now Plaza) and Center Streets before the 1906 earthquake

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

below.

Moving west up Powell Street to West Street (now Healdsburg)



The Red Man's Hall (Grainger's Store) after the quake.

Avenue) most masonry buildings were damaged. In the 300 Block at the corner of North and West, the stately Carl Muller building built by the Burgett brothers in 1895, lost its southern wall. Bricks showered down and destroyed the adjoining smaller structure which housed the harness and saddle shop of S.J. Hall, a small building on West Street next to C.G. Muller's which had regrettably been refurbished just a few years before the disastrous events of that April 18th morning.



Saddlery and Harness.
S. J. HALL,
ALL KINDS OF HORSE GOODS !

At Reasonable Prices.
Blankets, Whips, Harness, Pads, Lines, Halters, Etc.
BURCSTOF'S PATENT TUG CHAFE.
S. J. HALL,
Near the Sotoyome House, Healdsburg.

3y22.4m

The tragic loss of the building was complicated by the early morning work habits of harness maker John G. Taylor who found himself buried under a mountain of bricks and huge, heavy Redwood ceiling joists. He was seriously injured and it took frantic townspeople quite some time to free him from the rubble but he lived to work his brass and leather trade again. William Burgett, his son Bill, his brother Henry and their company workers were accomplished masonry men, and from the late 1870's through the turn of the century were responsible for building most of the residential and commercial brick structures in Healdsburg. The family also eventually owned the brick works where most of the Healdsburg bricks were made.

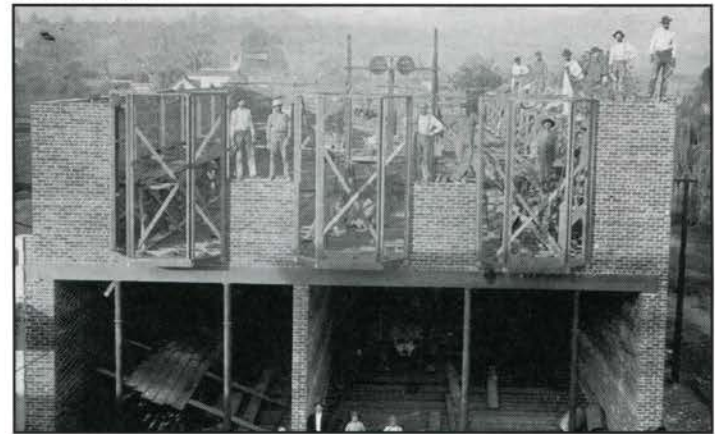
In fact, the family's own brick house, which they built on 736 Fitch Street in 1884, remained a testament to their work for over



Healdsburg residents examine the remains of S.J. Hall's Saddlery Shop on West St. near North St.

a hundred years until it was torn down in recent years.

No amount of masonry skill could have prevented the damage done by the rolling, rumbling, ravishing quake which laid much of their local handiwork low. It wasn't just brick buildings that went down. Throughout the area devastated by the tremor, virtually every tall brick chimney toppled onto the roofs above which they had once risen.



William Burgett, his family and crew working on the Muller Building at North and West Sts. in 1895.

Wooden structures were also not spared. One of the most dramatic and surreal sights was seen on the coast due west of Healdsburg in an area right along the San Andreas Fault line. The chapel at the one-time Russian settlement of Ross was shaken from its foundation and the chapel roof, cupola and bell tower now rested oddly on the ground above the ocean.

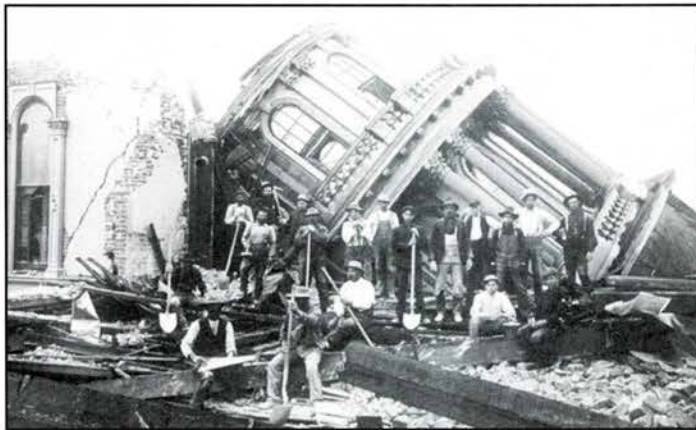
The former house of worship built in the 1820's joined other buildings on the ground at the colony 10 miles north of the town of Jenner at the mouth of the Russian River.

Continued on page 12



The Chapel of the Holy Trinity at Colony Ross

Though all of Sonoma County was affected by the devastating effects of the violent tectonic activity, Healdsburg's larger neighbor to the south received the worst blow in numbers of lives lost per capita. Santa Rosa, the County Seat, was in total ruin and in the fires and collapsing buildings, 100 unfortunate residents lost their lives.

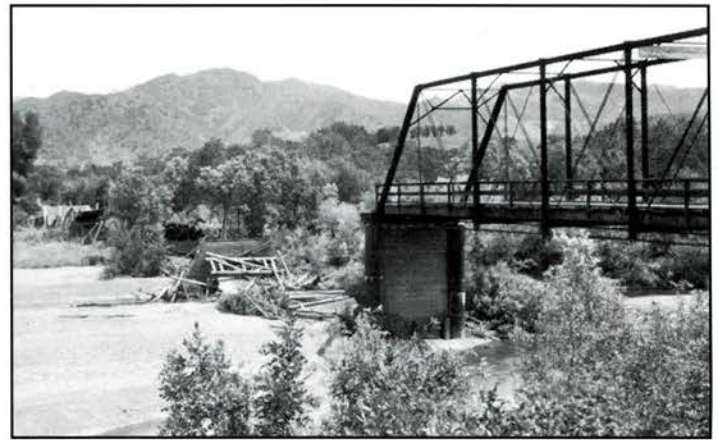


The County Courthouse in Santa Rosa after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

In fact this gruesome figure gave Santa Rosa the distinction of having the highest death rate per capita, even more than San Francisco. Many of the deaths occurred in brick and mortar hotels and boarding houses downtown.

Unquestionably and dramatically, the city of San Francisco was center stage in Northern California's confrontation with the forces of nature. Thousands of lives and millions of dollars worth of property damage marked the city by the Bay as the focus of national and world attention.

For the shaken residents in Healdsburg, secondhand reports and rumors were all they had to survive on for days as communi-



The Geyserville Bridge Over the Russian River six miles north of Healdsburg after the Earthquake

cations throughout Northern California were in a shambles. The transportation infrastructure had been damaged so severely that it would be months before rural communities were able to use familiar roads and bridges.

The residents of the City of Healdsburg and the other North Bay communities responded to the calamity with resourcefulness, ingenuity and compassion and eventually rebuilt their tortured towns and cities to face the challenges of the twentieth century. RRR



San Francisco, April 19, 1906 after the Earthquake

Sources:

Bancroft Library, Photographic Archives, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Gregory, Tom. *History of Sonoma County, California*. (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1911).

Healdsburg Enterprise, April 21, 1906, June 23, 1906.

Healdsburg Museum, Photographic Archives.

Healdsburg Tribune, November 14, 1895, May 3, 1906

Murray, E. Walter. Personal Communication, February 2006

Russian River Advertiser, April 21, 1906

PEDRONCELLI HERITAGE: FROM PROHIBITION TO THE PRESENT

by Holly Hoods

Based on "A Chronicle of the Pedroncelli Family in the Dry Creek Valley," by Julie Pedroncelli St. John and interviews with John and Jim Pedroncelli; used with permission

Early Years in California

John Pedroncelli Sr. came to northern Sonoma County in 1927, buying property on Canyon Road from G. Canata, a cousin of Louis Foppiano. His purchase included a house, winery building, barn and vineyard (of which about 25 acres were planted). Canata had owned the property for 15 years, producing wine for grocery store in San Francisco. Barrels of zinfandel were transferred from the west Geyserville site to the store where customers would fill their own containers with wine.

A native of Madesimo, a small town in the Italian Alps, John Pedroncelli was born in 1890. He came to California with his sister, Caterina, in the early 1900s, and learned English working at a Dunsmuir dairy. John became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1907 and enlisted in the military. After serving honorably in World War I, he homesteaded a 160-acre farm on the Pitt River near Redding.

John grew and sold his produce to local establishments. One delivery was to a Redding hotel where he met his wife-to-be, Julia Petrelli, a native of Sondorio, Italy, and daughter of Antonio and Margarita Petrelli. John and Julia married, and moved to Dunsmuir where John worked for a time in a roundhouse as a train mechanic. According to his son, John Jr: *"I guess he always wanted to be independent - wanted to own some land. With some contacts in the area [and the help of a V.A. loan], they moved to Geyserville in 1927."*

Surviving Prohibition

When John and Julia Pedroncelli arrived with three of their four children (Margaret, Marianne and John) in 1927, the ranch was planted primarily to Zinfandel and Carignane. For the next five years, until Repeal in 1933, the family nurtured the vines and sold grapes to home winemakers, since each household was legally allowed to produce 200 gallons for personal use. Many of the old vineyards that are so highly prized today—including Pedroncellis' famed "mother clone" vineyard—were saved because these home winemakers bought grapes. The grapes were delivered by truck and by train.



John Pedroncelli, Sr.

At the end of Prohibition, it took six months to obtain a license to make wine, so the official first vintage from Pedroncelli was 1934. They produced bulk wines; sometimes selling full barrels to families or filling the jugs they brought. Jim Pedroncelli characterized the wine market of the 1930s: *"There was no need to advertise. It was by contacts, through people you knew, relatives and friends, making them aware that we had wine for sale. Then they would come back if they liked the wine - so they built up volume by word of mouth."*

Living off the Land, Italian-Style

Like so many other hardworking and self-sufficient Italian farm families of this area, the Pedroncellis lived reasonably well in the 1930s. John Jr. reflected on the Depression era: *"We were never really prosperous, but we always had food on the table, because we grew our own vegetables. We had our own cow, pig, chickens and eggs. We lived off the land. It was a little tough, but I don't ever remember going hungry. Mother canned a lot and we had a lot of pasta! She even made our own butter, cheese and sausages. We had a lot of polenta. Nowadays, it's a new discovery. [We ate] a lot of risotto and mushrooms. We would pick wild mushrooms. [We'd have] hunter stew with venison and occasionally quail and robins."*

Fish were abundant, too. The Pedroncelli brothers remember fishing at Warm Springs in the north part of the valley, now cov-

Continued on page 14



John Jr. and Jim in the vineyard

ered by Lake Sonoma. Jim recalled: *"We had a stream (Canyon Creek) that ran through the yard here. At high water, the trout would come up here and we would fish for them. We still see them up this way from Dry Creek."*

In the early days, the neighborhood was close-knit and nearly all Italian. John described it warmly: *"The 'neighborhood' covered Canyon Road and Walling Road (formerly Mud Spring Road). There were a lot of children in the area and two Bocce courts: one at Giovannoni's and one at Buchignani's. Whoever had the best wine would draw the biggest crowd. I think Giovanonni won out. They played only on Sundays. It was the Sunday entertainment, especially for the older folks."*

Bottling Under the Pedroncelli Label

J. Pedroncelli Winery didn't bottle under its own label until the 1940s. At that time, the grapes were still being sold to home winemakers. Approximately 10,000 gallons were made from each vintage and distributed to stores. Until the 1940s, stores had barrels of wine and customers could dispense their own gallons.

The War Years and Beyond

The 1940s were relatively slow years at the winery, especially during the war. John, Jr. graduated from high school in 1943 and was immediately drafted into the Coast Guard. Marianne enlisted in the Marines. Jim stayed home to help run the winery. He made cream of tartar for the war effort by chipping off the tartrates from the wine tanks and selling it as an ingredient for munitions.

Because of the war there was a great shortage of field hands. Many men from Mexico (braceros) were hired to fill in the gap. They were housed in cabins and in the beginning everyone ate together at mealtimes. John Jr. returned to Sonoma County after WWII, graduated from Santa Rosa Junior College and took over

as winemaker in 1948. At that time, he only made Zinfandel, which he sold in bulk. Jim recalled:

"In those times, it was mostly red wine, maybe some white wine in smaller batches. You would be making one red wine, not like nowadays when you make eight or ten different varieties and from different vineyards. So it was a little more simplified back then."

Jim finished high school and attended the Santa Rosa Junior College for a year. He described the climate of the wine industry: *"After the war, in the late forties and early fifties, the demand for wines became depressed. There wasn't a lot of money for bulk wines, and if you didn't sell it by the next harvest, you needed to find a home for it. My father went out and stored wine at other wineries-it was a question of if you could keep going. The banks were actually pretty good. I don't think they would lend you money today if you weren't selling your product."*

Expansion and Innovation in the 1950s

John began to enter wines into competition during the 1950s. There were only two on the West Coast-the California State and the Los Angeles County Fair. They entered their first judging in 1955 and sent in the Zinfandel Rose and Zinfandel to the California State Fair. The Rose won a gold medal and the Zinfandel a silver medal. Jim remembered:

"We even entered some of the generic wines into competition (burgundy and claret). In fact the claret won a gold medal. The thing that stands out in my mind is it was bottled in a gallon jug, and somebody came by and they couldn't believe that you could buy a gallon jug of gold medal wine for \$1.50 a gallon."

In the mid-fifties the Pedroncellis increased their bottling. They purchased an automatic filler. Prior to that, everything was done by hand using a filler and labeler that bottled gallons and half gallons. Most people picked up their wine at retail at the winery.

The first expansion at Pedroncelli occurred in 1955 when Block #1 was built. Six large tanks (27,000 gallons) were added: redwood tanks from Italian Swiss Colony. John explained: *"We had more demand for wine and we were making it on a larger scale. We wanted to increase production."*

More equipment was purchased in the late 1950's to keep up with the increasing production. Jim officially came on board in 1957 and immediately became the sales manager. His delivery route then included the entire Bay Area.

First "Sonoma County" Appellation

The first bottlings to reflect specific varietals were added by 1954 under the J. Pedroncelli 'private stock' label. As Jim noted:

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 14

"The terminology of naming wines changed from calling the wine Sauterne or Claret to Zinfandel or Grey Riesling. By now, the California wine industry was changing and people were beginning to recognize Zinfandel instead of Claret and Pinot Noir instead of Burgundy on the label. We began using Sonoma County as an appellation on these wines instead of designating California, a broader appellation area."

Jim recognized the value of using a smaller appellation area on the bottle, so the combination of varietally-labeled wines along with the Sonoma County appellation raised the profile of Pedroncelli wines. He explained:

"Most of the wineries bottling in the fifties and sixties were using California as an appellation, even though they were in Sonoma County, because people hadn't really come to a point of awareness of the different areas. I believe we were the first to use Sonoma County as an appellation on the label. In those days, there were probably only five or so bottling wineries in the whole county, so there wasn't a lot of activity going on."

Wine sales depended on consumers; and at this time most of the wine drinkers were European, who consumed wine at lunch and dinner. The majority of the production at Pedroncelli during these years was red wine. John recalled:

"You know, wine wasn't as popular, or acceptable, shall we say, until after World War II. But we were on the vanguard of the acceptability of wine. It wasn't a great thing to have a winery or vineyard. People thought about it in a negative way."

Jim agreed:

"Wine wasn't as available as we know it now. Bars would hardly sell wine unless frequented by Italians, the French or Spaniards. In those days sweet wines or dessert wines had a greater consumption than table wines. It's hard to believe now."

Building a Market

John and Jim's mother, Julia, kept the books until Jim began working as sales manager. The bookkeeping and payroll was handled by the family until the early 1970s. John and Jim would answer the phone; take orders or whatever was necessary to keep the business running. Quite a bit of the sales were direct calls from individual markets and later on, Jim went out to make the contacts and develop new accounts.

These accounts included Traverso's Market, Rica's, Borella's and Arigoni's: all small Italian-run grocery stores. The San Francisco/Bay Area market was developed as their production increased. The first distributor for Pedroncelli, Bercut Vandervoot, was based there. Private labels were part of the wine lists of many prestigious accounts like Fairmont Hotel, City of Paris, and Spenger's in the East Bay. The transition from gallons

and half gallons to fifths (now 750mls) took place during this time. Cork-finished wine instead of screw caps completed the change in packaging. John remembered:

"By the mid-sixties, people had become aware, interested in wine and you could just feel it coming on."



Wine with dinner at the Pedroncelli family table, circa 1950's

Second Generation Winery

In 1963, John Pedroncelli Sr. retired. Sons John and Jim acquired the Pedroncelli property and continued to run the operation on their own. A new label, designed for the second generation, was developed and vineyard expansion began in earnest. The original 90 acres of land was doubled by 1970. New additions to the winery were made in 1964, 1967 and 1976. A new bottling building was added, along with the additional warehouse space needed for increased production.

While Zinfandel, Zinfandel Rose, Riesling and Pinot Noir were all made before 1964, the brothers began to add even more to the line. Cabernet Sauvignon was the first addition. The budwood came from Bob (Robert) Young of Alexander Valley. He was one of the very first farmers in Alexander Valley to plant grapes in the mid-Twentieth century.

J. Pedroncelli Winery produced a Pinot Noir from vineyards planted in the 1930s on the Home Ranch. The vineyard was pulled up later and t-budded over to Zinfandel. John admitted: *"There were a lot of mistakes made at the time in planting the wrong varieties in the wrong areas. People put more emphasis on wine making techniques instead of on viticulture techniques. The demand was being filled without much thought to quality beginning in the vineyard. With time, it began to matter that the wines began in the vineyard rather than at the winery. We all learned from trial and error."*

Continued on page 16

Jim recalled:

"We bought our first barrels through Bercut Vandervoort. These were the first French oak barrels shipped here. Early on, if you wanted a barrel, it came from France."

Common practice was to use the barrels year after year. Changes in winemaking style dictated that barrels be used for just a few years. The brothers slowly replaced the redwood tanks with temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks. This gave John more control over the fermentation and chilling of the wines, especially, as he said, for the white wines, *"White varietals are more sensitive to the heat, so you keep them cool. The white wines became more popular primarily because of the better quality. They became fruitier and retained their color better with the change in tank usage."*

Changes in Consumer Wine Preferences

In the early seventies, John and Jim produced more white wine than red. Chardonnay (called Pinot Chardonnay for the first few vintages), Chenin Blanc, French Colombard, Grey (and later Johannisberg) Riesling and Gewurztraminer were all popular during the sixties and seventies. All but Chardonnay have been dropped from the line. Today, more than two thirds of the production is red wine. A generic line of Sonoma Red, Sonoma White, and Sonoma Rose was developed to fill in the gap of the gallon and half gallon wines that had gone by the wayside. By the 1990s, these were also gone.

The Pedroncellis had previously produced generic wines, a dry red and dry white, known as Mountain Red and White in the 60's and Sonoma Red and White in the 70's. In the 1970s they phased out the gallons and began strictly bottling their own wines. During that time, they added Gamay Beaujolais, Cabernet

Sauvignon and Chardonnay, responding, in part to consumer preferences of the day. The challenge, according to John, was:

"When we went from primarily generic gallons and half-gallons of red and white wine to producing varietals in cork-finished bottles. We were known as a "jug wine" winery and we had to dispel that image. We did that through careful analysis of the market and finding out what grew best in our vineyards."

Third Generation Winery

In the past 25 years, J. Pedroncelli Winery has continued to adapt and thrive. The third generation, including Jim's daughters Julie, Cathy, Lisa and Joanne, son-in-law Lance Blakeley and John's son Richard, has begun showing its own innovative spirit in vineyard management, finance, marketing, and sales.

Current offerings by J. Pedroncelli Winery include single-vineyard selections: Morris Fay Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Pedroni-Bushnell Vineyard Zinfandel, Frank Johnson Vineyard Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. They also produce the following special vineyard selections: Mother Clone Zinfandel, Three Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Bench Vineyards Merlot, AltoVineyard Sangiovese, FamilyVineyards Petite Syrah, and East Side Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc. Despite changes and increased production costs, the Pedroncellis still believe in producing an affordable, approachable zinfandel that matches well with food. John describes this key Pedroncelli value:

"Wine should be an everyday beverage, not just for special occasions. It's a beverage to go with food. I can't see any other reason for producing wine if not to drink it with food. Because of the size of our production, the fact that one-third of our fruit comes from our own vineyards, and most of our facility has been in the family for years, we can afford the improvements and still keep our prices in the mid-range." RRR

Third Class



Healdsburg Museum &
P. O. Box
Healdsburg,

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
HEALDSBURG, CA
PERMIT 149