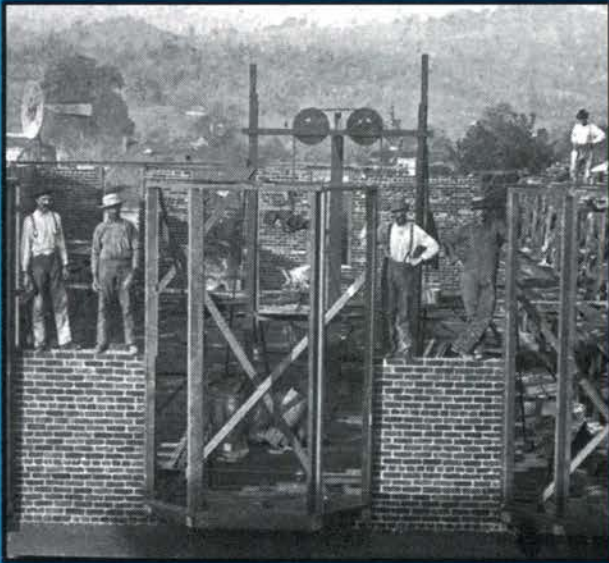




RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SUMMER 2006 • ISSUE 93

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



The Burgetts at work in 1894

The Burgetts: The Brick Builders of Healdsburg

by Daniel F. Murley Page 6

Floozies, Fistfights and Flames:

*"Where Licentiousness and
Depravity Hold Court"*

by Holly Hoods Page 8



Lucinda Walker, Healdsburg Madam

Also In This Issue:

The Baudau Bag:

Hop Picking in Healdsburg

by Whitney Hopkins Page 4

Palm Trees in Healdsburg!

Part of the Old and New Charm of the City

by Charlotte Anderson Page 12



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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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

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IN THIS ISSUE

Brick builders, Healdsburg's "sporting women" of the 19th century, a burlap bag used in hop picking and palm trees are the topics of this summer issue for 2006.

Our curator Daniel Murley, in his research and constant quest for more historical data, reveals in a well researched article that the many brick buildings in our community were constructed, in the second half of the 1800s, by the "close-knit" Burgett family members who came here from Ohio. The brick building business was successful, Dan tells us, because the locals were aware that the fire fighting equipment was very inadequate. So using bricks and mortar was the way to go.

Before she left in May to enroll in a graduate program in the History of Decorative Arts in Washington D.C. Whitney Hopkins, in charge of cataloging the museum's extensive artifacts collection for the past two and a half years, promised to write one more article for the *Recorder*. You will find her latest effort starting on page 4. From a burlap bag used in picking hops found in the museum's archives she has written a beautifully researched piece, not only about hop picking and its place in Healdsburg's history but also about a family and its involvement in the hop growing business. We know you will find Whitney's latest effort extremely interesting.

Research curator Holly Hoods gave herself a challenge when she opted to write about Healdsburg's "sporting women." She was able to obtain information about ladies who were involved in the "world's oldest profession" in the mid to late 1800s from reports in the press about "floozyes, fights and unusual fires." However, the challenge to find information about this topic in the 20th century is much greater because "the people who lived outside the law are harder to find in historical documents. No one ever listed prostitute or madam as an occupation in a single Healdsburg census or directory between 1860-1900." We know you'll enjoy this special slice of Healdsburg's history.

If you ever wondered how or why Healdsburg is dotted with Palm trees, Charlotte Anderson tells you in her latest, well researched article. She gives us a history of the palm tree as well as a pictorial tour where the trees can be found in Healdsburg. Again she has done a terrific job in researching her subject.

Arnold Santucci

Editor

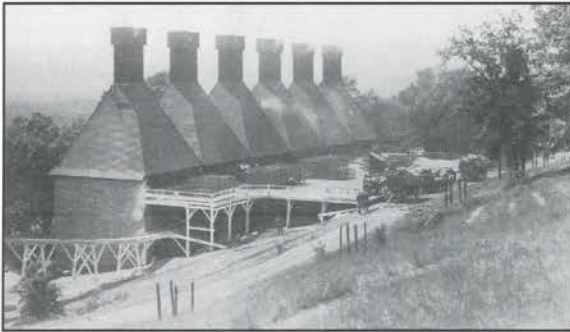
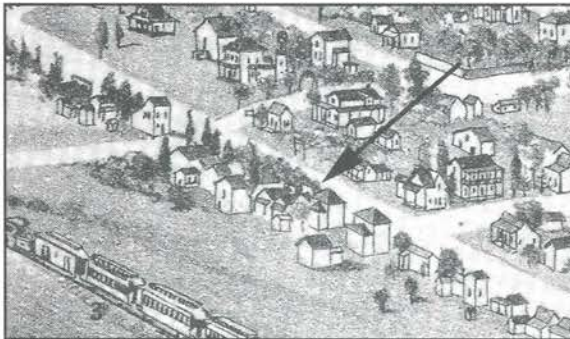


Photo of Hop Kiln at Wobler Bridge



William Burgett, circa 1879



1884 lithograph of Red light District



Healdsburg Avenue, old Highway 101

4. The Baudau Bag: Hop Picking in Healdsburg

by Whitney Hopkins

An historic object offers a fascinating story of days gone by.

6. The Burgetts: The Brick Builders of Healdsburg

by Daniel F. Murley

Early settlers, because of the fear of fire, built homes of brick and mortar. One family, the Burgetts, was instrumental in constructing many of the brick buildings in the community.

8. Floozies, Fistfights and Flames: "Where Licentiousness and Depravity Hold High Court"

by Holly Hoods

An account of Healdsburg's "Sporting Women of the 19th Century"

12. Palm Trees in Healdsburg: Part of the Old and new Charm of the City

by Charlotte Anderson

A history of the Palm tree and how it came to be part of Healdsburg.

THE BAUDAU BAG: HOP PICKING ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER

by Whitney Hopkins



Until machine harvesting came into being in the mid-1940's hops were hand picked and very labor intensive.

Historic objects offer fascinating stories of days gone by. Something as simple as a box, a bottle, a basket or, in this case, a bag can inspire the most fascinating of stories. Found in the museum's collection, a large burlap sack stamped with the words "Baudau Ranch" encourages many questions. Who were the Baudaus? Where was the ranch? What was the burlap sack used for? These are just a few of the questions which might be asked of this burlap sack. In fact, the sack was a hop sack used on the Baudau hop ranch which straddled both sides of Eastside Road and extended to the Russian River. It was located just south of the Nalley ranch. With help from historic Healdsburg newspapers and conversation with Mabel Baudau's nephew, Raford Jones, who grew up working on various Russian River hop farms belonging to his family, the following article was inspired by the hop sack from Baudau ranch.

In 1936 Mabel (Jones) and Albert Baudau purchased a 135-acre ranch on Eastside Road south of Healdsburg, of which 40 acres of Russian River bottom land were planted in hops. This ranch had formerly belonged to Mabel's father, Marcellus "Cellie" Jones — one of Sonoma County's largest hop producers. Jones had cultivated hops in multiple Sonoma County locations from the 1880s until his death in 1919. Mabel's brothers, Budd, Warren and Raford Jones, managed the Eastside ranch until their sister bought it. At this time Mabel Baudau (b. 1901), who had spent a portion of her childhood on the Eastside Road ranch in addition to her family's Willow Grove ranch off Fulton Road, personally took over operation of the farm. She oversaw hop cultivation, harvest, and sales.

Mabel and her husband Albert lived in what had been her father's house at 8536 Eastside Road. She was one of a handful of women managing hop yards. Her contemporaries in nearby hop fields were Mona Chisolm and Helen Von Grafen. While Mabel Baudau ran the farm, her husband, a native of Nebraska, continued his job as a hardware salesman, and from 1939 to 1942 served as Sonoma County Assessor.

From the 1870s until the early 1950s hops, used in the production of beer, were one of the major agricultural commodities in Sonoma County. As perennials, hops grew especially well in the sandy loam bottomland along the Russian River such as the Baudau ranch. The first hops were grown and harvested in Sonoma County's Green Valley in 1858 by partners Amasa Bushnell and Otis Allen who had brought the rootstock from the east. Their popularity grew, and by 1898 approximately 2000 acres in Sonoma County were planted in hops from Alexander Valley, Healdsburg, and Windsor to Forestville, Fulton, Mark West and Santa Rosa. Cellie Jones and his children grew hops for more than sixty years.

Mabel's father, Marcellus "Cellie" Jones, had come to Santa Rosa from Missouri with his wife (Mabel's mother) and infant son in 1886 to work for his uncle, Raford Peterson, on Wohler Ranch which was over 1000 acres. (The Raford House Inn which is nine miles southwest of downtown Healdsburg was built by Raford Peterson.) While working for his uncle, Cellie Jones learned how to grow hops. After a year with his uncle, Jones purchased a homestead tract thirteen miles northeast of Santa Rosa for his family to make their home. Seven years later he sold the homestead and returned with his family to live on the Peterson ranch, where he leased twenty-one acres of hops. After a few years at his uncle's ranch Jones leased acreage from Samuel Wright where he continued his hop operation. He then bought 75 acres near Mark West Station which he planted in hops. Around the turn of the century he bought a 148 acre tract on Eastside Road south of Healdsburg which he planted in hops. At one time Cellie Jones had five ranches in Sonoma County, according to his grandson Raford Jones. The Jones had eight children all born in Sonoma County except for their first child, Thomas, who came with them as an infant from Missouri. In addition to Thomas, their children were Warren, Smith, Susie, Budd, Charles, Mabel and Raford (father of Raford Jones, Jr.). As the children grew older they helped their father oversee the various hop operations.

Continued on page 5

Hops on the Jones (and later the Baudau) ranch were cultivated and harvested in much the same fashion as was done in the rest of the hop yards throughout Sonoma County. Growers usually sold their hops by signing a contract with a broker before the harvest. Hop vines grew, each year, on strings which hung from a "bull wire" that was supported by 26 foot redwood or steel poles. The fruit of the vine, shaped like small pine cones, was typically harvested in August. Growers could determine if the hops were ready for harvest based on their smell and feel. Until the mid 1940s when machine picking became common, hops were handpicked, and thus very labor intensive. Pickers (who came from near and far) would pluck hops off the vines into large baskets, being careful not to pick stems or leaves, which would result in "dirty hops." When the pickers' baskets were full they then dumped the hops into large burlap sacks, such as the museum's Baudau bag, which could hold 75 to 80 pounds of hops. Each picker was given a number so that their sack could be identified. Several times a day wagons, or later trucks, would come into the field to haul away the hop sacks which had been filled. Before they were taken to the hop kilns for drying the bags were weighed in the field, and the weight of each picker's sack was tallied by a bookkeeper and the picker was given a ticket as proof of the amount he or she had picked. A good picker could pick about 300 to 400 pounds of hops a day, while an excellent picker might pick up to 600 pounds according to Raford Jones. During the 1930s pickers were paid about one to two cents per pound. After the weighing, the hop sacks were transported across Eastside Road and up the hill to the nearby hop kilns for drying induced by wood-burning (and later oil) furnaces. The temperature in hop kilns ranged from 130 to 160 degrees. Drying generally took over 10 hours. After they were cooled sufficiently, the hops were baled and covered in cloth and shipped off by brokers to buyers for use in beer production. Raford Jones noted that many of the hops his family grew were shipped to South America.

Mabel Baudau (d. 1977) stopped growing hops by the early 1950s when she sold the Eastside Road ranch and moved to Santa Rosa where she went into the real estate business. Following World War II hop production in Sonoma County declined drastically, and by the early 1950s the hop fields had nearly disappeared. (Raford Peterson, Jr. harvested the last hops at Wohler Ranch in 1956.) The disappearance of the hop industry in Sonoma County has been blamed on numerous factors ranging from changing taste in beer to the appearance of mechanical harvesters. However, most growers would agree that the downey mildew which first made its appearance in 1934 and continued to plague hop fields was the main cause of the hops' demise. The mildew, which grew on both the vines and on the hops themselves, had the potential to reduce yards to one bale per acre



Hops were dumped from the pickers' basket into burlap sacks for weighing and transportation to the hop kilns.

and quickly put growers into debt. Today the property that was once the Jones/Baudau ranch has been divided into several parcels, and there are a few new homes and structures which have been built by later owners. Cellie Jones' (and Mabel Baudau's) house at 8536 Eastside Road is now owned by Jane and Alan Newman.

While there have been some changes, the same fertile Russian River bottomland owned by Calplans Vineyards is still continuing to nourish a vigorous crop - this time grapes instead of hops. [RRR]

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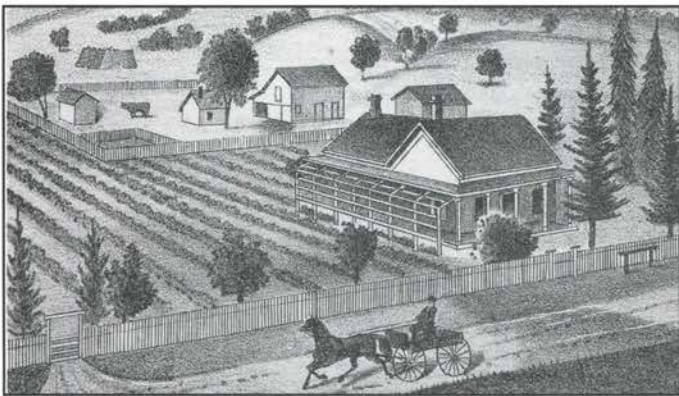
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THE BURGETTS: BRICK BUILDERS OF HEALDSBURG

by Daniel F. Murley

For the residents of early California, townspeople and business owners in every settlement lived in fear of flames. With no adequate fire protection other than local horse drawn and hand operated fire fighting apparatus, one solution to the problem was to build structures from brick and mortar. In the second half of the 19th century the construction of the many brick buildings in Healdsburg fell to a close-knit, mostly related group from the northeast end of this little northern California town. In the 1870s the prosperous brick maker and onetime mason Henry S. Miser owned the Healdsburg brickyard near what is now the corner of Powell and University Streets. He had a lovely home and family and a prominent, well-liked local partner, Solomon Face.



Henry Miser's Residence as it appeared in the 1877 Sonoma County Atlas.

Their construction and contracting business was highly respected and they built many of the town's early masonry structures. The tragic death of Solomon Face in 1874 may have hastened the arrival of Miser's Ohio relative and fellow brick layer, William Burgett. Soon after his arrival in Healdsburg, William courted and married local Sheridan Street girl, Elizabeth Briggs.



Libbie and William Burgett ca. 1920

Not coincidentally, the Briggs family was also in the building trades. In 1884, William moved out of the Briggs home on Sheridan and with a great deal of family assistance built a new house not far away on the north end of Fitch Street. William and Elizabeth now had three children, Nettie, William Junior and Laura and two more, James and Robert would follow soon. That brick structure served a few generations of Burgetts in Healdsburg and stood as a local brick and mortar landmark until it was finally demolished in 1962.

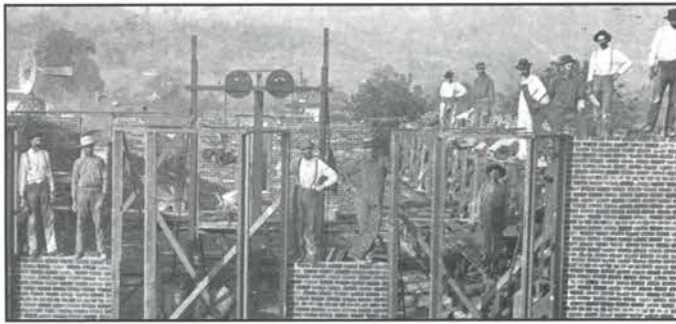
WM. BURGETT,
CONTRACTOR & BUILDER,
 Healdsburg, . . . California.
 ESTIMATES GIVEN AND CONTRACTS TAKEN FOR ALL KINDS OF
 BRICK AND CONCRETE WORK.
 Agent for the Anderson Prune Dipper. Brick, Lime and
 Cement For Sale.

As William's family continued to grow so did the family businesses and he purchased the brick-making enterprise from Henry Miser in 1891. News spread of his success and ambition and with the added bricklaying expertise of his younger brother Henry, who arrived from Ohio, the Burgetts built many of the brick structures now going up around the Plaza in booming downtown Healdsburg. One of their crowning accomplishments during that time was the construction of Carl Muller's two-story brick building at the corner of West and North Streets, just across from Muller's famous brewery and beer garden.



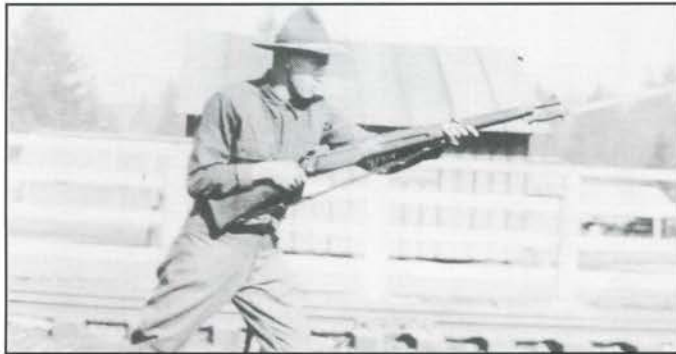
Nettie, James, Laura and William Jr. in front of the "new" house at 739 Fitch Street, circa 1887

Continued on page 7



The Burgetts at work on the C.W. Muller Building at the corner of West and North Streets in 1894.

The close-knit nature of the brick building family became more evident with the marriage of daughter Laura to another masonry man in 1902. Young John Keller from St. Helena, though accomplished at his trade, was afflicted with the curse of the drink and in a way, this led to his demise. As the *Healdsburg Enterprise's* front page of January 19, 1905 read, "the young couple did not get along very well together on account of the intemperance of the husband." The corner Frank L. Blackburn decided that Jack died of a self-administered overdose of carbolic acid. The unfortunate Keller had become William Burgett's partner in the brickyard in 1903 and one of Jack's sisters was married to James Briggs, one of the company's brick masons and brother to Elizabeth Burgett, William's wife.



Robert Burgett in U.S. Army training at Camp Lewis, Washington in 1918.

The rest of the bricklaying Burgetts suffered no such ill fates but went on to become upstanding citizens of the small Healdsburg community. All three Burgett sons, William Junior, James and Robert, served their country in military service during the first World War.

After returning from the service of their country the young Burgett brothers chartered careers in manly, out-of-doors pursuits as trappers, game hunters and miners. However, William Junior paid the price for his adventuresome lifestyle. In August 1918, he was bitten by a rattlesnake while hunting in the upper reaches of the Dry Creek Valley and nearly died from his wound.

Though somewhat successful, all three young men returned to the family business and continued in the brick and concrete contracting and construction trades. Among the many buildings in and around



The Burgetts in downtown Healdsburg after a mining excursion to Weaverville, circa 1907

Healdsburg on which they collaborated were the Windsor Odd Fellow's Hall and the Carnegie Library building which now houses the Healdsburg Museum.



James Burgett (far right, in overalls) while constructing the Carnegie library Building in 1911

Though there is a lasting legacy of the family in the remaining structures they built, a couple of ironic twists of fate remain. The William Burgett home at 736 Fitch Street was eventually demolished in April 1992. The many formidably built downtown buildings which were constructed to withstand the ravages of fire, could not withstand the powerful forces of tectonic plate movement and were destroyed by the earthquake of April 18, 1906. The south wall of the beautiful Carl Muller Building on West Street collapsed, causing the only major injury to a Healdsburg resident during the earthquake. The harness shop next door to the Muller structure, which was actually destroyed by the falling bricks and timbers, was owned by S. J. Hall, a distant relative of the Burgett family. [RRR]

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FLOOZIES, FISTFIGHTS AND FLAMES:

“WHERE LICENTIOUSNESS AND DEPRAVITY HOLD HIGH COURT

by Holly Hoods

The Setting

With only a handful of businesses and limited entertainment options in 19th century Healdsburg, the respectable frequently rubbed elbows with reprobates in the course of daily public life. W.T. Heald characterized the inhabitants of early Healdsburg:

Besides the Indians. . . two classes of people were here who made up the population of the town. . . The one class consisted of those who had come to find themselves homes and to establish a civilized community. The other one was composed of adventurers, rowdies and gamblers.

Healdsburg's "sporting women" of the 19th century inhabited the second category. They were rebels, living lives of open debauchery well outside the socially accepted roles for women of their era (or today!). Healdsburg of 1857 was a brand-new, western frontier town with fewer than 300 (white or Hispanic) inhabitants, the majority of whom came from Missouri or the Deep South. A couple of Healdsburg pioneers were "dance hall girls." The first saloon and dance hall was wiped out in a fire by 1859. Six years later, the town had four saloons and a population of 1,600 people, not including the native population.

“The Night is Made Hideous by the Drunken Carousals”

Women who plied the prostitution trade in 19th century Healdsburg were often women abandoned, widowed, and with limited education, family connections and means to employment. They worked out of dance halls, boarding houses, brothels and saloons. The rowdiness and partying went on nonstop. A "hurdy-gurdy house kept by two females from San Francisco," attracted the ire of the *Russian River Flag* in February 1872. According to the editor, the Norfolk Saloon had become:

an unbearable nuisance and should be suppressed. Night is made hideous by the drunken carousals of those who assemble there, and the quiet of the neighborhood is disturbed at all hours of the night.

Healdsburg harlots were usually described as tough acting, rough talking and vulgar. They were regularly observed fighting, smoking in public or falling-down drunk. These were not "high-class call girls" by any stretch of the imagination, nor did they walk the streets soliciting.



Lucinda Hall Walker after 1875

They didn't have to; the men knew right where to find them.

There seemed to be a good deal of physical violence among the women themselves, usually alcohol-fueled. In 1865, W.S. Walker recalled visiting Healdsburg:

We took a stroll through the village, and during our rambles, we experienced the sorrow of being an unwilling spectator to a fight between two women, during which skirmish, snuff-colored hair and crinoline suffered considerably.

As the fights made constant headlines, the newspaper editors devised new insulting descriptions for the women: "habitués of dens of iniquity," "inmates of disorderly houses," "seraglio tenants" and "women of ill repute who occupy an immoral, filthy den." In one account, publicized in the *Sonoma County Tribune*, two "Spanish women of ill-repute, Laura Gillian and Aggie Rodrigues" were charged with battery

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

for their assault of Lucinda Walker in a dispute “over the ownership of some chickens.” Mrs. Walker was dealt several violent blows on the back with a heavy club and hair was pulled from her head.

“About the Ugliest Old Battleaxes You’d Ever Want to See”

Ed Pruett’s celebrated Kentucky Saloon was the center of illicit activity from 1878 until it burned down in a fire of suspicious origin in 1892. The Kentucky Saloon was located on the west side of Healdsburg Avenue in the exact site now occupied by WestAmerica Bank (at Piper Street intersection). Despite Pruett’s attempts to elevate the tone of his establishment with whitewashed exterior and white papered walls, it was still a den of iniquity. Dr. William Shipley, who lived in Healdsburg in the 1880s and ‘90s, recalled:

Next door [to the Kentucky Saloon] was a deadfall which could be entered through his saloon. The women housed in this birdcage were about the ugliest old battleaxes one would want to see. Occasionally they would parade about the plaza in an open hack driven by Slade Capell for one of the livery stables.

Pruett’s Kentucky Saloon was located on the northern fringe of town on the other side of the (Norton) slough, then an unchanneled swampy, expanse of water that branched eastward from Foss Creek across Healdsburg Avenue, ending at Johnson Street. The slough separated the city limits from the disreputable district, which lined the west side of West Street (now Healdsburg Avenue), between Piper and Grant Streets.

“You Ain’t Spunky Enough!”

Alcohol was a mainstay in the life of the harlot; and death by overdose of laudanum the all-too-common exit from a squalid, boozy existence. One extensive article, published in the *Sonoma County Tribune*, summarized testimony at the inquest into the death of Mollie Beamin, a 30-year-old “tenant of one of the disreputable houses in North Healdsburg.” The interviews with Ed Pruett and Lucinda Walker provide a fascinating peek into the world of the Kentucky Saloon, where Mollie—“at least that’s the name that she went by”—took an overdose of laudanum while tending bar. Distressed over her love troubles with Frank Crocker (who ended up killing himself with laudanum a few years later), she brandished the bottle of opiate, threatening to swallow the contents. According to the testimony later, Ed Pruett scoffed at the distraught Mollie, daring her to take a swig, saying, “Ah, you ain’t spunky enough!” Evidently she was spunky enough. Mollie died at the saloon hours later, since none of her associates bothered to call a doctor. A collection was taken up in town to pay for her burial expenses.

The Walker Dynasty of West Street

Eli Stillman Walker became the entrepreneur of a small illicit empire in the Healdsburg Avenue area north of Piper Street, known in his day

as “North Healdsburg.” We can’t be sure how Eli and Lucinda C. Hall met, but the fact that they married in 1875 and she joined him in the brothel business, suggests that she may have already been self-supporting. The Tennessee-born Lucinda was 31 when she married Eli, a 49-year old native of Maine. Eli was already prosperous, owning a two-story “boarding house,” built in 1871. Next door he owned and operated the Twilight Livery Stable, which offered a private entrance door to the brothel for the discretion of customers.

Lucinda and Eli Walker raised three children: Kelsey, Esley and Mary, while Lucinda openly served as madam of the Walker house of ill-repute. The kids grew up playing with other children of North Healdsburg who were locally known as “the sewer rats.” Together with Ed Pruett at the Kentucky Saloon next door, the Walkers presided over the sporting life in North Healdsburg for more than two decades, figuring prominently in most notorious events.

“More Depraved Creatures Than These Can Scarce Be Imagined”

The turf wars over Healdsburg’s morality raged in the 1870s and ‘80s. Hoping to incite the townspeople to action, the *Enterprise* editorialized in May 1878:

Our beautiful city has long been cursed by two sinks of iniquity, well known to our residents and no attempt has been made to close them. Emboldened by immunity from punishment, the keepers of these dens have lately indulged in orgies of the vilest character, which would not be tolerated in even the most licentious communities.

It must have been quite a sight to witness the scene the *Enterprise* described:

Several depraved characters from Mendocino and Napa, on one of their periodical cruises through the country, visited this city and indulged in a grand carousal, which ended in a free fight. The keeper of the bagnio on West Street [Lucinda Walker] and one of her Mendocino visitors were drinking freely, the Mendocino bag becoming gloriously drunk; while in this condition she was attacked and handsomely whipped by the Healdsburg virago. More depraved creatures than these can scarce be imagined, and the “gentleman” who witnessed the combat was not one whit better than the women.

Continued on page 10

Kentucky Saloon,
 West Street, North Healdsburg,
 ED. PRUETT, Proprietor.

A Fine Stock
OF....
Old Kentucky Bourbon,
 OLD RYE,
 CHOICE WINES,
 LAGER BEER,
Best Brands of Cigars, Etc.

The Proprietor will depend on the quality of his stock to recommend his house, and will therefore keep only the best of everything. He invites a share of the public patronage. Remember the place—formerly known as “Raney Saloon.” 41-tf

1878 Ad for Pruett's Saloon, Published in the Healdsburg Enterprise.

Lucinda Walker lived a high-profile low life, yet she seemed untouchable by the law. Perhaps she paid off the enforcers. She became even more audacious as she acquired more property along West Street. In early 1878, the *Healdsburg Enterprise* began campaigning in the press to whip up public outrage about the “three women of vile character [who] occupy a house on West Street.” It took 25 years, many pages of blistering editorials and two arson fires to finally drive Lucinda Walker from Healdsburg. According to one *Enterprise* writer in June of 1878:

All citizens feel ashamed that such wicked places are permitted in Healdsburg; still everybody is indifferent about shutting them up. Whether this indifference comes from fear of offending somebody, possibly owners of buildings, or because it is too much trouble to make complaint to the proper officers, I cannot say. . . One hag has been forced to leave Healdsburg, but there still remains another of the same kind, who boasts that she has money in the bank; let her too be driven out with her earnings of sin and shame.”

Finally Ordinance #13 was passed in October 1878, making it officially a misdemeanor “to establish houses of ill-fame in the city of Healdsburg and to prohibit persons from visiting the same.” Punishment upon conviction of said offense was a fine of not less than \$5 and no more than \$200, or to be imprisoned not less than five days and no more than 100 days or by both said fine and imprisonment.

At the same time the City was fighting against prostitution in the 1870s and ‘80s, it was also becoming rabidly anti-Chinese along with the rest of California. The social critics editing the *Healdsburg Enterprise*

found close comparisons between Chinese immigrant laborers and prostitutes in December 1888, finding them equally loathsome:

for years the good people of this city have been compelled to bear with this immoral filthy den, compared with which the proprietor of a Chinese laundry would blush for shame.

In 1888, the City passed an Ordinance requiring Chinese laundries to be removed to outside the city limits. This was blatant race discrimination, as white-operated “steam laundries” were permitted to continue operating inside the city. The Chinese laundrymen were furious to be banished to the disreputable parts of town. Joe Wah Lee, described in the *Russian River Flag* as “the disgruntled Chinaman,” reluctantly relocated his wash house to one of the vacant houses on the Walkers’ property. Sam Hop’s laundry moved across the street. Not long after the moves, fires of suspicious origins began occurring on West Street.

“Good Riddance to Bad Rubbish”

In October 1892, a suspicious fire broke out in the Walker livery stable. Firefighters managed to put out the blaze before much damage occurred. Another fire was set in the stable June 1893. This fire did the trick. It burned seven houses “occupied by lewd women,” a barn and the Kentucky Saloon.

Ed Pruett had no insurance, and lost his house and business. In 1893, he sold his two lots to Lucinda Walker and appears to have left the area. Her property was insured and she was able to recover her losses. The *Sonoma County Tribune* described a surreal scene as the women of ill-fame appeared in the street in short nightdresses, smoking cigarettes. One woman calmly put her stockings on. The *Tribune* had minimal sympathy for the fire victims:

The principle portions of the buildings destroyed were occupied by lewd women and composed that section of the city that for years has been an eye-sore to all decent people and a nuisance to our town, and while all regret the loss of property, the universal verdict seems to be that it was good riddance to bad rubbish.

As might be expected, Lucinda did not go straight after this experience. She shifted the main operation of her brothel to the southwest corner of West and Grant Street. Notably this time she was outside the city limits. Lucinda Walker lasted 9 more years in business in this location. After a long career, she was ready to retire at 60. She finally sold her

Continued on page 11

Healdsburg property to Dr. H.C. Ottmer in May 1902. The *Tribune* noted portentously:

It is understood that the red-light nuisance many years maintained on the property facing Grant Street will be abated in the future.

Five months later no one was surprised when The *Tribune* announced:

The house of ill-repute just outside City limits on Grant Street was destroyed by fire.

Census research revealed Lucinda, aged 67, had a new home by 1910. She was found in Sutter Township, Sacramento County, retired and living with her two sons, both unmarried and in their 30s. It is unknown what ever happened to daughter Mary, who still lived at home with her mother in 1900. Despite their life of notoriety in Healdsburg (or perhaps because of it), the Walker sons stuck by their mother, suggesting that this nontraditional family nevertheless retained their own sense of family values.

Eli Walker died by early 1891, leaving an estate of \$5000 to be divided between Lucinda and the three children. After his death, other potential heirs came forward to dispute the will, claiming that Eli was of unsound mind and unable to communicate in his final days. At a trial, held in March 1891, Dr. James Swisher testified having treated Eli for a self-inflicted throat wound the previous November. Ultimately, despite questions about the will and the death, the estate was settled in Lucinda's favor.

Tootsie and Wootsie Witness to a Murder at Lytton Springs

The scene of Thomas J. Owens' murder of Marion Edward Hale in April 1900 was a little cottage about 200 yards from the hotel at Lytton Springs. The cottage was occupied by Mary Dennison, aged 40; her daughter, Lucy Dennison Hale, aged 20; and Lucy's two little girls. According to the *Santa Rosa Republican*,

They do not enjoy the best of reputations, in fact, it is known that they kept a house of ill-repute. . . The officers simply know them by their "pet" names of "Tootsie" and "Wootsie" . . . The women had lived in different parts of Healdsburg until recently, continually moving to satisfy fastidious residents who are particular about their neighbors.

The murder was precipitated when Thomas J. Owens, a married wood-chopper from Alexander Valley, showed up drunk at the cottage. The women refused to see him. When Ed Hale, the husband of one of the women, went to the door to send Owens away, Owens shot him in cold

blood. Lucy wore mourning black at the inquest, claiming to be the wife of the murdered man. The newspaper observed that the heavily-veiled woman "told of the shooting rather dispassionately."

It is relatively easy to trace the history of the upstanding citizens of Healdsburg, but the people who lived outside the law are harder to find in the historical records, for obvious reasons. No one ever listed "prostitute" or "madam" as an occupation in a single Healdsburg census or directory between 1860-1900, yet their drunken exploits, proximity to murders and fires of suspicious origin frequently put them in the headlines, sometimes testifying in court cases. Years of researching the combined sources, including newspaper articles, tax records and criminal court dockets, yielded three to 12 individual prostitutes living in town from 1858-1902. Quadruple that figure and we are probably closer to the real number. The research continues in order to document the hidden harlots of the 20th century. I am looking to the Healdsburg community to please help contribute information about the last 100 years. [RRR]

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PALM TREES IN HEALDSBURG?

PART OF THE OLD AND NEW CHARM OF THE CITY

by Charlotte Anderson

While driving around Healdsburg, have you ever wondered about the many palm trees? There are palms in the Plaza, palms in front of old and new houses, palms along driveways, and even an occasional tall lone palm tree silhouetted against the sky. Palm trees are not native to northern California so how and why did they get here?

From the earliest days of the explorers and navigators, palm trees have been a symbol of balmy weather, peace and serenity, and Eden-like land.



Washingtonia filifera - California Fan Palm

There are 2500 species of palms worldwide, with 11 native to North America. The largest of these, and the ONLY palm tree native to WESTERN North America, is the California Fan Palm. It is also known as the Desert Palm and the "California Washingtonia." The Fan Palm has a large, gray unbranched trunk with horizontal

lines and vertical fissures. The trunk is 2 to 3 feet in diameter and grows 20 to 60 feet high. The Fan Palm has numerous evergreen leaves, composed of leaf stalks, 3 to 5 feet long, with hooked spines along the edges. These fan shaped leaves spread from around the top of the tree while numerous old, dead leaves hang down against the trunk. For this reason it is sometimes also called the Petticoat Palm.

The California Fan Palm was an important resource for the Cahuilla Indians of Southern California who called it maul. They used it for food, roof construction, and various weaving applications. The original California Fan Palm oases were important gathering and habitation sites and were indicative of important springs, usually located along earthquake faults.



Mexican Palm - Center Street, Healdsburg

Coming north from Mexico is the Mexican Fan Palm, *Washingtonia Robusta*, aka the Sky Duster. The story of the earliest street palms is a fronded version of the Johnny Appleseed legend. Characters who passed through the Californian and Sonoran deserts began planting fan palms along orange groves and farm drives. At the beaches, Mexican palms fared better in the damp of coastal night fogs. From the 1880s onward, they became breezy emblems of the property boom. Developer Lucky Baldwin, famous for saying, "Hell, we're giving away the land. We're selling the climate," surrounded his Queen Anne cottage with fan palms, now some of the oldest specimens in Los Angeles.

Continued on page 13

Spanish Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries brought the first Canary Island DATE palms to California in 1769. Ships from Spain replenished supplies in the Canary Islands before proceeding across the Atlantic. It is said that Father Junipero Serra planted the Canary Island Palms at each of the missions he established. Also, as the missions were developed, the Mexican palm trees were brought farther and farther north.

In Southern California, one of the most famous, or infamous, native palm tree settings was known as Two Bunch Palms. Stories of the unique qualities and marvelous curative and restorative powers of the mineral laden waters within the oasis have traveled through time from Indian myths to modern verification. The waters of Two Bunch Palms came as a delightful surprise to the Spanish Conquistadors, American explorers, mule team drivers and army scouts as well as any other group or individual who had the misfortune of crossing the Mojave Desert and Coachella Valley.

[An interesting sidelight: WOULD YOU BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. ARMY HAD A CAMEL CORPS? On March 3, 1855, Congress, upon the recommendation of then Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, appropriated \$30,000 for camels and on April 29, 1856, 34 camels arrived at Indianola, Texas. After several weeks of rest, the camels were taken to their permanent base at Camp Verde, 60 miles west of San Antonio. In June of 1857 the Camel Corps was assigned to survey the unexplored territory between El Paso and the Colorado River. The party, led by Edward Fitzgerald Beale, consisted of 25 camels, 44 soldiers, 2 camel-drivers (Greek George and Hadji Ali, whose name had been anglicized to Hi Jolly) and numerous horses and mules. The camels proved their mettle when the expedition became lost and its water supply dwindled.



Trooper of Army Camel Corps, 1907

Only the camels were fit to go on. They found a river 20 miles from camp, led the expedition to it, and then looked on with indifference as men, mules and horses gulped the water they were desperate for. Triumphantly, the Camel Corps pushed on to the Colorado River, its mission a success. (There is a monument to Hi Jolly and the U.S. Camel Corps in Quartzsite, Arizona.)]

Then there is a story about the founding of Palmenthal (later to become Palmdale) which has to do with palms. In 1886 between 50 and 60 families of Swiss and German descent were moving westward to California. They were told that when they saw palm trees, they would be very close to the Pacific Ocean. Moving into the Antelope Valley, they saw our Joshua trees, mistook them for palm trees, and settled there!

Two Bunch Palms was finally “discovered” for once and for all in 1907 by a contingent of the U.S. Army Camel Corps on a map and survey expedition from Los Angeles to the Mexican Border. The group spotted the two adjacent groups of giant palm trees on a gently rising hill. “The miles and miles of arid, desert-like terrain surrounding these two majestic palm groves created an almost magical impression. It was as if an Arabian nights’ mirage had been transplanted to the Southern California desert. U.S. Army map makers were practical men and, being neither creative nor lyrical, they dutifully noted ‘two bunches of palms’ which officially became (with a little lost in translation) ‘Two Bunch Palms.’”

In the late 1920s a new legend had it that Two Bunch Palms had become “Big M’s (Scarface Al Capone) Fortress West.” Within months, the first permanent structures ever erected at Two Bunch Palms were completed—ornate, bungalows of solid rock with stained glass windows. The interiors had planked oak floors and the hot mineral water which flowed under the lower palm grove was contained into rock pools. The “fortress” even had a sentry turret on top of the main residence.

The sense of security at Two Bunch Palms and the restorative quality of the hot mineral springs seemed to revive Capone’s appetite for excitement and power so when the solitude of the desert got to him, he decided to allow selected people to share his fortress. Two Bunch Palms became the playground of Mafia bosses and movie stars. Now sharing the oasis was a modern gambling casino where the idols of the silver screen and pit bosses from Cicero, Illinois, smiled at each other across the baccarat table. Meanwhile, Capone, movie moguls and assorted ladies cavorted in steaming pools. However, it was a way of life that couldn’t last.

Needing total isolation, Capone’s Fortress-Casino could not survive the growing community of Desert Hot Springs. One day in the

Continued on page 14

mid 1930s, Capone was gone.

Today Two Bunch Palms' 56 developed acres calls to those who want to get away from the Desert Hot Springs-Palm Springs brouhaha. "There is magic here. It's in the breeze that ruffles the palms, the kindness of the staff and the salubrious waters."

Is that one of the reasons palms are in Healdsburg? Do they "bring magic" to the area or has "the magic" always been here and the palms are just pointing it out? Certainly in the past, palms symbolized the presence of water and good weather and, in the case of the Mexican Fan Palm, can be seen for a great distance.



Fitch residence - Healdsburg 1888

Maybe, too, it is the fact that palms CAN be grown here!

Perhaps the first palm in Healdsburg was brought by Josefa Carrillo Fitch when she moved here in 1849 after the death of her husband Captain Henry Fitch. The Mexican Fan Palm at the site of "Fitch's Castle" (on the Brandt property off Bailhache Ave.) certainly is old enough to have come that way! Many of its "children" are gracing the landscape there today.

Two very old palms, one Canary Island Palm and one Mexican, are in the turfgrass at the front of 204 Center Street.



The Jacob Pimm House built 1875

This property was originally bought from the Baptist Church by Jacob Pimm who built the house in 1875. The Mexican Fan Palm is the one closest to Mill Street. It is said that these two palms prompted and inspired the planting of the palms in the Plaza.

In 1897, Mr. John Flack, owner of "Magnolia Farm," a "Summer Resort" and nursery southwest of Healdsburg, donated 8 California Fan Palms (at a cost to him of \$8!) for the Plaza and 4 Sago palms for "ornamentation of the center of the Plaza."



Healdsburg Plaza - 1899 planting

The Fan Palms took well to the area even with the snow which fell in some abundance in 1905!



Healdsburg Plaza snowfall - 1905

With the Sagos it was another story. It is not known if Mr. Flack was aware of the fact that the Sago is not a palm tree but a Cycad. Cycads are actually a group of plants that are very primitive in their origin; therefore, as a group Cycads are often referred to as "living fossils." They look like stunted palm trees and are used in botanical gardens or as a landscape plant. However, they "need good sun" and do not want to be over-watered. Perhaps that is why they did not survive in the Plaza, especially when it snowed! Today, after several Plaza planting renovations, Canary Palms are the only ones among the many other variety of trees!

Continued on page 15

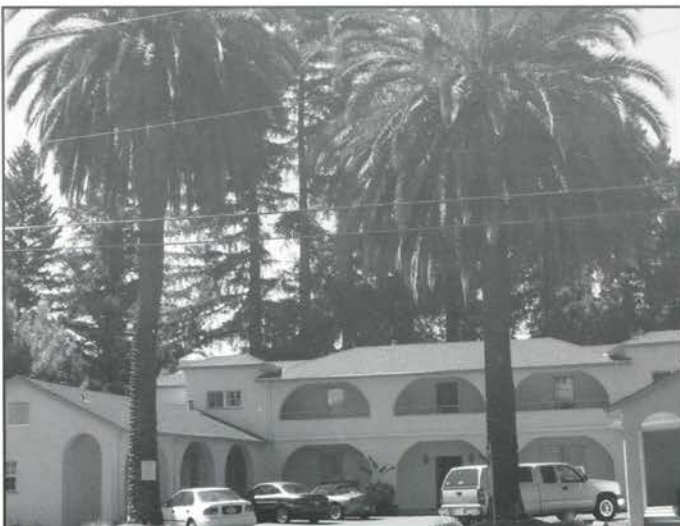
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The planting of two palms, more often than not on either side of the entrance to a home or property, was quite popular with those who built homes in the late 1800s and early 1900s in Healdsburg. Homes and trees "still standing" today include the following.

An early example is at the home built in 1874 at 68 Front Street by Adna Phelps, a one-time carpenter who later became involved in winery operations. In 1897 the house was sold to Peter and Guiseppe Simi who had founded Simi Winery in a stone building across the street in 1883. The home passed to Guiseppe's daughter Isabelle who married Fred Haigh in 1908. Today several Canary palms of varying ages still command one's attention in the front of the property.

At 607 Johnson Street can be found the "two palm tradition." The house was built in 1885 for J.W. Ragsdale, a real estate speculator and owner of the *Russian River Flag*, an early (1868-1886) Healdsburg newspaper. In 1890 Mrs. Catherine Byington purchased it for a summer residence, but in 1893 turned it over to her son Charles, a prominent Healdsburg merchant, a city trustee and Deputy County Clerk.

Worthy of note and a fixture in Healdsburg since the turn of the 20th century is the complex at 504 Matheson Street which has had "Palms" in its name for 100 years! Originally built in 1904 by Dr. H. B. Crocker as the Crocker Sanitarium, it served not only the sick but as a vacation resort to the weary. It was aimed at the person who was tired of the grind of social or business life and "who needed respite from the fog, cold winds and the noise of the city." It was touted as a "back to nature" type of health resort! In 1906 it became strictly a tourist hotel, "The Palms Hotel," and today it is The Palms Apartments, still with 2 large palms flanking the driveway.



The Palms Apartments, Matheson Street

Another home "flanked by palms" is at 417 Haydon Street. It was built in 1908 by William Ferguson, Jr., for his retirement after a lifetime of farming in Alexander Valley.

A "two palm sighting" can be found at the 523 Fitch Street home built in 1916 by Dr. Jasper Stone. Dr. Stone had come to Healdsburg in 1884 and practiced medicine until 1892 at which time he moved to San Francisco. In 1916 he returned to Healdsburg and resumed his practice. Fronting the Fitch Street home are two tall Mexican Fan Palms.

There is also another Mexican Fan Palm at 227 North Street, the house built by and for John Marshall in 1871. In later years a Canary Island Palm was planted to keep it company!

As one of the objectives, since the 1880s, had been to make Healdsburg attractive, in 1920 the Chamber of Commerce gathered information on improving the state highway approach to Healdsburg. The initial plans included the erection of some sort of arch over which would be the words "Welcome to Healdsburg" and palm trees planted on both sides of the highway.



Healdsburg Avenue - old Highway 101

When permission was granted by the State Highway Commission and the State Forestry Board for the plantings, 100 palm trees were ordered from John F. Miller & Sons who supplied them at cost. The palms arrived "after considerable delay caused by the railroad strike" and were planted by a Chamber committee on April 26, 1920. Each tree was carefully tended by a Girl Scout until the plants became established. The arch and the "welcome" sign were never mentioned again!

In its March 6, 1924, issue, the *Tribune* noted that "the palms planted by the side of the highway south of town a few years ago by the Chamber of Commerce are flourishing and showing

Continued on page 16

substantial growth. They are to be cultivated and carefully tended to insure their continued growth." Just recently (2006) the palms received a beautiful trim. Not showing any signs of being over 80 years old, these magnificent Canary Island Palms still welcome visitors to Healdsburg.

Also welcoming visitors and Healdsburgers alike are the Mexican palms that can be spied above most trees and roof tops: a "lonesome" palm which can be seen from a distance looking north along Center Street (it's actually between Grant and Lincoln Streets); one that stands tall and lonely at 447 Piper Street on the corner of University across from Recreation Park; and, of course, as mentioned earlier, the "grandfather" palm at Brandts.

As a youngster, Jack Brandt used to use that palm as a "navigation guide" when he was climbing around Fitch Mountain. The palm, now probably around 150 years old, can still be spotted from across the Russian River.

Today we have the newly built Parkpoint Health and Swim Club carrying on the tradition of palm trees as well as Dr. Crocker's "health resort" idea. Mature Canary Palms were planted along the western edge of the club's Foss Circle property next to the swimming pools, one purpose being to create an atmosphere of relaxation and well being.

So, in answer to the question, "Palms in Healdsburg?" we can say that palm trees are still visible, flourishing, and part of the old and new charm of the city. [RRR]



Parkpoint Health and Swim Club

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