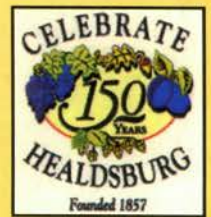


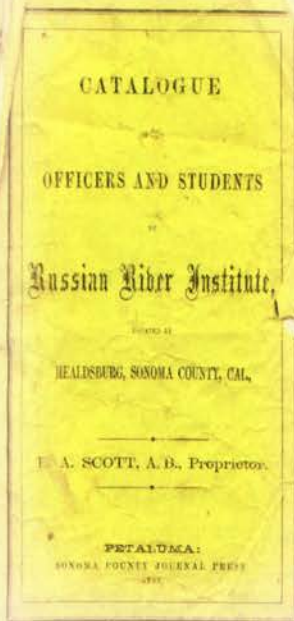


RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER



SPRING 2007 • ISSUE 96

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



F. A. Scott





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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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

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In This Issue



In 1857 James Buchanan of Pennsylvania was President of the United States and, as it turns out our only bachelor president. In January, 1857 John Downey was sworn in as the seventh governor of California, 7 years after California gained statehood. And our sister city to the south, Santa Rosa, was a hamlet of about 400.

150 years later, Healdsburg, now a thriving and history rich city of 11,600 is celebrating its founding by Harmon Heald, a man who came west to find a better way of life and his fortune.

Last year when it was being determined by Museum personnel how to be a part of the city's year long program to celebrate Healdsburg's 150th birthday, then president Al Loebel invited the staff of the Russian River Recorder to do a "special" or souvenir issue. In thinking over his request, the staff came to the conclusion that an "expanded" issue would be more appropriate and, hopefully, might become a keepsake. Our goal: to convey to our readers what living in Healdsburg was like at that time.

We hope that we have accomplished this. Our contributing writers - curator Daniel Murley, research curator Holly Hoods, Charlotte Anderson, June Maher Smith and former *Russian River Recorder* editor and educator Darla Meeker - met over a course of weeks late last year and came up with articles which we hope reflect our goal.

Many hours of labor, much research and much talent went into this issue.

We are indebted to Dan Murley for his exhaustive research into the times and people who came and lived in this area -as he points out "discovered Northern California-the Russian River Valley and Healdsburg." It makes for fascinating reading as well as giving a background on which to build the accompanying articles.

Charlotte accepted the assignment to research the history of Healdsburg's founder, Harmon Heald and his family and she did an admirable job. His was a short life but through his legacy and generosity we have been able to enjoy the fruits of his gift.

The Civil War, it might surprise you to know,touched Sonoma County and the Healdsburg area. June Maher Smith, a long time admired contributor to the *Recorder*, in her research found out that "the sympathies of Sonoma County Citizens were split - although Petaluma was rooting for the Union troops, the northern communities, Santa Rosa and Healdsburg, were in general siding with the Confederates." In her research she found that many who fought in the Civil War came West after the conflict and many settled in Healdsburg including Union sympathizer and familiar Healdsburg names -- L.A. Norton and Col. Rod Matheson.

And Holly Hoods, in her very special style, invites our readers to enjoy the type of housing and how it evolved - from "cabins and cottages to Greek Revival houses."

We welcome back former *Recorder* editor Darla Meeker who researched the "mercurial" history of the schools in the area. As always she did an excellent job in writing and research.

We are also indebted to Holly for supplying us with many "sidebars" - the 1858 brochure from the Russian River Institute, the 1857 Letter from Lindsay Carson, and The Early Days in Healdsburg by William T. Allen.

Celebrate Healdsburg is the theme of the year long observance of Healdsburg's 150th founding and we are pleased to have been able to participate in this small way.

In our next issues we hope to bring you more history with the theme of "life in Healdsburg in 1857."

Arnold Santucci

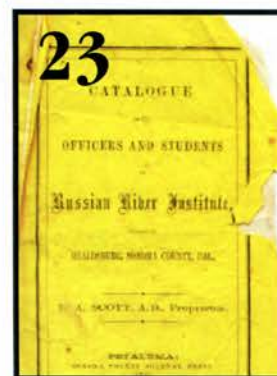
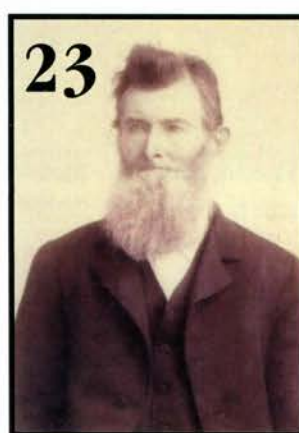
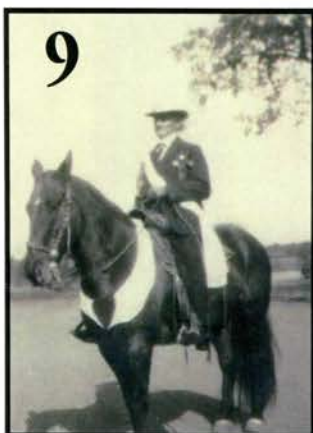
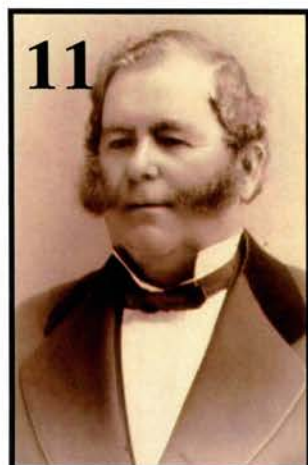
Editor



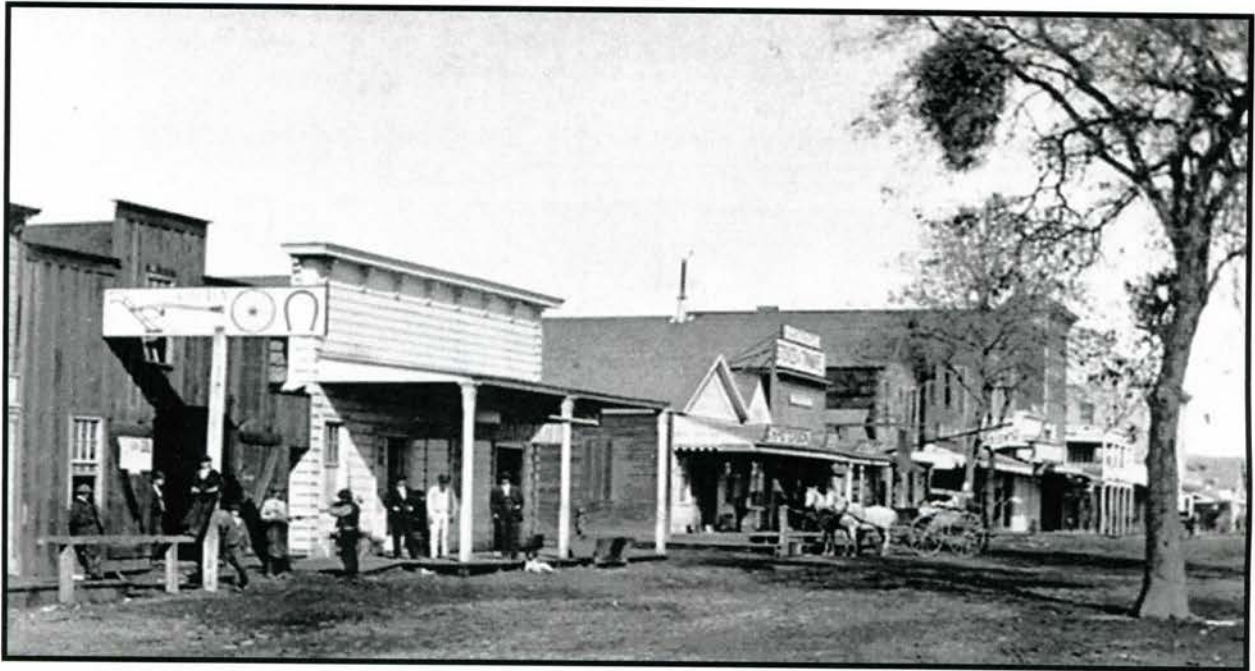
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West Street, west side, looking north.

1857 LETTER FROM LINDSAY CARSON TO HIS GREAT-GRANDFATHER, JOHN R. NORRIS

Russian River, December 7, 1857
Mr. John R. Norris

Dear Sir:

A long time has elapsed since we have heard anything from you and family. We have seen no one from your country since you wrote last. Myself and family are all well and hearty and hope this will find you and yours in the same. I saw Mr. Drum's folks today. They are well and hearty and are anxious to hear from you and Mary.

There is no news of any importance here. Times are quite hard, money is scarcer than I have ever known before, Sonoma County is settled up about as thick as it well can be, and every place that a man can raise stock is settled from Dry Creek to the coast. You recollect where Harmon Heald was keeping store when you was here. Last spring he laid off a little town there and now it is quite a village. It is called Healdsburg. There is some six or seven stores and more in process of erection. How long it will continue to improve I cannot say but I expect it will be about like all little California towns. It will get too big for its breeches, but there is one thing certain that there is a great deal of business done there for a little country town.

You and Mary had better come down about Christmas if you can consistently do so and see all your old friends and acquaintances. I am still living upon the same place, knocking along about as usual, work to make both ends meet. Drum is still at the same place. Heard there has been a good deal of sickness here this summer and fall mostly amongst children. The disease is [diphtheria]...sore throat, and it has been quite fatal. Four out of our five children have had it but we have had the good fortune to lose none of ours.

This has been one of the dryest years we have had since I have been in this country... The valley land, it ranges from twenty five to thirty dollars an acre. Rue cattle are about ten curts (?) on foot and scarce, no heavy cattle in this country. Hogs are eight curts and scarce. You must write to me and let me know what you are doing and how you are getting along and all about it as I am anxious to hear from you. My wife sends her best love to you and Mary, and please accept the same from yours fraternally.
Lindsay Carson

N.B. Direct your letter to Windsor P. O. Sonoma County, California

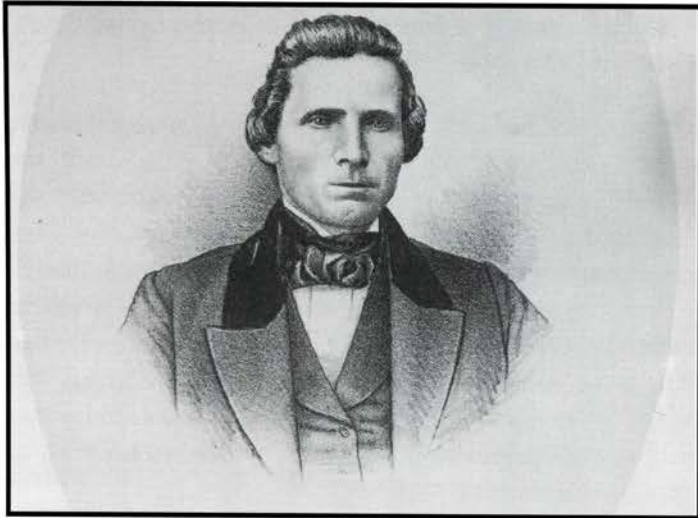
The preceeding document was provided by Mr. J. Robert Norris, Jr. (deceased) to the Sonoma County Genweb project and is communication between Lindsay Carson of the Healdsburg/Windsor area and his great grandfather. Carson was the brother of famed explorer Kit Carson.

HARMON HEALD'S GIFT: HEALDSBURG

by Charlotte Anderson

HEALD ORIGINS – 1703-1816

Originally from Cheshire, England, members of the Heald family became Quakers in 1652. In 1703, Samuel Heald and wife Mary Bancroft emigrated to Chester County, PA. One of their children, Jacob, became a farmer at Christiana, Delaware. The Heald family lived in Delaware for about 3 generations.



Harmon Gregg Heald

MOVING WESTWARD – 1817-1849

Finally, George Heald, after marrying Elizabeth Tatlow in 1816 and having one child, Mary Ann, moved to Belmont County in "the wilderness of Ohio." There they had 7 more children, 6 boys and 1 girl. Each of the boys was named after a Heald ancestor except for Harmon, born January 29, 1824, who was named for his maternal grandfather, Harmon Gregg.

About 1830, Harmon's father George was murdered in the Allegheny Mountains when returning to Ohio from a trip to Delaware to "secure a small legacy." This left Harmon's mother Elizabeth to raise 8 children on an hundred-acre farm in Ohio. After about 25 years in Ohio, the family (except for married sister Mary Ann) moved to Missouri on Snei Creek near Pleasant Hill in Jackson County. Here they were surrounded by many neighbors who afterward moved to Sonoma County, California: Patton, Espey, Bledsoe (later the sheriff who conducted the Fitch auction), Pool (became Searcher of Records in Santa Rosa), and Freshower. Harmon's education, begun in a log school house in Ohio, was finished in Missouri at the Chapel Hill Academy. He taught in the primary schools in the winter time and, along with most older males, worked the harvests in summer.

SEEKING FORTUNE – 1849-1850

Prior to 1849, many emigrants had left Missouri for California and some had returned to get other members of their families, but when stories of gold discoveries reached Missouri, many more were lured west. Thomas and Harmon with Samuel Philpott and Daniel Darby got an outfit together of 3 or 4 yokes of oxen, a wagon and two saddle horses. Starting on the 5th or 6th of May, 1849, they fell in with another party (which included brother Samuel) and eventually, due to several sicknesses, joined a huge company which had two doctors. Early in September 1849, the party reached Sacramento, with Samuel suffering from the effects of typhoid fever and Harmon from scurvy. Unable at this time to go to the Deer Creek mines with Thomas and Darby, Samuel and Harmon sold the wagon and oxen and wintered in Napa and Sonoma. Samuel Heald stayed with the Kellogg family in Napa, and Harmon and Samuel Philpott in Sonoma with Philpott's sister (Mrs. Thomas Patton) who had moved from Missouri to Sonoma in 1846.



1875 California map: "Heald" is a town!

In early April of 1850, Harmon and Samuel Philpott joined Thomas (Darby having died during the winter) at Deer Creek (which became Nevada City). Shortly, they and L.S. Adams of San Francisco left "one of the best diggings in California" to obtain river claims on the North Yuba. In Marysville each procured a saddle animal packed with provisions and tools. Reaching the camp, they found that provisions were scarce so they sold a 75 pound sack of flour for \$112.50! The four, including Thomas and Harmon, worked their sluicing claims (above Goodyear's Bar on the North Fork of the Yuba River) until early September when they sold their tents, tools, and claims for a few hundred dollars. They headed for

Continued on page 6

Sacramento via a route which took them through a now "thriving town of Nevada City" where those who had remained had been making from 10 to 15 dollars a day. Going on to Sacramento, they found it had "grown wonderfully," but after remaining a few days, Harmon and Thomas left their partners and went on to Sonoma.



Road to Mill Creek

In late 1850 in Sonoma Thomas and Harmon learned that their brother Samuel was at the "Russian River" where he was building a grist and saw mill (a trade he had learned in Missouri) on Mill Creek with William March. Upon arriving there, Thomas took charge of sawing while Harmon worked on regaining his health.

BUILDING A FUTURE – 1851-1856

Early in 1851, Samuel left for Missouri to help his mother sell the farm there and return with him to California. Meanwhile, Harmon chose a sunny site near an "oak and madrone forest" where he built a small clapboard cabin. He also cleared away ten acres of land where he planted wheat. His very successful crop was sold at 8 cents a pound. With the proceeds from this sale, Harmon, at age 28, started the first store in "Heald's Store," the original name of the stopping off place (town!) on the "main road to Mendocino and the counties to the north." Burk Miles, in October 1852, hauled the first load of goods to be sold in the store. Harmon catered to the surrounding ranchers, Indians, and travelers north, and was a great success, regularly selling out his entire stock in busy months.



Footbridge over the Russian River

Early in the year 1853, Harmon Heald lost his youngest brother George who had been helping him in the store, his being the first funeral in the settlement. He was interred "by the side of a cluster of madronas" in the original cemetery on East Street "then apparently far away in the backwoods." (His remains, along with those of many others, were removed in 1858 to Oak Mound Cemetery on land donated by Roderick Matheson.)

Harmon married Sarah Smith of Mark West in 1853 with whom he had two sons, George William (Billy), born Feb. 28, 1854, and Harmon Charles born Oct. 19, 1855. In 1854 he was elected to the County Board of Supervisors and the next year won a close election to the California State Legislature, narrowly beating Lindsay Carson, brother of "Kit" Carson.

In the winter of 1853-54 Heald built an addition to his store and went into partnership with H.M. Willson and A.B. Aull. Also in 1854 a fourth class post office called "Russian River" was established in Heald's store. When the original fourth class office was changed to first class on April 14, 1857, the name was changed to Healdsburg. (The Post Office name "Healdsburg" remained until 1894 when by order of President Benjamin Harrison the final "h's" in the "termination 'burgh' were dropped for all U.S. Post Offices.") Harmon Heald became the first of the county postmasters to serve as first postmaster of two offices, and the first to serve in an office bearing his name.



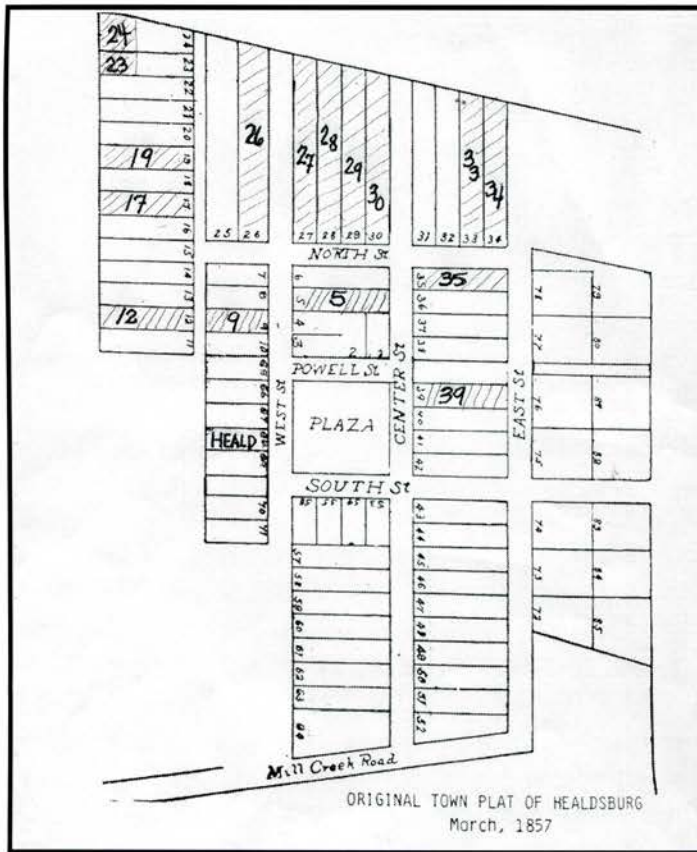
Postmark showing "H" in Healdsburg

FROM SQUATTER TO PHILANTHROPIST

Harmon Heald had never laid any claim to the land which he occupied. There was a dispute as to whether the land was government owned or whether it belonged to the Fitch family under a Spanish Grant. Harmon felt confident that the Grant would be confirmed and it was in 1855 that his opinion proved true. A series of forced land auctions in April and May of 1856 was the opportunity that Heald and the other squatters had been waiting for. He first purchased 100 acres between the old Healdsburg

Continued on page 7

slough (Foss Creek) and Dry Creek for \$200. Then in July he purchased 10 acres on the east side of the slough from his brother-in-law, Aquilla B. Aull and in December he purchased 55 acres from brother-in-law George T. Espey, both of whom had purchased the land at the original auction. It was on these tracts of land that Harmon Gregg Heald laid out the town of Healdsburg, the plat map



being recorded on March 5, 1857.

One week later, on March 12, Heald sold 16 lots to 8 settlers who had already built houses on the land. According to William T. Healds, "Although in some places it was common practice to disguise the actual amount paid for property, it is believed that such practice was not at all common at that time in Healdsburg. Moreover Harmon Heald was a very straight-forward man who had little to disguise either in business or otherwise. Had Mr. Heald been a man of sharp practices, he certainly could have driven some hard bargains. But Mr. Heald was a kind neighbor, and he now began to make the settlers secure in their holdings by placing their titles in their hands at \$15 per lot." Actually the prices varied a bit, but they were all low and fair. The first 16 lots were sold as follows: #9 and 12 to August Knaak for \$45; #26 and 200 feet of the west parts of #23 & 24 to William R. Dodge for \$22; #35 to C.W. Hooper and "Charlie" Mitchell for \$10; #5, 17, 28, 29, 30 for \$15 each to

Benjamin B. Bonham; #19 & 39 to Johnston Ireland for \$33; and #27, 33, & 34 to Henry T. Walsworth and John P. Domes for a "total of \$146.30!"

Historically, the first tract to be sold from Harmon Heald's "quarter section" was sold before the town was laid out to Harmon's old friend of his boyhood days in Missouri, Tom Hudson. On January 2, 1857, Hudson bought 10 acres for \$50 in the very south eastern corner of the quarter section (east of the depot). Not all of the original lots were put up for sale. Heald gifted deeds to certain



Matheson Street lot with Church

lots or transferred them for an honorary amount. These included lots for the town plaza, the old cemetery, two lots for schools and four lots for Healdsburg's churches.

Early in 1857, Harmon, finding his store space too limited for his successful business, constructed a new store across the street on the corner of West and Powell Streets. (later became the Bank of Healdsburg, corner of Healdsburg Ave. and Plaza St.) He added largely to his stock and opened "an establishment of some pretensions." Although his business was a great success, his health was not good and he placed an ad on March 26th in the *Sonoma County Journal* offering his store for sale.

On May 15, 1857, Sarah Heald, wife of Harmon, died after a short illness. According to the *Sonoma County Journal*, she died of typhoid fever after an illness of 13 days. According to William Thomas Heald's *HEALD FAMILY HISTORY*, "Mrs. Heald had done her week's washing and feeling still vigorous had whitewashed her

A Rare Chance!!

To persons wishing to engage in Merchandizing.

THE undersigned wishing to change his business, on account of ill health, offers for sale
His Store-house and Stock of Goods.

The House has a good run of custom, and doing a *first-rate business.*

For particulars, apply on the premises, to
H. G. HEALD,

Healdsburg, Sonoma County.

March 26, 1857.

32-3w

Heald's ad in the Sonoma County Journal

kitchen. But after exercising so freely she sat down in the doorway where there was a draft and caught cold. The result was that she ran into pneumonia and lived but a very short time." Harmon had been at The Geysers in hopes of improving his fast failing health. He had "entered into the pleasures of the evening as far as his health and strength would permit, and retired as happy and contented as his physical health could warrant." At the break of day, a man on horseback (having ridden all night) came with the news that Harmon's wife was dying. "Though in a very feeble condition, Mr. Heald immediately mounted his horse and set out on the return journey. Kind friends sent a conveyance as far as the wagon road extended so he was relieved of having to make the whole trip on horseback." The funeral of Sarah Heald was held in the Plaza among the oaks and madronas.

THE FINAL DAYS -- 1858

After the death of his wife, Harmon made his home with his wife's brother-in-law, George Espey. "Mr. Espey was very devoted to Mr. Heald and left nothing undone that a brother could do. Mr. Heald was taken to every place in the vicinity that had any note as a health restoring locality. But that dreaded disease, tuberculosis, had progressed to where it was beyond control." In the autumn of 1858 "Mr. Heald was brought to a camp-meeting that was being held near the lagoon on the Brumfield place. He was then unable to sit up and brought on a cot. Here we are told that notwithstanding his weakened condition he maintained a lively interest in visiting with all his old friends who chanced to be present."

Later in 1858, Harmon's son Harmon Charles was taken ill and died on 7 December. Harmon survived his son's death by only ten days, passing away on December 17, 1858 "at the age of 34 years, 10 months and 18 days. The next morning our townsman, Charles Fitch, then a lad of 16 years, came galloping into town on horseback to procure some groceries. Boy-like, he came whistling

22 LOTS FOR SALE,
In the prosperous and pleasant
TOWN OF HEALDSBURG.
The Lots are situated
NEAR THE ACADEMY,
and covered with
FINE LARGE OAKS, LAUREL
AND MADRONE TREES,
delightfully located for
FAMILY RESIDENCES.
✓ TITLE GOOD. ✓
FOR SALE CHEAP for Cash, or in ex-
change for Sheep.
45-4w Apply to **S. C. HAYDON.**

Ad in Sonoma County Journal showing growth of Healdsburg

as he galloped. But suddenly he was stopped by a neighbor and was told the news of the death of Harmon Heald. He tells us his whistling immediately ceased and that he found the town as still as death. Such was the respect paid by the town to its founder."

The *Sonoma County Journal's* January 7, 1859, obituary stated: "Died. At Healdsburg, December 17th (1858). Harmon G. Heald, aged about 38 (sic) years. Mr. Heald, who was one of the early settlers in that section of the county and from whom the flourishing town of Healdsburg was named, during the session of the Legislature of 1856 was a member of the state assembly from Sonoma County, where he served with credit to himself, and to the satisfaction of his constituents. As a friend and citizen he was universally esteemed."

In Harmon Gregg Heald's short 34 years of life he had experienced more than most people do. He helped on his mother's farm, went beyond the one-room school and became a teacher, crossed the plains and Rockies to California in a wagon train, tried his hand at gold mining, built and successfully ran a store, purchased, sold, and donated land, and ultimately gave one of his greatest gifts of all--the town called Healdsburg!

Sources:

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HEALDSBURG AND THE WAR OF THE REBELLION

by June Maber Smith

In the spring of 1861 Healdsburg's 500 citizens learned of the beginning of the Civil War. At that time the town was recovering from the loss of many buildings and businesses destroyed in a disastrous fire in the previous October. Although the actual attack on Fort Sumter occurred on April 12th, the news finally reached Healdsburg in the April 25th "extra" edition of Petaluma's *Sonoma County Journal*. The sympathies of Sonoma County citizens were split—although Petaluma was rooting for the Union troops, the northern communities, Santa Rosa and Healdsburg, were in general siding with the Confederates.

One of Healdsburg's prominent citizens, however, was definitely a Union supporter. He was Attorney L. A. Norton who came to Healdsburg in 1857 and resolved the local Squatter's War. By 1859 he was actively organizing the other Union supporters in the area and he continued to be a most ardent Union supporter during the War of the Rebellion. Another prominent resident, Roderick Matheson, was also a Union supporter.

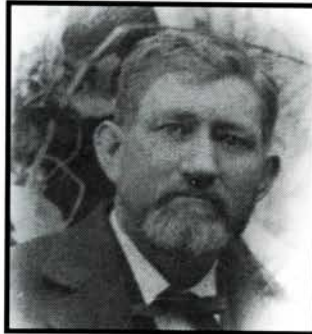
Many of the others who fought during the Civil War came West after the conflict and settled in Healdsburg. Brief information about some of these men follows.

DR. J. F. DAINGERFIELD

Dr. Joseph Fauntleroy Daingerfield, one of Healdsburg's early physicians, served in the Confederate Army. This Virginia native came to Healdsburg in 1870 from Christian County, Kentucky, and "made himself known as a skillful physician and surgeon." He died in 1873 and is buried in Oak Mound Cemetery.

R. H. WARFIELD

General R. H. Warfield, a native of Rochester, New York, came to Healdsburg in 1875 and served as cashier and president of the Farmers & Mechanics Bank for several years. Although he was a veteran of the Civil War, his title of "General" came from his position as a commanding officer of the Second Brigade, National Guard of California. After General Warfield moved to San Francisco he was involved in business ventures, including several hotels and the Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway. He was killed in a collision on that railway in 1906 and was buried in the Presidio National Cemetery under the auspices of the GAR. General Warfield was the father of prominent Healdsburg banker, George H. Warfield.



Lewis Adelbert Norton

R. K. TRUITT

Roland K. Truitt served as a cavalryman on both sides during the Civil War. He served 18 months in the Confederate Cavalry in the early days of the war and in 1863 he took the oath of allegiance to the United States and served in Company E, First Texas Cavalry. In 1868, Roland and his wife, Sina Brooks of Texas, arrived in Healdsburg. In the 1880s he served as constable and deputy sheriff. In 1885 and 1886, Truitt was a Wells Fargo Express Company shotgun messenger. Although he was engaged in raising stock, he is best remembered

for his opera house, Truitt's Theater, on Center Street. The theater was the site of graduation exercises, masquerade balls, traveling musical groups and other cultural events. In Sebastopol on Armistice Day, 1929, R. K. Truitt, mounted on his horse, led the parade's Healdsburg American Legion division. He died in 1930 and was buried with military ceremony in Oak Mound Cemetery.

L. A. NORTON

Attorney Lewis Adelbert Norton was born in Chautauqua, New York. His interest in military matters prompted him to organize the Illinois Volunteers at the beginning of the Mexican War. He then moved on to Placerville, California, and finally settled in Healdsburg in 1857. At that time the northern part of Sonoma County was in favor of secession but Norton was definitely a Union supporter. Although the Civil War would not begin until 1861, Norton organized the Sotoyome Guards in 1859. Norton and Roderick Matheson were chosen as officers. In 1862 Norton's name headed the list of men who signed the oath to "organize ourselves into a Military Company to be known as the Sotoyome Home Guards for the purpose of putting down said rebellion and apprehending and punishing treason...within the limits of the State of California." They further swore to "keep the very existence of this organization a secret to all unless I know them to be members thereof," so Norton proceeded to secretly drill the men. When it was said that no Union flag would ever float in Healdsburg, Norton purchased one and flew the banner from the balcony of his office. When he was informed in July, 1865, that the rebels had raised a flag two and one-half miles from Santa Rosa, he went down there, climbed the tree and removed the flag himself. Norton's illustrious career came to an end in 1891 when he died at the age of 72 years. He, too, is buried in Oak Mound Cemetery.

Continued on page 10

DR. J. S. STONE

Dr. Stone was born in Hockingport, Ohio, and joined the Union army medical corps at the age of 17. He moved to Healdsburg in 1884. After the death of W. F. Frame in 1926, Dr. Stone and R. K. Truitt were the last two GAR members living in Healdsburg. At Memorial Day services, Dr. Stone read the traditional "Roll Call of the Dead," a list of veterans of various wars who were buried in Oak Mound Cemetery. Dr. Stone died in 1939.

COL. R. N. MATHESON

Col. Roderick Nicol Matheson, born in Scotland, immigrated to New York City where he married Maria Antoinette Seaman. He spent a short time mining for gold in 1849, then went on to San Francisco where he became prominent in community activities and was a member of the local militia, the Marion Rifles. Matheson, his wife and children moved to Healdsburg in 1856 where Rod and his father-in-law, Jesse Seaman, bought 900 acres on the east side of town. Matheson was a member of the Free Soil Party, which wanted to keep slavery out of California and Oregon, and he was invited to attend Abraham Lincoln's inauguration in March, 1861. Two months later as the war erupted Matheson was named Colonel of the 32nd New York State Volunteer Infantry (the First California Regiment). Matheson was mortally wounded in battle in 1862. After funerals in New York City and San Francisco his body was brought to Healdsburg and the 38-year-old hero was finally laid to rest in Oak Mound Cemetery. A seven-foot obelisk "erected by his friends of Healdsburg and vicinity" marks the plot where Rod, his wife and children are buried on the crest of the hill under an oak tree.

After the war, Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) chapters were formed by men who had fought for the Union cause and wanted the camaraderie of others who had been through the conflict. Healdsburg's Rod Matheson Post, No. 16, was installed in February, 1881, and all ex-Union soldiers and sailors were invited to join this "friendly association." It was not to be a political organization. GAR Posts were also formed in Guerneville, Petaluma, and Santa Rosa. Matheson Post No. 16 conducted Decoration Day services at Oak Mound Cemetery in 1881. They marched from town under the leadership of Gen. R. H. Warfield and placed floral decorations on the graves of Col. Matheson, Charles Goodspeed, William Wells, and Confederate soldier Dr. J. F. Daingerfield. After an oration by A.G. Burnett they

marched back to town.

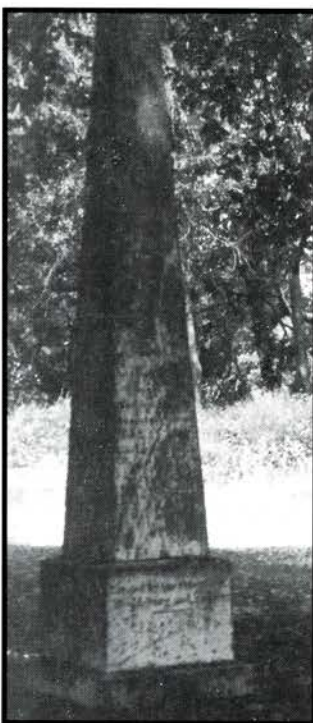
In June, 1902, Healdsburg hosted the 6th annual encampment of the Veteran's Association of Northern California at Luce's Grove. The grove's oak and madrone trees provided shelter for the tents of the veterans who would be enjoying "good fellowship and entertainment for ten joyful days." The GAR and other veterans could bring their own tents or rent one. Some brought their families. All cooking and campfire wood was provided free, together with hay for their horses "for those that come for a distance of five miles or more." Although 3,000 visitors were expected, the attendance was not as large as was anticipated. The local citizens enjoyed the band music, speeches, and watching the men march through town. The final encampment of the GAR was held in Indianapolis in 1949 and the last member, Albert Woolson, died in 1956 at the age of 109 years.



Dr. J.S. Stone



Roland K. Truitt



Matheson grave monument

The Ladies of the GAR is the oldest women's hereditary organization in the U. S. The members of Healdsburg's Ladies of the GAR Roanoke Circle No. 4 dedicated a monument in Oak Mound Cemetery "To the unknown veterans of the Civil War... May 30, 1922." Eighty years later, on Memorial Day, 2002, members of the Ellsworth Camp #23, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) rededicated the monument and replaced the flagpole at the site.

The Civil War Days reenactments are a special way to learn more about those days. Reenactors wear the uniforms and carry the armaments used by both the Union and the Confederacy. They set up field camps with authentic tents, prepare their food over open fires and relive the life of those 1863 soldiers. The battles they act out are authentic and exciting. There will be a reenactment at Duncans Mills, California, on July 14-15, 2007.

Thanks to Ray Owen for advice and assistance

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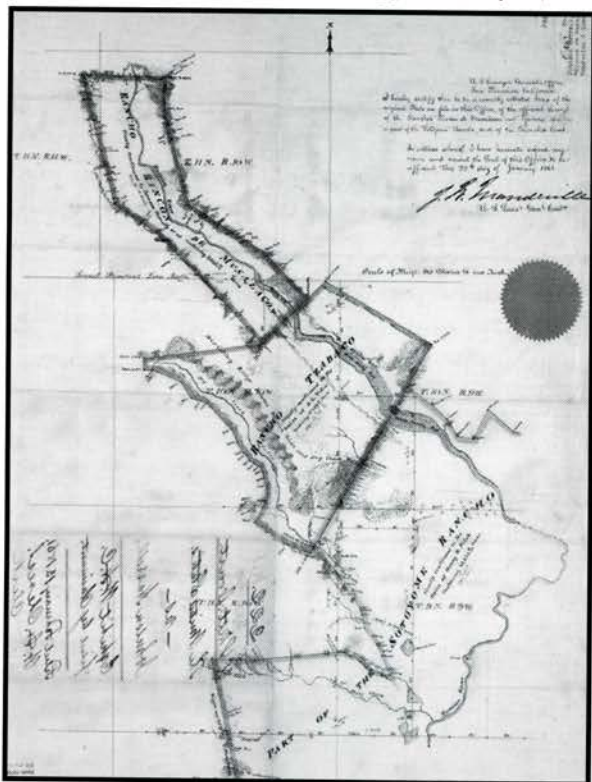
DISCOVERING NORTHERN CALIFORNIA:

THE RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY & HEALDSBURG

by Daniel F. Murley

Analysis of our past is oftentimes centered on the commemoration of significant anniversaries. In this year, the city of Healdsburg has chosen to feature the celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of filing of a town map by early Northern California resident Harmon Gregg Heald, for whom the now flourishing town has been named.

To put the celebration into historic context one must look past the squatters such as Heald and his contemporaries, before the Rancho grants of Sotoyome to Henry Delano Fitch and Tzabaco to José German Piña. Fitch's grant came to him in two large parcels, one of 8,800 acres in 1841 and another of 40,000 acres in 1844. Piña's holdings in what is now the Dry Creek Valley amounted to approximately 17,000 acres.

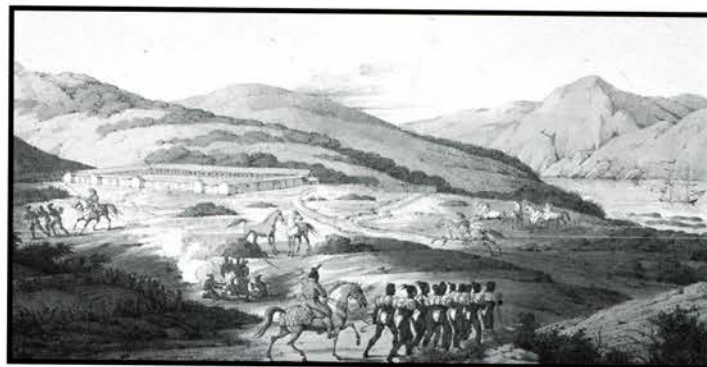


Map of Rancho Rincon de Musalacon, Rancho Tzabaco and the Sotoyome Rancho - Mandeville Survey of 1861

What was this fertile land like even before the rancho settlements?

As the Spanish moved northward from Mexico City, their center of influence in New Spain, they established a succession of Missions, Pueblos and fortified Presidios concluding with the El Presidio Real de San Francisco.

This outpost, the northernmost Spanish settlement in Alta



The Presidio at San Francisco - 1816 by Louis Choris *

California, was dedicated in September of the eventful year of 1776. While the ink from the quill pen of John Hancock and others was still drying on the parchment of independence in the East, Spanish soldiers under the lead of Captain Fernando Quiros were writing the history of Sonoma County. Quiros and his men made reconnaissance trips across the San Francisco Bay and attempted to find a water connection from San Pablo Bay to Bodega Bay. Though he found no navigable water route the trip between the two bays was made by Alaskan men and their Russian overseers to surreptitiously hunt sea otter. These early journeys were the first by non-Native people into what we now call Sonoma County. We will take an historic glimpse at this "land across the Bay" and the earliest explorers and settlers to the area near Healdsburg and the Russian River drainage.

In fact a view into the distant past may make clear the events which transpired to bring about the eventual settlement of Northern California. Here in the Russian River Valley, if one were to inhale a deep breath on a warm summer's evening, one would be filled with the acrid aroma of dried annual grasses. In winter, look westward to the rugged peaks which shield the peaceful valley from the relentless coastal storms or dangle one's toes in the chilly life-giving waters of the many creeks which feed the main watercourse in springtime. The clean air, the temperate climate, the fertile soil and the influence of the proximate ocean have drawn many like ourselves to this geologically active and climatologically blessed area. Let us first look to our geologic past, for it was the consequence of timeless, potent geologic forces which ultimately formed the basis for the human history of Sonoma County. The normally imperceptible movement of grand tectonic plates on the earth's molten mantle and the subsequent effects on the land surface has formed a unique topographic configuration. Mountains and hills were pushed upward by the movement of faults and the subduction of

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the plates, one under the other. Oftentimes heavy seasonal rains from the nearby Pacific washed these slopes, and the fertile valleys of rich alluvium bordering the meandering river and its numerous tributary creek channels were formed.

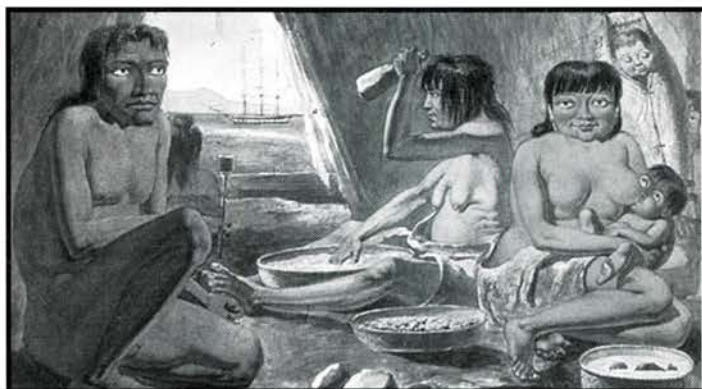
When combined with a temperate climate, the striking hills and dramatic river valleys acted as magnets for the area's earliest settlers. These original inhabitants probably followed ice-free corridors during the receding phases of an ice age of 12 to 15 thousand years ago, as well as moving down the Pacific coast in skin boats. Ethnologists and archaeologists postulate that major settlements of southward moving bands settled first around the state's largest natural water repository, Clear Lake. From there they spread westward to the valleys of the Russian River tributaries.



*Inhabitants of California by Louis Choris - 1816 **

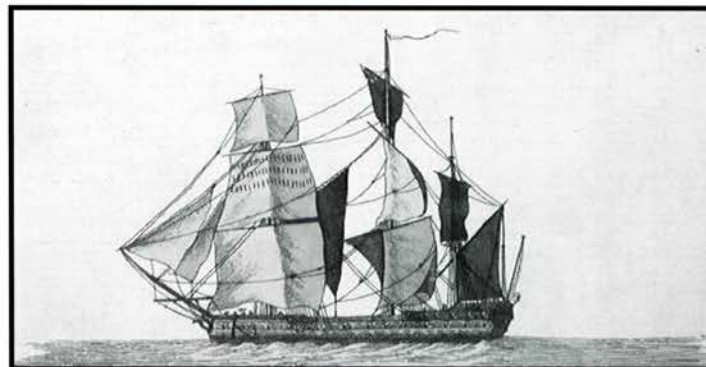
These first inhabitants were probably the ancestors of the Hokan-speaking Pomo people. In a relatively peaceful social aggregate of family-based villages, they lived for hundreds of generations and opportunistically hunted and gathered from the abundance which surrounded them.

In our not too distant past, this land became the object of settlement of many other ethnically different, yet strikingly similar families. In order to provide farmland for crops and feed fields for livestock, the early Spanish settlers came. In this geo-political theater, which included the Spanish, the Russians, the British and the burgeoning United States, the land became the main plot point in this human drama.



*Inhabitants of Rumiantsev Bay - 1818
Watercolor by Mikhail Tikhanov*

The local Native people had their own traditions about the arrival of people "from under the sea". No one really knows whence this tale originated, for many real-life incidents may have begun the legend of the "big bird floating on the ocean".

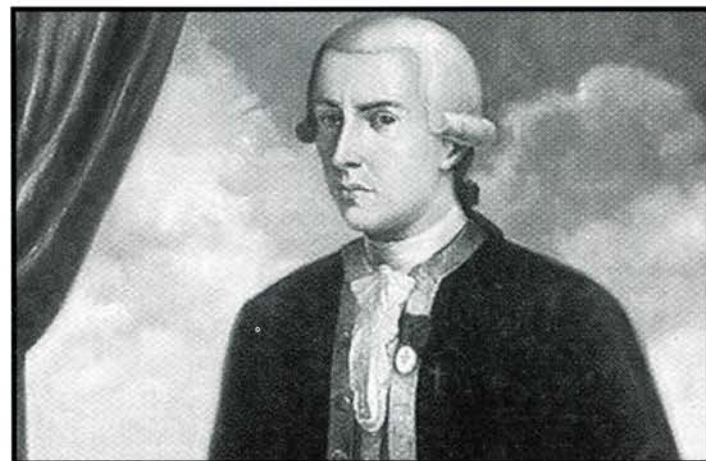


Sailing Ship circa 1790 by Freidrich Justin Bertuch

A sailing ship was sighted by coastal Natives and they determined that if they danced and sang and feasted, these actions would make the unfamiliar and "threatening" vision go away. When the sails of the "big bird" disappeared they felt they had been successful.

These sails could have belonged to that English privateer, the Golden Hinde, under the command of the "Queen's Pirate" Francis Drake when he sailed along this coast in 1579. The sails could have been that of Portuguese adventurer Sebastian Cermeño and his ship, the San Agustin, exploring the California coast for suitable ports for the Spanish galleons to rest and refit. Those billowing white sails might also have been those of the Spanish explorer Sebastian Vizcaino about twenty years after "discovering" Monterey Bay.

He sailed north past Cape Mendocino as far as Cape Blanco in southern Oregon, and many of the names he assigned to features such as Point Reyes and Año Nuevo in 1603 remain today. So does the name of the bay named for the Spanish explorer Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra into which he sailed on an exploration of the Northwest Coast in search of the Straits of Anian and on the lookout for Russian settlements.



*Captain Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra, Marina Real,
(Spanish Royal Navy) circa 1785*

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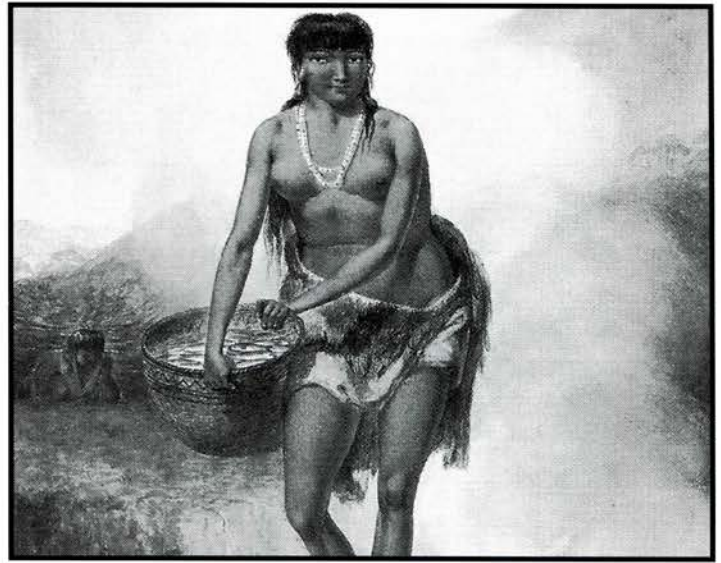
In the Native legend of the ships, it was not until the Russians and the Native Alaskan marine mammal hunters arrived at Bodega Bay in 1808 that they were able to put a face on the ones they referred to as the "undersea people". These visitors returned again in 1811 and stayed for another 30 years. They became the first "permanent" non-Native residents of what we now call Sonoma County. Many of the "northerners," as the Native Alaskan men in the service of the Russians were sometimes called, intermarried with local Native women.



Man of Nootka Sound - 1784 by John Webber

The female offspring of these unions for the most part stayed here with their mothers after their Alaskan fathers sailed back out of sight and into the sea from whence they came.

A small number of current Pomo and Coast Miwok families have oral traditions of their Russian and Alaskan lineage and those "undersea men" who left their legacy and traces of their language here on the Northern California coast, with the "people from the top of the land."



Inhabitant of Ruminatsev Bay - 1818
Watercolor by Mikbail T. Tikbanov

Consider if you will this short tale of a long walk by "strangers" into the interior of Northern California. They were following the river from its mouth near what is now Jenner on the coast, inland to the area near present day Healdsburg and further northward to the area near Ukiah. This was to be a fateful meeting of diverse cultures: Following a peaceful, colorful, cloud-filled sunset, the sun had slipped quickly behind the coastal ridge and darkness was swift and deep. Around a flickering fire near the river bank two disquieted members of the group of explorers spoke in muffled tones in a language never heard in this particular region of the "new land." The men were young Native Alaskan hunters and now, here, many miles inland from the ocean, fear and apprehension haunted their minds. These were courageous men who frequently risked life and limb on the open icy ocean waters of their Alaskan homeland in pursuit of marine mammals. On this day, they had trudged inland from the mouth of the river. Along the way they had passed sights inconceivable to these men from the wind-swept and sometimes treeless Arctic. Earlier in the day, crossing a small creek just west of the ocean, they craned their necks and pointed with unbelieving wonder to the tops of trees they saw as tall as the mountains in their homes. With their overseers from the Russian American Company they had come to investigate the land found eastward and discover the sources of this river that the local Native people called "Shabakai" and the Russians called the Slavianka. For them the names meant nothing, nor did it matter that near this very spot in just a few years the Russians would establish a small farm for the production of wheat. They knew that among the abundant wildlife they had seen today, along with the river otters and beavers, the eagles and osprey, there were salmon in this river and they knew very well that where there were salmon there were ...bears!



Territory of the Kashaya and Southern Pomo
Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8



Grizzlies at the Coast by Karl Bodmer - 1834

They finally drifted off to sleep with thoughts of the monstrous furry mammal haunting their dreams. They were quite familiar with a similar species of the bruin found on Kodiak Island where young Nikolai and Alexander (their Russian names) were born.

The next morning, despite a restless sleep they were quickly once again on the foot trail headed northeasterly. In half a day's walk following the river through vast fields of tall annual grasses, they saw ribbons of gray smoke curling into the air in the distance. Not long after the sighting, a group of four barefooted Native California men dressed in only the hides of deer approached the Russian travelers and through an interpreter encouraged the group to follow them. Soon after fording a fork of the main stream they found themselves at the confluence of two watercourses and the object of the curious gazes of the Sotoyomi people at the village of Kalé. The aggregation of brush huts was home to many extended family groups and when their Russian headman was addressed by the local leader, the crowd that gathered was not only curious but also cautious.

Still, young boys and girls giggled and pointed at the strangely dressed outlanders. None had ever seen men wearing garments



A Kodiak Hunter by John Webber - 1784

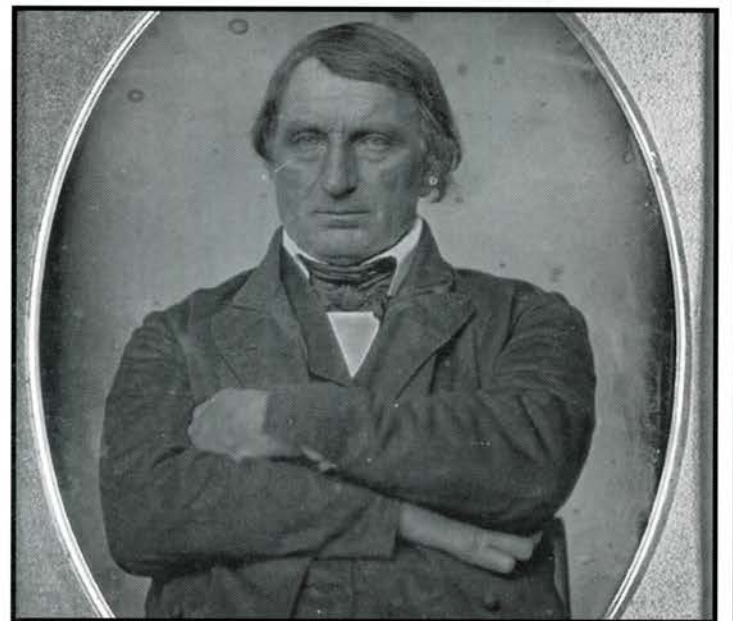
made from the dried and stitched lengths of the intestines of marine mammals. These hooded lightweight overshirts protected the wearer from the elements and kept him dry while on the ocean hunting game. They had also never laid eyes upon white men carrying fire arms.

Through interpreters, chosen by the Russians from around their port settlement at Rumiantsev Bay (Bodega) and near their Ross colony, the gathered Natives were told that the legends and myths of the great white bird on the ocean had been fulfilled. For from such a white bird, which turned out to be a ship with sails of white canvas, came these people from under the sea and they wished to be friends with the people of inland valleys of the "Shabakai."

The men from the Russian otter-hunting and settlement scouting group built a few structures at Port Rumiantsev. From here they explored Sonoma and Marin and secretly carried their skin boats overland from Bodega Bay to San Francisco Bay and secured the otter pelts which brought the Russian American Company so much in trade with the Chinese at Canton and Kyakta (a Russian trading settlement on the China/Russia border).

This meeting of cultures was probably the first of many encounters by the Russians with the Native people of inland Northern California and the present day area we now call Healdsburg and the Russian River. Near the place where that early exploratory party had stopped for the night, a location native Pomo speakers called Tamalancia, the Russians would plant and harvest wheat.

It is believed that near Porter Creek, near the current Westside Road, possibly what was to become the Wohler Ranch is the location of this early crop cultivation. One cannot help but think how appealing this particular area was, for near here also, close to Mark West Creek, Juan Baptista Rogers Cooper, the brother-in-law of the "Lord" of the North Bay, Mariano Vallejo, had built a residence, blacksmith shop and saw mill.



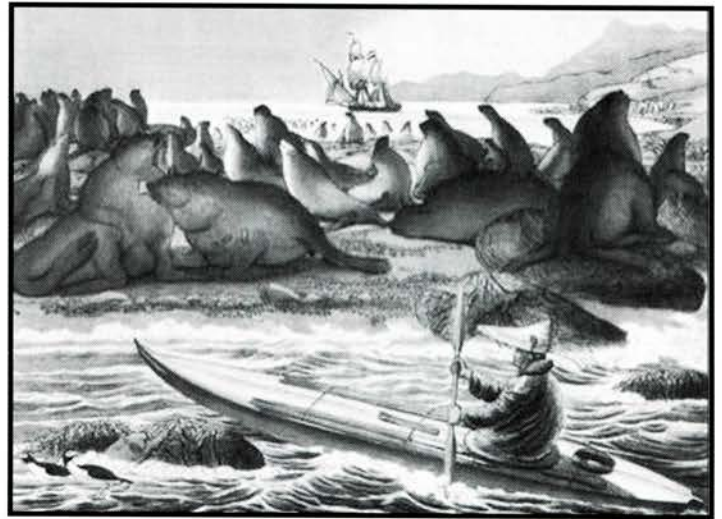
*Daguerreotype of John Rogers Cooper **

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Lumber for some of the earliest non-Russian pioneers was sawn here. Many other early pioneer families including Hugh and Missouri Porter and William B. and Elizabeth Elliott and their 11 children settled in the area near where that mill was built, north of the ecologically significant, Laguna de Santa Rosa. Amongst the fertile creek drainages of the Russian River Valley, many early residents settled.

In fact it was the Russians' incursion into Northern California which prompted the Spanish to send settlers to the North Bay and eventually build the Mission San Rafael in 1817 and Mission San Francisco Solano founded on the 4th of July, 1823, by Padre Jose Altimira. The mission is named for Saint Francis Solano, a Catholic missionary to the Native people of Peru. The California Natives affected by the Russians were allegedly treated well in the early years.

In fact many were said to have fled to the Russian settlements for "protection" from the menacing forays of men like the hard-drinking, hard-fighting and seemingly hard-hearted Salvador Vallejo, brother of Mariano, who came to the Healdsburg area to "round up" Native labor



Hunting Marine Animals by Louis Choris - 1816

warehouses, Native worker housing, kitchens, bathhouses, mills, granaries and tanneries.

Just north of what is now the town of Bodega, the Company established the Khlebnikov Ranch on Salmon Creek where many acres of land were cultivated.



*Salvador Vallejo circa 1890 **



The Chernynk Ranch in Green Valley by Ilia Voznesenskii - 1841

In the short time, from 1808 until 1841, that the Russian American Company occupied what is now Sonoma County, they spread their commercial enterprises inland. For soon after their arrival, almost all the marine mammals, which provided the company marketable pelts for trade in China, had been harvested by the efficient Alaskan Native hunters. In fact, for all intents and purposes, sea otters, Northern Fur seals and Elephant seals had been all but extirpated from their normal ranges along the entire California coast.

For this reason and because of the changing attitudes of the Spanish and then Mexican governments regarding trade for agricultural goods, from the small orchards and grain fields of Ross, the Russians turned inland for purposes of agriculture and stock raising. Each of these complexes was sizeable and well established, including farmhouses, managers' housing,

In Green Valley between Graton and Occidental they set up the Chernynk Ranch. Here Muscovite agronomist Egor Chernynk attempted some of the first large-scale vineyard cultivation in an area probably very close to the current vineyards of Marimar Torres. Near the mouth of the Russian River in the valley of Willow Creek, then-called the Rotchev River, grain was planted. The dwelling here at the Kostromitinov Ranch was called the Halfway House because it was located midway on a coastal trail between Bodega Bay and the Ross Colony.

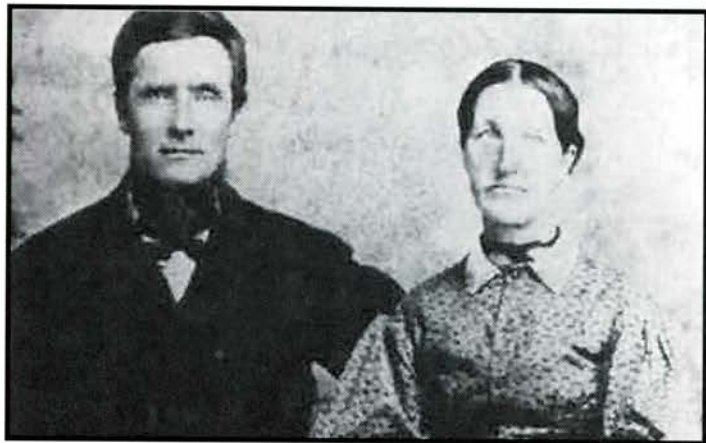
When the Russians left California in 1841 some of the redwood buildings they had constructed were dismantled by John Sutter and moved to his New Helvetia settlement near present-day Sacramento. Pioneer John Bidwell, of Chico's Bidwell Mansion fame, oversaw much of this transfer and actually stayed at the Ross settlement while windmills, threshing floors, warehouses and other material were taken away. The Russians had tried to sell their California holdings to the Hudson's Bay Company, to the Mexican government and even

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Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo 1808-1890

to Vallejo himself in a private deal but ended up selling to Sutter for \$30,000 in goods, grain and bank notes. Much of the price was never received and the Russian venture into Northern California ended on a rather sad note. These first European Sonoma County settlers and their Alaskan Native companions left many loan words in local Native vocabulary and a legacy in the human lineage. It appears that into the vacuum left by the quickly retreating Russians came enterprising and energetic American pioneers to fill the void. In many cases the Americans simply occupied the cleared lands and remaining deserted buildings left by the Northerners. In Bodega Capt. Stephen Smith set up his residence at the site of the Khlebnikov Ranch. In Green Valley the lands cleared by the Russians for agriculture were quickly put into use by the Gregsons, Sullivans and Marshalls. The Ross settlement was taken over as the enterprise of German immigrants William Otto Benitz and

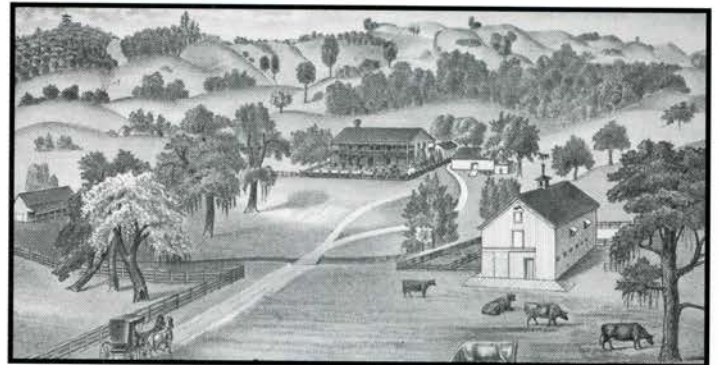


James and Eliza Gregson, Green Valley Pioneers

Ernest Rufus, who with local Native labor rebuilt and operated a successful ranching endeavor. The early wheat fields of Tamalanica along the Russian River near Healdsburg were swallowed up in the division of the ranchos after statehood and became fields of hops and then vineyard land.

North of Kalé in the homeland of the Native Wappo people, and with their assistance, Cyrus Alexander would establish a ranching settlement in a lovely valley which was once part of the Sotoyome Rancho. One of Alexander's early companions, Franklin Bedwell was sent to the Russian settlement at Ross to obtain cuttings from the orchard there to be grown at Alexander's ranch.

The Alexander Valley, now noted for its fine wine grapes, bears his name and the remains of one his early adobe structures.



Ranch of Cyrus and Rufina Alexander from Thompson's 1877 Sonoma County Atlas

* Images courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

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THE SURPRISING MERCURIAL HISTORY OF HEALDSBURG SCHOOLS

by Darla Meeker

PREFACE

As the current school population in the City of Healdsburg continues to decline, with one of three local public elementary schools closing its doors forever at the onset of the 2006-2007 school year, and a brand-new, tuition-based private school on the horizon, it seems both timely and fitting to review the surprisingly mercurial history of Healdsburg schools, as we celebrate the city's sesquicentennial.

This article therefore pertains, in large part, to the schools that actually were founded within the "city limits" of Healdsburg during a time of great change, both within the hamlet and throughout the State of California, as a whole.

Yet, in no way does this rather narrow focus diminish the long-lasting significance, or the ephemeral beauty, of the one-room country schoolhouses that once served as the community hub of Healdsburg's out-lying agricultural areas.

SETTING THE STAGE

According to early-day Sonoma County historian, Honoria Tuomey, during the 1840s and early 1850s, Sonoma County was "... a land of young bachelors and newly married couples."

In 1852, the first California Superintendent of Schools announced that there were 250 school-age children residing in Sonoma County, with a total of five schools: Santa Rosa, Sonoma, Analy, Bodega and Rancho San Miguel, all of them private rancharo schools, the latter two being Spanish-speaking.

In 1853, after Alexander Valley's first private day school burned down, pioneer Cyrus Alexander, following in the footsteps of other large Sonoma County landowners, built a small, privately-owned schoolhouse known as "Pine Grove," for his children and their friends to attend.

By 1857, in accordance with California's admission to statehood seven years earlier, three tuition-free public or "common" schools had been built in the outlying Healdsburg areas of Dry Creek Valley and Mill Creek, to accommodate the growing number of school-age children whose families had settled in the fertile Russian River Valley.

Regardless of the growing number of public schools dotting the surrounding countryside, it was imperative for the fledgling town of Healdsburg, (population: 500 in late 1857), to build a free "common" school of its own. For in those relatively rough-and-tumble days of early statehood, a town was not considered a proper town until it boasted both a school and a church.



Dry Creek School, 1897

BAITING THE HOOK

As both the founding father of Healdsburg, as well as the father of two young sons, Harmon Heald was eager to move forward with his plans to build a school and a church within the city limits. The fact that he owned eighty-eight choice parcels of in-town real estate was another very compelling reason to do so.

As a merchant, Heald also met many travelers in search of a better life, who yearned for a modicum of success and stability. He therefore baited his hook accordingly by donating land enough to build not one, but two, churches as well as a "common" school all located on a single city block bordered by Matheson, Fitch, Tucker, and East Streets.

An oasis of civilization in an otherwise heavily wooded landscape, the three buildings would act as a lure for newcomers to justify spending \$15 for a spacious plat lot that promised easy access to church, school, and the downtown plaza business district.

FROM PRIMITIVE TO PROSPEROUS

In 1858, Healdsburg's first "common" school was built at the corner of Fitch and Tucker Streets, with the entrance facing Fitch Street. The school, which looked like "*an ordinary box house*," apparently offered "*primitive accommodations*," along with a lackluster education.

Nor was it the first school to open within the city limits, as Harmon Heald had envisioned. Be that as it may, in every other way, Heald's business acumen was right on target, as indicated in an 1884 lithograph depicting the Tucker Street District as a "*dense cluster*" of residences, all within easy walking distance of school, church, and town.

Continued on page 18

In fact, as Healdsburg grew and prospered, and the tax base increased, a new, more inviting two-story public grammar school was erected, in 1871, on the same city block, with the school's entrance now facing Tucker Street.



Healdsburg Grammar School

In 1888, the second floor of the grammar school was transformed into Healdsburg's first high school, which offered a three-year course of study. Eight young women and one young man comprised the first graduating class of Healdsburg High School in 1891, sending a clear message to the general public that Healdsburg's "common" schools were here to stay.

GRUESOME RUMOR

Prior to 1871, the two local churches and the original grammar school shared the same city block with Healdsburg's first cemetery, where Harmon Heald's younger brother George held the dubious distinction of being the first to be laid to rest there, in 1853.

But as the need for a larger, two-story grammar school became a reality, it was determined that the bodies in the original cemetery should be exhumed and transported to Oak Mound Cemetery, which was owned by Roderick Matheson's family for many years.

Following the transfer of remains, it was whispered that many of the bodies in the original cemetery had been overlooked in the move, especially those of unmarked paupers' graves.

For years afterwards, stories ran rampant throughout the new, two-story grammar school that bones, teeth, fingers, and hair had been found in the school's water supply, which was pumped from three separate wells on the school grounds.

Yet, according to Dr. William Shipley, who, as a young student, lived in dread of finding something gruesome in his tin water cup, no evidence to support those lurid tales was ever found.

ENTER "PROFESSOR" ERASTUS A. SCOTT

As mentioned earlier, despite Harmon Heald's great expectations and best intentions, the Tucker Street "common" school was not the

first "in-town" school to open its doors to local students.

Instead, during the summer of 1857, Professor Erastus A. Scott, a New York State educator, burst upon the local scene, whereupon he wasted no time in convincing the local populace that while a public school was slow in coming to fruition, he could guarantee a first-rate education for the youth of Healdsburg, in a much more expedient manner, if only the townspeople would lend a helping hand.

Although the Professor made it clear that while he had no money of his own to invest in the project, he was happy to claim proprietorship, and to offer \$100 scholarships to those school-age children whose fathers offered assistance. It seemed a feasible idea at the time.

According to local educator C.E. Hutton, in an article first written for the 1881 Enterprise, "*The people met (Scott) with a liberal spirit. Business men contributed money, farmers subscribed, mechanics gave work, and the mills furnished timber.*"

AMONG THE OAKS, MADRONAS, AND MANZANITAS

Local landowners, Jesse Seaman and Roderick Matheson, donated approximately two acres of land to the cause while Charlie Proctor was in charge of the construction, using ". . . rough redwood timber as sawed and split in the Mill Creek section."

Located about half a mile from town, among the oaks, the madronas, and the manzanitas, at 112 University Street, the two-story square building, crowned by flagstaff and bell tower, was completed in record time.

The bell, the first in town, rang in the new year of 1858. On January 23rd, the new school, known as the Russian River Institute, hosted a "*grand concert and festival.*" Two days later, 103 students proudly stepped across the threshold of Healdsburg's first private academy to further their education.

ROLL CALL

A few weeks prior to the opening of the Russian River Institute, Miss E. A. Downing arrived from Massachusetts, with her parents in tow. Her job was to assist the Professor in the direction of the Institute, which was comprised of fifty-seven students in the "*Male Department*" and forty-six students in the academy's "*Female Department.*"

Many of the students were local students: Joseph, Charles, and Isabella Fitch of Fitch Rancho, James Shafer of Sotoyome, James M. McElhany of Big Plains (Alexander Valley), Thomas Brumfield of Russian River (Eastside Road), Annie O' Neal and J.M. Mayhew of Ohio House (800 block of Healdsburg Avenue) were just a few of the many tuition-free students who attended the Institute during the 1858 school year.

OF VIRTUE, VICES, AND VANISHING PROFESSORS

"Virtue and intelligence are the safeguards of the nation" was

the institute's motto. The Professor advised his students that
". . . *abstaining from vice is the only source of true happiness.*"

He also provided them with a laundry list of five cautionary rules to follow at all times, including practicing self-restraint ". . . *from visiting places of vicious practices.*"

It is not known if the students adhered to these principles, but it was a known fact within the community that "*... there were plenty of scholars but very little income.*"

In fact, by the summer of 1859, at the close of the third term, the Professor lost control of the property; yet, ". . . *having developed the germ of education,*" he subsequently opened another academy in Santa Rosa, which also soon failed.

THE AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Healdsburg's Roderick Matheson, along with J.D. Hassett, C. E. Hutton, W. Masey, R. M. DeNean, and a Mr. Thompson now led the charge to keep the Russian River Institute's doors open by changing its name as well as its "mission statement."

In August, 1859, the new tuition-based academy became known as the Agricultural and Mechanical University of California, with Roderick Matheson's farm being made available for hands-on learning projects and work/study scholarship students.

For a time, the school was so popular that the administration built a boarding house near the college. By year's end of 1860, however, falling crop prices, costly Mexican land grant rulings, and the imminent departure of Roderick Matheson to assist with the formation of the Union Army's 1st California Regiment, forced the closure of the University.

EDUCATIONAL SHOOTING STARS

From 1861 to 1877, a veritable meteor shower of school openings and closings occurred at the old Russian River Institute/AgMech site, including the "Sotoyome Institute" (with its library of 300 volumes), the "Alexander Academy" (named in honor of Cyrus Alexander, who deeded the former Russian River Institute building to the local Presbyterian Church), and several ladies' seminaries.

Viewed through the lens of a nation divided by war, along with other contributing local economic factors, the ebb and flow of these fledgling private school ventures is not surprising.

Yet, in 1878, the Alexander Academy left the old Russian River Institute building behind, and moved into the brand-new Healdsburg Institute schoolhouse, located on present-day Plaza Court.

Despite the move, five years later, in 1882, the last secular academy in Healdsburg folded, with the property being sold to the Seventh Day Adventist Church for \$3,750 in gold coins.



A schoolhouse in decline: The former Russian River Institute/Alexander Academy, 1870

AN ANCHOR AND A BEACON

None of the original "in-town" schoolhouses is left standing. The Tucker Street "common" school was re-built several times, before it was re-located, in 1933, to its present-day North Street site.

Meanwhile, the former Russian River Institute on University Street became a "ghost house for bats and birds . . . a shipwreck . . . called Neglect." It was razed in the late 19th century, with the property sold as residential lots, just as a host of bungalows now grace the former Healdsburg Institute/ Pacific Union College campus.

Yet, as we celebrate the sesquicentennial of the town's founding, it is worth recalling the value of these ephemeral schoolhouses as both anchors and beacons within the city of Healdsburg.

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RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE OF PIONEER HEALDSBURG

by Holly Hoods

SPLIT-LOG CABINS AND ADOBES, 1840-50

There were no houses constructed in the Healdsburg area before Cyrus Alexander moved here in 1840. The native Pomo and Wappo peoples of northern Sonoma County who preceded him built temporary seasonal shelters constructed of woven plant materials. When Alexander, a former fur trapper, came to oversee a horse and cattle ranch on Henry Fitch's 48,836.51-acre Sotoyome Rancho in 1842, he built a cabin of split redwood logs on the east side of the Russian River opposite the present town of Healdsburg. Cyrus Alexander's building methods were described in the 1880 *History of Sonoma County, California*:

With few mechanics' tools and no nails...grooves were cut in the sills and plates, and after framing these, the sidings were set up in the grooves and aforesaid sills, and the plates being placed on top of the sidings, all were firmly bound together with rawhide. The only sawn lumber used throughout the construction of this dwelling were two planks, subsequently procured from the town of Sonoma, which were made into doors.



Elisha Ely's redwood cabin near Geyserville, built in 1851, exemplifies the type of split-log pioneer residence first constructed in this area. Joseph Downing photograph, 1872

The earliest American-built homes in the 1840s in this region were split-log redwood or adobe dwellings. There are no known examples of the split-log buildings still standing in Healdsburg or the immediate vicinity in 2007. The former Tzabaco Rancho (Jose German Piña/D.D. Phillips adobe at 6630 Dry Creek Road) is the only known surviving (partial) adobe house in the area. It has been enlarged and remodeled over the years. The only other known example of early California adobe architecture in northern Sonoma County is an outbuilding-converted to a garage on the former Cyrus Alexander ranch, now on Hwy 128 and owned by Harry and Maggie

Wetzel of Alexander Valley Vineyards. The Healdsburg Museum has photographs documenting the architecture of this early era and also the following description of a "cabin raising."

Henry O. Ferguson, who came to Alexander Valley, California in 1857, included in his pioneer memoirs a description of "how settlers made their houses without sawed lumber or nails."

The first thing we did was to go into the woods or timber and cut logs of proper length for the sides and ends of the cabin or house, also poles for the ribs to lay the shakes on for the roof, and to weight shakes down to keep them in place. Then [we would] select a white oak tree to make the shakes from. [We would] have the logs, shakes and all on the ground where the cabin is to be erected. Then the neighbors are asked to a "raising" to carry the corners of the cabin.

The first logs are laid at the ends of the cabin, a saddle is made on the top of the log, and now it is ready for the side logs which are notched to fit the saddle, and so on until the cabin has been raised to the desired height. Then gable logs and ribs are pinned on by boring auger holes and driving wooden pins in them to hold them on. Then the shakes come next. They are laid and the weight poles are put on top to hold the roof on. The floor is made of puncheons split out, hewed, laid on top of floor joists. The chimney and fireplace is made of clay jams and the flue is made of sticks and plastered with clay mortar. The four corners of the flue are weighted down with four balls of stiff clay mortar. The doors are made of puncheons and hung on wooden hinges.



1850s McCracken Cabin on Sweetwater Springs Road, pictured here in 1890, was built using pioneer construction techniques described by Henry Ferguson.

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When Henry's parents, W.W. and Mary Cooperider Ferguson, brought the family to Alexander Valley in 1857, there were only five houses in the valley.

FIRST SAWMILL, 1850, AT MILL CREEK

William J. March and Samuel Heald, brother of town founder, Harmon Heald, opened a combination grist and sawmill on Mill Creek in September 1850. This made possible the construction of the first houses in the area using sawn redwood boards. Erected on the Upper Falls of Mill Creek near what is now Felta Road, this mill was the first lumber mill to operate in northern Sonoma County. March and Heald's mill attracted customers from as far south as Petaluma.

According to the 1880 *History of Sonoma County, California*, Louis Legendre built the first house in the vicinity from the milled redwood planks produced by March and Heald's pioneer sawmill in autumn 1850. Legendre's cabin stood for many years on the Calhoun ranch on Eastside Road.

The first houses of Healdsburg to use milled lumber were simple rectangular wood-frame homestead cottages, two to four rooms in size. Architectural detail was minimal, varying from posts to split pilasters. The modest structures were frequently of vernacular construction, that is, "designed" and built by amateur carpenters. Initially the pioneer residences dotted West (now "Healdsburg Ave"), North, South (now "Matheson St"), Center and East streets, which was the extent of the original 1857 city limits. Today there are only a handful of pioneer houses still standing from Healdsburg of the 1850s.

HOMESTEAD COTTAGES, 1850-1857

Usually 1 to 1 1/2 stories, homestead cottages or cabins were built with wide milled redwood siding, double-hung wood sash windows with multiple lights, and either hipped or gable roofs. If gabled, roofs often took on the "salt-box" configuration typical of New England houses. Front porches and shelf moldings over doors and windows were characteristic features.



John Hassett's Homestead Cabin, built in 1853, moved 1987, shown here in 2007. It is the oldest known house in the city.

OLDEST KNOWN HOUSE IN HEALDSBURG

Today the oldest known surviving residence located within the Healdsburg city limits was originally built for J.D. Hassett on Center Street in 1853, four years before the town of Healdsburg was actually founded. John D. Hassett came to California in 1852 from Ohio with his brother, Aaron. The Hassett brothers built a saw mill on Mill Creek in 1853. Two years later, they opened the steam-powered Healdsburg Flouring Mill, which became the largest building in town, at 72 x 56 feet.

John Hassett's first house was a redwood homestead cabin that was built near the flouring mill. The 1853 Hassett cabin is owned today by veterinarian Glenn Benjamin. Dr. Benjamin moved the dwelling from 239 Center Street to 307 Piper Street (just east of Fitch Street) in 1987. The simple box shape of the 1853 cabin is still visible in the old building. The wide horizontal boards of the original cabin have been replaced by vertical siding. In 1863, J.D. Hassett bought a 1,000-acre parcel of the Sotoyome Rancho from the Fitch estate. His purchase included Fitch Mountain and extended as far as the present Tayman Park golf course.



The Healdsburg Flouring Mill, photographed in 1872 by Joseph Downing, was located on the east side of West Street (now Healdsburg Avenue), just south of Matheson Street. A parking lot occupies the former mill site in 2007.

Several of the new arrivals who joined the residents of pioneer Healdsburg were skilled carpenters. One of these was James Mead, a native of Vermont. Mead crossed the plains to Placerville in 1850. He worked for five years in Sierra County as a merchant and ran a pack train from Marysville to Downieville. In 1856, Mead and his wife Caroline moved to Healdsburg where he resumed his trade as a carpenter. He built many of the early houses in town, including his own, which is now located at 327 Mason Street (moved from a previous location on Mason nearer to University Street). Mead also built the original hotel at the famed Geysers Resort.

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Geysers Hotel, built by James Mead. Carlton Watkins photograph, circa 1868.

Open gable cottages, such as the James Mead house, were typically built as middle-class and working-class housing, and as rural, even farmstead housing. The open gable cottage featured clean lines, a simple form and was usually two stories in height. The Mead residence has been altered by the addition of a porch more typical of the Greek Revival style.

GREEK REVIVAL HOUSES, 1855-1875

With the influx of trained carpenters from other states, local architecture of the mid-1850's began to utilize the more contemporary styles used elsewhere in the U.S. Greek Revival was one of the most popular styles in the United States. The Greek Revival style was distinguished by the use of broad corner pilasters, split pediment, and porches supported by pillars. Buildings of this style featured clean, simple lines and precise detailing. Façades were usually undecorated, except for occasional porch posts.



Roderick Matheson's circa 1858 Greek Revival House in Healdsburg is no longer standing in 2007.

Greek Revival is noted for its sharp, severe lines. Doors have the same proportions as windows, both being long and narrow. Windows are composed of many small panes (usually six-over-six) with simple architraves at the top. The more articulated examples of Greek Revival, like the Lindsay Carson house, have gable returns, (roof plane framing that returns at the building's edge).



Lindsay Carson's Greek Revival House.

The Greek Revival style was chosen by both Roderick Matheson and Lindsay Carson, prominent local residents. Carson, the brother of famed adventurer Kit Carson, settled in the area in 1847. In 1849 he built an adobe six miles south of town on present-day Eastside Road which he operated as a store. Carson once owned 80 acres north of Piper Street. His Greek Revival farmhouse still stands at 641 Healdsburg Avenue. The circa 1855 residence is one of the oldest in Sonoma County.

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EARLY DAYS IN HEALDSBURG

by William T. Allen

as published in the *Healdsburg Enterprise* 30 May 1891



William T. Allen, Dry Creek pioneer settler. June 17, 1889 photograph.

I came to the Russian River Valley over forty years ago, and so I am inclined to think I should be classed as a pioneer. When I came here this section of country was but sparsely settled, in fact it was actually a rare sight to see a white man. As I sometimes sit and ponder over bygone days, I almost feel as though I were young again.

There was no pretty city of Healdsburg in those days I can tell you. The site of our town was then a perfect wilderness and large oak and madrone trees covered its broad acres. The deer, bears and panthers roamed in peace and without fear through our forests, but they too have long since gone.

In 1853 I settled in the Dry Creek Valley, on the farm on which I have since resided. And there I have toiled ever since, enjoying good health and many a happy day. When I first settled in that valley, the only residents in that section were the Lamberts, Miles, Millers and Henry Laymance.

Indians were numerous then, too, but were of quiet disposition and we had no trouble with them. Wild animals, however, proved a constant source of annoyance to us, bears and panthers especially



Bear trap, made by Ed Hicklin in 1859 for Lieuallen J. Hall of Alexander Valley.

doing an immense amount of damage. I have known a bear to attack a steer belonging to Lambert and after biting it by the nose, beat it to death with its paws. Bears have often killed large cattle, and we always find it necessary to corral colts and hogs at night. I tell you we raised horses, cattle and hogs.

We pioneers raised grain, too! The land was not worn out then and yielded fine crops. Our flour was made at the old flour mill on Mill Creek, owned by Miller.

The nearest town to us then was Petaluma, and a very poor road it was that led there, being almost impassible in the winter time. Yes, indeed, we had good times in those days, and if I was young and strong I should enjoy living them all over again.

ARTIFACT: 1858 BROCHURE FROM THE RUSSIAN RIVER INSTITUTE

By Holly Hoods

This artifact, #338-33, is a brochure, printed in 1858, from the Russian River Institute. April MacDonald donated the item to the Healdsburg Museum in 1985. It was found in the basement of the Henry Passalacqua house at 403 Sherman Street. This irreplaceable relic is in surprisingly good condition for its age. It measures 5 inches tall by 4 inches wide. Though the edges are torn and the booklet is missing a few pages, the pages are not brittle and the vivid yellow color cover is unfaded.

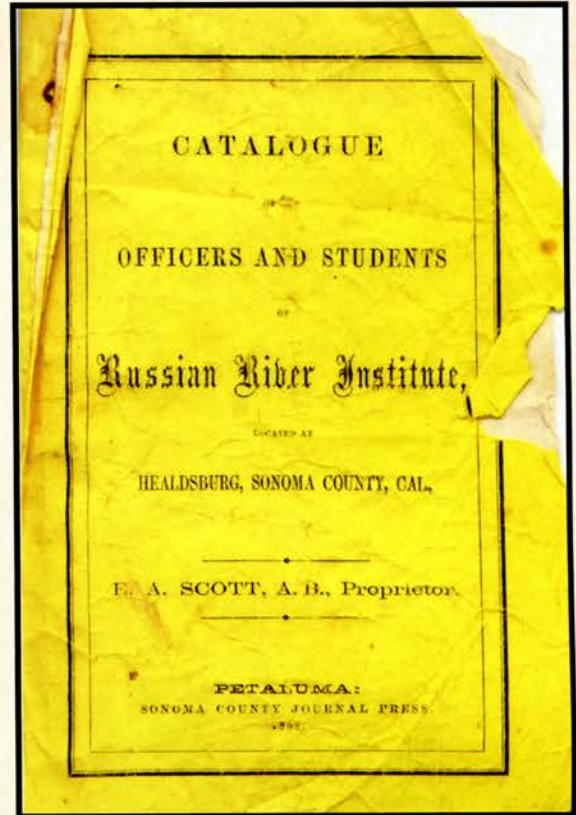
The Russian River Institute was a private academy that was founded by Erastus A. Scott in January 1858. Scott, who came to Heald's newly-created town in the summer of 1857, financed the construction of an academy through subscriptions from the families of potential students. One hundred and three scholars were enrolled in the first term.

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The new school was an impressive two-story wood-frame building with belfry, built at the edge of an oak, manzanita and madrone grove. Today the site of this former schoolhouse is 112 University Street. The street was so named because of this building.

According to the catalogue, the Russian River Institute students were expected to follow five rules of behavior:

1. Students will be required to abstain from any and all profane language.
2. They will be expected to treat their teachers and each other with all kindness and due respect.
3. They will be expected to attend some place of public worship on the Sabbath, when it is convenient to do so.
4. They will be restrained from visiting places of vicious practices.
5. They will be required to practice punctuality and diligence, and to yield prompt and cheerful obedience to such other rules and regulations as the teachers may from time to time see proper to establish for the good of the school.



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