



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

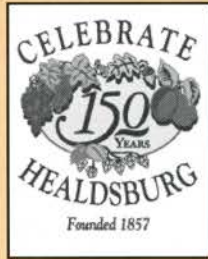
AUTUMN 2007 • ISSUE 98

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society

CHERISHED MEMORIES YOUNG MERVYN SILBERSTEIN IN HEALDSBURG

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THE STORY OF "BAD BOY BRUGGY"

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In This Issue

Keeping in mind that Healdsburg is still celebrating its 150th anniversary in this issue, we continue our commitment by publishing the second installment of Charlotte Anderson's interesting biographies of Harmon Heald's siblings who, she points out, "made notable contributions to the area" and should be so noted.

Curator Daniel Murley, because of the public enthusiasm generated by the many photos on display at the Museum's booth during the city's 150th anniversary celebration in the Plaza Square, decided that a tribute to Mervyn Silberstein and his talents as a photographer of Healdsburg history should be featured. Dan has given us a most enjoyable story about a special person who chronicled a special time and place. We know you will enjoy the many photos from the Museum's collection which Dan picked to illustrate his article.

Darla Meeker, former editor of the Recorder, has provided us with a well researched and well written article about a magnificent and beloved structure that for many years was located at 315 Grant Street. On this site, in 1917 the two story Healdsburg High School was built and served in that capacity until the mid 1950s when the new high school on Powell Avenue was erected and the 315 Grant Street building later was torn down. This article, as Darla points out, focuses on how the high school came to be built. However, referring to other local buildings that were demolished in the name of progress or because of safety factors she asks "what can we learn today about community involvement (or lack thereof) as it pertains to historic preservation?"

Raymond L. Owen whose Excitement at Skaggs Springs Resort appeared in the Autumn 2006 issue of the Recorder this time brings us the intriguing story of George Bruggy, convicted of murder and sentenced to die on the gallows but in the end escaped. I'm certain that you will find *Escape from the Gallows, The Story of "Bad Boy" Bruggy* an interesting chapter in local history.

We hope that you will find our latest endeavor interesting as well as informative.

Arnold Santucci, Editor

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RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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

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P. O. Box 952

Healdsburg, CA 95448

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THE HEALD FAMILY & THEIR NOTABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

The second of a two part installment

by Charlotte Anderson

(In this issue Charlotte Anderson continues noting the life and times of Harmon Heald's siblings. In her first installment she featured the history of his brothers George William, Samuel and Jacob Gregg. In this issue she tells the stories of Mary Elizabeth Ridenhour, Sarah Elizabeth Shaw and Thomas Tobin Heald. In her opening article the author noted that "since Harmon Heald founded Healdsburg, it is only fitting that the rest of his family should be recognized, especially as a number of them bought property in the area and made notable contributors.")

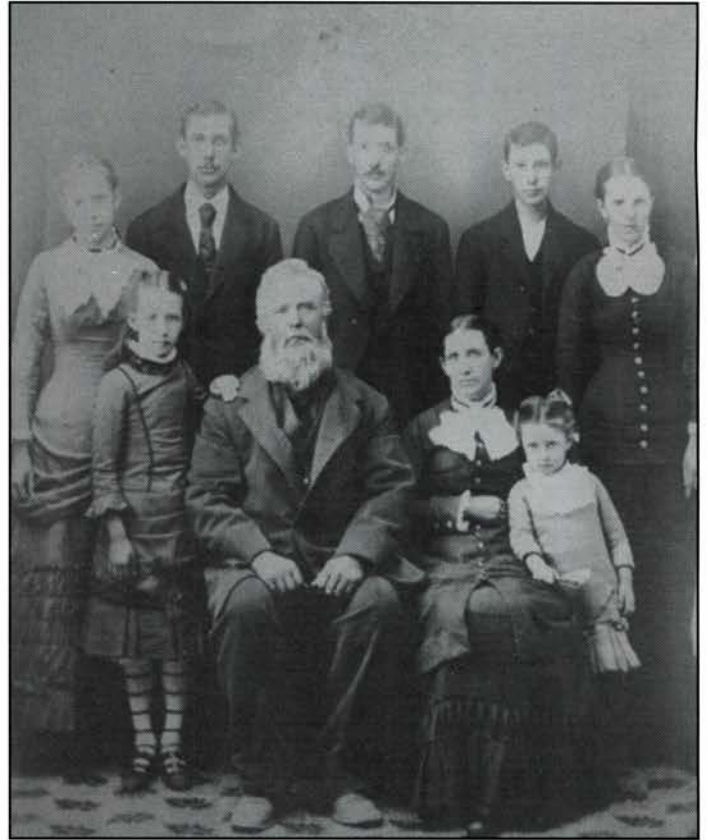
MARY ELIZABETH HEALD RIDENHOUR

Mary Elizabeth Heald was born in Belmont County, Ohio, on August 14, 1841. Her parentage is uncertain; however as none of her Heald "uncles" were married or had children at that time, it is speculated that she was the illegitimate daughter of Sarah Heald. Mary lived with the Healds as granddaughter and niece and moved with them in 1844 to Missouri. She briefly attended school, at one point being taught by her uncle, Thomas T. Heald.

Mary's uncle Samuel returned from California in early 1851 and helped his mother sell the farm. Thus it was that in May of 1851, a "train of 27 wagons left for California with Samuel serving as the train captain of a rather larger group of settlers in addition to his own family members." (His family consisted of his mother Elizabeth Tatlow Heald, his sister Sarah, his two brothers George and Jacob, Jacob's wife and one-month-old daughter, and his niece Mary Elizabeth Heald.)

Mary Elizabeth "rode a gray mare as far as Sweetwater in Wyoming where, because the mare was sick, it was left in a meadow. From Sweetwater Elizabeth rode a gray mule named Choctaw the rest of the way to California. A wagon train following behind the Healds found the mare in good shape, brought her on, and returned her to the Healds!" The wagons were drawn by oxen and the Healds had eight yoke. A spring wagon for the women was drawn by mules. "These mules at one time became scared of the Indians and a big young mule named Kitty was an Indian hater and would be relied upon to give warning of any approach of Indians." Any Indian confrontations along the way were apparently "ably handled by Samuel who gave them tobacco and a young cow to butcher figuring well fed Indians were not likely to cause trouble and they did not."

The Healds arrived in the fall of 1851 at Heald's Store and Thomas T. took his mother and niece to live with him. In 1853 the three moved down river about eight miles to "the Merchant Place which Thomas had acquired from a man named Potter." It was



*Ridenour family, top: Ellen, Lewis E., William, Hilton, Emma.
Bottom: Ann, Lewis, Mary, Ida*

here that in 1853 or 1854 Lewis William Ridenhour entered into an arrangement with Thomas Heald to sharecrop a portion of Heald's property. After meeting Mary Elizabeth, he continued sharecropping but also started to clear his own property and plant crops. He lived in the log cabin that he and Branscombe had constructed in 1852 and courted Mary Elizabeth.

Lewis and Mary Elizabeth were married on June 11, 1856, she being 14 years, 10 months, and he being 27, by Reverend Eaton at the Paxton property west of Healdsburg. They lived with Thomas and Thomas' mother for the remainder of the year. In January of 1857, they moved 3 or 4 miles down river to Lewis' property and one-room cabin, in virtual isolation. (Ridenhour had located the place with a man named Branscombe and in the winter of 1852 they had built a "little one-room log house." In the spring, Ridenhour went to the mines and came back with enough gold dust to send Branscombe east, in the fall of 1853, with money to purchase cattle but he never returned.) This cabin served as Lewis

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and Mary's "residence" from January until June when the "present residence was built. The frame and shingle for this house were gotten out by hand, and the original shingles are still on the roof with very slight leakage. The weather boards were gotten out at a little horse power mill at the mouth of Green Valley Creek, owned by Samuel Powers." The orchard was planted in 1859 with trees from Lancaster Clyman in Green Valley.

"Up to the time the railroad came, the principal income of the place came from wheat, corn, potatoes and stock. The earliest grain was cut with cradle scythe and threshed with horses and what was not fed or used was hauled to Petaluma by ox team. After the railroad came in 1876, the wood business became of some proportions and was furnished mostly for burning in the locomotives of the Donahue lines."

The Ridenhours dabbled in potting and tile and then bricks. However, the most successful of their enterprises were the prune and dairy businesses.

The Ridenhours had ten children in the years from 1857 to 1878. The seventh child, born in 1868 was a boy whom they named Hilton Baker. In 1894 Ridenhour was the first postmaster of a fourth class post office in Hilton, which he had named for his son. Hilton later became a popular summer resort on the Russian River, located about five miles east of Guerneville.

His wife Mary Elizabeth continued living on the ranch until her death in 1928. They are both buried at the Hilton cemetery about 15 miles down river from Healdsburg. Of their ten children, five were living at the time of their mother's death in 1928. There were also 22 surviving grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren.

SARAH ELIZABETH HEALD SHAW

Sarah Elizabeth Heald was the 4th child, and 2nd daughter, born to George and Elizabeth Heald. She, too, was born in Ohio November 5, 1822. She probably helped her mother with chores around the farm and taking care of younger brothers Harmon, Thomas, Jacob, and George.

In 1851, Sarah emigrated to California with her family which then consisted of mother Elizabeth, brothers Jacob and George, Jacob's wife and one-month-old daughter, and niece Mary Elizabeth. They were on a wagon train led by her older brother Samuel.

Six months after arriving at Heald's Store from Missouri in April of 1852, Sarah married Thomas A. Shaw. The Shaws purchased George Heald's ranch on the Russian River (which later became the Hobson Ranch). Being a skillful builder, Shaw built a house on the property, and in this house their first child Thomas was born on April 6, 1853.

"After the birth of their first child, the Shaws learned of new strikes being made in the gold mines, and they left their home for a time and went to what was known as Shaws Flat in Tuolumne County." It was while they were there that their first daughter Sarah Elizabeth was born on May 12, 1856. After staying a while at Shaws Flat, the family of four returned to their home south of Healdsburg but soon sold it to Hobson. "They moved to Hermitage, about ten miles north of Cloverdale. At this place the panthers were very numerous and made life uneasy on account of their ravages on the young stock of which the panthers were very fond." Sarah, fondly known as "Aunt Sally" would tell how she "used to hold the torch at night to shine the panthers' eyes while her husband would shoot them out of the trees. Finally this sort of sport grew rather monotonous and the panthers did not seem to grow any less, so they moved back again toward Healdsburg," settling in Upper Dry Creek, near Cloverdale. From there, T.A. Shaw went to Oregon where he died. Sarah stayed in Upper Dry Creek where she reared her children.



Sara Heald Shaw

Sarah Elizabeth Heald Shaw died May 5, 1909. The *Healdsburg Enterprise* of May 8, 1909, reported on page one: "Last of Pioneer Family Laid to Rest." "The death of this aged lady (87 years!), deeply regretted by all those who personally knew her, is a matter of more than usual interest to all the people of Healdsburg and vicinity; for

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she is the last member of the Heald family--the pioneer settlers of this valley, and from whom the town of Healdsburg received its name." At that time her surviving children were Thomas Shaw, Elizabeth Grosser, Wilson Alexander Shaw, and Julia Rackliffe.

The *Enterprise* concluded: "Friday were performed the last solemn rites for the last member of this pioneer family. The generation of the present has paused for a few short moments by the graves of a generation now past, and now goes forth again to the duties and cares laid down by the strong brave hearts of the early days. Is it to be as faithful to those duties as they?"

THOMAS TOBIN HEALD

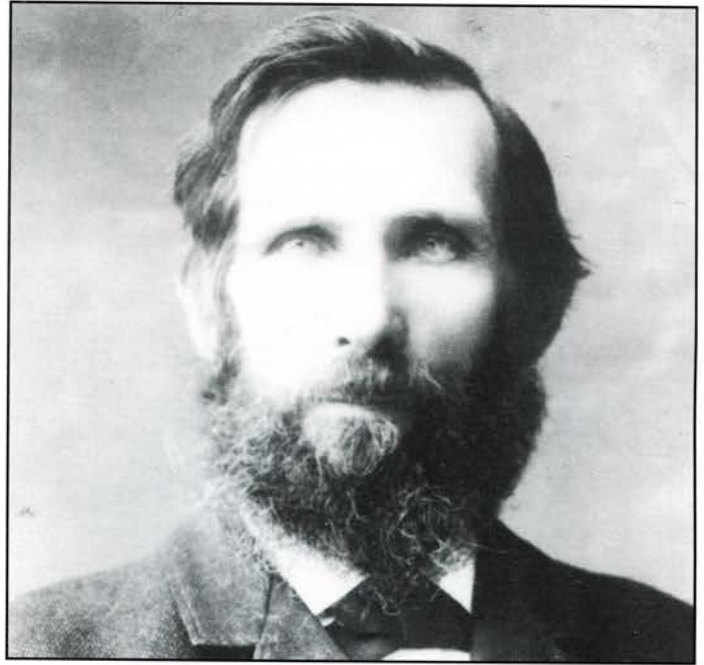
Thomas Tobin Heald, the 6th of George and Elizabeth Heald's children, was born December 10, 1825, in Ohio. Thomas attended the Cadiz town school and helped care for his older sister's (Mary Ann) baby.

At age 19, he and his family moved to Missouri where he worked in his brother Samuel's first built saw mill. While Samuel was away building mills for others, Thomas remained as head sawyer, off bearer, salesman, and bookkeeper. He also was recruited as a school teacher. This latter "job" spurred him on and he went to Goshen's Academy at Pleasant Hill. (At the same time brother Harmon was attending Chapel Hill Academy.) Thomas had a few more teaching jobs before heading for California with brothers Samuel and Harmon in 1849.

After four months "on the trail," their party reached Sacramento in September. Thomas and his friend Daniel Darby parted company with Samuel and Harmon, who were both ill, and went back to the Deer Creek mines. Darby died there during the winter, but Thomas was joined by brother Harmon and two others to work a Yuba River claim for the 1850 "season." In early September they sold out and traveled via Deer Creek (Nevada City) and Sacramento to Sonoma. There they learned that their brother Samuel was at "Russian River" so westward they headed.

Thomas went to Mill Creek to March's mill which Samuel had helped complete. There Thomas took charge of the sawing portion. (The grist part was patronized from as far away as Petaluma.) March's mill was a "large" mill compared to the one in Missouri, and he often remarked "what a caution was the way the Missouri mill would saw logs. He said that when the water was low in the autumn he could start a log in before dinner and then go and eat a hearty meal and return in plenty of time to remove the slab."

In 1852, Thomas bought a place from Bill Potter about 8 miles "down river" from Healdsburg on the west side of the river. He took his mother, Elizabeth Tatlow Heald, and his niece Mary with him. In '52 and '53 he planted an orchard with trees from Cyrus Alexander.



Thomas Tobin Heald

In June of 1856, niece Mary married Louis Ridenhour. Five months later his mother died on November 25. Feeling lonely, she left the farm for a while to be in Healdsburg. He found plenty of business to look after: first, settling his mother's estate; then acting as his brother Harmon's counselor and assistant in making out papers as well as acting as Harmon's "attorney in fact."

Thomas also began to deal in property and to erect buildings. He joined the Presbyterian Church and became a trustee. His first building was a 2-story one so there would be a place upstairs for the organization of the Sons of Temperance, an order which was already quite strong in the state. He "had at that time great confidence in its (the Temperance movement) arresting the saloon element and making the young, prosperous town a temperance one."

He soon sold this building and built a larger and better one a few doors further south. The organization about this time was changed to Good Templars, and for a long time it remained in a flourishing condition. In the lower story of each of these buildings, Thomas kept a small stock of furniture, bedding, carpets, wall-paper and the like.

Once Thomas had settled brother Harmon's estate (Harmon Gregg Heald died in December 1858), he longed to be back at his ranch, but not alone. He was now 34 years old and had yet to find a suitable companion. He visited different places, even so far as San Jose where his brother Samuel had built San Jose's first grist mill.

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Thomas finally found his intended near Glen Ellen in the person of Julia Guerne, sister of George Guerne for whom Guernville got its name.

Thomas and Julia were married July 26, 1860. They "immediately went on the ranch and took up the regular routine (sowing and reaping) of farm life." Thomas declared: "My hop crop was the first raised on Russian River, but in the 2nd year it was burned when hops were 60 cents a pound. Hops afterwards did not pay to raise so I plowed them up." Thomas was helped for a while on the ranch by his brother-in-law George E. Guerne until Guerne left for "the Redwoods" to start up a lumber business.

Thomas also planted a vineyard! Julia had come from French/German stock and had been brought up to the use of wine with meals and to serve to company. Thomas' Temperance work notwithstanding, he raised grapes, made wine annually and also raised tobacco! Thomas Tobin Heald used neither liquor of any kind nor tobacco but did not question having wine about his place nor selling hops and tobacco for profit! However, he seemed never to go so much as to mention business on Sunday. According to his diary, he was "nearly always at church, Sunday school, camp meeting or quarterly meeting unless it was raining." The nearest he approached business on Sunday was on the eighth of September, 1866, when he mentioned "taking some colts to Yarbrough's pasture!"

Thomas and Julia were only married for ten years as Julia died January 23, 1870. During this time, they had six children three of whom died in infancy. The other three were first born George Henry, Henrietta Elizabeth, and Amelia. Henrietta married Dr. Brighthouse who was on staff at St. Helena Sanitarium. Amelia was quite sickly and remained at home. George became quite a renowned physician, graduating from the Cooper Medical College, which was absorbed by Stanford University. He took several postgraduate degrees and joined the staff of the St. Helena Sanitarium. In 1899 he became the editor of the "Pacific Health Journal" until that journal was transferred to Washington, D.C., and became "Life and Health". Dr. Heald went to Washington, D.C., at that time (1904) as editor of the magazine and remained there until his death in 1934. Besides being editor of the magazine, Dr. Heald carried on a huge correspondence with people all over the world who were asking for medical advice.

Thomas carried on with his ranch, farming and raising horses. He also worked at the mill in Guerneville. Eventually he bought a home in Healdsburg where he lived out his life.

In 1899 he hosted a "Notable Reunion" at his home on Matheson Street. From the *Healdsburg Tribune*, 19 October

1899: "A delightful reunion was held Tuesday at the residence of Thomas Heald in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Mr. Heald's arrival in California. About thirty people, coming from various parts of this and adjoining counties, gathered at his home to participate in the reunion. The dinner, which was served on the lawn in tents, was unique, being characterized by the absence of flesh food, tea and coffee, or baking powder. The dinner was gotten up under the supervision of Mrs. J.E. Leadsworth who is the author of an excellent little guide to healthful cookery. Mr. Heald read an account of his early life and his trip to California. Dr. Brighthouse (Thomas' son-in-law, Henrietta's husband) furnished a variety of music with the phonograph, and Mrs. L. Heald read a poem entitled 'Reminiscences.'"

In 1907 when Thomas was writing his autobiography, Henrietta was living at home caring for Amelia and their father who were both invalids. Ironically, Thomas's last known entry into his diary was penned three months before his death on April 8, 1908. "On this tenth day of December 1907 another mile post is reached by being the 82nd (birthday). When 81 was past it hardly could be expected that I would become the 82nd but in the Good providence of the One in Whom we live and have our being I have been enabled to see this which is likely to be the last."

Thomas' words were prophetic as he died 4 months later. From the *Healdsburg Tribune*, 16 April 1908, p. 1: 4: "Thomas Heald, a pioneer resident of Healdsburg, aged 82 years, died at his home on Matheson Street. He had been in poor health for many months." After a very brief biography, the Tribune concluded with "Deceased was a man of high Christian character and was respected by all. The funeral took place Friday (April 10) from the Adventist Church, a large number of friends paying their farewell tribute to his memory."

SOURCES:

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Papp, Richard Paul, BEAR FLAG COUNTRY, p. 78
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Russian River Flag, 27 Jan 1870, p. 2:5
Healdsburg Tribune, 19 Oct 1899, p. 1:5 and 26 Oct 1899, p. 1:2
Original Manuscript of T.T. Heald, in Healdsburg Museum
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"Life and Health" magazine, April 1934, Vol. XLIX, No. 4

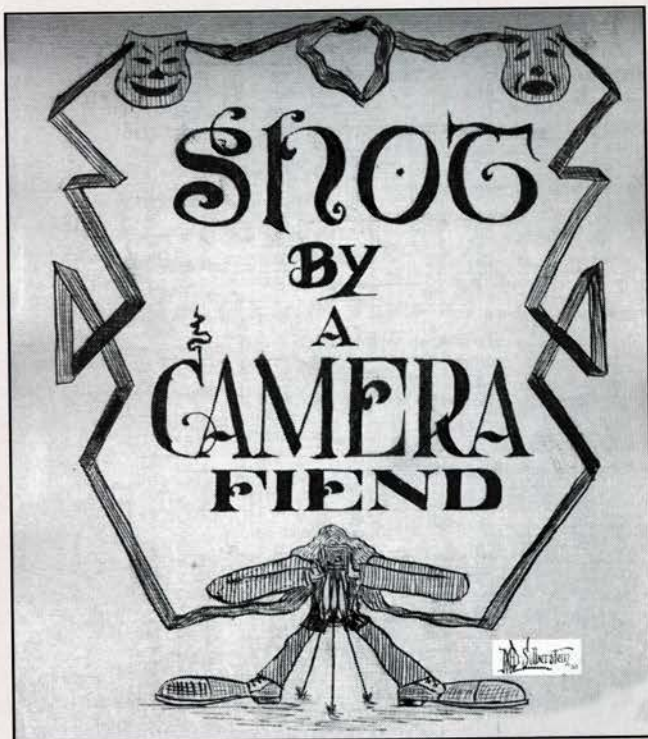
CHERISHED MEMORIES

YOUNG MERVYN SILBERSTEIN IN HEALDSBURG

by Daniel F. Murley



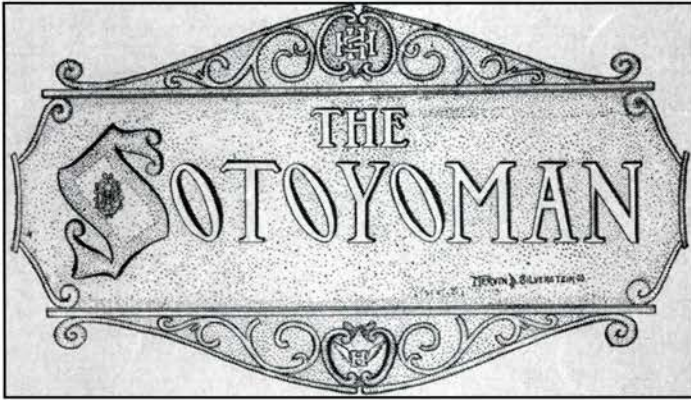
Mervyn Silberstein, Nette Luce, Harvey Frost, Ruth Drake and Will Livernash.



"Shot by a Camera Fiend", M.D. Silberstein

The young man gently laid his straight pen down on the blotter and leaned back slowly in his straight-backed wooden chair. After a moment of reflection, he retrieved the black lacquered stem and dipped the metal point into the jar of India ink. A new balloon appeared above one of his comic drawings. A few more rapid strokes on the paper, another quick dip in the ink and more tiny words filled the balloon. Now satisfied, he dropped the pen, leaned back further and smiled down at the detailed graphic before him. Mervyn D. Silberstein was putting the finishing touches on another cartoon creation which would grace the pages of the new publication he had helped create for the graduating class of 1903 of Healdsburg High School.

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The booklet was called "The Sotoyoman," a name whimsically chosen by the originators from the now legendary Sotoyome Rancho of 50,000 acres granted to Henry and Josefa Fitch in the 1840's. The title seemed to have some regal ring which tied the high school boy and his classmates to a romantic time past and reminded them of the historic beginnings of their little northern California town. Though not quite Camelot, humorous comparisons were definitely made by Merv and his imaginative (not imaginary) friends.



Annie Muller, Will Livernash, Lily Cooke and Mervyn on the Russian River.

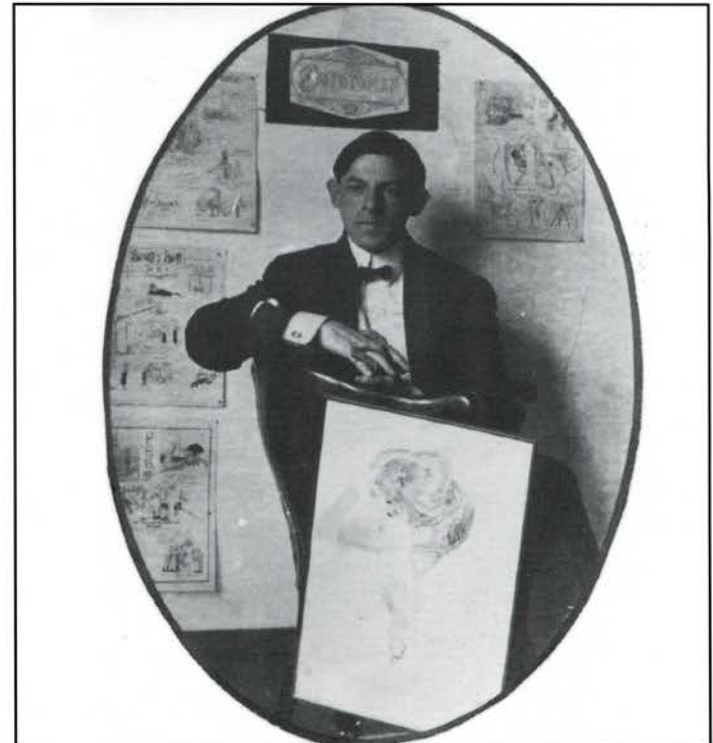
It was here that Mervyn, the son of local dry goods merchant, Jacob Silberstein, would find joy in the artistic and literary pursuits which would serve to guide the direction of his life and career choices. In fact it was probably at his father's store at the corner of Powell (now Plaza) and Center Streets where young Mervyn probably purchased his first camera. That building across from the Plaza which housed Silberstein's and the Red Man's Hall was severely damaged in the 1906 earthquake but the business survived in the downtown district until Jacob sold out his interest in 1910.



J. Silberstein's Store beneath the Red Men's Hall - 1905.

Though involved in his solitary artistic pursuits Mervyn found great enjoyment and inspiration in frivolous outings with his close friends. Many of his most humorous and inventive creations combining photography and cartooning came from these adventures along the Russian River or out at Lytton Springs resort.

The friendships he fostered would also be of great importance in his life, for his male friends were also talented products of the close-knit community. There were probably two young men in particular with whom Mervyn related, though for widely differing reasons.



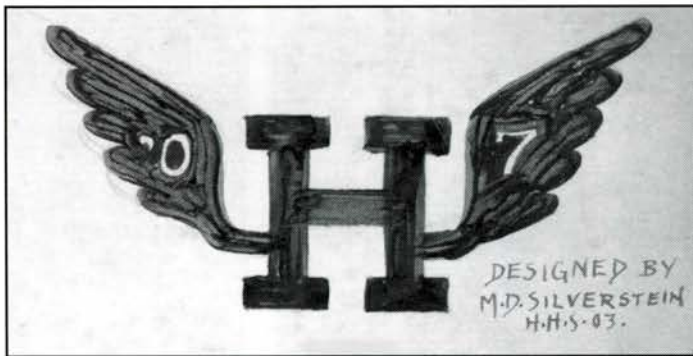
Mervyn in his "studio" room.

One who would eventually cast a shadow over the whole town and in whose brilliance Mervyn often shaded himself was the gentle giant, Ralph Rose. Though the friendship with Ralph probably existed from grammar school days, when both were

SILBERSTEIN'S
 FOR THE LATEST IN
 Ladies' and Gentlemen's Wearing Apparel
 College Novelties, Society Stationery, Spaulding's Athletic Goods
 Kodaks, Souvenir Postals, Etc.
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Healdsburg Tribune Advertisement - 1904

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Trademark winged "H" - 1910 Healdsburg High School Girls Basketball Team

on the Healdsburg High track team together, they became closer still. Contributing and creating to the future of both young men was a new toy Mervyn acquired from his father's store, a Kodak. Behind its fixed lens, Mervyn would find expression of his artistic talent and that lens' image would be constantly filled by Ralph's athletically inclined, rapidly developing physique.



Ralph Rose - Healdsburg High School - 1903

From a lanky school boy star to the enormous finely-tuned Olympic champion, Ralph Rose's accomplishments would be captured by the constantly clicking shutter of his childhood chum. No better images of the young Olympian, who came from a small school to rise to the epitome of the track and field world, are more personal and captivating. From his antics off the field to his record setting performances, his growth and development were chronicled in the photographs and newspaper articles of Mervyn Silberstein.

All of Healdsburg and the track world mourned the death of this honored champion when he lost a bout with Typhus in a San

Francisco Hospital in 1913 at the age of 29. He was buried here in Healdsburg with hero's honors.



A tribute to Ralph Rose in Mervyn's memoirs

Mervyn was himself an accomplished track athlete and held the high school's record for the 50 yard dash which lasted for years after his graduation. When not competing in a meet himself, he would be recording the times and distances of others for the school publications.



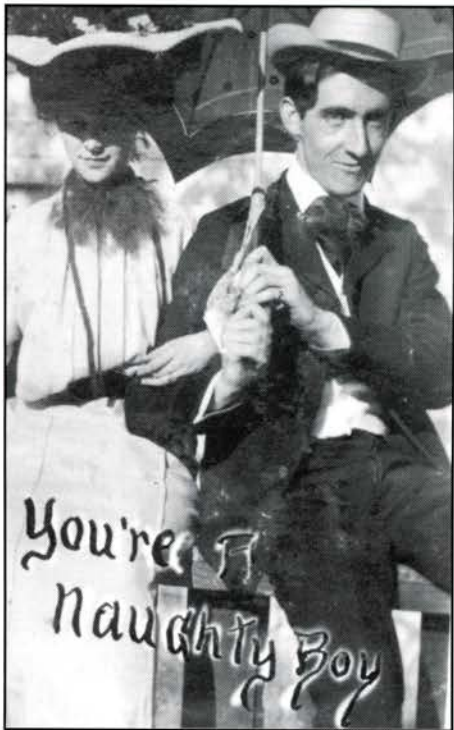
Healdsburg High School Girls' Basketball Team - 1910

His other companion who would oftentimes lead away from the sports scene to more of the "sporting life" was Will Livernash. Will was from a relatively well-to-do family and his sister Lizzie Livernash was the editor and eventually ran the local *Healdsburg Enterprise* newspaper. Will, a dashing young lad, was also quite interested in music and "the fairer sex" as the term went in the early 1900's.

It seemed that as many of Mervyn's photographic images were filled with the fleeting forms of young men in the fields of sporting events, so too were they decorated with the fine fashioned forms of young women in more gentle pursuits.

Many images show Will and Merv with "our gang" playing a tune

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Will Livernash and friend - 1904

in the parlor or paddling a canoe or rollicking on the nearby Russian River or visiting the other local "hot spots" such as Lytton Springs. Some of Mervyn's favorite subjects during this time after high school while attending Pacific Union College in Santa Rosa were his Healdsburg friends and family. Many images of his sister Ethel, (sometimes he

refers to her as "Daisy") three years his junior, also appear to have been taken at this time.

Mervyn would move to San Francisco in 1911 and shortly thereafter came the death of his father Jacob in 1913.

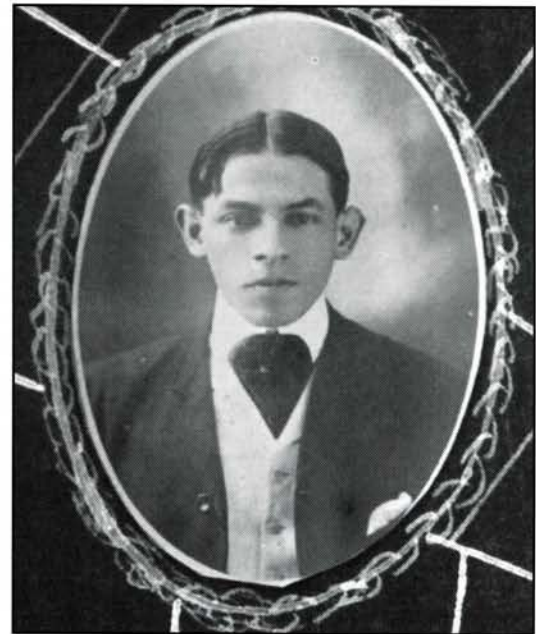
Mervyn stayed in San Francisco for the rest of his life and pursued a career in the advertising industry but returned to Healdsburg frequently. He documented many sporting events in local papers, writing a baseball column, replete with illustrations, for the Healdsburg Enterprise. He also photographed and reported on the rise of another friend and Healdsburg sports champion Eddie Beeson, who went on to set the world high jump record at U. C. Berkeley in 1914, a record which would hold for ten years.



"Daisy" Silberstein - 1911



Mervyn David Silberstein left a personal and artistic legacy in his photographs, writings and cartoons. These have given texture and insight into the lives of young men and women at the turn of the 20th century in this once small Northern California town. Mervyn died in San Francisco in 1957.

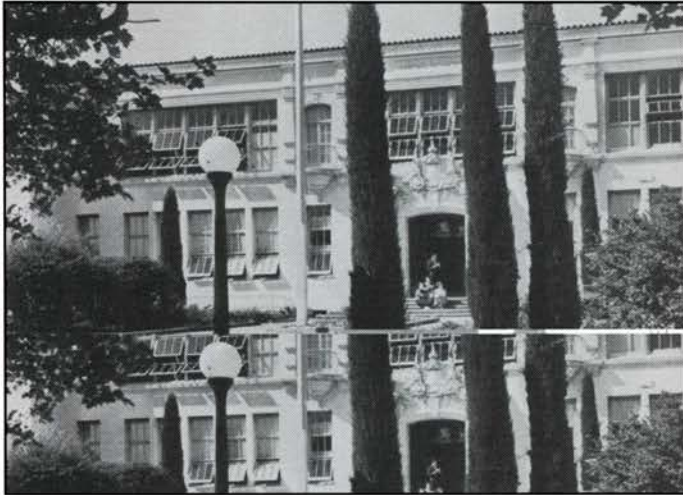


Mervyn David Silberstein

I am grateful for the generous contributions of time and material to Gloria (Silberstein) Brown of Palo Alto, California, Mervyn D. Silberstein's daughter. She has shared her remembrances and donated many of her father's images, scrapbooks and cameras to the Healdsburg Museum. It is from this colorful collection, I have been able to glean the information contained in this article. dfm

315 GRANT STREET

by Darla Meeker



"Located on a sight (sic) unequaled for a public building, overlooking our beautiful town, and the magnificent mountains in the distance, stands an imposing three-story edifice, whose enduring pillars and massive walls give it the appearance of permanence and solid worth. This beautiful new building is Healdsburg's new high school, a fitting monument to the interest the citizens of the district have shown in education . . ."

- Editorial, Ye Sotoyoman, 1918

PREFACE

Over the years, the town of Healdsburg has lost several prized public-access buildings--separate and apart from the west side of Healdsburg Avenue--in the name of modernization and/or earthquake safety. For many longtime residents, these fallen architectural giants have become touch-stones of the past, each with its own multiplicity of stories, each with its own undercurrent of controversy surrounding its demise.

Yet, what is the history of these ephemeral community landmarks? How did they come into being? Who benefited from their presence? What can we learn today about community involvement (or lack thereof) as it pertains to historic preservation?

Although today's article focuses solely on how the two-story structure that once held court at 315 Grant Street came to be built, it cannot capture the sense of loss and regret that former students often express whenever they talk about this beautiful building. It was a source of great pride, as we shall soon discover, for the entire community.

A MEMORABLE CELEBRATION

In 1888, an astounding thirty-one years after the town of Healdsburg was founded--and thirty years after the local public elementary school opened its doors--Healdsburg's first high school "department" was allotted a single room in the local public elementary schoolhouse on Tucker Street. Fifteen students enrolled in the fledgling program, and, in 1891, after a three-year course of study under the direction of Professor H. R. Bull, eight young women and one young man received the first diplomas ever issued by Healdsburg High School. Much to the graduates' surprise and delight, over 600 (!) townspeople crowded into Truitt's Opera House to witness this educational milestone. Two years later, in 1893, the high school became fully accredited (on its first application) by the University of California.

A DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Over the years, the Healdsburg High School student body continued to grow and thrive; yet, the old wooden schoolhouse on Tucker Street was woefully lacking in space and amenities. It also was structurally unsound. Finally, in 1903, the California State

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Inspector of High Schools deemed the local high school building “a disgrace to the town.”

“Most people in Healdsburg agree(d)” with the State Inspector’s assessment; and, in 1904, a special school bond election was held to purchase property on West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) and Lincoln Street. Unfortunately, due to a technicality at the state level, the deal fell through, leaving the students in limbo until the 1906 San Francisco earthquake jolted a group of concerned citizens into action.

GENEROSITY ABOUND

As luck would have it, in 1906, the Seventh Day Adventist Church relocated its entire base of operation to Angwin, in Napa County, where it still exists today. In the wake of the Adventists’ swift departure, their “abandoned” Healdsburg College building (also known as South Hall), was for sale. Concerned citizens of Healdsburg purchased the site for \$6,500, then leased the property to the local school board until that time when they could afford to reimburse them.

It was, undeniably, a stop-gap measure at best. For it was evident there was limited space for expansion, not to mention the fact that the school building itself—built in 1878 as a private academy—was showing signs of wear. Regardless of the property’s shortcomings, the Plaza Court site was to become the first campus that Healdsburg High School students could claim as their own.



Healdsburg High Campus, 1907-1918

RAMPANT RUMORS PROVED TRUE

By 1915, however, horror stories about the deteriorating conditions of the thirty-eight-year-old schoolhouse ran rampant

throughout the town. Upon closer inspection, unlike many other twice-told tales around town, the rumors proved true: The building, inside and out, was in dire need of repair.

Once again, local citizens leaped into action, with local merchant Eli Bush leading the charge. New floors, blackboards, sinks, and lavatories were purchased and installed in the old schoolhouse, along with the fervent plea for a new high school to be built as soon as possible.

PRIME REAL ESTATE

Finally, in 1917, a prime piece of real estate became available for purchase: a 5-acre parcel bordered to the north by Lincoln Street, to the East by College Street, to the South by Grant Street, and to the West by Fitch Street. Dr. Wheeler’s Sanitarium, a large, four-story wooden building, which had originally been built in 1882 to serve as a 70-room dormitory (known as North Hall) for Adventist students, dominated the landscape. An orchard and various shop buildings where Adventist students had once learned shoe-making, tent-making, and black-smithing dotted the hillside. The asking price for the 5-acre lot was \$9,500.

Local school board trustees—F.W. McConnell, George C. Alexander, A.D. Goddard, E.F. Patronak and George Duvander—were said to “... have given every thought to the future of this institution (i.e., Healdsburg High School) . . . ,” as they negotiated an option to purchase the Wheeler Sanitarium property from the Seventh Day Adventist Association. Yet before that could happen, the Board of Trustees needed to persuade local voters (i.e., adult white males) to support a \$100,000 school bond.

WOONG THE VOTERS

Right from the start, the trustees made it clear that a re-build on the Plaza Court site would force them to construct “an antiquated ‘Sky Scrapper’ type of building which . . . would be almost criminal and a step always to be regretted by the inhabitants of the district.”

A week later, in an article entitled *Sidelights on the School-Site Question*, Julius Myron Alexander extolled the virtues of the 5-acre site: “. . . As a business proposition, the tract contains 35 building lots with a fifty-foot frontage which would be readily worth \$500 each or \$17,500 for all. The option (asking) price (\$9,500) is extremely liberal.”

Furthermore, in a town where old wooden structures burned to the ground on a fairly regular basis, Alexander also noted that:

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"The (b)igh school building will be of concrete and absolutely fire-proof." Then, on June 7, 1917, the Tribune's editorial opined: "Perhaps not since the date . . . when Opportunity came to acquire municipal ownership for water and light utilities, has there come a day that may mean so much to the future of this little city."

A POWERFUL VISUAL

Words, though, were not enough. The school board took their school bond campaign one step further by providing a sneak-peek at what the public could expect for their hard-earned dollars.

The trustees hired William H. Weeks, a much-touted California-based architect whose "modern" school designs included the stately 1914 Santa Cruz High School (which still stands today, despite the 1989 Loma Prieta 7.1-magnitude earthquake), the nearby 1922 Brick Gothic Santa Rosa High School (still standing), and twenty-two Carnegie Library buildings (eighteen extant), and many other public-access buildings.

To whet the voter's appetite, a full-page spread of Weeks' pen-and-ink design of the proposed Healdsburg High School ran on the front page of the May 31, 1917 issue of the Healdsburg Tribune, along with the claim that ". . . the plans provide for one of the most up-to-date and attractive high school buildings to be found in the State of California . . ."

The image of the school's majestic concrete façade packed a powerful punch . . . which it definitely needed to do if the school bond were to succeed, since the masthead directly above the architect's rendering also implored local readers to support the war effort: *"Your Patriotic Duty-To Buy A Liberty Loan Bond."*

Despite the fact that the "war to end all wars" was deep into its third year, the people of Healdsburg did themselves proud: They not only exceeded their Liberty Bond quota, they also passed the school bond on June 17, 1917, with the necessary two-thirds vote in favor of the purchase of the 315 Grant Street property. The rush to build the new Healdsburg High School was on!

NEW ARRIVALS

During the summer of 1917, the Wheeler Sanitarium was razed, with L. Bergren & Son of San Francisco listed as contractor. By early November, the superintendent of construction for Healdsburg High School, E. Pearson and his wife, as well as construction foreman, Arthur Erickson and his wife, moved to Healdsburg, where both

couples rented houses on Brown Street, so that Pearson and Erickson could oversee the day-to-day operation needs of the construction site.

Both men had previous experience in building Weeks-designed high schools (including the much-acclaimed Eureka and Woodland high schools) as well as the Woodland court house and other large building projects throughout the state of California. Upon his arrival in Healdsburg, Pearson cautioned that delays in receiving materials, due to the war effort, could hinder progress, but such delays never materialized.

BREAKING GROUND, NOT HEADS

"It is a great pleasure to participate in a ground-breaking event, when everybody else seems to be engaged in breaking heads," announced the Reverend Francis Hope at the November 14, 1917 ground-breaking ceremony attended by students, faculty, and community members at the 315 Grant Street site. Professor Schoer, the principal of the high school, and David Schmidt, the student body president, also spoke.

To mark the occasion on this balmy November day, a shovelful of earth was turned by the class presidents: David Schmidt, Harriet Castner, Leland McClish, and Henry LeBaron. The fresh-turned earth was then taken to the Plaza Court school site, where it was used to make a new flower bed. Class yells and the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" concluded the ceremony.

OF CORNERSTONES & TIME CAPSULES

Throughout the winter months of 1917, and into the spring of 1918, construction continued, unabated. On June 12, 1918, *"... one of the most forward steps in the history of Healdsburg"* occurred when all of the "business houses" in town were closed at 2:00 p.m., in observation of the laying of the new high school's cornerstone (also known as, the keystone).

A parade in honor of the event preceded the laying of the cornerstone. The Municipal Band played as Grand Marshal Oscar Frellson, along with Ed Thompson, Harvey Frost, Joe Cox, and George Blackburn on horseback, led a long list of high school staff and students, county supervisors, city officials, and numerous Masonic and Odd Fellows' members to the 315 Grant Street site, where the Masons presented Healdsburg High School Principal Professor Schoer with the United States flag, which was immediately *"boisted to the masthead."*

After the "Star Spangled Banner" was sung, Lewis Norton, a member of the high school senior class, made a speech that "won

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for him deserved applause." Ray Welch then sang a "delightful" solo, accompanied on piano by Miss Edith Passalacqua. A laundry list of articles that had been placed in the cornerstone's time capsule was also read aloud by W. W. Ferguson.



Original Keystone, 1918

A CITY'S GREATEST DUTY

"There have been larger parades in Healdsburg," stated the *Healdsburg Tribune* the following day, "but it is doubtful if any other parade in the history of this city was so significant of the future achievement and progress of the youth of this community. ... After all, it is a city's greatest duty—the rearing of its youth in ways that make for their fullest development for service to state and nation—the building of character, and purpose, and ambition."

THE FINEST OF ITS CLASS

It was with awed disbelief, and great pride, that the people of Healdsburg took possession of their brand-new high school, three months later, in September 1918. Construction superintendent E. Pearson declared that he knew "... of no other high school building of its class in California today, that is the equal of this of Healdsburg". Even before the school opened, the High School Trustees were planning a public open house "... (to) give the public an opportunity to see what splendid value has been received for the bonds that were so willingly voted for the purpose of building and equipping this structure."

And what a "magnificent new" structure it was! Six hundred opera chairs were at the ready to be placed in the "handsome" auditorium that also included a full, curtained stage, a second-floor viewing gallery with two rows of seats, and a fire-proof projection room while, throughout the building, the banisters were made of hardwood and the halls, corridors and inclines (ramps) were laid with cork linoleum, "soft to the tread and of everlasting quality."



Healdsburg High School Auditorium

Each classroom boasted a beautiful clock, that was synchronized with the paper tape bell system that operated out of the front office. And, for the first time ever in Healdsburg, "... in every room there hangs a telephone connecting with the principal's office". For staff, students, and community members alike, who had always "got along with inadequate, out-of-date equipment, it is difficult to realize that the magnificent new structure ...is really the property of this city and district."



Redwood Seedlings from Mill Creek planted by C. Ruonavaara's father, c. early 1940s

And for many years, as it added feather after feather in its educational cap, the school that the townspeople of Healdsburg built at 315 Grant Street, during those long, bleak years of the First World War, was a symbol of hope of better days-and better opportunities- to come.

ESCAPE FROM THE GALLOWS

THE STORY OF "BAD BOY" BRUGGY

by Raymond L. Owen



George W. Bruggy

In February 1890, readers of *The Sonoma Democrat* were startled to see an article captioned, "Murder in Windsor-Richard Louison Killed by George W. Bruggy." This was but the first chapter of a saga that would see George W. Bruggy repeatedly escape the gallows and in fact twice escape custody.

On 17 February 1890, after a day of drinking and minor fights, George W. Bruggy shot and killed Richard Louison in Fred King's saloon in Windsor. Accounts of the event differed somewhat but in general agreed that the two had been drinking freely and that Bruggy had been harassing Louison. Louison was a larger and more powerful man, about 28 years of age, and Bruggy was of medium height, about 23 years of age. Testimony was developed that Louison had knocked Bruggy down in the street in front of the saloon and later inside had refrained from striking the younger

man with his fist, rather slapping him with an open hand. When Bruggy persisted in harassing Louison, the latter threw him on the floor but did not follow-up his advantage. Bruggy then drew a gun and as Louison fled, he shot him in the back of the head, killing Louison instantly.

Bruggy was taken into custody by Deputy Sheriff [Hy] Greshong and transported to the county jail in Santa Rosa. He was uncommunicative during the trip and upon arrival was described as in "a partial drunken stupor." When asked by Sheriff Edward P. Colgan why he had killed Louison, he reportedly "looked up with an idiotic leer on his face and asked, 'What man? I didn't kill anybody'". Was his response because of shock? Drunkenness? Or, was it a reasoned ploy?

Four years later, it was learned that George W. Bruggy and his older brother, Jeremiah, had been indicted by the Grand Jury of Contra Costa County, California, in 1881 on charges of murder and robbery of a man near Brentwood. George Bruggy was the last person seen with the victim before the discovery of the body. That and other evidence lead to the indictment. Although the Bruggy brothers were acquitted, the mystery was never solved and it was soon after the acquittal that they came to Sonoma County. It seems George Bruggy was not unfamiliar with the legal system, a suggestion strengthened by his refusal to answer particular questions before consultation with his attorney.

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Date

To

Twenty Five - Above of Gerald Mrs
hundred dollars toward - or her
will state of per J. P. Mulgrew
Sheriff Sonoma Co.

Continued on page 17

The general opinion was that Bruggy was a person of a quarrelsome nature and most citizens of Windsor felt that the shooting of Louison was an unprovoked murder. Bruggy plead not guilty to the charge of murder in the first degree and trial was set for 26 March 1891. On 16 April 1891, he was found guilty as charged and sentenced to death by hanging. Upon sentencing, Bruggy asked if he could make a few remarks, but the judge denied the request, stating the time for talking was over, thus engendering a scowl toward the bench. An hour later Bruggy was "singing a gay song" in his cell and called upon the other prisoners to join in the chorus.

The case was appealed to the State Supreme Court where the verdict was upheld in May 1891 and it was ordered that Bruggy be hanged. However, owing to the prominence of the case, a second hearing was granted but on 26 February 1892 the State Supreme Court again upheld the verdict of the lower court and again denied a request for a retrial.

During the protracted appeal, a new feature was added to the drama. On 21 August 1891, George W. Bruggy married Mary N. Pool, a daughter of Henry J. and the late Mary E. Pool, a Windsor neighbor. The ceremony was conducted in the jail. They were already the parents of a baby girl born about 1890.

Following the appellate ruling, the date of execution was to be set in the Superior Court of Sonoma County on the morning of 2 May 1892. When Bruggy's name was called, the Sheriff replied, "May it please your Honor, he has escaped". Bruggy and a fellow prisoner, "Frenchy" [Theron], a petty thief, had broken out of the county jail just hours before the sentencing.

The county jail was in a brick building with barred windows within which was an iron strapped cage containing two tiers of cells on the sides with an open interior. There were two versions of the escape: the prisoners' and the authorities'. According to the prisoners, much of the work was done on Sunday afternoon when the interior was open and prisoners could freely circulate. Inmates later commented that they were not closely watched and that Bruggy even displayed two revolvers, apparently smuggled to him days before. During Sunday afternoon, "Frenchy", having been promised forty dollars by Bruggy, filed through some of the thin iron straps of the cage, climbed through the opening and hid in an iron water tank reservoir that served the jail. It had been purposely emptied during the day.

The evening inspection was carelessly made and the absence of "Frenchy" was undetected, apparently because of the guard's focus on the presence of Bruggy. After the inspection, "Frenchy" left the water tank, crawled back into the cage and filed open the hasp to Bruggy's cell. As Bruggy walked out, he said, "Good bye, boys... we're on our way." They then simply crawled through the cage opening, scaled the lattice and exited through assuredly already cut bars of an outside window. They had a six-hour head start before their absence was discovered.

According to the Sheriff and guards, the escape was an outside job. While there had obviously been outside help and Bruggy had been smuggled money, guns and files, the accounts of the prisoners more closely matched the evidence. When one prisoner was asked why he had not sounded an alarm, he prefaced his answer with a comment that Bruggy was a desperate man who was to be sentenced to hanging the next day and then said, "Give the alarm-and him with two pistols? Not much!"

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NUMBER	SENT BY	RECEIVED AT	CLASS
	W. Bruggy	43 Paid	#2/Br
Received at SACRAMENTO, Cal. 1:35 P. M. Standard Time. May 7 1892			
Dated Santa Rosa Cal			
To Hon. S. D. Markham			
"C"			
G. W. Bruggy under sentence of death, escaped from County Jail last night height five feet ten - eight one hundred eighty - complexion light red hair and mustache, aged			

George Bruggy and "Frenchy" were captured within seventy-two hours, prompting the question, "Dead or alive?" Deputy Gill Hall received a report that smoke had been observed in a gulch near Windsor and a voice overheard that sounded like Bruggy's. Deputy Hall, accompanied by Deputy Hy Groshong, went to Windsor where they were directed to the gulch. From concealment, they saw Bruggy and "Frenchy" standing under a tree, sheltered from the rain. One deputy crept to within twenty feet behind a bush and the other deputy positioned himself uphill with a shotgun. Upon the order to drop their guns, and seeing that they were covered with a pistol and a shotgun, the fugitives meekly complied.

Later at the jail, Bruggy was asked why they hadn't traveled farther. He explained that during two years in jail he had gotten "tenderfooted." After two days, his feet were so swollen he could not put on his shoes. Then they got cold and wet from the rain, built a fire and gave themselves away. Bruggy was matter-of-fact about his capture, remarking, "It's hard luck...our plans were well laid, but you see they miscarried."

Upon re-incarceration, Sheriff Mulgrew placed a twenty-four hour guard over Bruggy and the District Attorney considered filing charges against Mrs. Bruggy for having furnished firearms to her husband. A petition for commutation of Bruggy's sentence was soon sent to Governor Markham who in June 1892 refused the request. When the Governor's decision was received, Bruggy was given a set of new clothes, moved to a holding cell and a scaffold erected in the jail yard for his execution on 1 July 1892. Bruggy's reaction to the Governor's decision was a forced levity, a request for whiskey and the comment, "Well, I ain't hung yet. There's many a slip betwixt the cup and the lips."

On the 28th of June, the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court wrote to the Governor and requested a reprieve of execution for thirty days. A mistake had been made with Bruggy's appeal and it had erroneously been filed in the case of the State of California versus McNulty thereby denying Bruggy due process. Both cases involved an identical issue of interpretation of an 1891 law that vested execution authority solely with prison wardens, not sheriffs. Because the McNulty case was before the United States Supreme Court, an agreement was made that the decision would also be binding on the Bruggy case. The request for a reprieve was granted. Mrs. Bruggy was at the jail when Sheriff Mulgrew delivered the news. After displaying her relief, she asked for and received permission to kiss her husband through the grating.

Although the Governor had granted a reprieve in June and would grant four more until 30 September 1892, he steadfastly refused to commute the death sentence. The hanging was scheduled for the 1st of October. An appeal to the U.S. Circuit Court had earlier been denied, however, on the 29th of September the decision was reconsidered and an indefinite stay ordered pending the ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court. Once again Bruggy escaped the gallows by hours. In view of the indefinite stay, work commenced to dismantle the scaffold. Bruggy requested to see the structure and was accordingly led to it. He stood on the trap door, surveyed the construction and commented, " 'It looks strong.' "

In May 1893, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered its decision in the McNulty case-the writ was dismissed. The Santa Rosa

newspaper announced, "Bruggy's Last Hope for Life is Gone." This pronouncement was premature because of the suspended case in Circuit Court, along with another appeal. Nonetheless it was a devastating blow. Interestingly, the months before and after the decision saw a remarkable transformation in Bruggy. He changed from a troublesome inmate known for "pranks and devilry" to a model prisoner. In a July 1893 newspaper account Bruggy was described as "attired in a neat and becoming suit of steel gray. He was clean shaven, and hair and mustache trimmed... Bruggy is a changed person...the change extends much below the surface." Bruggy lamented his past use of whiskey and expressed deep feelings about its self-destructive nature. Another account in October 1893 stated, "Those who remember the rough, brutal and dissipated slayer of Louison would not recognize him in the George Bruggy of the present day...in fairness it must be said an apparent great change has been wrought in his character and certainly in his behavior. The officers say there is not a more quiet and obedient prisoner." In fact, he was so obedient that he was made a trustee and assistant turnkey.

The appeal in Circuit Court continued to languish. By agreement, if the decision went against him in the Supreme Court, a motion to dismiss was to be made in the U.S. Court of Appeals, however, lacking a requisite certificate from the Circuit Court the matter was pended until after the Court of Appeals reconvened in January 1894.

On the 27th of January, George Bruggy and five others broke out of the Sonoma County jail.

The jailbreak was a sensation! As the news spread, crowds descended on the jail. The escaped prisoners were Bruggy and Jack Espy, convicted murderers, Craig and Smith, burglars, and Pridgett and Owens, petty offenders. The timing was perfect and occurred while the jailor was absent having supper. A cross bar of the lattice had been sawn out and the escapees simply crawled through the opening, scaled the cage, broke a skylight, crossed the roof and dropped a short distance to an alley. There had obviously been outside help and suspicion fell upon Mrs. Bruggy, considered by some to have been allowed too much liberty to visit her husband. Others felt friends of Espy assisted.

On condition of anonymity, an inmate confided to a reporter how the escape was engineered. It was known in advance that an escape would be attempted. Bruggy had gotten possession of a file with which he made a key for his cell and one for the middle door that lead to the jailer's office. Apparently thin blanks of soft pine were inserted into the locks and turned, leaving impressions

and a template. Making keys to the other cells was simple. For some time, Bruggy had been the assistant turnkey and as such he handled all cell keys except his own. It was just a matter of surreptitiously making key imprints on tinfoil. The original plan was to open the middle door, overpower the jailor and exit en masse through the front door. However, Bruggy acquired a steel saw and it was decided to cut through the cage. To mask the sound of sawing, the inmates loudly sang and shouted. When asked why the sheriff wasn't informed of the plot, the informant replied, " 'In the first place none of us was anxious to get brained, and in the second place I think we all would rather like to see him get away.'"

Sheriff Sam Allen initiated an intense search for the escaped prisoners and within a short time Pridgett and Owens were captured at Healdsburg. The whereabouts of the burglars, Craig and Smith, was unknown and Bruggy and Espy remained at large. Months later it was learned that Bruggy and Espy had been secreted for several weeks in a farm house less than ten miles from Santa Rosa after which they hid in a brush shanty near Windsor, not far from the site of Bruggy's capture in 1892. Local residents later reported that they had observed Mrs. Bruggy and another woman carrying well-provisioned baskets to the area. When the site was eventually found, it was littered with empty food cans.

George W. Bruggy was never recaptured or returned to California authorities. He simply vanished. After two years, his wife divorced him for abandonment and later remarried. Was he a "Bad Boy?" As a youth, he was implicated in a murder-robbery. As a young man, he needlessly and deliberately shot and killed a man and feigned ignorance of the act. He married while an inmate—was it affection or to acquire an outside accomplice? Later, he abandoned his wife and child. He morphed from a troublesome inmate to a model prisoner, gained the trust of his jailors and exploited their confidence. A "Bad Boy?" You bet—but one who represents a colorful thread in the fabric of our local history.

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The Press Democrat, Santa Rosa, CA. Issue of 6 August 1903.

Memo to File dated 14 March 2007. Advisement by California State Archives that no prison file exists for George W. Bruggy.

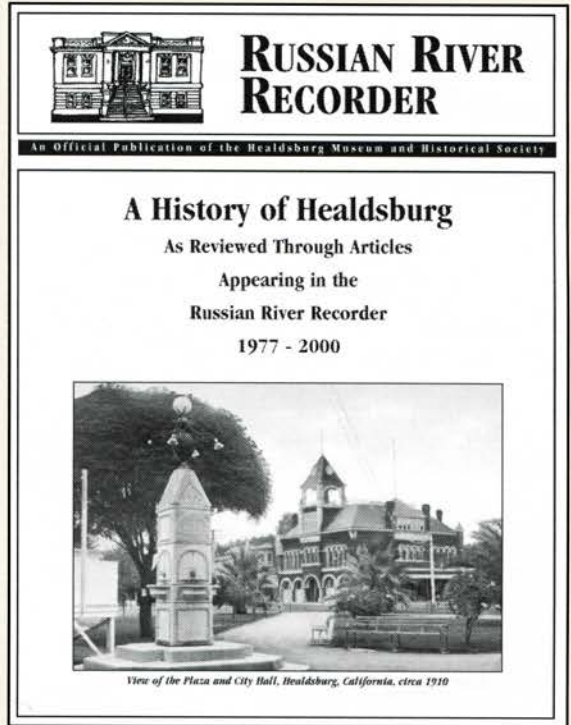
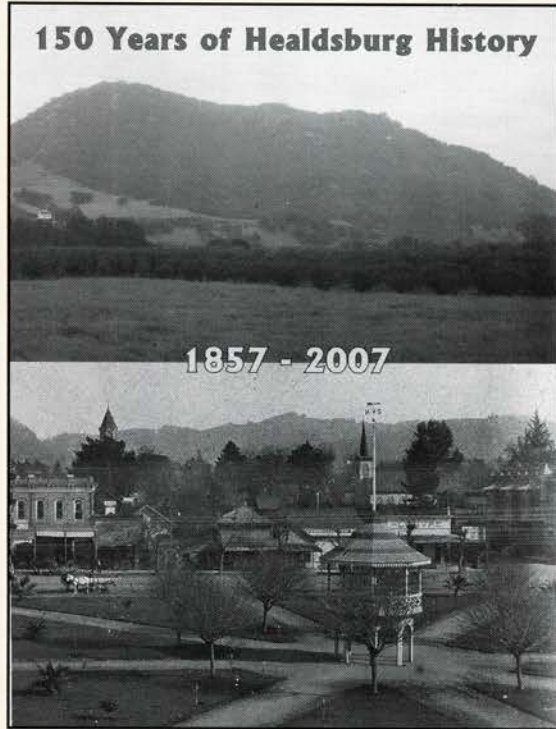
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