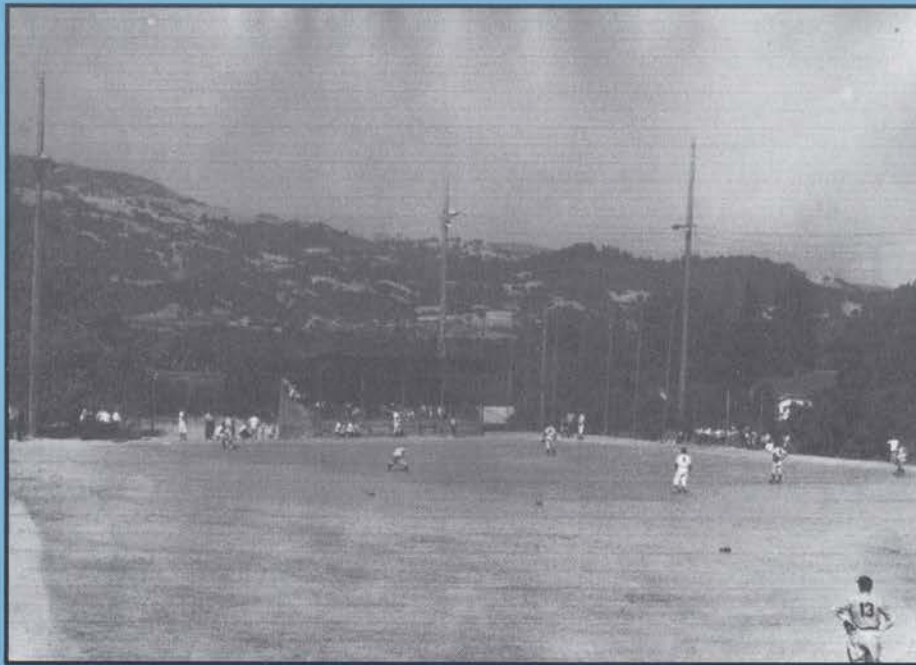




# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

WINTER 2010 • ISSUE 111

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



*Geyserville Ball Park*

## BUSH LEAGUE BASEBALL IN GEYSERVILLE

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## In This Issue

We welcome as a contributor a devoted volunteer and Geyserville native, Janet Sbragia Pisenti who researched the interesting story of the Lea and Inez Bell family, owners and operators of the Bell Ambulance Service which has been in business for over 54 years. Janet, through her research and the cooperation of the Bell family, has provided us with a fitting tribute to the Bells and their devotion to the community.

Retired educator and author Joe Pelanconi shares with us a nostalgic turn with his article "Bush League Baseball in Geyserville". Author of "Vino and Biscotti: Italy to Sonoma County and Back" and "Whine and Crackers: Musings of a High School Principal," Joe fills his article with the names of many well known local players, and special games, pointing out that "this was bush league baseball at its best." And it was a great time before television and other distractions. Bush League Baseball, he says, "was what people did in Geyserville on summertime Sunday afternoons." We know you will find this most enjoyable reading.

The Museum's collection manager, Meredith Dreisbach, shares with us a terrific "find", historical documents of the City of Healdsburg which had been stored for many years. Meredith

says, "What a Jackpot," and she is so right. The assortment includes reports, receipts, letters, contracts, proposals and bids, some as far back as the 1800's.

The Holiday Toy Exhibit was a terrific display of antique toys by Curator Holly Hoods with emphasis on teddy bears. Holly, in this issue, chose to give interesting highlights of a few of the toys on display. We found the history of the teddy bear extremely interesting, especially how it derived its name.

2010 is now behind us. Looking back it was a challenging, innovative but interesting one. We hope that, in our small way, we helped to bring the Museum's message to our members as well as the general public.

Our wish - a Very Happy and Successful New Year.

Arnold Santucci  
Editor



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*The Official Publication of the*  
HEALDSBURG MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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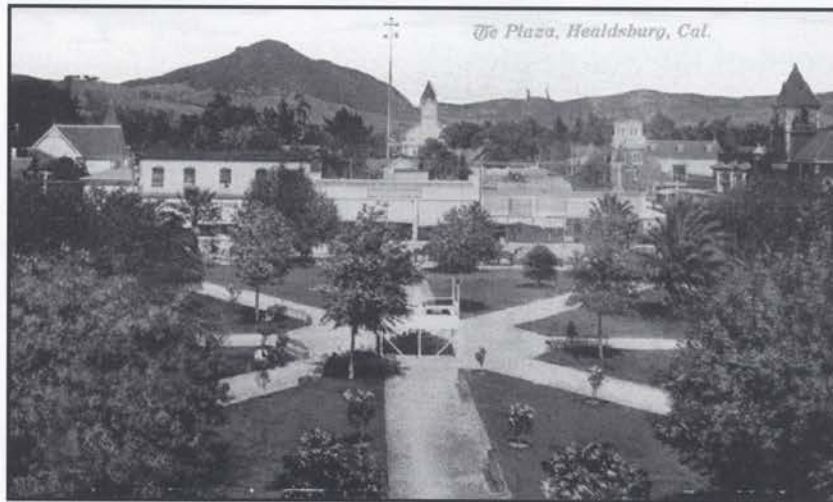
The Healdsburg Museum story (Autumn 2010) about the Healdsburg Machine Shop brought back a 15+ year old memory of an event from a trip I took to Spain and France. We were driving north on the main road heading from the Mediterranean coast to Paris. As we approached the famous Chateaux de Pape area, we were drawn to a small winery and went into visit. As we were having a glass of wine, the owner/winemaker (speaking English) asked us where we were from. We said, "The wine country in Northern California." To which he said Yes, but where? One of us answered, A small town named Healdsburg, north of San Francisco. The owner said, Come with me. We left the tasting room/barrel room and went into the small winery. Just inside the door opening onto the vineyards was a relatively small but clearly recognizable crusher. The owner with great pride pointed at the label on the crusher, "Healdsburg Machine Shop, Healdsburg California."

*Russ and BJ Green, Hoot Owl Creek Vineyards, Alexander Valley*

# HEALDSBURG: QUEEN OF THE SOTOYOMES

*Sonoma County's Third City in Size and Commercial Importance is Located in the Center of a Rich and Fertile Territory, Where Almost Everything Grows in Splendid Profusion*

Description of Healdsburg 100 Years Ago from *Healdsburg Tribune*, 27 January 1910:



Healdsburg, Sonoma County's third city in point of population, is on the axis of four rich and productive valleys, and is the business center for their people. Alexander Valley is five miles to the north. Dry Creek Valley stretches fourteen miles to the west. Russian River Valley lies to the south and east, and still further east is Knight's Valley. All are tributary to Healdsburg. All these valleys are fertile and rich, thickly dotted with homes and cultivated to a high degree. From the valleys the foothills lead up to the mountains, greatest of which is Mount St. Helena. The acclivities are largely grazing lands, with many fine vineyards interspersed. The mountains are heavy with timber.

Healdsburg has a population of about 3,500—all of which does not show in the United States census, for populous suburbs are outside the corporate limits, and are therefore not counted. But of course, these people properly belong to Healdsburg, and in time the corporate lines will no doubt be extended to include them. Healdsburg is 65 miles north of San Francisco and 16 miles north of Santa Rosa. It is on the main line of the Northwestern Pacific railway, in the rich and fertile valley made by the confluence of the Russian River and Dry Creek. This land gives a natural drainage and a firm foundation for buildings. The business houses of Healdsburg are principally of brick and concrete, and mostly of modern architecture and construction. The dwellings are chiefly constructed of wood; most of them are of modern design. The streets and roads are graveled; and are hard even under the winter rains. There are nearly five miles of cement sidewalks. Along most

of these are shade trees, tropical in suggestion—magnolia, palm, poplar, eucalyptus and umbrella trees.

In the City's center is the Plaza, after the old Mexican style, which is kept in green lawn throughout the year. It is surrounded by magnificent maple shade trees, while within it grow luxuriantly the palms of the tropics, oranges, lemons and beautiful roses that bloom through all the seasons. During the summer the Healdsburg Band gives concerts in the Plaza each Saturday evening, which are enjoyed by hundreds of the town and country people, making a joyous gathering. This Healdsburg Band is celebrated as one of the best musical organizations to be found in any town of similar size anywhere in the United States. Its leader, Prof. D.C. Smith, having for many years been the bandmaster on the United States cruiser Philadelphia, and having held many other important positions of like character.

Healdsburg's mean elevation is 100 feet above sea level; its average rainfall is 43 inches annually; and its mean temperature is 63 degrees. Fitch Mountain, 800 feet high, rises in benches and acclivities from the banks of the Russian River, winding at its base. From every point of view may be seen a picturesque panorama of Nature's most beautiful blending—of valleys, of fruitage and wooded hills. Russian River itself lies at the eastern edge of town. Its banks are lined with flowers, cottonwood and alders. In spring, summer and autumn its waters

*Continued on page 5*

are clear and limpid, running in ripples and then into deep pools abounding in bass and trout. In winter, it rushes a torrent from the mountains, carrying the alluvial sediment which it deposits over the land along its banks, making the fertility of the famed Russian River valley lands. Spring-fed streams run down the mountain sides to the valley lands. Along these streams are groves of redwood and fir, of pepperwood and oaks, forming pretty dells for camping and outings. Away in the distance are the blue peaks of the Geysier range and Mount St. Helena, forming a background of wild and rugged beauty. In the early days, the valley about Healdsburg was given the name "Sotoyome Vale." Tradition varies as to this name's origin. Some say "Sotoyome" was the name of an Indian chief, while others declare that "Sotoyome Vale" means "Valley of Flowers." Either name might fit; for there were many Indians there in the early days, and not a few still live near there. Also there always were millions upon millions of lovely wildflowers in the Valley of Sotoyome. One may wade knee-deep in golden poppies, through fields of buttercups and blossoms, blue and red and white, painted by bright sunshine and kissed by soft winds from the south. Among the hills are all manner of flowering trees and shrubs, and late in the autumn the madrona and the holly make red the hillsides with their bright-colored berries. It is a land of kaleidoscopic changes of beauty.

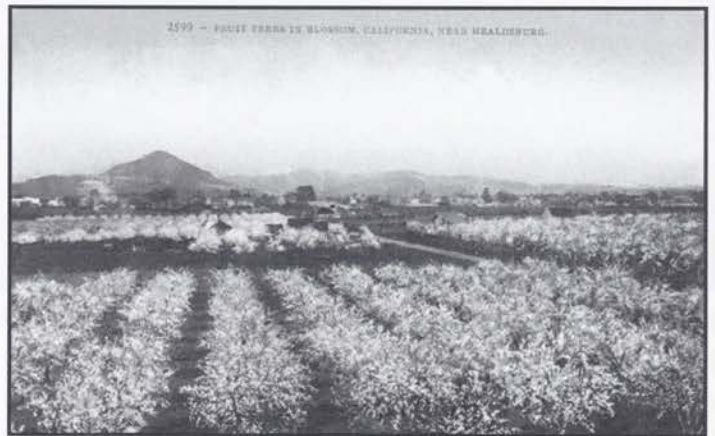
Healdsburg has a splendid grammar school building of brick and stone, erected in 1907 at a cost of \$35,000. It has also a well-equipped high school, the large building being in commodious grounds, centrally located. The complete high school course is carried, and the school is accredited at both the universities. All of Healdsburg's schools are rated with the best. The City of Healdsburg owns its light and water systems. The power for the plant comes from a mountain reservoir, fed by large springs. This power pumps the potable water into reservoirs from great wells—an abundant supply, pure and cold. The charges for water and lights are at a minimum sufficient to meet maintenance charges and provide for extensions. Power is supplied to many electric meters all over the town.

Healdsburg has eight churches: Methodist-Episcopal and Methodist-Episcopal South; Presbyterian, Baptist, Christian, Catholic, Episcopal, and Advent. It also has many fraternal organizations, all prosperous. There are two banks and a public library of more than 3,000 volumes. The local Chamber of Commerce has an exhibit room in the handsome City Hall. Healdsburg has splendid stores, a theater, a public hall and several places of amusement. A Ladies' Improvement Club works for the city's adornment and improvement. A Water Carnival is given annually on Russian River, and is attended by thousands of people from near and far, who share in its sports and amusements. Within the city limits are three fruit canneries and three fruit-packing houses. During the harvest season these employ



Water carnival scene on Russian River

hundreds of hands and pay many thousands of dollars in wages. There are several other packing houses near town, and several factories where cider and vinegar are made.



Fruit trees in blossom

Grapes are a leading crop of the lands near the town. Most of the foothill land is a loose, red soil that produces vintage of the highest grade. The wineries in this neighborhood carry cooperage for millions of gallons. Prunes, hops, apples, peaches, pears, apricots, cherries and plums are here at their best, and berries, tomatoes and garden vegetables of all sorts grow luxuriantly and yield profitably. Walnuts, olives and oranges are extensively grown. The growing of livestock has always been a profitable industry on the hills above Healdsburg. Splendid beef is produced, for which there is always demand. Two clips of wool are taken from sheep each year. There are several well equipped creameries in the foothills. Back of the town are magnificent groves of redwood. Some of these are in their primeval condition, and have not yet felt the touch of the saw. There are also several sorts of hard-wood.

Numerous resorts of great renown are near the town. Boating, bathing and fishing are among the attractions at these places, which draw thousands of tourists every year.

# A WEALTH OF INFORMATION FOR THE MUSEUM'S RESEARCH FACILITIES

by Meredith Dreisback

Historical documents are a vital part of a museum's collection. They are used for research, reliving past events and recording the daily life of a community. The Healdsburg Museum is fortunate to have a varied selection, ranging from agriculture to vital statistics documents.

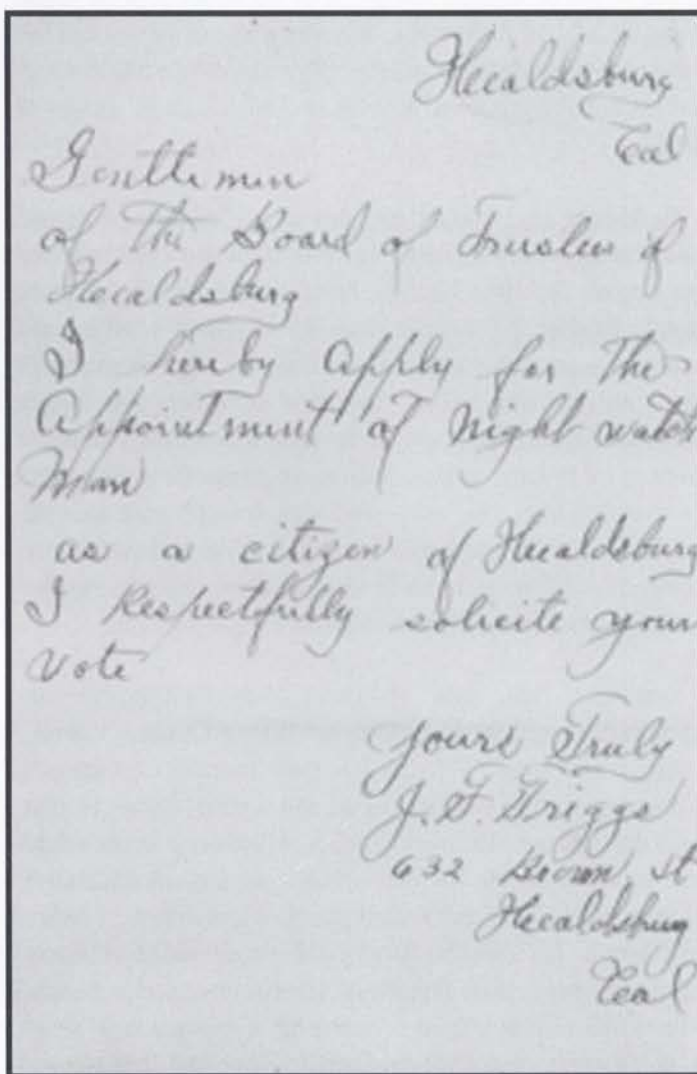
Volunteer Pam Vana-Paxhia has been working on consolidating the Museum's off-site storage facilities. In the process she came across several boxes of old City of Healdsburg records, some dating as far back as the late 1800's. What a jackpot! The assortment is a treasure of reports, receipts, letters, contracts, proposals and bids, all carefully folded, labeled and covered with many, many years of dust!

Some of the most intriguing items certainly reflect how times have changed. Agreements and contracts were often one or two pages, sometimes even handwritten, compared to the more complicated, multi-page contracts of today. An example is the contract between the Healdsburg Water Company and the City of Healdsburg dated "the twenty-eighth day of November, A.D. 1884" ...to furnish and supply water for one year for fire purposes.....", signed by "J. W. Rose, President of its Board of Trustees, S. M. Hankir, Superintendent of Streets of said City and J. R. Smith". Simply stated, simply executed.

Employment applications were minimal, too. A mimeographed half-sheet reading: "To the Hon. Board of Trustees of the City of Healdsburg, Gentlemen;-- I hereby apply for the position of Janitor and Gardener for the City of Healdsburg; Signed *Chas. Whickham*. The form was merely signed by the applicant, not even an address. Two small slips of paper, handwritten, described "the duties of the Janitor ...keep the city hall in a neat and clean condition...removing all dust, cobwebs and rubbish...., repair furniture, gas pipes...see that the toilets are in proper condition and working order..." Another application was handwritten, simply stating " I hereby apply for the appointment of night watch man. As a citizen of

Healdsburg I respectfully solicit (sic) your vote. Yours Truly J. F. Friggs, 632 Brown Street, Healdsburg, Cal." (he at least gave an address!) It's not known if these men got the jobs. No payroll records have been found.

However, one document was found regarding the salary of the night watchman; it read "Be it Resolved That this Board



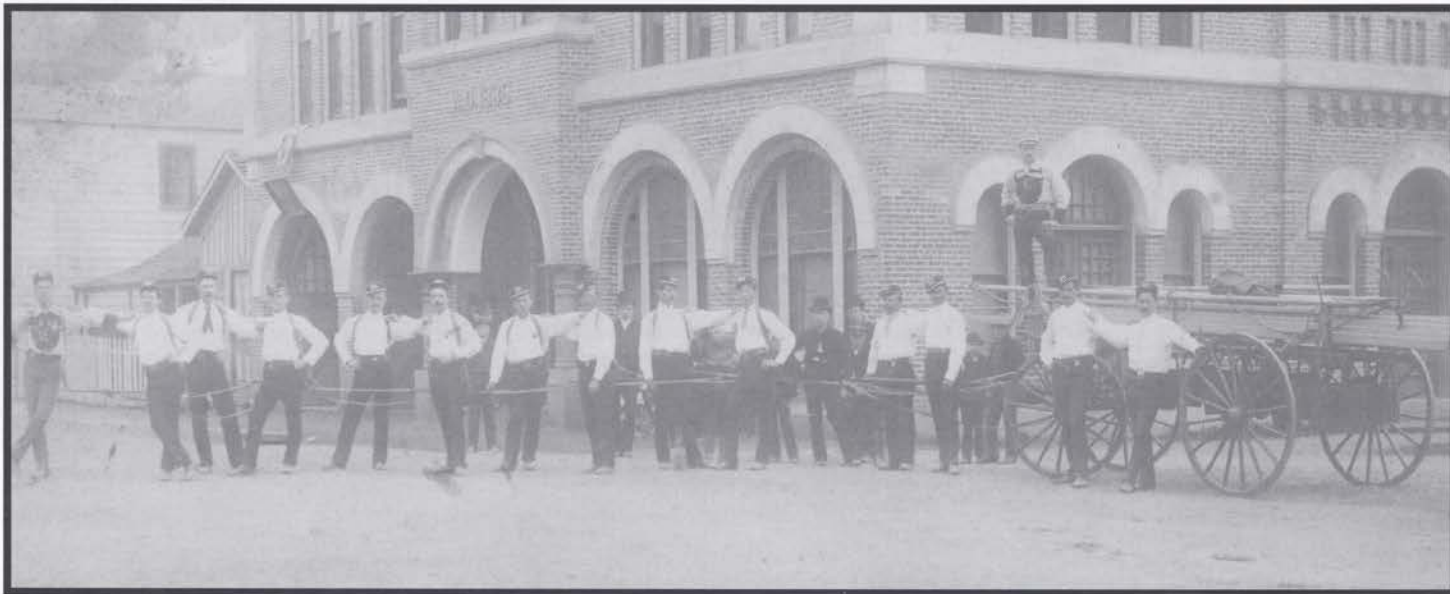
Healdsburg  
Cal  
Gentlemen  
of the Board of Trustees of  
Healdsburg  
I hereby apply for the  
Appointment of Night watch  
man  
as a citizen of Healdsburg  
I respectfully solicit your  
vote  
Yours Truly  
J. F. Friggs  
632 Brown St  
Healdsburg  
Cal

Continued on page 7

proceed & provide for the creating of a special plice (sic) offices, as night watchman, at a sallery (sic) from this board of not to exceed one 1.00 dollar amount until furthe (sic) notice". This was dated June 1, 1896.

Another observation is that these people were very keen to

A Fire Department document, dated February 3, 1896, was a memo from Fire Chief Hilgerhoh to the Healdsburg Board of Trustees. It reads in part: "...that there is but ten buckets now fit to be used in connection with the hook and ladder truck in the Healdsburg Fire department...I would recomend (sic) that ten additional buckets be purchased...." Perhaps these very buckets are the ones in this photo.



Healdsburg Fire Department, 1887

"reuse, repurpose". Some of the officer's reports were written on the back of a used piece of paper. The Annual Report of the City Clerk dated June 1, 1892 to June 1, 1893 was handwritten on the back of a piece of stationery from the Sotoyome Milling Co., consisting of 13 lines of text. Today the City's CAFR report is a one-inch thick bound volume. A December 1934 report was again handwritten, this time on the back of a list of stolen property from the City of Monterey police department.

Another captivating part of these documents is seeing the "historic" names that appear. The documents were either signed or created by familiar names that are currently seen around town or in the historical writings of Healdsburg. The names include A. W. Garrett, J. M. Alexander, Louis Wasson, C. H. Pond, C. Fitch, W. W. Ferguson, A. D. Passalacqua, and M. A. Matheson. Specifically, a 1908 list of the members of the Volunteer Fire Department ("Alert Hose Company No. 1") listed Hyman, Rosenberg, Albertson, Hall, Guillie, Sherrard, Miller, Emerson, Dirvin, Garrett, Petray, Quick, Black, Likins, Madeira, Morehouse, Cochran, Meyer and McMinn. Honorary members were S. Passarino and Chas. Miller. Are you related to any of these gentlemen?

Along these same lines of simplicity was a #10 business-size envelope containing officer's financial reports for the month of April 1914. The reports were from Geo Luedke, Library Board; Jas. Mason, City Marshall; L. J. Hall, City Treasurer; C. J. Raymond, City Recorder. Each report was one piece of paper, some handwritten. The most interesting was the City Recorder's report listing six complaints, and fines collected for the offenses that included "fighting on the streets (\$10. fine)", "intoxication (\$5. fine)" and "transacting business...after the hour of midnight \$25. fine)". All fines were collected and "paid to City Treasurer".

These documents are just a tiny sampling of, not only the City of Healdsburg records, but the other archival material the Museum has as part of its collection. These archives provide a wealth of information for our research facilities and are also used many times within the Museum's displays.

# BUSH LEAGUE BASEBALL IN GEYSERVILLE

by Joe Pelanconi

Bob Meyer is 94 years old and remembers that Sunday afternoon in 1947 like it was yesterday. On their dirt baseball diamond, on a rare cloudy August day, the Geyserville town team hosted their Healdsburg arch-rivals. Geyserville's Sam Sinclair and Healdsburg's Rudy Ruonavaara locked horns in a first-class pitching duel. It wasn't until the 7<sup>th</sup> inning that Buckshot Fredson led off for Geyserville and was hit by a pitch. Bob Meyer, Al Strehlow and Eugene Domenichelli followed with hits for Geyserville's two runs. The game ended in a stunning 2-0 upset win for the locals. However, as was often the case in games with Healdsburg, the outcome was not without controversy. The June 13, 1947 issue of the *Geyserville Press*, as well as Geyserville left fielder Bob Meyer, note that Healdsburg had their chance in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning.

According to the Press, "*Healdsburg started a rally in the eighth as pinch-hitting Iversen singled to right and Mascherini walked with one away. Rudy then hit a long fly to left center which landed between the fielders. As Iversen was scurrying home he tripped and fell. This gave Geyserville the break it needed. A quick relay from Les Meyer to Lampson to Whitton not only put out Iversen but nipped Mascherini at the plate ending the inning...*" Bob Meyer will tell you that the newspaper did not tell the whole story. Healdsburg complained that Geyserville watered down their dirt diamond, hoping the mud would slow down Healdsburg's fast runners. Geyserville insisted they watered only to keep the dust down.



Geyserville baseball team 1939

Waldo Iversen's flop while rounding third base was all the proof Healdsburg needed to validate their assertion and guarantee that the rivalry would continue. Bob Meyer recalls Whitton's quick one-two tag outs at home plate as a thing of beauty.

This was bush league baseball at its best. Long before television, fast cars, the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland A's, bush league baseball was what people did in Geyserville on summertime Sunday afternoons. Young men, with their loyal "rooters" in the grandstand, displayed their talents on the diamond. A source of civic pride, the Geyserville town team began in the late 1920's, took time out for WW II, resumed in 1946 and lasted till the early 50's. This writer's father, who played for Geyserville in the 30's, regaled our family with bush league tales. He was particularly verbose about the 1939 team that finished with a thirteen win and one loss record. Most notably, they defeated Cloverdale 8 to 4 and Healdsburg twice, once 4 to 3 and again 7 to 5. And yes, Dad hit a home run at Healdsburg's Recreation Park that cleared the left field fence and hit a house across University Street. Given the number of times he told the story, one

might say he was prouder of that feat than the birth of his only son.

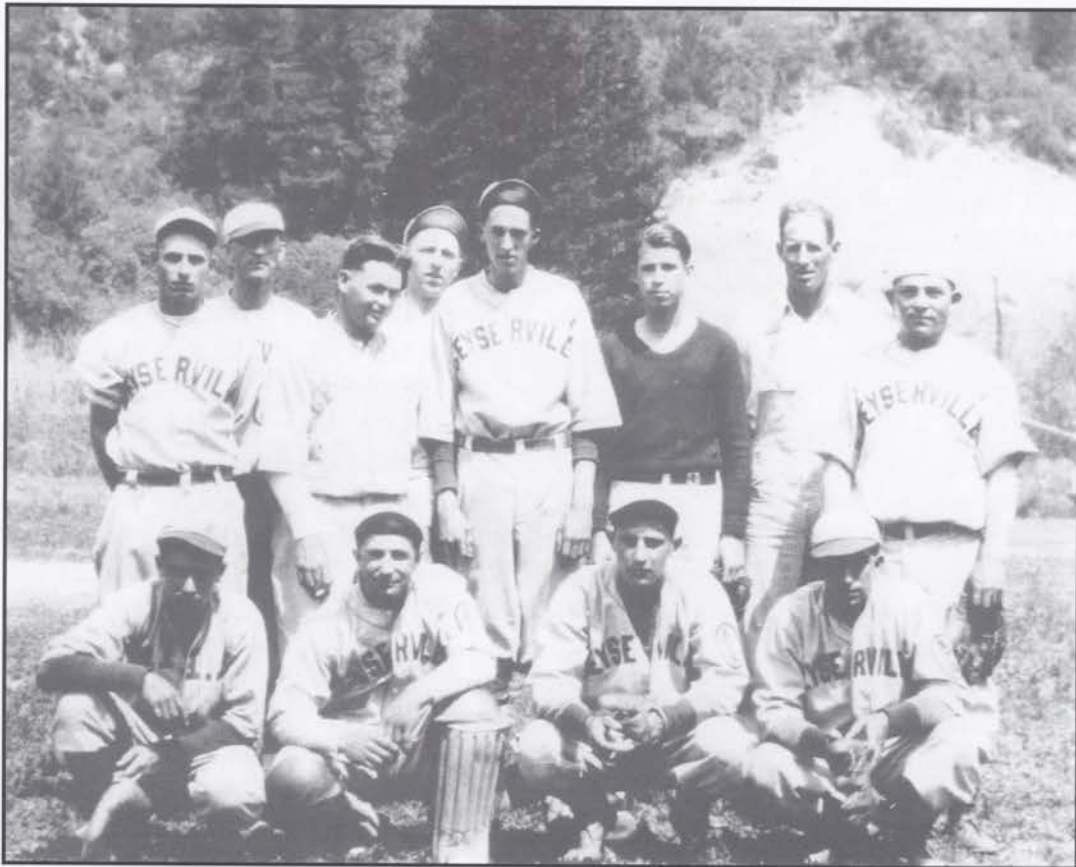
Located behind the high school, the local diamond had a skin surface and short foul lines. Left field was carved out of the side hill and right field was measured by a picket fence. Both foul poles were not more than 250 feet from home plate, which meant special ground rules. Any fly ball that landed on the left field hill to the left of the big oak tree and any fly to right field over the picket fence were doubles.

Fly balls that left the field in straight away centerfield were homeruns. The field itself was rock hard dirt, with a black eye just a bad hop away. Other bush league diamonds also had their quirks. A 1949 loss at Bodega prompted the local paper to report that "*locals made many errors because they got confused because the diamond resembled a cow pasture more than a place in which to play baseball.*" (Geyserville Press 6/22/49) Bob Meyer remembers playing left field in Occidental, where a chicken coop was near the foul line. Bob chased a foul fly behind the chicken coop, unable to make the catch. While out of the umpire's site, Bob deftly picked up the ball and ran back onto the field holding the ball over his head. The batter was called out.

Viewing games in Geyserville was not a comfortable experience. The wooden grandstand with chicken wire fencing faced westward where "rooters" baked in the hot summer sun. The heat combined with redwood splinters in the grandstand benches led a number of former players to

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Geyserville Baseball, circa 1939-40

marvel that their wives and girlfriends were regular attendees. Josephine Fredson, wife of pitcher Don, attended many games. As she explains, it was a time when most families had only one automobile and not a lot of extra money, so going to the ball games was a social outing where one could visit with friends. It was worth any discomfort. Admission fees involved "passing the hat." Local shopkeeper, Tom Addleman, often served as the PA announcer. Sporting a black fedora, thick glasses, short cigar and gravelly voice, the Geyserville Press (July 5, 1946) said Addleman, was "Geyserville's 'Ted Husing,'" and at games "with his wires and 'mike' to tell you what's going on."

Games were well attended. A 1947 report noted that 650 fans watched as Healdsburg "gained partial revenge on the locals for an early defeat, this time winning 2 to 1." (Geyserville Press 8/1/47) For years,

Milton 'Dint' Rose was an avid fan at most games played in Geyserville. Dint recalls a full grandstand with more folks sitting on the left field hill. Young boys climbed onto the roof of the high school bus barn for an upper deck view. A contingent of male fans was found standing down the right field line, where they discussed the action, criticized play and taunted the umpire. Dint also traveled to many away games. In the 20's, Dint's father, Russell Rose, played on a Geyserville Odd Fellows team. As young boys, Uncle Pouch Rose took Dint and brother Bud to their father's away games.

Bush baseball generated lively local interest and biting criticism. Displaying obvious favoritism, local scribes were not kind to Geyserville opponents. A 1940 story of a 4 to 3 loss to the Healdsburg Odd Fellows was punctuated with the quote that "winning did not come easily

for the lodge men . . . They broke eight bats in gaining their victory (bats that cost \$1.75 each) – one for each hit or \$3.50 for each run." (Geyserville Press 6/14/40) Sub-par play by the locals did not pass unreported. After a 13 to 2 loss, an article stated "there should be no further presence of 'lead' in some players trousers that was so evident in several cases last Sunday." (Geyserville Press 7/5/46) One can imagine what the right field critics said during that game.

Disagreements and rhuarbs were not uncommon. The Healdsburg Tribune (7/7/39) noted that a Geyserville victory over Healdsburg "was marked by many spirited arguments due to the spirited rivalry between the two squads." One game with Petaluma, called a "wild and wooly affair" by the Geyserville Press (7/18/47), ended in a 12 to 12 tie, with the

Continued on page 10

Petaluma team walking off the field in the 10<sup>th</sup> inning after disputing an umpire's call. Umpires were local men that lived in the communities where they officiated. This may have tainted their eyesight. Hank Del Sarto, a local merchant, umpired numerous Geyserville games. Visiting players, and some locals, said Del Sarto provided Geyserville a clear home field advantage. Other Geyserville umpires included Hank Witbro and Louie Lombardi.

The Geyserville I.O.O.F. Lodge was an on-again, off-again sponsor of the local team. When sponsored by the lodge, they went by the moniker of Geyserville Odd Fellows. Some years, when local businesses donated funds for equipment, the ball team went by Geyserville Merchants. For a time they were known as the Geyserville Oaks, since star pitcher Sam Sinclair had tried out with the Pacific Coast League Oakland Oaks and kept the uniform, which he proudly wore when pitching for Geyserville. At other times, they were known simply as Geyserville. Old team photos provide little help in defining their nickname, since players often wore uniforms emblazoned with a collection of logos that included Geyserville I.O.O.F., Geyserville, G.H.S., Oaks or whatever else served as a playing shirt.

Over the years, Geyserville played in several leagues and also, at times, played an independent schedule. In the late 20's and early 30's, they were part of an Odd Fellows League that played its games at two parks near Guerneville. Bill Ferguson, Geyserville I.O.O.F. Noble Grand, hoped sponsorship would entice young men, particularly young Italians, into the lodge. It was said that the local Catholic priest told the Italian boys that they should not get involved with the Odd Fellows lodge. Some quit the team and this contributed to Geyserville eventually dropping out of the I.O.O.F. league.

From 1939 to 1941, Geyserville played most games at home. Using the services of San Francisco bush league guru and master schedule maker, Al Erle, Geyserville hosted teams from the Bay Area. These teams included dozens of teams such as the powerful Sausalito Fire Department and Jefferson Athletic Club, the oldest bush league team in San Francisco. However, neither league affiliation nor Al Erle ever precluded Geyserville from scheduling local rivals Cloverdale and Healdsburg. After the war, they played in the Sonoma County League that included teams from Healdsburg, Sebastopol, Occidental, Petaluma, Santa Rosa VFW, Crown Machine (Santa Rosa) and Geyserville.

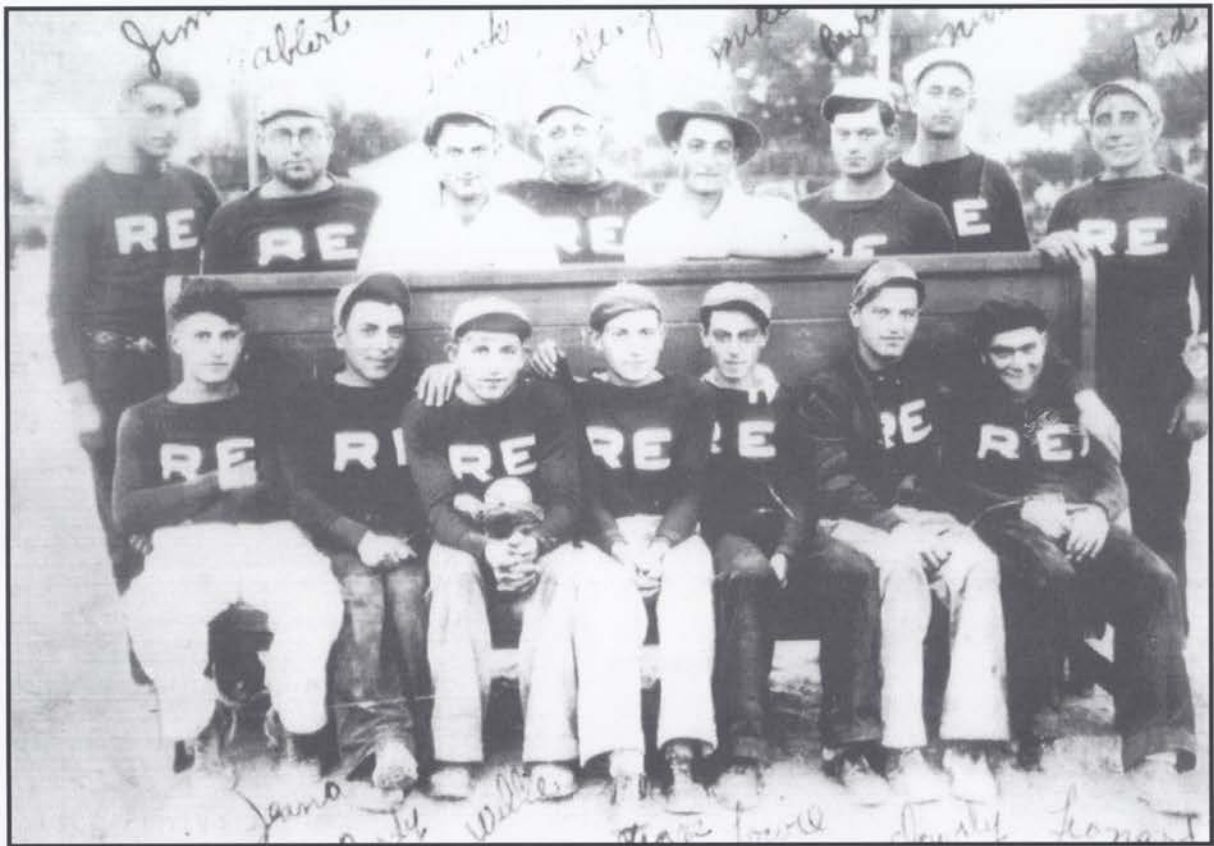
Geyserville team rosters were reinvented each year. During the early years, Frank Banti was a talented player and team manager, responsible for getting players, scheduling games and umpires, procuring equipment and being the field general during games. In 1939, Nick Scatena assumed the manager role. Chic Lombardi and Bill Sciutto offered coaching assistance at different times. Raymond Brandt, Les Meyer, Bob Meyer, John Whitton, Eugene Domenichelli, Sam Sinclair, Nick Scatena, Bud Rose, Don Fredson and Byron Lampson were mainstays that played both before and after the war. Many players were talented athletes with some having played intercollegiate baseball. In the late 40's, young Ernie Domenichelli briefly pitched for Geyserville before pursuing a professional career. Many followers agree that over the years the most talented player was John Whitton, a big strapping man who was an excellent catcher, fast on his feet and fearsome hitter. A heart condition is said to have thwarted Whitton's professional aspirations.

It was the manager's job to put a competitive lineup on the field each Sunday. With some players away at college

and most with jobs, it was not always a simple task. Fruit harvest, which began in August, also posed problems. A review of game box scores indicates that there were often fill-ins who played only a game or two. Pitchers were the key to bush league success. Sam Sinclair, wearing his Oaks uniform, pitched for Geyserville for nearly a decade. Roger 'Bud' Rose and Don 'Buckshot' Fredson were also successful Geyserville chuckers. Rose was a big man who did not throw hard, but had a huge, sweeping curve ball that Bob Meyer recalls during one game he threw clear over the backstop. 'Buckshot' Fredson derived his nickname from his ability to throw a mean fastball. Teams were not above coercing pitchers from outside their own community. In 1940, Geyserville recruited the services of Penngrove resident Jim Dowling, who had pitched at SRJC. In that same year, the Cloverdale Reveille reported that "*Negotiations have been started to get Don Fredson, University of California and former J.C. Pitcher to pitch for the Legion . . .*" Fredson, however, stayed with Geyserville.

Aside from baseball itself, teammates shared a camaraderie and social connection. Throughout the years, social activities often followed the action on the field. Nello Biaocchi recalls post game Sunday evening dinners at the Occidental Hotel. By all accounts a loud and raucous group, the Geyserville boys were seated in a banquet room off the main dining area. Liquor flowed and food sometimes flew across the room. Nello remembers waitresses stopping in the doorway and waving a white towel before entering the room to serve the group. Many recalled Byron Lampson as a good third baseman and an all-star reveler. In 1940, Geyserville traveled to Fort Bragg to face a tough coast team. The Loggers beat the locals, but treated them to dinner at the Piedmont

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Geyserville Baseball, circa 1927

Hotel. In 1947, thirty dinner reservations were made at Skaggs Springs for the Geyserville Merchants baseball squad and their guests. Tom Addleman was master of ceremonies for the end of season event. (Geyserville Press 9/6/47)

By 1949, things had begun to change. A scathing editorial in the Geyserville Press was a precursor of things to come. It chastised local folks with the following: *“There’s not much incentive to playing to an empty house . . . the good sport stands by his own – win, lose or draw . . . Remember Nick Scatena has given most generously of his time to keep the community represented in the county . . . support your home town team by attending the games.”* (Geyserville Press 7/24/49) In 1950, Geyserville played in a Napa-Sonoma League. At age 35, Bob Meyer was still a player and helped organize the six-team league. Les Meyer was player/

manager. There was no Geyserville team in 1951. There was a softball league in town, but it was not the same. People had other things to do. Young men left for the Korean War. Bush league baseball in Geyserville was doomed.

Perhaps the most noteworthy legacy of bush league baseball in Geyserville was its contribution to civic pride and sense of community. Baseball was part of the fabric that held the community together and gave it an identity. Talk at the local barbershop, grocery store or watering hole often centered around what happened on the ball field the previous Sunday afternoon. Geyserville, located between the larger communities of Cloverdale and Healdsburg, relished the underdog role and took particular delight in seeking superiority on the ball field. History suggests that the boys from Geyserville made the town proud. As my Dad often

said, *“Geyserville ball players were a tough bunch and played damn good baseball.”*

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  - Don 'Buckshot' Fredson
  - Roger 'Bud' Rose
  - Sam Sinclair
  - John Whitton
  - Byron Lampson
  - Emil 'Mose' Sacchi
  - Eugene Domenichelli

# BELL'S AMBULANCE SERVICE: THE STORY OF LEA AND INEZ BELL AND THEIR FAMILY

by Janet Sbragia Pisenti



*Lea and Inez Bell with their 1948 Buick Flexible ambulance, taken August 28, 1956, in Healdsburg*

Snuggled under the covers on a cold winter night, the only sound we could hear from our farm was the Northwestern Pacific train traveling through Alexander Valley. People like to talk about the "Blackouts" during World War II, when windows had to be shaded at night and lights turned off following the December 7, 1941 invasion of Pearl Harbor. Well, it was always dark at night in the country! Besides the distant sound of a train whistle, the delightful sound of crickets doing what crickets do lulled us into peaceful slumber during the summer evenings.

Even so, piercing that peaceful atmosphere was the occasional wake-you-up shrill of an ambulance siren as it sped along the old Redwood Highway bordering our property. It was on its way to a terrible accident up the road, usually not far from our house. All I could think was... **Lea and Inez Bell**... those brave and law-abiding citizens of the town of Healdsburg. They were people just like us... but not quite.

What would make two people want to rush to the aid of people in trouble, usually from an automobile accident... people injured, bleeding, maybe dead? My mother, out of curiosity, would

sometimes follow the ambulance up to the accident scene to see what had happened and then report back to us. I sometimes went with her. Due to the curves in that two-lane road bordering our property, accidents took place often. To eliminate this problem and for other reasons, five acres were taken from our property by Eminent Domain to accommodate the new freeway being built between Healdsburg and Geyserville. There is nothing left of our having lived there, but accidents in that area happen a lot less often.

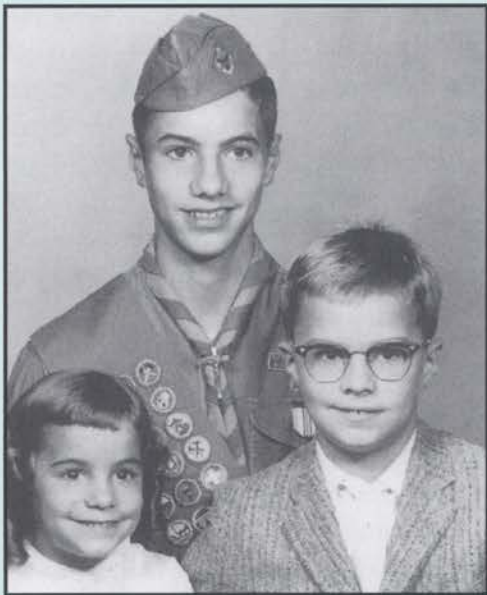
Before the Bells came on the scene, **Wilbur Moniz** and **Lloyd Evangelisti** came to the aid of those in trouble as partners of the Healdsburg Taxi and Ambulance Service. Lloyd owned the ambulance, but they ran the business for the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce. They were not staffed around the clock and they parked their ambulance near Wilbur's service station on the corner of Healdsburg Avenue and Exchange St. or Quimby's Gas Station. [Sounds a bit like *Mayberry RFD* or *Petticoat Junction*.] Yet, they were good Samaritans and served Healdsburg and its neighboring communities for quite a few years. In 1948, **Edward H. Crosetti** took over the business, again running it for the Chamber of Commerce.

*Continued on page 13*

In 1956, the Chamber purchased the community ambulance from Lloyd Evangelisti, paying him \$562, and then leased it to Lea Bell for a 5-year term. Lea and Inez Bell then became the new ambulance service providers in town, a business that would last until the present time, 2011. They were brave to start this venture out of their own home, filled with three young children: Loren, age 9, Wayne, age 5, and Pamela, age 2.

Inez Guadagni Bell was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1918, the daughter of Italian immigrants, Tony Guadagni and Palmira Lazzareschi Guadagni, from Aquacalda, Lucca, Toscana, Italy. At age five, Inez's parents decided to move from Chicago to Healdsburg, where she had a hard life, her children said, but managed to attend all eight grades of Healdsburg Grammar School. They would not let her attend high school, and she had to work at all kinds of jobs to help support the family. They first lived in a barn out in Dry Creek Valley and she and her mother, Palmira, cooked and cleaned for a number of people. "She did not have a childhood," her children, Pam and Wayne, recalled.

Lea Bell was born in 1918 in the very small town of Ipswich, South Dakota, the son of Leah and Walter Bell. During World War II, Lea served as a Marine in the rough and tough Carlson's Raiders. He was in the Pacific theater for 32 months, seeing combat duty in Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands among other war zones. He must have seen men in the worst conditions. Could this have been the beginning of his future life?



Loren, Wayne, and Pam Bell were young children when their parents' ambulance service began. When the phone rang at their house, their neighbors, friends, or Grandma Palmira would come to the house and watch over them.

After the war ended, Lea came home to Healdsburg and soon gained employment at the Italian Swiss Colony at Asti. That is where he met Inez Guadagni. They were surrounded by family and friends there and they fell in love and were married in Reno, Nevada in 1945. They soon began living in a little white house at 438 Powell Avenue.

Two years later, in 1947, their son, Loren Bell, was born; Wayne Bell was born in 1951; and their daughter, Pamela Bell (Simmons), was born in 1954.

### The Good Samaritan

The good Samaritan refers to a quotation in the New Testament of the Bible regarding the parable of the Good Samaritan, where a man who was beaten is cared for by a Samaritan. Luke 10/34

*"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him."*

Oil and wine are not the most modern forms of medical care, but this story continues with what occurred in the heart of one person, Lea Bell, from Ipswich, South Dakota. When Lea returned home after World War II, he found the growing cities of Healdsburg and Windsor were without dedicated ambulance service. The lack of ambulance coverage in the community became the driving force stimulating the formation of the company called **Bell's Ambulance Service**. It was 1956 when Lea convinced Inez, who had no medical training, to enter the business with him and they started to work right where they lived at 438 Powell Avenue. They leased a 1948 Buick flexible from the Healdsburg Chamber of Chamber, having to pay a monthly 10% interest from their profits to the Chamber for the use of the automobile and to cover maintenance and upkeep. After three months, Lea decided that he was not going to pursue this business arrangement, but decided to purchase the automobile, thereby going into business for himself. There was no further attachment to the Chamber.

Their first run in Healdsburg took place when Mrs. Mary Oliver called them and they delivered her to the Healdsburg Hospital, located then on Johnson Street.

The delivery charge in those days was \$12.50 within the city limits and \$1.00 more for outside the city limits. Their second ambulance, a converted panel automobile, was a 1957 Chevrolet.

How did their young children manage when urgent calls sounded on the family's telephone and their parents had to leave the house in a hurry? "We had next-door neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Delagnes, a French couple who owned the Bellevue Villa, and they would come over and stay until our parents returned," Pam recalled. "Other friends and neighbors would help, including Nonnie Palmira or "Palma" (known later during her second marriage as Palma Vittori)." "They could sense what was happening and there was an electrical line from the phone to a horn outside, which would alert the neighbors," added son Wayne.

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### Memories from Pamela Bell Simmons

"I remember my Dad designing his own ambulances (interiors) with the help of local contractors (George Bianchi, Johnny Pedroni, the Brommer brothers, to name a few) since the only ambulances that could be purchased at the time were Cadillacs, which could not maneuver or survive the roads in our response area. It was a time consuming process, since the product vehicle was either a panel truck or van, that's all. As with most situations such as this, ingenuity led to the success of the finished product, as well as knowing how to use the equipment, and having talented tradesmen to create your vision.

Since Mom was always the driver, naturally the passenger compartment of the ambulance had to be to her specifications as much as possible. She was almost five feet tall, small in stature, but very strong. One of the ambulances had a wooden block attached to the gas pedal so she could reach it!

More often than not, Mom and Dad were the *only* ones on an ambulance call. There were NO first responders...no fire departments to assist on scene...just the two of them and their patient/victim, sometimes very far out in the country on an old dirt road. There are stories of the locals or delivery men who would stop and assist Mom and Dad. It is hard to imagine all that they encountered over the years, but it was always evident that their strength was in being together just as it was when Wayne joined them in running calls. There is comfort in working with family in a family business that is just not replicated in other work environments. Things become automatic and unspoken."



*Inez and Lea proudly demonstrate their ambulance interior and patient stretcher. They were the good Samaritans in Healdsburg who took over after Lloyd Evangelista, Wilbur Moniz, and Ed Crosetti had provided that service prior to 1956.*

### Lea and "Ma Bell," A Rare Husband and Wife Team

The Bells served their communities as one of the only husband and wife teams in the ambulance industry. In fact, Inez was one of only two women ambulance drivers in the state of California at that time and one of the first few women ambulance drivers in the United States. Inez became one of the first women in EMS, Emergency Medical Services, as an EMT, Emergency Medical Technician. She was sometimes called "Ma Bell." Lea Bell became a leader in local politics and helped establish rules and protocols, and helped professionalize the ambulance industry in Sonoma County.

Lea Bell, founder of the company, died in 1997 and Inez Bell died in 2005, having driven the ambulance, not on emergency calls, but on non-emergency deliveries, until she was 70 years old. Fifty-five years after its inception, in 2011, Bell's Ambulance Service is still family owned and operated from the office across the street from the little white house on Powell Avenue. The company has grown and now owns four up-to-date green and white ambulances, produced by the company called Leader. The number of employees has grown from two people, including son Wayne, to thirty employees. Daughter Pamela answers the phone and takes emergency calls and handles other business regarding the services they offer.

"The ambulances and company uniforms are green and white for two reasons," Pam remarked, "one being that color combination would distinguish us from any other company. At that time all ambulances were white or red and white, as well as their uniform apparel and the second reason is that green and white was Mom's favorite color. As I tell people, we are not very complex. The business and its daily operations have gotten complex, but not us! We like to keep things as simple as possible, take care of our patients, take care of their families as best as possible, and provide the best care we are able to by providing medical transportation to the sick and injured and being able to go home at the end of the day knowing that the only difference between ourselves and our patients that day was the grace of God."

Our service does not end once the patient is off loaded at a facility. We often assist families with billing issues, medical inquiries, and general information, and we do follow up. My parents were also very diligent in their jobs to the extent that they would readily call the local Catholic priest to come to the hospital to administer the last rites to a known parishioner. Their faith was the stronghold of their work and their life.

Dad taught CPR and First Aid without recompense to all the bus drivers in Healdsburg, Windsor, Geyserville, and its surrounding

*Continued on page 15*

areas, covering more than 500 square miles. Through mutual aid agreements, Bell's Ambulance Service assists many neighboring agencies in all of Sonoma and parts of Napa Counties, which include: Cloverdale, Larkfield and Wikiup, Santa Rosa, Forestville, Guerneville, Monte Rio, Knights Valley, and Calistoga. It also operates two 911 advanced life support (ALS) ambulances, stationed in Healdsburg and Windsor. Both of the ambulances are staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days a week with advanced life support paramedics. Bell's also has reserve ambulances for special needs or requests, such as non-emergency transports to and from hospitals, nursing facilities, assisted senior facilities, residential care facilities, doctors' offices, and homes. There are now 15 drivers, instead of the original two.

Special events standbys include: sporting events, concerts, health and career fairs, and all events where medical professionals are required. This excellent company also provides public education programs, blood pressure check programs, and 'every 15 minutes' programs.

The every 15 minutes' idea stems from statistics testifying that every 15 minutes there occurs a teenage driving accident. "These statistics are less now," remarked Wayne, even regarding adult accidents, "what with seat belts and air bags." Yet, they continue to occur. The program Bell's Ambulance puts on may be done at and for high schools or for other organizations. It is a simulated car crash with high school students as participants that illustrates the sometimes fatal result of driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Fire trucks appear on the scene; ambulances arrive; other students run to the scene; and students and mothers cry often over the whole emotional scene. It emphasizes the sadness of it all for everyone connected to those accident victims.

This company also provides the most sophisticated equipment for its elite group of paramedics. It has one of the most experienced work forces in all of the state of California. Many of their part-time employees have specialized skills and work as managers for other agencies, officers for fire departments, and even police officers. Bell's Ambulance is very proud of their work force, and its patient care oriented culture attracts the best personnel in the field. In 2007, Healthcare Foundation gave Bell's Ambulance Service 12 lead EKG machines, and that same year, the company was named the Small Business of the Year by the Windsor Chamber of Commerce.

What safety precautions does the company have to adhere to in the course of their business? The 1966 ICC Ruling states that because ambulance services are conducted on Federal highways,

they fall under the jurisdiction of their rules and those of the Fair Labor Standards Act. It has to do with fair minimum hourly wages and benefits paid to ambulance personnel whenever they are employed, including all stand-by and sleep time. The Highway Safety Act and the DOT curriculum are also rules to live by in this organization.

Caring for the sick and wounded has gone from carrying a sick, injured, or dying person in one's arms, to putting that person on the back of a donkey or horse, to towing that person by horse and litter or horse and wagon. It proceeded through the ages in various ways and with various modes of transportation, from Model T's to other types of automobiles, leading to modern-day ambulances with their much improved interiors and helicopters rescuing people in hard-to-reach areas. Modern improvements are being studied as to bio-terrorism and naturally communicable diseases. Speed of travel began with a motorized ambulance which could travel at 16 miles per hour to the present day of traveling at speeds unchecked! How fast can Bell's Ambulance travel? "As fast as safely possible," Pamela Bell Simmons answered. [I surmise it can travel over 100 mph. What do you think?]

#### References:

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- The Healdsburg Tribune – June 1, 1976 edition – "Ma Bell"
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- The Healdsburg Museum – Bell's Ambulance Photos



*Inez Bell, the daughter of Italian immigrants from Lucca, Italy, never dreamed that someday she would be an ambulance driver. She was one of only two women ambulance drivers in California and one of the first few women ambulance drivers in the U.S. – also one of the first women with the title EMT or Emergency Medical Technician.*

# HEALDSBURG WOMAN IS MISSING HEIR

Reprinted from *Healdsburg Tribune* 30 June 1966

*The following article and photo were found by Museum volunteer Pat McCracken who has been sorting and identifying a collection of 1960s Healdsburg Tribune photos that were recently donated by Melinda Langhart Hill.*

Louise Williams, 229 East Street, Healdsburg, and Mrs. Thilo G. Knappe, 807 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Davenport, Iowa, will be seen on Art Linkletter's CBS-tv and radio "House Party" show on Tuesday, July 5, as "missing heirs" to an estate of \$27,000. Found by Linkletter's daily "House Party" show, the two sisters did not know their half-sister, Ann Shirley Kellogg, had died, leaving an estate of \$25,851.



*Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Knappe and Art Linkletter, 1966*

Over the past few months, Linkletter has employed the services of private investigator, Larry Craig, who has searched the files of major cities for estates which have not been claimed by heirs. Craig estimates there is one billion dollars in unclaimed estates across the country. In the past few months Linkletter, announcing the name of estates on the air, and the clues to the identity of 'missing heirs' across country. Another \$300,000 has been claimed, but

a widow, lives on a pension and needs an eye operation. Mrs. Knappe, confined to a wheelchair, has medical and doctor's bills to take care of. For both families, the money will be a blessing.

Viewers in the Healdsburg area who would like to see this heartwarming surprise story can catch the show when it airs on Tuesday, July 5, 1:30 p.m. on CBS-tv.

is only awaiting court processing before being turned over to waiting heirs—also found by Linkletter's daily "House Party" show.

How did the two sisters hear of the estate? Mr. Knappe, one of the sisters' husbands, heard the "House Party" show when the estate was first announced over radio station WHBF, Rock Island, Illinois. He reported to his wife that a "Kellogg" estate existed and was waiting to be claimed by rightful heirs. This was the first word the sisters had of their half-sister since she had run away from home to become a Ziegfield Follies star.

How will the two sisters spend their money? Mrs. Williams,



# GREETINGS FROM OUR ARCHIVES

Christmas and New Year's cards from the early 1900's



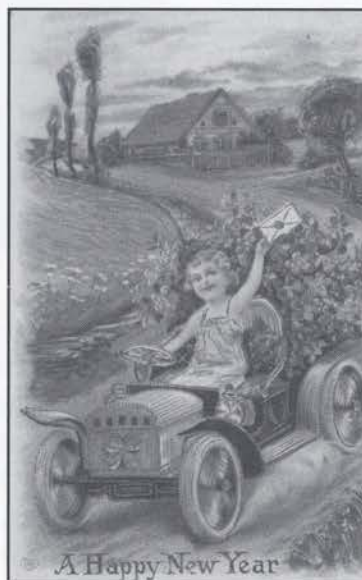
*Christmas Card, 1914*



*Christmas Card, 1915*



*New Year's Card, 1905*



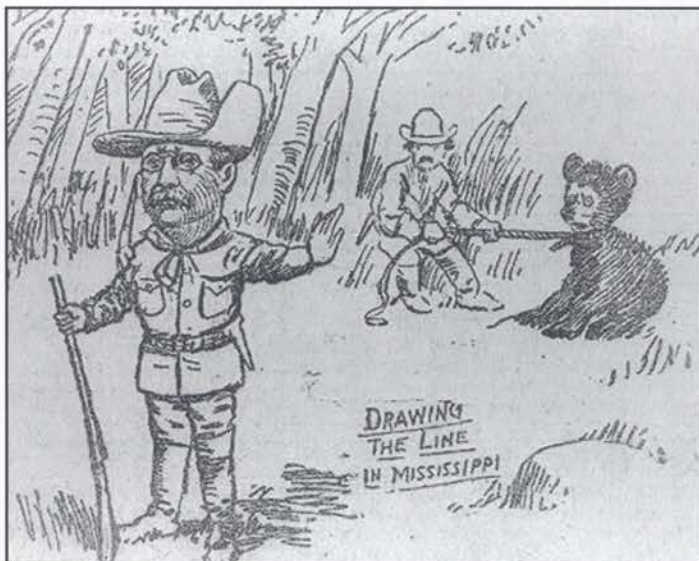
*New Year's Card, 1909*



*New Year's Card, 1908*

# ARTIFACTS: TEDDY BEAR TALES

by Holly Hoods



*Teddy bear cartoon by Berryman*

The Teddy Bear that we know and love so well today was created over 100 years ago, in 1902. Did you realize it's named for President Theodore—"Teddy"—Roosevelt? The inspiration for the teddy bear came from a Clifford Berryman cartoon, "Drawing the Line in Mississippi," which portrayed Roosevelt's then-famous refusal to shoot a bear. As the story goes, on a diplomatic visit to Mississippi, Roosevelt, an avid hunter, was taken on a hunting trip. The hunt was so unsuccessful that someone brought out a captured bear cub and offered it to Roosevelt to shoot. His refusal to kill the defenseless animal was immortalized in the *Washington Post* cartoon, which was then widely reprinted.

Morris and Rose Michtom of Brooklyn, New York, saw the popular cartoon and decided to make a stuffed toy bear based on the drawing. They named it "Teddy's Bear" and displayed it in the window of their candy store. Instead of looking fierce and standing on all fours like previous toy bears, Teddy's Bear looked sweet and friendly, and stood upright like the bear in Berryman's cartoon. The bear was a hit, and the demand so great that the Michtoms went into the toy business. They founded the Ideal Novelty and Toy Company, becoming the first teddy bear manufacturers.

Margarete Steiff of Germany made the first known toy stuffed animal, an elephant, in 1880. A survivor of crippling childhood polio, Steiff grew up determined to launch her own toy company.

She believed that children needed a toy that was indestructible, yet still cuddly and soft, and above all, realistic. In 1902, at the same time as the Michtoms, Richard Steiff, Margarete's nephew, created his own design for a toy bear cub. That first Steiff bear was introduced in 1903 at a toy fair. An American buyer, aware of the growing interest in Teddy's Bear in the US, ordered 3,000 Steiff bears. By 1906, a teddy bear craze was in full swing in the United States. Gund Manufacturing Corporation made its first bears that year, and is still making bears today. Bing, Schuco and Hermann of Germany also joined Steiff and Gund in making high quality teddy bears. In 1907, American composer John Walter Bratton wrote the "Teddy Bear Two Step." The song would become, with the addition of lyrics by Jimmy Kennedy in 1932, the "Teddy Bears' Picnic."



*Teddy bears at picnic*

The current Healdsburg Museum toy exhibit includes a Teddy Bears' Holiday Picnic scene, which features teddy bears on loan from: De Anderson, Pat McCracken, Betty Miller, Kaye Stallard, Fern Naber, Diane Carriger, Randy Jackson, Nicole Collins, Eddie Collins, Elizabeth Holmes, Fred Campbell, the Castelli and Beard Families, Hayden (Taneyhill) O'Connor, Victoria Taneyhill, Charlotte Anderson, Ron and Del Kron, and Holly Hoods. The bears on display are big and small, young and old--each one unique and well loved. Some of the "bear tales" can be heard on the audio tour which accompanies the exhibit.

*Continued on page 19*



June Smith loaned bear

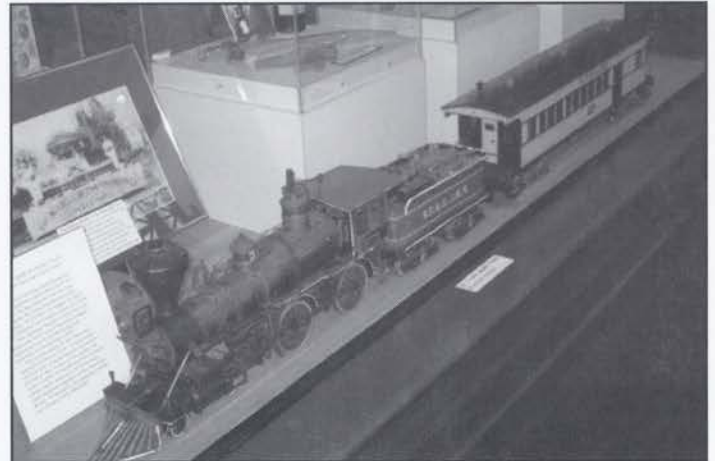
June Maher Smith loaned her son Bob's brown bear, dressed in red flannel fireman pajamas. In the early 1950s June made matching pajamas for Bob, his teddy bear and his granddad William Maher, a Healdsburg Volunteer Fireman! Kaye Stallard's stylish and colorful bears were handmade by her sister, Barbara Dinelli. Some of the bears on display have had "adventures," such as Jim Dreisback's bear that was given a haircut by Jim's older sister Sue; and Fred Campbell's bear, "Bart," who used to preside over the whimsical "Feast of St. Bear." Diane Carriger's bear spent a winter out on the roof of the house during the 1950s! For more bear history and "bear tales" visit the Healdsburg Museum exhibit "Magical Toyland," on display through January 31, 2011.



Goldilocks and the three Bears from the Castelli family

## SHIRLEY TRUITT'S MODEL TRAIN

by Holly Hoods



Shirley Truitt model train

The first full-sized steam locomotive made in California was an American 4-4-0, named "the California." It was built in San Francisco by the Union Iron Works in the early 1860s for the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad. In its first run, August 30, 1865, the "California" set a speed record of 67 miles per hour. This model train, an exact 3/4 scale replica of the 1865 "California," was made by Shirley Truitt, a native of Healdsburg from an early pioneer family. Mr. Truitt grew up in San Francisco, and became a heavy equipment engineer at the Union Iron Works where the "California" was built. What is particularly amazing and impressive about this train is that Mr. Truitt fabricated all of the parts himself working from the original train plans. Three quarter scale models are built with all measurements fashioned to be 1/16th of the full size of the original. Shirley worked on this model as a hobby over 11 years, from 1948-1959. It was donated to the Healdsburg Museum by Harrison Truitt Starr.

Model trains were first introduced in the mid-1800s, not as toys, but as promotional models to help sell early railways. They were useful to show to people who had never seen a train. During the Victorian period, as trains became popular, many types of toy trains were produced. These included live steam engines (expensive and only for the wealthy), pull-trains, and penny toys made of lead or tin. The defining moment in model train history was in 1891 when the Marklin company produced the first clockwork train sets, made of painted and soldered tin, with a series of standard track gauges, ready-to-use track, and a range of locomotives, rolling stock and accessories. During World War I, importation to America from Germany ceased and new U.S. companies began making trains; Lionel and Ives were the most popular.

# NANCY ANN STORYBOOK DOLLS

by Holly Hoods



*Darla Budworth and Nancy Ann doll*

The story of Nancy Ann Dolls originated in San Francisco in 1936 when Nancy Ann Abbott started a doll-making venture. In 1937, Allan "Les" Rowland joined her to handle the promotion and financial matters. "Nancy Ann Dressed Dolls" incorporated as a company in 1937.

The first dolls that the company made were small 3-3/4" bisque baby dolls from the "Hush-a-Bye" collection. The "Hush-a-Bye" doll bodies were of Japanese manufacture. Doll bodies began being made in California in 1939. Artists hand-painted the facial features, which gave each doll its own look. The bisque 5" tall "Storybook" dolls were produced from 1936 to 1948. They were sold with gold wrist tags to identify them, beginning in 1941. The dolls were a huge success in the United States. By 1942, the company reported a million dollar gross yearly income.

Nancy Ann had created 125 different characters by 1943, including seasonal dolls and fairy tale dolls. The company name was changed to Nancy Ann Storybook Dolls, Inc. in 1945. During the 1950s, production of dolls reached its peak: 12,000 per day. Girls who grew up in the 1940s and 50s collected and prized their Nancy Anns. The Museum is fortunate to feature 14 dolls on loan from Darla Williams Budworth's childhood collection. Darla's dolls were all purchased locally and given as gifts by her grandmother. Darla still treasures them today.



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