



# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

FALL 2011 • ISSUE 114

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society



*Sheriff James Petray, 1918*



*James Petray Funeral, 1920*

## VIGILANTE BREAKS HIS SILENCE

*by Gaye LeBaron reprinted from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, December 8, 1985 • Page 16*

## Barking Up the Wrong Tree? The Reaction to the Lynching

*by Gaye LeBaron reprinted from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, January 5, 1986 • Page 19*

## A. W. Garrett and Jim Petray – A Tale of Good and Evil

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## A Singular Problem: The History Hunt

*by Jane Bonbam • Page 10*

## In This Issue

For this fall issue of the *Recorder* we have assembled articles and artifacts connected with the current Healdsburg Museum exhibit, "Twisted History: Bizarre, but True" on display through November 9<sup>th</sup>. Rated PG-13, this exhibit was based on a subject file of "oddities and curiosities" that I started compiling 15 years ago, ranging from the wacky and whimsical to the downright disturbing. This issue of the *Recorder* includes colorful news articles from that oddities file, including UFO sightings in 1896, school credits for doing household chores in 1916, cross-dressing Italian men celebrating Carnivale in 1895 and drunken prostitutes brawling in downtown Healdsburg in 1878. "Worse Than Chinese Lepers," the prostitute article, is what originally inspired me to create that oddities file. When you read it, you will see why!

With Gaye LeBaron's kind permission, we have reprinted in full her 1985-6 articles from the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* in which she broke the true story of Sonoma County's infamous 1920 lynchings and explored locals' responses to the story. We also include an excerpt of her 2008 follow-up to those articles in which she named her anonymous source. Museum volunteer Jane Bonham, in her

first contribution to the *Recorder*, has written a moving article about researching her family's connection to the brutal 1935 tar and featherings of labor organizers in Sonoma County. I have written about the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese history of the Healdsburg area, including the 1886 Wickersham murders and the anti-Chinese backlash. I also present some locally-used Chinese artifacts from the Museum collection. Janet Sbragia Pisenti rounds out the issue with her interesting article about Al Garrett and Jim Petray, a story of good and evil.

We hope you enjoy this twisted issue. Thanks to all our contributors.

Sincerely,

Holly Hoods  
Curator

*Correction to Summer 2011 issue: "A Trip down Memory Lane with Miss Redwood Empire" included an incorrect phone number to reach Florence Buchignani Rovai. The correct number is 707-433-3060.*



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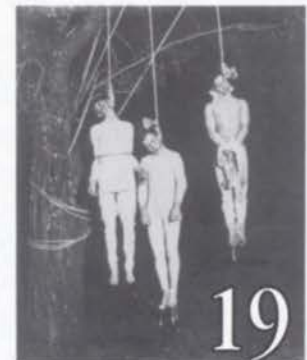
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# Dirty Laundry: The Chinese History of Healdsburg

by Holly Hoods

## Peddlers, Cooks and Launderers

Over one hundred years ago, every February, the Healdsburg sky sparkled and popped with the festive explosions of thousands of firecrackers heralding the Chinese New Year. Pioneer Healdsburg, like most mid-19<sup>th</sup> century western towns, had Chinese residents from the earliest days, and New Year was always celebrated as an important holiday in Chinese culture.

Hundreds of Chinese immigrants came to California during the Gold Rush; and thousands more arrived during the 1860s and '70s to build the railroads. Once the railroad tracks were laid, many Chinese stayed in the state, working in farming, lumbering, hotels, laundries, kitchens and household jobs. As early as 1860 – three years after the town was founded by Harmon Heald – Healdsburg had a notable Chinese population. Chinese vegetable peddlers raised produce and sold their wares out of baskets on the streets. Chinese-owned laundries dotted the east side of Healdsburg Avenue (then “West Street”). Most of the wealthiest families retained live-in Chinese cooks, and nearly all the hotels did too.

By the mid-1870s, there were 60-70 Chinese residents in Healdsburg, all of whom were adult males. Chinese men were sometimes called “pigtails” by whites for wearing their traditional long hair ques. There were four Chinese “wash houses” in town at that time. These laundries were patronized by residents of all races and the Chinese were accepted as “exotic” but hardworking immigrants. The *Healdsburg Enterprise* reported on local Chinese cultural activities with interest in February 1877:

*The Chinese New Year was ushered in at midnight last Sunday by the firing of bombs and crackers. The pigtailed of Healdsburg have been spending their holiday occasion in the pleasures of feasting, drinking and visiting. In China, the festivities are continued through one week, but in this country, from two to four days.*

By the early 1880s there were two large Chinese-operated laundries in Healdsburg. Former Healdsburg resident Arthur Price remembered his fascination with them as a young boy:

*There were always four to six pigtailed employed in each institution and both turned out perfectly beautiful laundry at a very nominal sum, and that was something in that day of many flounces, voluminous skirts, ruffled dresses and drawers, to say nothing of the stiff starched shirts, collars and cuffs which were worn by the men. It was great fun to look in through their open door and watch them iron with their gigantic irons. First they would spread out the garment on the board, take a sip of water from a bowl, and spew this water in a fine spray all over the piece to moisten it and then proceed with the ironing, at the same time keeping up a string of conversation in Chinese. Their work, their customs, their language, in fact their whole ensemble fascinated us small boys.*



*Fluting Iron used by Chinese launderer at Magnolia Farms, 1870s. Healdsburg Museum Collection.*

## Jo Wah Lee vs. Sing Lee

According to William Shipley in his *Tales of Sonoma County*, Jo Wah Lee's laundry was located on Center Street near the Plaza in an old one-story wooden building between the City Hall and Nosler's Skating Rink (where the Police Station is today). He



had a thriving business. The other laundry was operated by Sing Lee just behind Connor's Livery Stable on Center Street at Piper. Sing Lee's laundry was built on pilings over Foss Creek, then called much less respectfully "the Slough."

The men in the Healdsburg wash houses labored long hours and lived together in households of five or more, often next door to or above their laundry. Unlike a store or a restaurant, a laundry could be opened with a small capital outlay of \$75-200. Laundry labor became one of the few employment options open to Chinese workers. Despite the relatively tedious and unpleasant work, owning and operating a business provided some self-sufficiency, and ultimately some social status. At the time, many more Chinese were working under exceedingly harsh and dangerous conditions at the nearby quicksilver (mercury) mines. There they were paid lower wages than white men and often died of mercury poisoning. Many Chinese turned to opium to dull the edges of their hardscrabble lives.



*Chinese Opium Smokers in Northern California, 1880s. Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

By 1881, the two Chinese-owned laundries in Healdsburg were in fierce competition to produce the cleanest laundry and achieve the highest customer loyalty. Arthur Price recalled:

*The town was rather well divided between those who took off Joe Wah Lee and those who followed the banners of Sing Lee. These laundrymen were the town's Walter Winchells and the Dun and Bradstreet, for they saw all, heard all, knew all and told what*

*they thought best; also they knew who did and who did not pay their bills.*

### **From Tolerance to Backlash**

Each Chinese New Year, the laundrymen always brought huge bags of candies and nuts to hand out to their customers. In addition to the candies and nuts, each patron was presented with a lily bulb which would grow and bloom in a bowl of water and pebbles. These were tokens of good luck. They would also fly beautiful kites with hummers and shoot off long ropes of firecrackers, all of which gave the small boys in town a great thrill.

Despite the relative harmony that developed between most of the Chinese and white residents of Healdsburg, the town was not immune to the prevailing racism of the time. Throughout the state, white working men's resentment of the Chinese men's willingness to work hard for low wages began to focus pro-labor sentiment into a full-fledged anti-Chinese backlash. Some of the loudest protests came from recent white immigrants, particularly the Irish. By 1878, "Anti-Coolie" clubs began forming throughout California, in which whites pledged not to hire Chinese labor or patronize any business who hired Chinese workers. That year, Dennis Kearney, the infamous anti-Chinese agitator from San Francisco, visited Healdsburg several times. Some of his ideas took root. Anti-Chinese meetings were organized and held in Healdsburg. These meetings were held at Roland Truitt's Theater, directly across the street from Jo Wah Lee's laundry! Among other things, the group plotted to attract a "white steam laundry" to town. Perhaps they recognized that many townspeople were more motivated by the need for clean laundry than they were political about the subject of Chinese labor.

### **The Wickersham Murders**

According to a Healdsburg correspondent to the *Santa Rosa Daily Republican*, "the anti-Chinese movement, which is sweeping over the county, struck our town like a tornado" in January 1886. That same month Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Wickersham were found murdered at their remote mountain sheep ranch 28 miles northwest of Healdsburg. Sarah Wickersham had also been "foully outraged" (raped). Nothing had been stolen.





Jesse Wickersham, c. 1880. Courtesy of David Otero.

The prime suspect in the slayings was Ah Tai Duc, the couple's Chinese cook who disappeared from the house and fled the state after the crime. The cook supposedly fled in such a hurry that he took none of his personal belongings or money, yet he took the time to place a piece of cake on the pillow of the slain woman. This was claimed to represent a Chinese superstition of leaving something sweet to appease the spirits of the dead.

The tabloid headlines about the murder and search for the culprit further inflamed anti-Chinese hysteria. In January 1886, three hundred members of the Healdsburg Anti-Coolie Club," representing all classes of men from bankers down to daily laborers," signed a pledge to withhold money from Chinese businesses and to use "all lawful nonviolent means" to drive the Chinese from town.

The local Chinese began to face increasing harassment. Some fought back. In 1888, Ah Tom, age 38, pled guilty to a charge of battery on the young son of Roland Truitt. Despite the supposed "nonviolent" tactics of the Anti-Chinese movement, the *Healdsburg Tribune* reported that "about the only material fact established (in the Ah Tom case) was that a crowd gathers around the City Hall to molest passing Chinamen." William Shipley also described the marauding gangs of young men:

*who would collect ancient eggs, rotten vegetables or some other obnoxious substance, and at night would gather in front of a laundry. One of their number would rap on the door and run out of range, so that when the Chinaman opened the door, the rest of the*

*mob would give him a volley of garbage, which would get inside and foul up everything it came in contact with. The lives of the (Chinese) were made miserable and the old feeling of mutual trust and confidence faded.*

In February 1893, the *Tribune* reported--chillingly--that the Chinese New Year was celebrated "with utmost tranquility" in contrast to the previous year in which "several hundreds of dollars were spent on firecrackers and pyrotechnics." In 1894, Jo Wah Lee's laundry mysteriously burned to the ground. The formerly prominent business owner found himself unable to rebuild in his old location, because the town had just passed an ordinance banning Chinese laundries within the City Limits. Jo Wah Lee grudgingly moved out of the City limits, into the disreputable section of West Street next to the brothels and saloons (at Piper Street where WestAmerica Bank is today). He objected strenuously to the racist regulation that somehow outlawed his laundry, but permitted white steam laundry owners to wash within the City Limits. Fortunately, many of his loyal customers followed him out of town.

By the early 1890s, there were only a handful of Chinese residents still living in Healdsburg. Most of the work opportunities were gone and further immigration was restricted. Given the many setbacks of the previous decades, the last Chinese New Year celebration in Healdsburg in February 1897 was an act of defiance and cultural pride:

*The Chinese of Healdsburg celebrated their New Year Tuesday with considerable snap and tanglefoot. The ceremonies concluded with the discharge of thousands of fire crackers that made a racket most deafening. Hundreds witnessed the Confucian hubbub.*

**Sources:**

Shipley, William. *Tales of Sonoma County*. 1965, reprinted 2001.

*Healdsburg Enterprise*, 26 February 1878.

Healdsburg Museum "Chinese" subject files.

Healdsburg Sanborn Maps, 1884, 1893, 1898, and 1911.

*Healdsburg Tribune*, 1895-1900.

U.S. Census, "Healdsburg, Mendocino Township, Sonoma County, California" 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900.



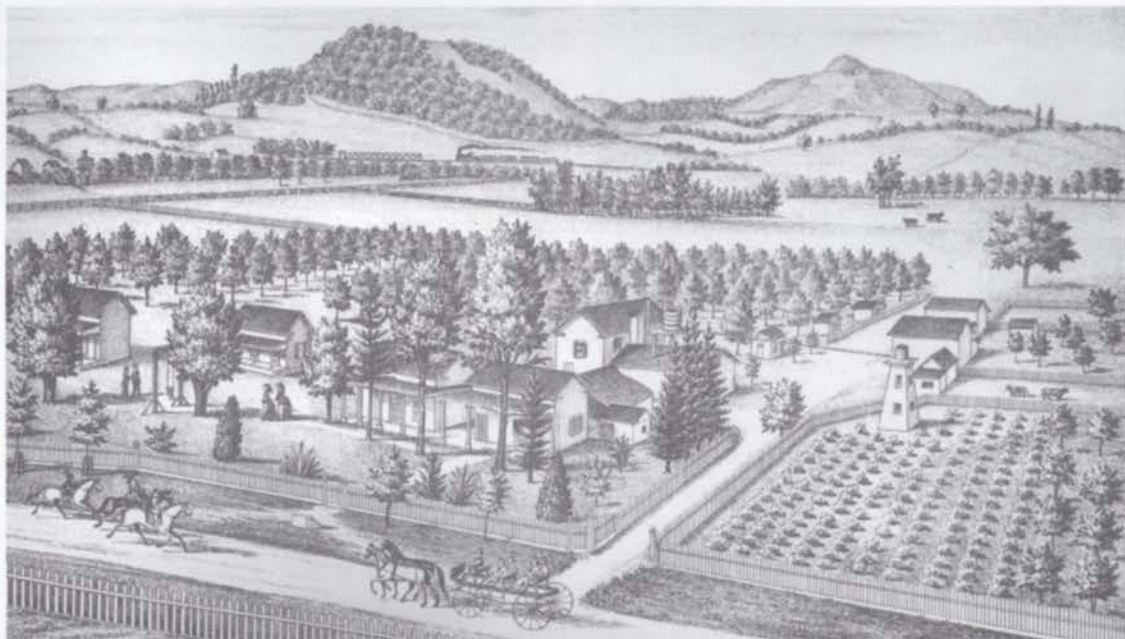


## Artifacts: Opium Scale and Opium Pipe

by Holly Hoods

Donated to the Healdsburg Museum in 1987, this opium scale and pipe date to the 1870s. They are of Chinese origin. The pipe is made of a cane-type wood with ivory at both ends. The bowl to hold the opium for smoking is made of brass. The pipe also features a decorative silver plate. The scale, made of bone, thread and brass, is missing its brass weight that would have been suspended at one end of the bone by thread. A shallow brass bowl held the opium to be weighed at the other end. The portable scale fits into its own wooden violin-shaped case. The case has Chinese writing on it which the Museum has never had translated.

These items were used at John Flack's Magnolia Farms, a late 1800s farm and resort, located south of Healdsburg. The 1880 census indicates that the Flack family had at least one Chinese employee residing on the property: a cook named "Charley." The donor of the items was Mrs. Ella (Flack) Packwood, daughter of John and Nelly Flack, who owned Magnolia Farms.



Magnolia Farms 1877

Because of easy availability and modest prices, opium use among Chinese immigrants was very widespread, economically important, and (until 1908) perfectly legal in most parts of the United States. Opium smoking was socially acceptable within the mostly single, mostly male culture of Chinese immigrants in California. Smokers of opium, largely Chinese, may have been addicts, but were neither criminals nor outcasts.



# Close Encounters in Healdsburg 1896

*The following accounts are quoted directly from the Healdsburg Tribune. Remember, it wasn't until 1903 that the Wright Brothers took to the sky.*

## HEALDSBURG, November 26, 1896

The airship that has been seen soaring in the sky in various parts of the State and startling the populace has been in the vicinity of Healdsburg, too. James McClish, who is a pioneer and a reliable citizen, declared that he observed the strange object floating about high up in the air the first night it made its appearance. At about 6 o'clock in the evening he saw the engine's light flashing over his farm a few miles south of town at quite a tall elevation. His family also saw it and it was a mystery to them what it was until they read about the craft of the atmosphere in the newspapers. They first supposed that it was a meteor, but it traveled too slowly for that and its course was horizontal. Mr. McClish stated also that the light emanated from a dark object, whose form, however, he could not discern in the darkness.



*McClish Valley View Farm*

most brilliant light, very similar to that of an arc lamp. The ray issued from a material form, and as it passed on a light of less power was seen coming through a deep aperture in the rear of the navigator of the sky. Mr. McClish said nothing about the strange sight to anyone, though his family saw the same thing, until he read about it in the papers, fearing that he would be regarded as the inventor of the airship himself and subject himself to considerable ridicule at the hands of disbelievers. Constable Norton was down at the river bridge at a late hour a few nights ago when the reflection of a large moving light in the water called his attention, and as he looked above him to see what it was he was startled as his eyes followed an illuminated object high in the air and it appeared, in the position he saw it, to be shaped quite like a barrel, but either end came to a small convex. Others who saw it that night gave the same description. One man secured a field glass for a good observation after it had departed a long ways and he says the thing appeared to him to have a round body which seemed to inflate and deflate as a means of propulsion. The same night there were numerous men who observed a moving body in the sky. All that was perceptible at 10 o'clock was a light of a brighter hue than the stars and it would flicker and disappear and reappear again, evincing that it was attached to something that was rambling about in one direction and then another. There were so many people who saw the phenomenon here that its existence cannot possibly be a myth of illusion and all agree that it was nothing other than the airship which has engrossed the attention of the California people and excited so much curiosity universally.



*James McClish*

## HEALDSBURG, December 3, 1896

The belief that the mysterious and sensational airship really exists is growing here while the theories of the skeptic have been frustrated. James McClish made the statement personally to the editor of the *Tribune* Saturday that the object which came to his view was undoubtedly a craft of the air, constructed by human hands. It soared over his [Westside Road] ranch at an apparent height of 300 feet, and it moved with considerable rapidity, raising and lowering in its course like a pigeon's flight.

When first he saw the strange object it was approaching from the opposite direction and shed a





*Children from Healdsburg Grammar School, 1916*

## School Credit for Home Work

### *New System Has Proven Successful in Many Localities*

*Reprinted from the Healdsburg Enterprise February 10, 1916*

The home credit system has been adopted by the board of trustees of the Healdsburg Grammar School and went into effect Monday. Once a week each child takes home a home-duty record slip and all credits earned in home duties by the child during the week are entered in the proper spaces on the card. At the end of the week the card is signed by the parent or guardian and returned to the teacher. The principles involved in the application of the school credit system are bringing good results in various states of the union. Home duties or other activities wherein the principles taught in school may be actually practiced have always proven to be beneficial to the pupils in that their lessons become easy and pleasant, where formerly they were often irksome.

The duties for which credit is given by the Healdsburg School are:

Wiping dishes	Caring for pets	Running errands
Washing dishes	Putting playthings away	Home reading
Carrying wood	Washing face and hands	Care of language
Setting table	Washing neck and ears	Practicing music
Caring for baby	Dressing self	Caring for garden
Sweeping sidewalk	Neat personal appearance	Neat personal appearance
Sweeping porch	Bath	Cooking
Cleaning yard	Washing teeth	Making beds
Feeding chickens	In bed at eight o'clock	

The public schools of Poughkeepsie, New York for two years have been giving school credit for home work. The new plan has proven so successful in educational value and in popularity with the parents that it is coming into use in many other places.

"I find more good coming from this method than I had hoped," said Superintendent of Schools S. M. Chaney of Glenn County, who has been trying out the plan for six months. Mr. Chaney claims that not only is the work done better and more cheerfully, but that hygienic conditions have been improved, also. Professor O. F. Staton of the Sebastopol Grammar School is following the system and finds it a success. Miss Mary Schwab and Miss Crystal Gallaway were appointed a committee from the teachers of the Healdsburg Grammar school to obtain the necessary blanks for instituting the new credit system in the local school. The new system will add considerably to the duties of the teachers, but they are glad to give this time in the interest of the pupils.

# A Singular Problem: The History Hunt

by Jane Bonham

*Chance has put in our way a most singular and whimsical problem, and its solution is its own reward. --  
Sherlock Holmes*

This year I joined the *Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society* (HMHS) as a volunteer, reading the *Tribune* from years gone by, searching for gems of interest or oddity to send on to the writer of *Flashbacks* for possible inclusion in the column. Sometimes I am alone in the research center, working in the quiet that reminds me of times in this building in my youth when it housed the town library. Sometimes the room is alive with activity, researchers at the table and volunteers at the computer desks or using all available floor space to build something for the next event or exhibit.

It was during that sort of happy, creative chaos following a volunteers' meeting that chance propelled me on my own singular problem.

After the meeting, I sat with two other volunteers discussing *Flashbacks* research. Nearby, Holly Hoods, the Museum Curator, entertained others with her plans for the next exhibit. I caught the name "Jack Green" and without giving it any thought, volunteered, "I have one of his paintings." I briefly described its history (as much as I knew of it) and agreed to bring it in the next time I was scheduled for researching.

If you have seen the *Twisted History* exhibit, you will know that my paternal grandmother kept a painting signed by Jack Green on which the first name had been scratched off. However, under close scrutiny the name still can be made out. When I brought the picture in, I told Holly that I knew little about the man except what I had read sometime in the 1990s in a Gaye LeBaron article. I shared with her that for years I'd intended to find the article and frame it to hang alongside the painting because I took pride in knowing someone in my family had risked much to work for the right to a fair wage.

And with that, as Sherlock would say, the game was afoot.

Curator Hoods sent me away with copies of newspaper articles, a 1977 Sonoma State research paper from the museum files, and several of her own books. My first task was to read all the accounts of



*Painting by Jack Green*

the apple pickers' strike and the events that followed and to gather together all the facts available. I distilled these into a timeline of the events leading up to the tar and feathering – an evening soon to be recalled in the artifacts we were gathering for the exhibit.

That research paper contributed greatly to my growing understanding of events and the people involved. It was written by Bryce A. Suderow in 1977 for a history class at Sonoma State. He received a well-deserved A- for the effort, which included an interview with someone who had been at Germania Hall when the meeting was invaded by the "Army of Peace." I found a "Suderow" on the internet, obviously active in historical pursuits and a participant in several online history blogs. Was this the same person? I ventured an email of inquiry and was rewarded with an email in return and an offer of telephone contact. Mr. Suderow was indeed the



author of the paper and most generous with his time. As we said our goodbyes, he was the first to sound a cautionary note in the face of my investigative enthusiasm: Were we concerned about a hostile reaction to the exhibit? Surely not, I thought, it's 2011 after all.

My search for information about Jack Green was not very fruitful. I thought the best representation of him for the exhibit would be to include the brief description of him included with the information about the Jack Green Award given by the Sonoma County ACLU. I emailed to the local ACLU about the exhibit and asked to use them. Later I spoke directly with a gracious member who give permission. He wondered if we had had any resistance to the planned exhibit. Surely not, I thought, it's 2011 after all.

The more I learned about the summer of 1935, the more questions I had. There seemed to be such an imbalance between the adversaries in this conflict. The planning for the strike seemed to me to be almost spontaneous and certainly not clandestine.<sup>1</sup> Demands were written and publicly distributed. Organizers' meetings were so open that one was attended by the Sheriff, several "special deputies," a District Attorney, an Assistant District Attorney and a stenographer.<sup>2</sup> So how, I wondered, did it happen that the sheriff had riot gear and a 500 member "Army of Peace" at the ready? Who was behind the obviously well-organized actions against the strikers?

I combed the libraries and the internet and my efforts began to bear fruit. My initial picture of the conflict was two dimensional, an image of pawns on a board game in play between the ideals of capitalism and communism -- small family farms struggling to avoid foreclosure versus transient laborers: disenfranchised families from California's unemployed and the Dust Bowl traveling from migrant camp to camp and struggling to stay alive. Truly that was a part of the drama that unfolded as the summer heat topped 100 degrees, but a smaller part than I had imagined.

I once had a brief conversation with my Dad about that time and he said that I didn't understand what it was like then. He was right. There were at least two more *-isms* in play at the time. Sherlock had a more sophisticated understanding of his world than I have had of mine. His brother, Mycroft, was highly placed in the British government and would

have been well informed. When I first read the term "Americanism" quoted in newspaper reports, I thought that it was made up in the moment by the speaker. Through my history hunt, I learned that it is a term representing one of the founding principles of the American Legion. The Legion was newly created after WWI, in part, to actively fight "Bolshevism."<sup>3</sup>



*Jane Bonham and her father, Bill Bonham*

In the 1920s and 1930s the leadership of the American Legion was enthusiastic about another *-ism* imported from across the pond after WWI: Fascism. A National Commander of the early '20s promoted Fascism as a model for defending the nation against "every element that threatens our democratic government -- Soviets, anarchists, IWW, revolutionary socialists and every other red." He proudly compared the two: "Do not forget that the Fascisti are to Italy what the American Legion is to the United States." The National Commander in 1934-1935, Frank N. Belgrano, was a banker from California. Some websites suggest he too believed in a fascist model because of his association with Bank of America's Giannini. According to his obituary in the New York Times, "He took a strong position against communism and fascism and for preparedness."<sup>4</sup> He surely would have approved of Sonoma County American Legion involvement: "We of the Legion are mobilized to meet that enemy and we are calling upon loyal Americans everywhere



to join us in ridding our country of this menace.”<sup>5</sup>

Could this be the answer I sought to account for the battle readiness exhibited by special deputies in Santa Rosa? Certainly the American Legion and Chamber of Commerce were named in later reports (see *Santa Rosa, a Twentieth Century Town* by Gaye LeBaron & Joann Mitchell, *Comrades and Chicken Ranchers* by Kenneth L. Kann and *Business Versus Labor in Sonoma County* by Bryce Suderow) as both supporters and participants in the strike-busting of 1935. I returned to my research material and there it was: in response to the 1934 longshoremen strike, local law enforcement formed armed escorts to protect trucking and “Sheriff Harry Patteson deputized more than 150 men as an ‘Army of Peace’ that same summer.”<sup>6</sup>

The citizen army that was reported to be so well organized and orderly was not newly formed in 1935 -- this was its second year in operation.

Finally, it was time to focus on the second part of my puzzlement – locally, who was behind the organized response. In some newspaper articles and in two court cases brought against the vigilantes after that summer, individuals were named. (Justice was ill served and the defendants were either excluded from trials for lack of evidence or found not guilty). I compiled lists of these names and returned to the hunt.

After all this time, what evidence might be found to connect any of the alleged vigilantes with the American Legion (i.e., possibly veterans of WWI) and were any on the list businessmen of some social standing (i.e., likely to be active in the Chamber of Commerce)?

Genealogical research tools include databases of military records and to these I turned to learn more about the individuals involved. I found records for over 2/3rds of the 41 men on my list, which document that they were not young hotheads. They were all middle age or older, ranging in age from 38 to 61 years of age in 1935. Over 70% of them had WWI Draft Registration cards in the database. The draft registration cards included information about employment and the WWI card asked about prior military experience.

At least half of the 41 men served in the First World War, most in the army. Eye witnesses to the Germania Hall rout by the “army of peace” commented on the uniforms worn by some of the

men which resembled army uniforms of the times with the signature leggings.

At least four men served in positions of leadership, documenting their capacity to organize and mobilize men to action: three during the war in the Army as a Sergeant and a Captain, and in the Navy, a Chief Quartermaster. Another had noted under prior military service that he served as a corporal with the U.C. Cadet Corp. This lead introduced me to a military training program still in existence today for young men in school under the auspices of the Coast Guard. I was intrigued to find a manual from the times with a picture of the Cadet Corp uniform, including leggings. I thought about the possibility that high school students filled out the citizen army. The records are missing online for the annual reports of activities for 1935-36 in the archives of both the Cadet Corp and the Coast Guard, so I was unable to investigate further. However, in all the remaining reports surrounding those years, no mention is made of a cadet program in the county.

Employment information from the reports of the times and the draft registration cards suggest that over 40% of the men named in association with the activities of the “army of peace” were in government or other professional occupations which might have drawn them to membership in the Chamber of Commerce -- including a President of the Healdsburg Chamber and a man who worked for the Chamber. Most intriguing is one of the employers cited: the Associated Farmers of California, ...” a militant statewide group... [that with] the backing of law enforcement officials,... warned, threatened, and terrorized workers to halt the ruralization of ... union activity...”<sup>7</sup>

My quest is at an end. The “*solution is its own reward.*” I’ve determined that the events of that summer are not beyond understanding. Healdsburg’s response was not an isolated incident from a renegade community. Respected community members were embedded in a complex organizational infrastructure and set of beliefs that spanned the entire West Coast at the time. Their actions were consistent with their times.

Could that extremism happen again? Surely not, it’s 2011 after all. But I hear it whispered in history:

*“It has been done. It is a grim, purposeful, unswerving body who will strike, if blows*



*become inevitable, in the interests and furtherance of ... the cause of home, family, liberty and security. Among the so-called "Vigilantes" you may find your friends and your neighbors."*<sup>8</sup>

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> There were ongoing communist activities throughout the Depression in Sonoma County and a statewide radical union called the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (*Santa Rosa, a Twentieth Century Town*, Gaye LeBaron & Joann Mitchell, pages 184-6). The organizing that summer appears, even in press reports, to have been orderly and

nonviolent. Certainly its inception has been described as locally emergent: "One [apple picker] came to me and said, 'I am a Communist. The people want to strike, but we need help.'" (*Comrades and Chicken Ranchers*, Kenneth Kann, p. 104)

<sup>2</sup> *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, July 30, 1935 (p. 1, col. 8; p. 2, col. 4).

<sup>3</sup> [www.americanlegion.org](http://www.americanlegion.org) history tab and [www.Wikipedia.org](http://www.Wikipedia.org) Jules Archer's *The Plot to Overthrow the Whitehouse*

<sup>6</sup> *Santa Rosa, a Twentieth Century Town*, Gaye LeBaron & Joann Mitchell, p. 186

<sup>7</sup> *Santa Rosa, a Twentieth Century Town*, Gaye LeBaron & Joann Mitchell, p. 185

<sup>8</sup> *Sotoyome Scimitar*, August 8, 1935

## Timeline: 1935 Apple Workers' Strike and Its Suppression

### Weekend of July 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>

Local left wing unionists and small groups of apple pickers meet and decide to strike; they speak to workers at Handy Auto camp in Sebastopol, the largest of the migrant camps.

### Monday, July 29<sup>th</sup>

Strike leaders release goals in written mimeographed posters.

Sebastopol-Graton apple growers meet and agree to reject workers' demands. Sheriff assures them that property will be protected, that his office is fully equipped with new riot gear, and that he has 500 special deputies which he calls his "Army of Peace."

Apple pickers meet and agree to strike. Sonoma County Sheriff and Assistant District Attorney are observers at the meeting, along with some men from the citizen "Army" and a court stenographer.

### Tuesday, July 30<sup>th</sup>

Apple workers strike; pickets at most of the area's apple orchards and packing plants; packing house workers vote to join the strike.

### Wednesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>

Ranchers and businessmen demand Board of Supervisors issue emergency anti-picketing ordinance. Board declines.

Two packing plants close temporarily because of walk outs.

Rumors of more walk outs and arson. 35 special deputies sent out to guard plants.

### Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup>

Rally at Germania Hall planned to appeal for food and money for strikers; more than 100 assemble.

Meeting disrupted by vigilantes who forcibly disperse families and supporters. Some leaders are beaten.

### Mid-August

Laborers expected to arrive to harvest crops have been frightened by recent events and do not come in numbers anticipated.

Government relief projects in the area are shut down worksites and the displaced workers told to go to Sonoma County to harvest hops.

### August 20<sup>th</sup>

Union men learn of imminent arrival of "scabs," and plan a protest meeting for the following evening. Vigilantes learn of meeting and plan to disrupt it.

### August 21<sup>st</sup>

Union men learn of plan to disrupt meeting and cancel, staying at home. Vigilantes dispersed to countryside in groups of 25 to 30 to kidnap the organizers.

Five brought in, commanded to kneel and kiss flag. Three do as told and are released; two refuse and are beaten, tarred and feathered.

### August 22<sup>nd</sup>

Visits to police and law offices by injured men to file charges were met with blows and rough treatment.





*Railroad depot and hotel, 1880's*

## In Female Guise: Italians Have a Gay Promenade

*Actual headline and article reprinted from the Healdsburg Tribune February 28, 1895*

The season of *Carnivale* is a jubilee which surpasses all Italian holidays and is observed universally with an exceptionally large amount of blithesomeness and vivacity by the sons of Italy and those who are of Italian extraction. The celebration of *Carnivale* is a custom which has been pursued for ages and was established as a wind-up of gaiety before the Lenten season. Masquerades during the *Carnivale* predominate and take the place of all other amusement. The season began last Thursday morning and ended Tuesday night.

All these things were unknown to Marshal Leard and when he caught sight of two suspicious characters in female attire Monday afternoon. He at once perceived that they were males in disguise and were bent perhaps on performing some diabolical deed.

They had come up to town from the Italian boarding house near the depot and in their promenade they drifted into the heart of the business quarters where everybody's attention was attracted by their deficiency of effeminate carriage and dainty tread. They were clad in dresses no woman would be very willing to exhibit themselves in on the streets, especially in the very public part of the town, and even the casual observer was undeceived by their clumsy mien. Their forms were not such as would be admired by the gentlemen, though to make their figures somewhat symmetrical and more plausibly in simulation of the proportions of Venus's disciples they padded themselves out in various places.

Marshall Leard intercepted the pair in front of



*A deceptive creature, 1895*

Judge Coffman's law office on West Street and placed them under arrest. They were escorted to the City Hall where Justice Pond made an informal investigation of the case with the assistance of the City Marshal. Both functionaries had been very cautious in the matter and there was no doubt in their minds about making any mistake.

The brace of Italians disrobed themselves at the request of Justice Pond and when he admonished them for their acts, they were discharged. The masqueraders promised to be a little more secluded in the future in their pilgrimages while celebrating *Carnivale* in that traditional style.





*Lucinda Walker*

## **Worse Than Chinese Lepers**

*Reprinted from the Healdsburg Enterprise May 30, 1878*

Our beautiful city has long been cursed with two sinks of iniquity, well known to our residents and no attempt has been made to close them. These places are poisoning the minds of our youth and educating them for crime and the prison; they are undermining the morals of the people and entailing vice and misery upon the community. We call upon all good citizens to aid our officials in rooting out those plague spots and restore once more the good name of Healdsburg. Emboldened by their immunity from punishment, the keepers of these dens have lately indulged in orgies of the vilest character, which would not be tolerated even among the most licentious communities, and the drunken bouts and fights of Saturday and Sunday nights ought to convince every man who has the welfare of our city at heart that the time has finally come to enforce the laws against this vile class.

On Friday several depraved characters from Mendocino and Napa, on one of their periodical cruises through the country, visited this city and indulged in a grand carousal, which ended in a free fight. The keeper of the bagnio on West Street and one of her Mendocino visitors had been drinking freely, the Mendocino hag becoming gloriously drunk; while in this condition she was attacked and handsomely whipped by the Healdsburg virago. The latter was arrested upon complaint of her victim, taken before Judge Luce, who fined her thirty dollars. More depraved creatures than these women can scarcely be imagined, and the "gentleman" who witnessed the combat was not one whit better than the women. We trust that strong measures will be taken to break up the bagnio and prevent a reoccurrence of such disgraceful scenes.

# Vigilante Breaks His Silence

by *Gaye LeBaron*

*Reprinted with permission from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat December 8, 1985*

One of the vigilantes who lynched three men in Santa Rosa in 1920 spoke out last week, breaking the 65-year silence that has created some false impressions about this notorious act of frontier justice.

This man, a lifelong Sonoma County rancher, is pushing 90 now. He admits he was among the men who took George Boyd, Terry Fitts and Spanish Charley Valento from their jail cells and hanged them from a tree in the Rural Cemetery on a December midnight, an episode in Sonoma County's history that was retold in a column here last Sunday. We can't use his name. And he would not name others. But he has told his story.

He's one of two survivors of the vigilante group. He was among the youngest participants. He decided, when he read an account of the incident last week, that "I had an obligation to set the record straight."

The story he told is a gripping one, more powerful even than the way the newspaper accounts of the time tell it. The events that led up to the hanging are well-documented. Spanish Charley Valento was a member of Spud Murphy's Howard Street Gang, a collection of San Francisco toughs known throughout the state for their violence. Terry Fitts was from Santa Rosa, recently released from the penitentiary and well-acquainted with Murphy's gang. George Boyd was another fellow traveler who accompanied Fitts and Valento the Santa Rosa to hide out after two young women were gang-raped in Valento's Howard Street shack.

The trio had gone to Pete Guidotti's house on Seventh Street, trying to borrow money and was refused. They wheedled some soup from Guidotti's wife and were sitting in the living room when Sheriff Jim Petray and two San Francisco police officers, detective Lester Dohrman and Sgt. Miles Jackson, who had been scouring the West End hotels and speakeasies in search of the trio, came through the door. Boyd picked up Fitts' revolver and emptied it at the three officers. Dohrman lived a couple of hours and died at Mary Jesse Hospital on Fifth Street. Sgt. Jackson and Sheriff Petray died there on the living room floor.

Five days later, the three men, Boyd wounded by a shot from Jackson as he fell, were lynched. Reporters wrote that the masked men who brought guns and nooses to the jail that night were "probably" San Francisco policemen, friends of the two police officers slain along with the Sonoma County Sheriff.



*George Boyd*



*Terry Fitts*



*Spanish Charley Valento*





*House where Sheriff Petray was shot*

The notion that the masked men came from San Francisco was fostered by the press. Rumors that a caravan of automobiles passed through Cotati after the lynching, heading back to San Francisco, were planted. Descriptions of men with "uniform coats turned inside out" were written to give credence to the theory that the gang came from out of town. The grand jury met and returned a verdict of "death by persons unknown" with 12 hours.

And no one ever corrected these misapprehensions. Until now.

"There was no one from San Francisco there that night," said the man who came to the newspaper office last week because his conscience told him, not that the act was wrong, but that history should be made accurate. "We were all from Healdsburg. We were all friends of Jim Petray's - Gentlemen Jim, Sunny Jim we called him. He was a wonderful man. He was my father's close friend."

The decision to lynch the man responsible for Petray's death and his companions, was made the day Petray was shot, he said. "We drilled for three nights, getting ready. We started drilling two days after we learned that Jim was dead, as soon as the Captain could get us together."

There were no more than 30 men in all, not 100 as the doctor who came upon the men outside the jail reported to the newspapers. "We could have had 500 men, if we'd wanted them," he said. "Everybody in town would have come. But the fellow who got it all organized, the captain would only take 30. He wanted everybody to have an assignment and didn't want anybody who was going to get trigger happy

and blow it all."

They drilled - practiced their assignments and stations - in a room in back of the Standard Machine Works in Healdsburg. "It was back out of sight," he said. And they met there on the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, before leaving for Santa Rosa.

The Captain - "He was a man who was respected in the community, a businessman who'd got us organized" - talked to them before they left. "If any one of you wants to back out," he said to us, "this is the time. Do it now. There won't be one word said. Nobody will think you're a coward. But if you stay, from now on, we're all one."

The men came down from Healdsburg in 12 to 15 cars. "We didn't come in a caravan, just regular." When they reached the jail, they spread out, according to previous assignments. "I parked across the street next to the old Courthouse."

"We all wore masks - bandanas, blue and red ones, I kept that mask 30-40 years, then I asked myself why and I threw it away. Each one of us had a job. Some were guards. They all had guns. Over there on Third Street some young kid came along who wanted to get into it. He started running alongside me. He run up against one of the guns with a great big shotgun and that changed his mind in a hurry. I looked around and all I saw were the bottoms of his feet, he was going away so fast.

"The stories were wrong when they said they were all in the same cell. They were each in a different cell. Valento, he was the one they told us was a real tough one, was upstairs. So was Fitts. Boyd was downstairs. He had big wide bandages around his middle and a big spot of blood on the side of his union suit."

This young man's assignment, he said, was to go into the jail. Did the new sheriff know they were coming? "Now, you're really going to me on the spot. Well, let's put it this way. They cooperated with us. What else could they do? The deputies were there, but nobody tried to stop us.

"If we couldn't get the keys, we were ready to burn our way in. We had cutting torches to cut the locks. We were prepared. I don't think there was much left out."

He went into Valento's cell and found him "paralyzed, just paralyzed with fear, he couldn't move. We had it all planned - one man to take his feet, one man around the middle and another at the



shoulders. But he didn't give us any trouble. He was too scared. And me, I was just a kid and I couldn't keep my mouth shut. I hollered at him, 'you so-and-so, you'll pay for this!' He reared back against the wall." When they went downstairs for Boyd, the wounded man never said a word. "He was conscious, but he didn't say anything."

It was very dark, he said, "December weather but no raining," when the caravan of cars made its way to the cemetery. "It was an oak tree, not a locust tree," he said, adding in an aside that he has "always been sorry they took that tree down. I thought they should have left it there and put a fence around it, made it like a monument."

The cars parked in a semi-circle and kept their lights on. There were a couple of spotlights on the tree, but all the headlights were on so we could see." Was it true that it was all over very quickly? "The hanging, yes. But then came the long part. The Captain knew about these things. We had to put them from the ground – because it takes longer to die. The Captain kept testing them, taking their pulse. It took 10, 15 minutes for them to die. Longest time I can ever remember. Every minute seemed like an hour to me. All I wanted to do was get out o there.

"The Captain wouldn't let anyone leave until the three men were dead. Then he said, 'OK boys, let's continue with our plans.' Someone said, 'Let's shoot 'em full of holes,' but the Captain said, 'Hey, we've done our job. We'll have none of that.'"

Even after the deed was done, the military-

style discipline imposed by "the Captain" was observed. "We went back to Healdsburg – not all together but separate. Some went by way of Coffey Lane and other roads. We met again the Standard Machine Words and the Captain counted noses.

He said, "If any of us is caught, keep quiet. Answer simple questions but don't name any of the others. If they take you, we'll come back and get you.' That was pretty impressive."

Then the men returned to their homes, to wives and mothers who knew what had happened, who had known all along of the plans. "The next day when we met on the street, maybe we said something like, 'You look sleepy today,' and the other would say, 'Yeah, I might have been up a little late.' But that was all."

Did the men discuss the lynching often, through the years, when they met? "Oh, we talked about it once in awhile. But not as much as you might think.

"I've often wondered if I did the right thing. But, you know, I just can't believe it was wrong. Jim Petray was a wonderful man. Everybody loved him. Nobody spoke against it. Ninety-five percent of the people were in favor of the lynching after it happened. Lots of people said they were there, were part of the group, that weren't there at all. I met a guy once when I was hunting up in Modoc who told me his father-in-law had been one of the men who lynched those guys. I said, 'Oh yeah, I wouldn't be too sure of that.'"

## 1900-2008: Life of a Wild West Pioneer

by Gaye LeBaron

Excerpted from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat January 23, 2008

A remarkable man who may have been the last survivor of Sonoma County's "Wild West" era is dead at age 108. Clarence H. "Barney" Barnard, born in a farmhouse on the shoulder of Fitch Mountain and raised in a log cabin at the upper end of the Dry Creek Valley, died Sunday at his Healdsburg home. Barnard also was the guardian of an 88-year-old secret involving frontier justice. As the last living member of an organized band that hanged a trio of San Francisco outlaws in 1920, Barnard was the one who spoke out, anonymously, to tell the truth about the infamous incident that was the second-to-the-last lynching in the West.



Clarence H. "Barney" Barnard



# Barking up the Wrong Tree? The Reaction to the Lynching

by *Gaye LeBaron*

*Reprinted with permission from the Santa Rosa Press Democrat January 5, 1986*

Lynching has been a hot topic around Sonoma County for 65 years now. And the "confession" of a member of the 1920 vigilante group that lynched three men in Santa Rosa has heaped fuel on old fires.

"It's been almost a month since the elderly rancher came forward to tell the whole story of the hanging and to lay to rest a number of misconceptions, some casual, some purposeful, about the perpetrators and the event.

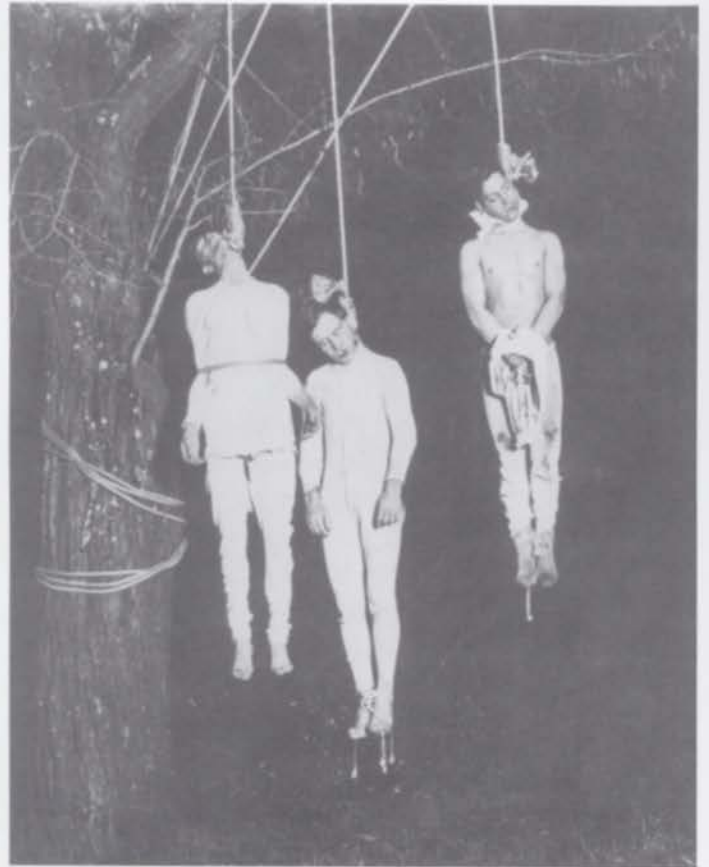
His account, although necessarily anonymous, occasioned considerable speculation among old-timers and resulted in a file folder full of mail on the subject.

The public reaction has been interesting. The crux of the debate is not, as one would anticipate, the act of killing or the morality of vigilant action. The burning issue is: what kind of tree did they hang from.

The anonymous member of the lynching party, who was in his early 20s when he joined the group of 30 Healdsburg men who drilled for three days in preparation to avenge the killing of their friend and neighbor Sheriff Jim Petray, says the tree was an oak tree. The newspaper reports of the time describe the tree as a "giant old oak." Ransom Petray, the son of the murdered sheriff, who was a high school student at the time remembers the tree well, even photographed it the following day. He says it was an oak tree.

But the tree in the photograph taken that night by Santa Rosa photographer Oscar Swanets, showing the three men in union suits hanging from a single limb, is a locust tree. The bark on the trunk and the seed pods on the bare December limbs show this clearly. And, by spring of the following year, newspaper articles referring to the incident had changed the species of the tree from oak to locust. A phalanx of Santa Rosa seniors, led by Ed Lindsay, whose family lived across the street, and George Greeott, who "drove by the tree every day and

watched it grow again," point to an existing locust tree in the Rural Cemetery and swear that it grew from the stump of the "Hanging Tree."



*George Boyd, Terry Fitts and Charley Valento*

The locust tree which grew from the four-foot stump is almost as large as the original tree, with a branch bearing an uncanny similarity to the one from which the men were hung. Assuming that it is no longer the focus of souvenir hunters like the ones that hacked the old tree to pieces, it can be located by using the GAR monument, once surrounded by cannonballs, now ringed with a concrete border, just inside the big gates to the Rural Cemetery on Franklin Ave. The tree, its stump visible from the



east side is due east of the southeastern corner of the monument plot.

Ed Lindsay is the final authority on that tree. Now 82 years old, he was 17 when the lynching occurred and remembers the night well. He was the youngest of a family of eight who lived in a big house on Franklin at the end of Carr Avenue. From his vantage point across the street, Ed Lindsay saw what happened to the "Hanging Tree." He saw it being hacked to pieces by people who wanted "remembrances" of the event ((several still have theirs, chunks of locust wood with the date carefully etched on one side). He watched as the damaged tree began to die and was still there to see it removed, before Memorial Day of 1921, by the sexton of the cemetery, on orders from the cemetery board.

He was there, too, when they came to hang the men. On the night of the "little party," as he puts it, they heard the cars coming down Franklin, which was a dirt road at the time.

"My father, who was a pretty smart man, turned out the lights and issued the order that no one was to leave the house. 'They've got a job to do,' he told us, 'and we're not going to interfere.' They were quiet. Only the lead car had lights as they approached. Several of the neighbors slept through it. When they were through, they dispersed and went north. Busybodies from downtown and the curious started coming out a car or two at a time. They left them hanging there because the county coroner was a man named Phillips from Petaluma and it took an hour or two to get the message to him."

In that hour after the hanging, photographer Swanets, who lived nearby and owned a studio downtown, came out and made the gruesome photograph that was circulated throughout the start and can still be seen in Wild West style barrooms as far away as Marysville.

There may have been other photographs of the lynching since Press Democrat editor Ernest Finley, confronted with a man with a rifle who told him gently, 'Go on back to your office, Ernest. We've got business here and you'd better just go back to work,' dispatched another photographer, Ted Nelson, to the scene. His photographs of the lynching have apparently been lost.

Lots of information that has been "lost" for 65 years has come to light since the 65-year silence about the carefully-planned incident was broken last month. One woman began her letter with "Well, finally your account of the lynching reads more like the story my father told me!"

Her father was the deputy sheriff who handed the keys to the four men as they came into the jail. He was at the jail that night specifically for his part in the operation. His account was not a boastful tale, but a simple telling of vigilant justice. I don't know if he ever regretted or questioned the morality of his involvement, but doubt very much that he did." Another corroboration for the vigilante's tale came from Forestville where lives the young boy, now 78 years old, who ran alongside the lynchers. The old rancher's story of a boy's exuberance-turned-to-fear at the sight of the guns, amused family and friends of the Forestville man. They have heard him tell the story often through the years – how he tried to follow but got scared and ran, how he ran so far and was so frightened that he became lost. He was 13 years old.

Most of the responses to the story about the lynching has come from those who are nearing or past 80, who are anxious to have everyone understand the lynching in the light of the times.

"Sonoma County was like a family in those days," said one man. "When Jim Petray was killed it was as if they had killed a member of your family. It wasn't so much that they were afraid that justice wouldn't be done. It was simply that they wanted to do it themselves. They wanted to kill the men who killed Jim."

Last summer, a history magazine published in San Francisco called "The Californians" did a piece on the Howard Street Gang and the Santa Rosa lynching. The author, Jim Kline, wrote that "the entire episode became a curious source of civic pride."

There's been nothing in my mail to dispute its conclusion.



# A.W. Garrett and Jim Petray

## *A Tale of Good and Evil*

by Janet Sbragia Pisenti

"Local boy makes good" I guess you would say about A.W. Garrett. He opened his tin and hardware shop in downtown Healdsburg at 312 Center Street in 1890, but prior to that he was only three years old when he arrived in Healdsburg with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Albert W. Garrett, Sr. Albert, Sr. opened a glove factory here in 1868.



*A.W. (Albert) Garrett is standing in front of his hardware store at 312 Center Street in Healdsburg. Photo taken in 1893.*

Young Albert must have enjoyed his growing-up years in the very small town of Healdsburg. Why, it was just incorporated in 1867, so you can imagine how small it was in building size and population. He attended local schools and it appeared that he was a young man who loved the outdoors and had good character, sort of an Eagle Scout type of guy...doing good deeds and helping others. His friend, Jim Petray, was the same kind of guy.

Jim was born in Windsor in 1865, the son of R.A. (Ransom) Petray and Nancy Faught, whose family was one of the '49ers who crossed the plains to come to California. Ransom was involved in a mercantile establishment in Windsor and he and Nancy had five sons and two daughters. Jim attended Healdsburg High School and so did Al Garrett.

Hannah Clayborn, during her time as curator of the Healdsburg Museum, thoroughly researched and put into print many stories of Healdsburg's past. This story highlights just what kind of guys A.W.



*James Petray, a dashing young fellow, born in Windsor of Pioneer parents, is looking good on top of this horse.*

Garrett and Jim Petray really were, as she includes them in her 2003 History of Healdsburg called "Legends, Rumors, and Miscellany."

### **Healdsburg's Flood of 1890** **Two Young Men Come to the Rescue**

The Russian River, famous for standing tall and spreading her swirling skirts over the land, rose to a particularly impressive height in the year 1890. On or about January 23, all of the lowlands near Healdsburg were inundated and two young men, A.W. Garrett and Jim Petray, were called upon to make heroic rescues.

When word reached town that two women were trapped in their house about a quarter mile south of Mill Street, the pair set off to the rescue in a rowboat. After reaching the house, Garrett and Petray yelled, but their voices sank into the roar of the water rushing around them. Rowing close by a window,



Garrett kicked out the glass and saw two women standing terrified on a tabletop with the water rising about them. One of the women was exceptionally large and when she reached her arms excitedly around Garrett's neck, both plunged into the water that filled the room. When she repeated her too eager embrace, putting both underwater a second time, Garrett resorted to knocking her over the head, rendering her unconscious and easier to squeeze through the window and into the boat. Meanwhile Petray anchored the boat by holding onto the window frame.

The second woman, much younger and more slender, was cooperative and was easily hoisted into the boat. With all on board, however, they found the current too swift to row against, so they drifted toward the area south of town by the depot. Once again, in a panic, the large woman moved too quickly, overturning the boat and sending all into the water. After hauling her to safety atop a pile of stacked lumber at Prince's lumberyard, they could not find the younger woman. But Garrett saw a long braid of hair bobbing near the edge of a plank and yanked her quickly out of the water. They even succeeded in recapturing and righting the boat.

Although safe, they were cold, drenched, and stranded atop an island of wood. Fortunately, a man on horseback had come as far as the bridge (site of the current auto bridge). Seeing that they needed help, he threw them a rope, which they tied to their boat. Carefully, they all climbed aboard and were pulled slowly to shore by the strong black horse.

As if this were not excitement enough, Garrett and Petray were called out later that afternoon to rescue another family. These folks were obedient, carefree, and calm and so were taken without incident through a second story window.

©Hannah Clayborn

### **A.W. and Jim Grew Up & Things Happened**

Time marches on, as they say, and it marched on in different directions for young A.W. "Albert" Garrett and young Jim Petray. Albert decided to get involved in the commerce of Healdsburg, as his father had done before him, only he decided to open a plumbing shop with F.E. Cook of Healdsburg. It was 1889, some say 1890, and the firm was known as Cook and Garrett. They sold stoves, tin ware, pumps, and hardware, but Mr. Cook sold his interest in the

firm in 1893 and the hardware store became Garrett's Hardware.

At some point, Albert Garrett married Cordelia "Cora" Hall of the well known Hall family of Healdsburg and they enjoyed their home and social life and watching their hardware business grow, a business which lasted until the 1940s.

Albert Garrett was very successful in his business and because of that success, it is said, he built a home at 403 Matheson Street and hired building designer and contractor J.W. Terry to do the job, who also provided plans for Josefa Carrillo Fitch's home, and many others in town.



*This large and very impressive home at 403 Matheson Street, Healdsburg, was designed by James Terry, architect, for Al and Cora Garrett, proprietors of Garrett's Hardware. They are believed to be standing in front of the home.*

Albert also became more involved in Healdsburg's everyday life when he became fire chief and the first president of the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce.

Jim Petray, who helped Albert Garrett rescue the two ladies already mentioned, plus other stranded people in the flood that inundated Healdsburg that year, also went on to achieve success in the town of Healdsburg. He grew to six feet tall and over the years he earned the nicknames "Gentleman Jim" and "Sunny Jim." He was married to a woman named Harriett, called "Hattie," and they raised a family of three children. Jim held various offices, such as: leading member of the Knights of Pythias, member of the Progressive Grange, enlisted volunteer in the



Spanish-American War, member of the Healdsburg Home Guard, deputy sheriff and constable...all topped off by being elected Sonoma County Sheriff in 1918.



*Sheriff James Petray, elected to that job in 1918, was also known in the Healdsburg area as Gentleman Jim or Sunny Jim. He and his friend, Al Garrett, enjoyed their life in Healdsburg with great success until Sheriff Petray's untimely death.*

The Petray family lived very comfortably at 730 Johnson Street in the house Jim had built in 1915, which was featured in the 2010 Historic Healdsburg Homes Tour. He was well-loved by the people of Healdsburg and became 'like a member of the family,' someone recalled.



*Former Petray house at 703 Johnson Street*

On December 10, 1920 at 12:30 a.m., at age 46, Jim Petray's life would change in an instant. He and two San Francisco police officers were called to track down three suspects involved in a gang rape in

San Francisco. They were traced to a house at 28 W. Seventh Street in Santa Rosa, located next door to the Toscano Hotel, now called Stark's Steakhouse. In a fierce gun battle, Jim was murdered, along with the two officers. As an era, it was the so-called "Roaring 20s" and it turned into the beginning of a sordid tale of revenge by 30 of Healdsburg's male residents, who captured the three men who shot and killed Jim and the two officers from a Santa Rosa jail, and hung all three at the Franklin Park Cemetery. They had already sworn each other to secrecy and drove home. Except for one person, their identities are still unknown, which should not bother most of us, but will be very interesting to some of Healdsburg's present-day citizens who have ancestors involved in that event. They will find out the whole story when the 30 names will be made public in the future. Meanwhile, this sordid tale is one of several news-making events featured in an exhibit called *Twisted History* at the Healdsburg Museum.

Even though Garrett's Hardware, owned by Albert Garrett, ended in the 1940s, the store and its business were purchased by various buyers, the latest being Healdsburg resident Carole Mascherini, President, all of whom kept the name Garrett in their business title. They have taken the store and its business right up to the present time, 121 years in business. Throughout those years, Healdsburg's residents have been influenced by various events both good and evil.

In 1906, the San Francisco Earthquake struck and towns as far north of little Healdsburg were greatly affected. On Center Street, where Garrett's Hardware was once located, the three-story Odd fellows Hall collapsed and so did the two-story Gobbi Building. The population in 1914 rose to 3,500, WWI began, and Healdsburg boys signed up to help their country. Yet, in 1917, Healdsburg was rated 5<sup>th</sup> in California in per capita wealth. Agriculture is what held the town and its surrounding area together and it wasn't always about grapes.

In 1919 Prohibition began and in 1921, the bridge over the Russian River was rebuilt to its present form. Prohibition ended in 1933, but the wine industry was severely damaged and many wineries had closed. In 1939, the stock market crash took place. This affected many people throughout the

United States, not just Healdsburg. Four passenger trains per day, though, were running through Healdsburg and in 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed. It was the beginning of America's involvement in World War II and an estimated 700 of Healdsburg's citizens joined the military service. The population was listed at 4,000 and good things and bad things continued to happen. The war ended in 1945, but five years later the Korean War began. It was 1950.

In 1958, the last regularly scheduled passenger train came through. Two years later, in 1960, the freeway bypass was dedicated. Other major events continued to take place, both locally and nationally, like the Vietnam War, with its loss of thousands. In the 1980s the town underwent major changes in the downtown and a multitude of vineyards, wineries, tasting rooms, hotels and restaurants began to draw widespread attention to our area.

Much more can be written about the years leading up to today, but this story began with two of Healdsburg's hometown boys, both successful but

one losing his life along the way. Healdsburg's population was very small when they began their lives, but has grown to 12,400+. It is still a very small town but it suits most people just fine.

Every owner, employer, and retail buyer of Garrett's Hardware, plus everyone in Healdsburg has been affected by all or some of the aforementioned events. Yet, Garrett's Hardware, now called Garrett Hardware and Country Store, a top-rated AC Hardware retailer and seller of plants, household items, and gifts in its adjoining Gift Shop, is still looking good in two locations, Healdsburg and Windsor.

Good continues to take place in both towns...and so does evil.

**Sources:**

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