



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SUMMER 2014 • ISSUE 125

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society



**THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE
OF THE HEALDSBURG PLAZA**

In This Issue

Like our current Healdsburg Museum exhibit, "If the Plaza Could Speak..." this issue of the *Russian River Recorder* focuses on the Healdsburg Plaza, from its 1857 pioneer inception to contemporary use. We are pleased to present articles by some talented guest writers, including a personal essay by Healdsburg's Literary Laureate, Gabriel Fraire, and an irreverent account of Larry Wilson and his proposed "Plaza of the Flags" by John Van der Zee. We are particularly delighted to feature an article by Hannah Clayborn, Healdsburg Museum's curator from 1979 to 1993. Hannah and John originally published their articles on a local history website created by Richard Janosko over a decade ago. They are included here with the authors' kind permission.

Museum Curator Holly Hoods presents "Spectacle and Outrage in the Plaza," an account of the epic Healdsburg Floral Festival of

May, 1904. Assistant Curator Whitney Hopkins has written an interesting overview of the sometimes-overlooked historic monuments that are currently installed in the Healdsburg Plaza. June Maher Smith researched the extensive history of musical concerts in the Plaza for the *Russian River Recorder* 14 years ago. We are pleased to update and reprint our recently-deceased friend June's article.

The issue begins with an introduction to the early days of the Plaza, written in 1928 by *Healdsburg Enterprise* Editor Julius Myron Alexander, the great-nephew of pioneer settler, Cyrus Alexander. Poems by Margo van Veen and Michelle Wing of the Healdsburg Literary Guild add contemporary perspectives. We close with a tribute to the Plaza from *Travel and Leisure* magazine in 2013.

As always, we hope you enjoy this publication.

Holly Hoods, Curator
Pamela Vana-Paxhia, Editor



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The Official Publication of the
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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Harmon Heald

Healdsburg Plaza's Early History

by *Julius Myron Alexander, 1928*

Pioneer stories are always interesting. They are of discovery and take the reader back into an unknown land as it came from the hand of creation. Harmon Heald was a pilgrim with a vision reaching far into the years ahead of him, so he came with his ox teams and lumbering wagons into the meadow and the beauty land of the north. He explored and rode as a vaquero over all of the Sotoyome land, and in 1851 he pitched his tent beneath a big Madrone tree which stood in the center of what is now [Healdsburg Avenue] at the corner of [Plaza Street].



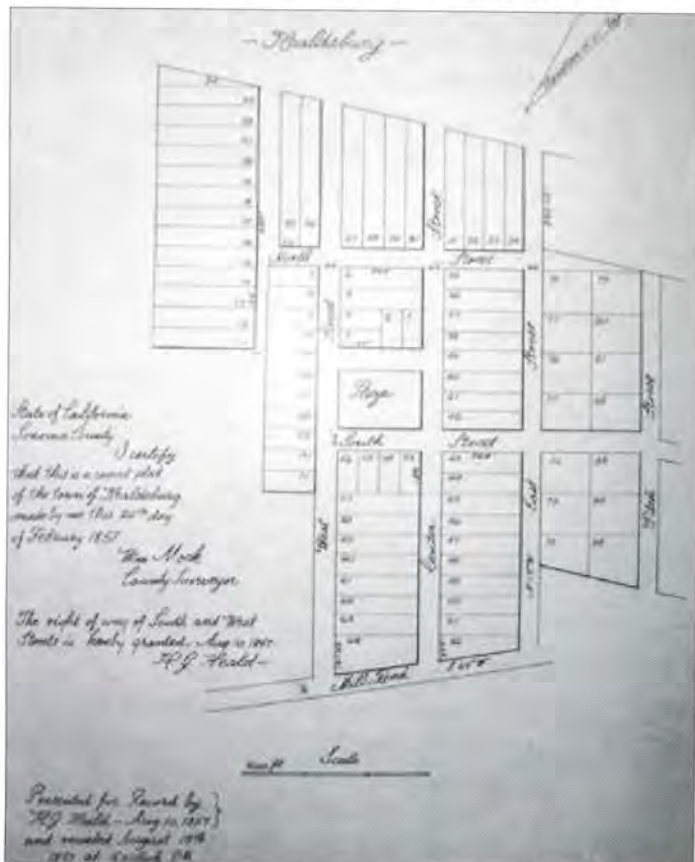
Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Madrone tree in road at corner of (what is today) Healdsburg Avenue and Plaza Street, 1869

There beside the roadway leading to Mendocino County, he built a little cabin of clapboards split from the redwoods of the Mill Creek section. From Petaluma he ordered a stock of food and clothing, filling the rude shelves and tables with calicoes, shirtings, boots, spurs, coffee, salt and sugar with a liberal supply of chewing tobacco and painted across the front of the "shebang"—"Heald's Store." That was the first building and the first store of the wayside where the wild oats and clover grew in tangle, and the great oaks and meadows gave shade to the wild cattle, the deer and the antelope.

Harmon Heald was a good man, fair and square in his dealings. He was above all a community leader. There were five essentials in the primitive establishment of a village: a general store, a blacksmith shop, a saloon, a school and a church. Of necessity other pioneers came, and about Heald's Store they built the three needed shacks. William Dodge and William Dow had the first blacksmith shop, where they shod oxen, mended log chains, repaired guns and made bear traps. That was the second building for the establishment. Cyrus Alexander built the church and the school house and the man who started the saloon was probably known

only by his first name that the records might not tell a tale. Then Tom Hudson came and lived with Heald and Mrs. Hudson cooked beans and flap jacks and mended the shirts for the merchants and her spouse. In 1853, little Henry Hudson was born, being the first (white) birth in the new settlement. In that same year of 1853, Harmon Heald's youngest brother died, so we find birth and death, the beginning and end, closely interwoven with the pioneer population of seventy five years ago. Then came August Knaack who made chairs and A.B. Aull who bought an interest with Heald in the store. Many others followed each year to the village of the Russian River land.

In the spring of the year 1857, Harmon Heald employed W.P. Mock to make a survey of the town site of Healdsburg. It was rather a hard task for surveyor Mock, for he had no established place for a beginning point, so Heald and he picked out a big tree on West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) for their base of beginning. They did not worry about the ending point, for they could stop at any point or time when they were tired or the dinner bell rang.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

1857 Plat Map of Healdsburg, drawn by William P. Mock



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Drawing Tools, belonged to Surveyor William Mock.
Donor: Barbara Webster

So they began at the big tree, the madrona, running from there so many feet north to the slough (Foss Creek), and then a number of feet south until they again ran up against the slough. Then Mock came back and set his compass as right angles to the first line and measured for North Street. From North Street he measured down West Street for the formation of South Street, now known as Matheson. Then he crossed over the distance of the south side of the Plaza square. Thus the original town site extends from the slough on the west to the line of Fitch Street on the east and north to the meanderings of the slough and sought to any old point about where Mill Street is today.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Early view of West Street Businesses, c. 1864

Then Heald made a reservation of the Plaza for a public park and certain other lots for church sites, and gave notice to the public that lots were for sale at \$15.00 each, if taken at once. After a very short time the price jumped to a higher figure and purchasers began speculating in Healdsburg real estate. Built upon a solid foundation as planned by these pioneers of old, the village of "then" has become the prosperous, beautiful city of today."

The Healdsburg Plaza

by Hannah Clayborn, 2003

excerpted from the original, published in 2003 on the local history website, www.ourhealdsburg.com

Harmon Heald picked a spot near the present Plaza in 1851 when he built his first little "squatter's" cabin. He was looking for a sunny, but protected spot out of the dank gloom of the redwoods to recover from the illnesses he contracted on the journey across the plains. An early settler at "Heald's Store", as it was known in 1856, described the Plaza site as a "beautiful shady grove."

When Harmon Heald's wife, Sarah, died in 1857, the funeral was held outdoors on the Plaza, a church having not yet been built. One who attended that funeral described the Plaza as "covered with large oaks with but one or two madronnas."

Although it is difficult to identify all of the native species of trees that once shaded the Plaza and town site, photographs from 1864 to 1873 suggest that it was covered with Pacific Madrone, Black Oak, Valley Oak, Coast Live Oak, and Black Walnut. The Indians may have transplanted the Walnut to their village sites.



Source: *Beyond the Mississippi*
Madrona Tree, Healdsburg, California, 1859

Plaza Tree Immortalized

One huge and ancient madrone tree that stood on the northwest corner of the Plaza was impressive enough to be sketched by writer and artist, Albert Deane Richardson, author of *Beyond the Mississippi*, an account of his travels in the West from 1856 to 1857. He wrote:

"In the afternoon we reached Healdsburg, an agreeable village, shaded with live-oaks and madronas, or mountain laurels. Here the live oak attains perfection. I have seen no other tree so beautiful save the elm of the Connecticut valley. The madrona too, with its vivid green foliage, bright red stems and exquisite outline, is a marvel of grace and loveliness. One, in the principle street of the town, towering and spreading far above the highest buildings, is singularly picturesque and venerable. The boughs of all trees are richly festooned with great bunches of mistletoe."

No other small northern California town was so honored in his book, and the tree Richardson drew in 1865 had been severely damaged by fire in 1859.

The town, as Heald laid it out in 1857, was in the common "grid" pattern pervasive throughout the West. But the focus of its streets on a plaza/park was somewhat unusual for northern California. He was no doubt influenced by the old Mexican military parade ground/plaza in the nearby town of Sonoma. The name itself betrayed its Mexican origins, for it was never called a "square" or "commons" as such places were known in New England, but was always referred to as the "Plaza" from 1857 on.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
The Healdsburg Plaza before it was fenced, and with a few remaining native trees in 1872. Wagons used the Plaza as a parking lot. In center, view is east on Matheson St. from Healdsburg Ave.

Pigs Are Prohibited

As the commercial center and population of the town grew, many trees were felled to make way for construction, but the Plaza trees remained as a remnant of the old forest. The first attempt to fence and protect these trees came as early as 1858, when a group of citizens surveyed the lot and made cost estimates before giving up the project.

The importance of a fence may not be as clear to us now, but in those days the Plaza was mainly used to hitch heavy wagons which made deep ruts in the earth and crushed the tender root systems of the native trees. Marauding livestock, most notably pigs, ran loose and wallowed in winter mud puddles. The very first city ordinance, in fact, expressly prohibited all pigs from entering the Plaza.

The Ancient Oaks Fall

It is difficult to tell how many Plaza trees were damaged or removed between 1857 and 1868, but in the latter year the local newspaper editor protested, "Many of the noble oaks on our plaza, which have long been the pride of citizens and the admiration of strangers, are dying for want of protection." Later the same editor declared, "It is a shame that these trees remain unfenced to have the life trampled out of them by the constant travel of the streets..."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg Plaza, view west, J. H. Downing photo, 1875

The Plaza was finally fenced in 1873 at a cost of \$1,000. This first adornment was built of redwood with carved pickets and molded posts. Six gates gave

access, one at each corner and one on the east and west sides. At the same time townsfolk plowed, harrowed and filled the plaza with river bottom loam hauled from the Russian River. Ornamental shrubbery, most likely herbs, was planted among the native trees, along with at least one fruit tree.

Yet by 1873 the attitude towards the old forest trees had changed. Now the local editor and a group of citizens called for the removal of the trees, thinned and strangled by abuse. They must have met with opposition, however, for the first City Council order to remove the trees in April of that year was rescinded one month later. Finally, a citizen petition forced the removal of the ancient oaks in March of 1874.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

The "new improved" Plaza as photographed in a snowstorm in 1887. Citizens were invited to plant trees & shrubs which grew up in profusion. The eucalyptus border had to be partially cut down in order to take the picture. Bell Tower is in center.

Citizens Invited to Plant

Now that it was cleared for improvement, the Council invited all interested citizens to plant trees and shrubs in the Plaza, which they did, seemingly at random. By 1876 they had filled the plaza with tiny fir trees, cypress, and had bordered it with Eucalyptus. In the very center they planted exotic palms.

Although the firs were a native California touch, perhaps a remembrance of the journey over the Sierras, these plantings also exhibited the taste for the exotic that flourished in California during that era, especially the pervasive Eucalyptus imported from Australia.

Even these efforts fell short, for only two years later the newspaper began to agitate for further

beautification, including the planting of Kentucky Blue Grass, irrigation, and iron benches for visitors. The unkempt appearance of the Plaza had an unfavorable effect on visitors, the paper claimed. "Hard times" following the economic "Panic" of 1873 delayed further work until late 1880, when the first structure on the site was designed.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Bell Tower encircled by cypress trees, Healdsburg Plaza, 1892

Bell Tower: a Painted Lady

In December 1880, the City of Healdsburg purchased a 778-pound bell from the Christian College in Santa Rosa. Immediately thereafter work began on a large enclosed bell tower in the center of the Plaza. The nearly completed "City Fire Tower" received the bell and tested its voice on January 6, 1881. She sounded loud and clear, serving for many years to call the volunteer fire brigade, gather townsfolk in emergencies, or ring out joyous news.

With its many trees, lacy fence, and now a lofty civic spire and bell as centerpiece, the citizens of Healdsburg seemed satisfied with their Plaza. Encircled by a row of Eucalyptus, the lot now supported approximately 35 cypress and fir trees in various stages of growth.

Still, without regular maintenance the Plaza often looked unkempt. When the editor of the *Healdsburg Enterprise* newspaper called the Plaza an "eyesore", a movement to clean it up began that was repeated annually. Not all of the improvements made during this era were equally appreciated and it was about this time that disagreement arose about the appearance and use of the Plaza.

For example, in 1892 enthusiastic citizens gave the wooden bell tower a new coat of paint,

apparently in very bright colors. Many other citizens felt the colors were in poor taste, and it was reported that the majority "would have preferred white".

A Party Place

With its central location, the Plaza also became a party place. Local businessmen were the first to recognize the advantage of such gatherings in a picturesque setting, conveniently encircled by their shops.

Fourth of July celebrations on the Plaza began at least as early as 1866. A reported crowd of 2,000 gathered in that year to hear orations, watch the parade and later enjoy the evening pyrotechnics.

RULES AND GENERAL INFORMATION
— CONCERNING GRAND —

Knighthood :-: Tournament!

TO BE HELD IN HEALDSBURG MAY 1, 1888.

King Arthur of the Table Round and Knight-Errantry associated with his times will be represented.

The King will have his attendants of courtiers, pages, etc.

There will be 28 Knights, divided in two teams of 14 Knights each.

One team will be composed of Healdsburg riders, the other of riders from abroad.

The winning Knight will crown the May Queen.

The next four highest in order will crown the 1st, 2d, 3d and 4th Maids of Honor.

Also \$100 IN CASH PRIZES will be awarded the winning Knights, as follows: First Prize, \$50; Second Prize, \$30; Third Prize, \$20.

Distance to be ridden, 100 yards: 20 yards from start to first arch, and 40 yards between the arches. Time, 40 seconds or less.

The rings will be 1 1/2 inches in diameter, in the clear, and will be suspended from the arches in such manner that they may be picked off with the lance.

The lances will be 7 feet long and will weigh about 2 pounds.

Each Knight who enters must pay \$1 50 entrance fee, and deposit \$5 for helmet, armor, etc. Part or all of the \$5 deposit will be returned if the finances of the Healdsburg Tournament Club will afford it. [Already its financial success is assured, as the business men of Healdsburg have subscribed liberally; so entering Knights may confidently count upon the return of the \$5 deposit. An advance of \$6 50 must be made, however, before the rider's name is listed, as a guarantee of good faith.]

Each Knight, in his order, will have in all five rides, making 15 the highest number of rings possible to take. Ties to be decided at close of regular tilting.

Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Handbill for Knighthood Tournament, 1888

In 1877 a May Day Festival was established. This first festival featured a "Knighthood Tournament", wherein mounted riders tried to spear brass rings with lances while galloping at high speeds. By 1879 the event was drawing close to 5,000 people, almost three times the population of the town. The main event was always the parade of the Floral Queen and her attendants around the Plaza. As each year built upon the last, the event grew more elaborate. In 1895 the festival was a three day extravaganza with a mile long parade around the Plaza.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg "Lancers" in Knighthood Tournament

After 1896 the Floral Festival, as the May Day spectacular was now known, was combined with the Independence Day celebration and the "Floral Queen" was replaced with the "Goddess of Liberty".

Fourth of July celebrations tapered off about 1925, when a reported crowd of 15,000 gathered at the park. The economic effects of Prohibition on this grape and hop growing region, and later the onset of the Great Depression, caused the discontinuation of the large Plaza festivals.

Miss Bell Tower, Scorned by Band

Almost as soon as a town band became well established in the 1880's the Healdsburg Plaza became its unofficial headquarters. The Plaza was a perfect location for regular seasonal Saturday night band concerts drawing people from far and wide. The Healdsburg concerts were economical. They cost next to nothing and admission was free. They brought trade for local business because shops stayed open until 9 p.m. on those nights. The concerts also provided much needed entertainment and social opportunities.

Requests for a permanent bandstand, to replace a temporary one constructed annually next to the bell tower, had been made for years. But in 1895 a concerted movement for civic improvement began in Healdsburg. This movement, which in other spheres resulted in a municipally owned water and electric plant, had a drastic effect on the Plaza, and pushed the question of the band concerts to the forefront.

It all started with agitation by the local newspaper and citizens beginning in April 1895,

resulting in the destruction of old "Miss Bell Tower" in 1896. Barely 15 years old, she was now considered an "eyesore" and was accused of causing false fire alarms with her rickety frame in high winds.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Plaza Bandstand, 1897

A new circular bandstand appeared in her place, a gazebo-like structure with a conical roof built upon the old bell tower legs. Following the elaborate styles of that era, it included open banister work, fancy brackets and cornices, and a "swaying" staircase". This whimsical Victorian bandstand soon became a favorite gathering place, especially for young single men and women who would assemble on warm evenings after chores were done.

Lady Imps Ignite Firestorm

Perhaps it was the popularity of the bandstand as a magnet for socializing, and the ever-increasing fame of the Saturday night concerts, which led to its controversial downfall only three years later. Those concerts inevitably involved the consumption of liquor, either in nearby saloons or from pocket flasks.

One aspect of the progressive spirit that seized the town included the Temperance Movement to ban the use of alcohol. Following the lead of Temperance Leagues throughout California, a local group, the Ladies Improvement Club, received permission from the City Trustees to replace the bandstand with a central drinking fountain. Such civic water fountains had been installed in many towns as a symbol of the determination to outlaw stronger refreshments.

A drinking fountain could have been placed almost anywhere on the Plaza, but the "Lady Imps", as they were known to some, were set upon the destruction of the bandstand and its unsavory

influence. They ignited a firestorm of controversy by proposing the removal of the town's favorite gathering place. The City Trustees, caught in the middle of this passionate debate, became mired in indecision.

When a citizen's petition began to circulate to save the bandstand, the Ladies Improvement Club, intent upon their Higher Purpose, had the bandstand hurriedly axed down. This rash action started a year-long battle between community factions, played out on the Plaza, in the newspapers, and at City Trustee meetings.

Hoodlums Scrawl Indecent Graffiti

On April 12, 1900 the *Healdsburg Tribune* reported that a group of young people had played a hoax on the "Lady Imps". In the dark of night they erected a fake "marble" monument in the center of the Plaza, built out of wood with muslin stretched over it. The newspaper fumed over the "indecent" graffiti that was scrawled upon the thing, stating, "The sentiments expressed on the monument were worthy of Barbary Coast hoodlums."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Ladies Improvement Club fountain

The Ladies Improvement Club, determined to have their symbolic drinking fountain, would not be swayed. The young people and most shop owners wanted a bandstand. Some businessmen wanted something else altogether, suggesting an elaborate "electric fountain", consisting of large sprays of water lit by multi-colored lights. This idea was modeled after an exhibit at the 1894 California Midwinter Exposition in San Francisco. Although expensive, such a spectacular display might draw out-of-towners, they reasoned. The Plaza had become the

visible battleground for a war waged between competing community values and interests.

With the help of an attorney, the "Lady Imps" finally prevailed over all, and the drinking fountain was dedicated on May 1, 1901. Not completely defeated however, the rest of the community immediately erected a temporary bandstand next to the fountain, which was succeeded by a permanent one donated by local businessmen in 1915. By that time the "Lady Imps" may have lost political power.

And the band played on.

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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Queen Isabelle Simi and her Court, 1904
(Part of Ladies' Improvement Club fountain in far left)*

Spectacle and Outrage in the Plaza: Cabbage Head vs. the Flower Queen

by Holly Hoods, 2014

This colorful story of the Healdsburg Floral Festival started and ended in the Plaza in the spring of 1904.

Festivals and Carnivals

By the late 1870s, Healdsburg had already become an entertainment destination in Sonoma County. Residents, neighbors and tourists from out of the county flocked to Healdsburg's fun-filled, seasonal festivals, most of which centered on the Plaza or the Russian River. These elaborate galas were highly promoted, drawing thousands of visitors to Healdsburg, dwarfing today's "Tuesday on the Plaza" concert crowds.

One of the biggest and best-loved carnivals was the Floral Festival, a spring extravaganza that was held in Healdsburg at the turn of the 19th century. Healdsburg hosted its first Floral Festival in 1895. Inspired by a similar festival that had been held in Santa Rosa in 1894, the whole downtown was festooned with real flowers and garlanded with the blue and yellow festival colors. Floral arches

crowned Matheson Street at Center Street and Healdsburg Avenue (then "West Street"). Flower-bedecked floats, rigs and bicycles came from Santa Rosa, Geyserville, Lytton Springs, Windsor and (of course) Healdsburg to participate in a huge parade.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Floral Festival in the Plaza, 1904

The *Healdsburg Tribune* estimated the 1895 crowd size to be at least 5,000. The 1896 Floral Festival attendance was even bigger—estimated at more than 10,000 people! Despite the successes, only three floral festivals were held in Healdsburg. The last one was in May 1904, when Miss Isabelle Simi was crowned queen.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Queen Isabelle Simi and her Court, 1904

Isabelle Simi Crowned Queen

The 1904 Floral Festival was an especially dramatic episode in the life of the Healdsburg Plaza. Isabelle Simi, a pretty and spunky 17-year old from a respected local winemaking family, was chosen to be queen at a ceremony on May Day. She was a popular choice for this honor. Young Isabelle was mourning the recent death of her father and shouldering new responsibilities managing her family's Simi winery. She had the sympathy and esteem of the community.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Floral Festival brochure, 1904

Queen Isabelle was to reign over the upcoming Floral Festival on the weekend of May 27-29. The queen and her court, attired in royal garb, presided over three days of downtown parades, receptions, musical tributes and speeches. The maids of honor selected for the queen's court were young ladies from neighboring communities as well as Healdsburg: Mildred Martin of Geyserville, Margaret Minehan of Cloverdale, Lettie Riddle of Santa Rosa, Ethel Healey of Petaluma, Jennie Burger of Healdsburg and Mary McGowan of Ukiah. An excursion train from the north and another one from the south brought thousands of visitors to add to the carnival throng. San Francisco was well represented at the event.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Queen Isabelle Simi, 1904

Three Day Festival in the Plaza

Healdsburg took its honorary royalty seriously. The businesses flanking the Plaza and private homes throughout the City were decorated with flowers and bunting in the carnival colors: red and green in 1904. Before the coronation ceremony was a rousing concert by the Sotoyome Band in the Plaza, followed by a spirited oration by Clarence F. Lea, a Healdsburg attorney (on his way to becoming District Attorney and eventually Congressman). According to the *San Francisco Call*, which covered

and promoted the pageant, on the first day a floral crown was "placed on her Majesty's head by Mayor T.S. Merchant and the keys to the city turned over" to the queen. On the final day of the carnival, Queen Isabelle crowned King Rex who arrived in a "cavalcade of horsemen and chariots." Following the coronation ceremony was a fantastic parade. The festivities closed with "merriment and a masquerade ball."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Ande Nowlin, 1905

Nowlin the "Knocker"

Not everyone watched the winsome pageantry with approval. Ande Nowlin, editor/publisher of the *Windsor Herald* and later the (Healdsburg) *Sotoyome Scimitar*, was an outspoken bigot. Frequently offending readers with his fiery editorials and rude characterizations, Nowlin loved nothing better than stirring up a good controversy. Nowlin took cruel aim in the *Herald*, taunting Healdsburg, the carnival and the queen in crude singsong rhymes. He encouraged Windsor people to skip the festivities altogether. Worst of all, he razed the people of Healdsburg for selecting a dark-skinned Italian ("swarthy Dago") to be their fair queen.

The people roared in indignation over the outrageous insult to their queen. The *Healdsburg Tribune* editorialized:

Now that the official program of the Carnival has been duly set aside to rest upon its laurels, it becomes necessary in the course of human events to award the "King of Knockers." The judges have fairly and justly handed this honored title to the poor, weak-spirited knocker who runs the Windsor Herald. This poor excuse for a newspaperman has cast insults and slurs

upon the people of Healdsburg and the Carnival. The citizens of Healdsburg cordially invite the knocker to attend an Egg Social, which will be held any time he informs them he will be in town. Tar and feathers will be very much in evidence.

Cabbage Head

Monday evening about 8:30, a crowd of about 150 people, including many of the prominent businessmen and town officials, assembled in the Plaza. They were armed with tin pans, clubs, horns and other articles of warfare. They made an effigy of Nowlin (with a head made of cabbage) which they paraded around the Plaza, booing and jeering, "Who have we here? Ande Nowlin, the knocker!" In front of the Sotoyome Hotel the effigy was burned and speeches made. "Three cheers for Queen Isabelle! Three groans for Nowlin, the Knocker!" They set fire to the figure and left the remains in the Plaza. The head of the effigy, a cabbage, was saved and prayers were offered by the chaplain in front of the City Hall. The crowd then proceeded to the Queen's home to show their loyalty and would have soon put a finish to the *Windsor Herald*, had it not been for wiser heads ruling at the moment. Tuesday morning all the Healdsburg business houses advertising in the *Windsor Herald* removed their ads.

Tuesday night a coffin was made at the undertaker's and the remains were officially buried in Pete Dirvin's Enterprise Cannery, after a crowd of over 150 citizens had marched dolefully around the Plaza, to the tune of a muffled snare drum and a washtub. Nowlin actually stood by and watched as they placed the ashes in a coffin and buried it. He loved the negative attention and relished attending his own "funeral."

The Floral Festival controversy apparently stood out as one of Ande Nowlin's personal highs in his journalistic career. When the curmudgeon journalist sold his newspaper and retired in 1946, Nowlin fondly recounted this story in his final "Swan Song-Adios."

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Healdsburg Tribune, 26 May 1904; 2 June 1904
San Francisco Call, 26, 27, 28, 29 May 1904.
Sotoyome Scimitar, 22 August 1946.

Monuments in the Plaza

by Whitney Hopkins, 2014

Today's Healdsburg Plaza contains a curious array of monuments, which have come about as a result of the contributions of a number of individuals, service clubs and local businesses. They serve as reminders of Healdsburg's history, as well as broader events in American history.



Photo: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Sandborn Memorial Plaza, 1961

The Sandborn Memorial Fountain, funded by Elmer Sandborn in memory of his family, in the center of the park was dedicated on May 15, 1961. The fountain was designed to be the centerpiece of the newly renovated Plaza square at the time. Designed by R. Burton Litton, Berkeley landscape architect who grew up on the family ranch near Healdsburg, the renovation consisted of the new center fountain, new benches, center concrete walkways, new plantings of trees and shrubs, new lawns and sprinkler system and new drinking fountain. Approximately 600 people were present for the dedication ceremony. Mayor Art Ruonavara credited the late councilman R.L. Whitwell for initiating the renovation of the plaza square. The highlight of the fountain's dedication was the appearance of well-known opera concert contralto Elizabeth Pharris who sang a selection of songs to the crowd. It was Healdsburg's Smith Robinson who was responsible for arranging Ms. Pharris' performance at the dedication.



Photo: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman, tennis champion, sits in front of the torch monument honoring her in December, 1963.

The torch monument, in the northeast corner of the plaza, was funded by four Healdsburg service clubs, the Lions, Kiwanis, Soroptimists and Rotary. It was designed by Fabe Soukup of Healdsburg. Its purpose was to honor Healdsburg's athletic champions: Ralph Rose, world shot put champion; Edward Beeson, world high-jump champion; Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman, world tennis singles champion; and Robert Boehm, world inboard motor boat hydroplane champion. Dedicated in June, 1963, it was noted that "there is probably no city in the US the size of Healdsburg that can boast of four world champions. Smith Robinson had the original idea for the monument, and was instrumental in gathering the information about the athlete's accomplishments, and getting Healdsburg's service clubs to take on the project. The monument was unveiled by Healdsburg's George Barry, the chairman for the project, and Fabe Soukup, whose employees at Concrete Conduit did the design and fabrication of the monument. Dr. Beeson and Mr. Boehm were present for the ceremony. Ralph Rose was deceased. Mrs. Wightman, who lived in Boston, was not present at the ceremony, but came to visit

Healdsburg in December, 1963, in order to see the monument. In 1998, a new flame sculpture atop the torch, created by Ed Voelkel, was installed, paid for by local contributors.



Photo: Healdsburg Museum Collection

***E Clampus Vitas Dedication, May 1964
Dedication of Harmon Gregg Heald plaque.
Left to right - Ed Langhart, Doug Badger,
Dick Nason, Bill Ward***

The boulder and plaque on the northwest corner of the park was organized by E. Clampus Vitus (ECV), a fraternal organization known for their "mirth-making" and dedication to the study and preservation of the heritage of the American West. The boulder is a monument to Healdsburg's founder Harmon Heald and his store. May 23, 1964, the "Clampers" planted the plaque and new stone. For the dedication of the stone, the society paraded around the plaza with band blaring and six-shooters popping before heading up to the Villa to initiate new members. Ed Langhart described the activities of Harmon Heald and Mayor Doug Badger welcomed the group. Bill Ward, who had a summer home on Fitch Mountain, spearheaded the visit of ECV to Healdsburg.

The historic millstone from the Cyrus Alexander flour mill, located in the south west corner of the plaza park, was placed there May 20, 1965. Mr. and Mrs. Harry H. Wetzel and Mr. and Mrs. Russell H. Green, residents and property owners in Alexander Valley, donated the millstone. In 1962, Russell Green and Harry Wetzel, two long-time friends and business partners in Southern California, purchased the Alexander ranch, where the millstone was located. Pioneer Cyrus Alexander, for whom the Alexander Valley is named, is believed to have

established one of the earliest grist mills in Sonoma County, in 1847, in order to grind flour for his family's use.



Photo: Healdsburg Museum Collection

***Doug Badger and Ed Langhart inspect the Plaza millstone,
1965***



Photo: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Fallen Soldiers' Memorial, 1997

The statue of a young boy holding a tri-folded American flag at the southeast corner of the plaza park was donated to the City of Healdsburg by the Fred and Evalee Vellutini on December 7, 1997. Vellutini, who lives in Santa Cruz, is a former Healdsburg resident who lost his brother Herman, and cousin Ray Vellutini, in World War II. The statue serves as a monument to the local soldiers fallen in battle. It was originally a memorial to Healdsburg men lost in World War II, but another plaque has since been added to the statue with the names of those lost in World War I, Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf War. The Vellutinis also created a trust fund, which is being held by the City of Healdsburg, so that a wreath can be placed on the statue on December 7 (Pearl Harbor Day), Veterans Day and Memorial Day annually.



Photo: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Plaza gazebo, dedicated 2007

While the plaza has included a number of gazebos over the decades, the current gazebo, which rose in just over four months, was built in 2007, and dedicated on July 24 of that year. A plaque on a stone east of the gazebo notes that “the gazebo is a monument to the dedication, generosity and character of our community.” It was built by businesses, organizations and professionals who donated or discounted their services, and businesses and individuals who contributed funds. Healdsburg architect Kenneth Munson designed the gazebo and Eddinger Enterprises served as the General Contractor. Healdsburg Lumber donated materials. Numerous others also contributed.



Photo: Nell Kneibler
9/11 monument in Plaza, 2014

Installed in 2012, the most recent addition to the east side of the Healdsburg plaza park is the 9/11 monument. Part of the Twin Towers, a steel I-beam approximately 90 pounds, is mounted on a concrete pillar. The cost of the pillar was paid for by Fred Vellutini, the former Healdsburg resident who also donated the plaza war memorial. Vellutini’s grandson-in-law died on September 11, 2001 aboard Flight 11 on a business trip out of Boston to Los Angeles when the plane was hijacked by terrorists and flown into the north tower of the World Trade Center. According to Ben Gilliam, a retired Healdsburg firefighter who requested the piece of the Twin Towers from the New York City’s Fire Department, “It’s really supposed to be a remembrance of 9/11 but also for firefighters and police officers...”

Sources:

Healdsburg Tribune newspaper 11 May 1961, 18 May 1961, 20 June 1963, 27 June 1963, 5 December 1963, 28 May 1964, 13 May 1965, 27 May 1965.
Press Democrat newspaper 8 September 2012, 13 September 2012, 28 November 2013.

Music in the Plaza

by June Maher Smith, 2000
updated by Holly Hoods, 2014

Over the years the City of Healdsburg and outdoor concerts have become almost synonymous. The Saturday night concerts in the Plaza provided entertainment for local citizens and visitors for decades. Rural families came to town to listen and socialize. The merchants stayed open on those Saturday evenings so the parents could shop and then treat the children to something cool at the soda fountain.

Early Healdsburg Bands

The Russian River Brass Band was the first organized band here. John S. Williams, who came to Healdsburg as a young lad, noted in his "Pioneer Recollections" that he remembered hearing that band in the late 1850s. The conductor was James E. Fenno, a jeweler and watchmaker by trade. It is doubtful this band played in the Plaza, as back then the block donated to the City by Harmon Heald was still covered with oak and madrone trees. It was used mostly as a parking lot for wagons since there were no fountains, benches or bandstands. The Russian River Brass Band was still in existence in 1866 when Professor Carl V. Wilmot became the conductor. Prior to moving here he had been with the Presidio Regimental Brass Band.

In 1873, the native trees were cleared from the Plaza and pines, fir and eucalyptus were planted. (This was just the first of the various Plaza landscaping projects over the years, but that's another story.) About five years later the bell tower and the first bandstand were built.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Sotoyome Band, 1899

By the mid 1880s the Russian River Brass Band must have disbanded, for another group, the

Sotoyome Band, was formed by some of the same musicians. In March 1888 this new band gave an open air concert in the Plaza, the beginning of a series of Saturday night concerts that year. In 1891, Professor O.C. Smith moved from Fresno to conduct the Sotoyome Band. According to the *Sonoma County Tribune*, Smith was "the leading cornet soloist on the Pacific slope." Also in that year the City fathers granted the band the privilege of erecting a bandstand adjoining the bell tower and furnishing benches for the audience's comfort. Weekly Saturday evening band concerts started in May that year.

Although the band had only 15 members in 1891, they played a full concert of marches, waltzes and other selections. In fact, they opened the June 5th 1897 concert with John Philip Sousa's march "King Cotton." This same march was included in the Healdsburg Community Band's repertoire 100 years later.

The Sotoyome Band also played for dances. After one of their Saturday night Plaza concerts in August 1897, they played at Muller's Hall. The *Healdsburg Tribune* stated that "Perfect order will be maintained and the dances will be conducted in the best possible manner." (Muller's Hall was a German brewery and beer garden located at the NW corner of North Street and what is now Healdsburg Avenue.)

By 1902, the Sotoyome Band had a new conductor, D.O. Davis. George Alexander was the business manager. Other members of the group were Ed Ellis, John Fay, August Arata, Fred and Temple Bailhache, Dave Ban, I. Morel, Ralph Powell, Charles Butler and Charles Proctor. The next year permanent lighting was installed in the Plaza.

Not even an earthquake could stop the Saturday night concerts in the Plaza. Two months after the disastrous 1906 quake, the band played two numbers by Healdsburg composers: "The Gaiety Girl

March” by Will L. Livernash and a march-song, “The True Sons of ’49,” words by Arthur Price and music by Louis Meyer. The latter was dedicated to the San Francisco earthquake and fire sufferers.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Sotoyome Band in the Plaza, 1910

The band was reorganized in 1916 as the Healdsburg Brass Band. Ed Pryor was the director and there were 19 other members. Three of them had played in the previous brass band: John Fay, Dave Bane and Temple Bailhache. This group also played for people living out on the coast. Band members loaded their children and instruments into a large wagon and spent a couple of summer weeks camping at various spots along the ocean. In the evenings, they would give a concert in one of the small coastal towns.

Wartime Concerts

Even during the World War I years, the concerts were well attended. In May 1918, the *Healdsburg Tribune* reported, “Quite a number of persons drive to Healdsburg from Santa Rosa on Saturday evenings to enjoy the concerts given by the Municipal Band in the Plaza.”

In the late 1920s, the Lytton Boys’ Band (Salvation Army Band) was providing the Saturday night music. During the 4th of July weekend in 1927, they played six concerts over three days. Major Taylor conducted the band, which continued playing on Saturday nights for several years, using Healdsburg High School students to fill out their numbers. Guerdon Miller remembers playing with them in the mid-1930s. In addition to being present for the Plaza concerts, Guerdon says that they had to

attend two weekly rehearsals in the gymnasium at the Lytton Home. Their weekly “salary” totaled 10 cents—a whole dime to spend on an ice cream cone.

Also in the mid-1930s, the Depression years, the Healdsburg merchants signed a petition to abandon the concerts, as they did not bring enough profit to those businesses which contributed to the Chamber of Commerce and the concert fund. As a result, the Salvation Army Band discontinued their concerts in the Plaza.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Owen Sweeten with the Municipal Band, 1937

Owen Sweeten Revives the Concerts

However, in 1937 Owen Sweeten was asked by the merchants and the City Council to organize and conduct summer concerts. Sweeten was a musician and showman who was well known in his native Salt Lake City. He had been a director of a large band which had played for dancing at the Saltair Resort at Great Salt Lake; and he had played on stage in many theaters on the West Coast.

The Healdsburg Municipal Band concerts he directed not only featured band music, they also starred local talent, both young and old, contests and other diversions, such as bathing beauties. They drew large crowds to the Plaza on Saturday nights. The *Tribune* reported that “close to 4,000 people attended the July 5th concert in 1941.” At a concert the following month, bottles of wine donated by Italian Swiss Colony were given to the three oldest people in the crowd and the one from the farthest distance. Patriotism was building in this last peacetime year: the “Star-Spangled Banner” was played at the beginning and end of each concert.

The Healdsburg Municipal Band members were local men, including Jess Ratchford, Harry Latimer and John Condit. High school and Junior College students also played. Some of them were Milt Brandt, Lee Engelke, Berwyn Richards, Bob Sacry, Walter and Fred Rueger, Ed Moy, Bill Autry, Jack Garrettsee, Jack Kellar and Doug Arthur.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

A Tuesday in the Plaza concert, 2012



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg Municipal Band in the Plaza, 1941

Although World War II interrupted the summer concerts, they were revived for a couple of years after that. However, the union raised the amount the players received to such a high level that the merchants couldn't afford the costs. Thus ended the Saturday night band concerts.

The old bell tower, bandstand and fountain are gone and the gazebo on the east side of the Plaza now serves as the stage for various groups who fill the Plaza with all sorts of music. In 1982, the Healdsburg Community Band was founded by Lew Sbrana and Doug and Judy Price. Some of the original members included: Larry and Judy Price on trombone, Milt Brandt and Guerdon Miller on drums, Tony Heitz on trumpet, Jason DeStefano a high school senior, on trumpet, and Doug Pile, who still is a member, on clarinet. Lew Sbrana was the first conductor. In 1987, the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce hosted a free weekday noontime concert in the Plaza. The "Picnic in the Plaza" series grew and offered nine concerts, including Elmo and the Hi-Rise Hillbillies, Hi-Jinks and the Community Band on summer Sunday afternoons. The summer concerts continued in 1995 as "A World of Music."

Plaza Concerts Move to Tuesdays

In 2004, a new format was introduced for the Summer Music Series, "Tuesdays in the Plaza!" Lynn Woznicki, C.E.O. of the Healdsburg Area Chamber of Commerce, championed the idea of changing the traditional Sunday afternoon concerts to Tuesday evenings. She gained support from merchants, locals and the Healdsburg Certified Farmers' Market, hoping to create a more neighborly gathering at a cooler time of day, midweek. Concerts have included Stompy Jones, the Sorentinos and Norton Buffalo. The concerts are funded entirely by sponsors and private donors. Record crowds attest to the ongoing popularity of the Tuesday format. Healdsburg is likely to enjoy many more years of music in the Plaza, a longstanding local tradition.

Sources:

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Democratic Standard, 5 December 1866.

Healdsburg Community Band website, 2014. "History of the Healdsburg Community Band."

Healdsburg Enterprise, 23 March 1888; 1 August 1903; 12 March 1937.

Healdsburg Tribune, 6 June 1895, 3 June 1897, 5 August 1897, 15 May 1902, 28 June 1906, 4 May 1916; 23 May 1918; 2 July 1927; 7 July 1941; 11 August 1941.

Interviews-Milt Brandt and Guerdon Miller, 1999.

Owen Sweeten Scrapbook at Healdsburg Museum.

Russian River Recorder, Issue #4, "Pioneer Recollections by John S. Williams."

Sonoma County Tribune, 4 May 1891; 7 May 1891; 4 June 1891.

Sotoyome Scimitar, 31 May 1934.

Healdsburg's Most Famous Developer

by John van der Zee, 2002

The photograph, if it exists at all apart from local memory, can be found now only in an old, tucked away issue of the long-gone and lamented *New West* magazine. In the photograph, a burly young man with the muttonchop sideburns of the mid-seventies is standing in one of the walkways of Healdsburg's Plaza. Nearby is the small artillery field piece that now stands outside the Villa Annex, and the sign, "Healdsburg, The Town that Adopted the 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army." It was a Korean-War era leftover, a reminder of Healdsburg's long and honorable tradition of service in and support for America's military.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg Plaza, 1970s

The brash young man, whose body language and assertive glare say "world by the tail," is staring directly at the camera. There is no shy smile, no caught-off-guard surprise at being photographed unaware. Instead the young man, in a response no doubt secretly envied by generations of pursued politicians and celebrities, is looking directly at the camera and flipping it the finger.

The headline on the piece that followed, in homage to Mark Twain, read: "The Man Who Corrupted Healdsburg."

Larry Wilson, the man in the photograph, was a man with a vision. A dream of Healdsburg, how it ought to be. Though Wilson is long gone, we are living, today, in Healdsburg, with the consequences of that vision.

He was known, in the mid-seventies, as Healdsburg's Howard Hughes, a stranger from out of

town with apparently unlimited resources he was willing to apply to a mystery plan to renovate Healdsburg's downtown.

For twenty-two months, Wilson had been buying up buildings on Healdsburg's Plaza's west side, then a pleasantly eclectic collection of Victorian brick storefronts and bays, with an overall harmonious small-town feel.

"We want a turn-of-the-century Main Street atmosphere," Wilson described his plan before the City Planning Commission in May of 1976, asking for a "favorable attitude" from city officials toward what city planners considered major problems in bringing the downtown buildings up to code. His proposal included artist's renderings of a transformed Plaza bordered by flagpoles in a "Plaza of the Flags" motif.

The Planners were not overly receptive to Wilson's proposal. When one planner said that a "Hollywood facade" covering dangerous public buildings would not be allowed, Wilson assured the Commission that he intended no flagrant code violations and that he wanted a "quality development".

Wilson said that he hoped for a public meeting to further his plan. But Wilson's public appearances locally had been rare. Instead, Wilson preferred to oversee his vision from a distance: Hawaii, since, he explained in a quote that did not sit well with locals, "Water seeks its own level."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg bumper sticker, c. mid 1970s

Meanwhile, tenants of Wilson's buildings (whose owner of record was his wife, a member of a prominent Bay Area wholesale seafood family) were complaining that their rents had skyrocketed, while repairs to the old buildings had been neglected. Rumors continued to fly about Wilson's plans for the

town. According to one, he intended to make Healdsburg a Theme Community, on the order of Solvang, the ersatz-Scandinavian village in Southern California. Only the operating theme, in Healdsburg, would be that of the Tyrolean Alps, with the cops outfitted in lederhosen.



Source: solvangusa.com

Solvang, California

The following month, Wilson appeared again before the Planning Commission. He admitted that there had been a lack of communication with townsfolk about his plans for downtown and the Plaza. The result had been "untruths and rumors running around the city" which he hoped to dispel.



Source: ourhealdsburg.com

The Heidelberg Cafe anticipated Larry's dream 20 years earlier.

He hoped to begin after Labor Day with a "cosmetic" face-lifting, to be followed about eighteen months later, by another stage involving new construction. This would be succeeded by a period of several years during which the two stages would be blended into an overall look that would be "easy to the eye."

His renovation plans had been delayed said Wilson, a man still in his thirties, because he had suffered three heart attacks and because one of his financial backers had gone into receivership. He was, he said, considering three offers to take over the development, including an outright sale of all his downtown properties.

"I don't expect the tenant to bear the brunt of the cost of development, but we do expect a return on our money. Nobody can put up new buildings and rent them for what we're renting for."

In what turned out to be prophetic statement, Wilson said: "We're not going to put money into buildings that won't pay. We'll close them all."

And that is pretty much what happened. The double whammy of high rents and skimpy repairs drove the tenants of some of which--Garrett Hardware, Wright's Feed Store, Carroll's Pharmacy, The Office --- had been on the Plaza for decades, out of the neighborhood and, in some instances, out of business.

There was, however, no rush of new tenants. The town was undiscovered by tourists then and Sonoma County wines hadn't yet acquired the exalted reputation they have now. As the buildings continued empty, month by month, while, even with minimal maintenance, upkeep costs remained, Larry Wilson saw his cash flow thin to a trickle. Forced to make a deal, he sold his stalled Utopia to a Canadian financier, even further distant from the spirit of the community than Wilson was. Eventually the entire western side of the Plaza was demolished. His dream shattered, Wilson left the area and not long after died of a heart condition at forty-one.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Oktoberfest in Healdsburg, 1966

So here we are, living in what is, in many ways a skewed version of Larry Wilson's theme community: wine culture, antiques, pricey restaurants, boutiques. Sure, it beats being malled by franchises and tourism has brought us two fine independent bookstores and an interesting movie theatre. But wouldn't it have been something to see Healdsburg's cops outfitted in lederhosen?



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Ancestors of Mexico Festival, 2012

The Plaza is the Heart of Healdsburg

by *Gabriel A. Fraire, 2014*

The Plaza in Healdsburg has always been a beautiful place, a gathering spot, a little piece of green in the middle of our town. And ever since my wife and I first moved here, we have enjoyed the Plaza. We have picnicked there, met friends and attended social events.

Without a doubt, for those of us who live here, the Plaza is the Heart of Healdsburg.

Not only do we pass through it physically on a regular basis, but the Plaza is a part of us. We have all had, at one time or another, a close personal relationship with the Plaza. We have watched our children, when they were in elementary school, dance in the Plaza. We have listened to friends perform. We have heard political and environmental speeches while sitting on the lawn. We have worked the Plaza for one or another service organization or another using the Plaza to fundraise. And I feel confident that almost everyone who lives here has had a similar experience.

When I think of the Plaza I think of Charlie Scalione, a very nice man born in 1907, who I once

interviewed for my book "*I Remember Healdsburg.*" Charlie told me when he was a boy the palm trees on the Plaza were so short one could touch the leaves. When I look at those palms trees now I can't help but wonder what stories they could tell.

Maybe they would remember the old bandstand that was torn down to discourage band concerts that encouraged drinking. Or maybe the trees would remember the big gaping hole where nothing existed on the west side where the Healdsburg Hotel now sits. Or perhaps the trees would recall when the whole south side of the Plaza was nothing but one long row of parked motorcycles when Healdsburg was the summer fun spot for biker gangs.

Well, the trees will never reveal their fondest memories, but I will. My fondest memory of the Plaza is a more recent one which occurred in 2012.

The current museum curator, Holly Hoods, had been trying for years to make inroads into the Mexican-American community in Healdsburg. With more than 16,000 photos in the Museum collection

there were fewer than five of Mexican-Americans.

As long as there has been a Healdsburg, Mexicans have been here. The Dry Creek Valley was settled by a Mexican. Cyrus Alexander, who helped settle the Alexander Valley, had a wife who was Mexican and there have been Mexican farm laborers here as far back as the 1940s bracero program if not before then. But there was little representation of Mexican-Americans in the Museum collection or in the community.

To help with outreach a small committee was formed that came up with the idea of an Ancestors of Mexico Festival sponsored by the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society. In September of 2012 we had this festival.

I lived in the area for almost 40 years and, in my opinion, until that festival, the largest gathering of Mexican-Americans could only be found in work camps or under the Alexander Valley bridge during harvest. And the closest most Latinos ever got to the Plaza was hanging on the corners looking for work.

We Mexican-Americans lived here, but we weren't really a part of it.

Over the years, as Healdsburg changed with the explosive popularity of Sonoma County wines, so did its population and so did the town's attitudes. I remember telling people at the first committee meeting for the festival that as few as ten years ago we might not have been able to have this event and we might not have received much citywide support.

For too many years Mexicans in the Healdsburg area were invisible. We worked the

fields, but only on Sunday could we be seen in town at the laundromat or the grocery store.

Today, Latinos can be found in all walks of Healdsburg life - the city, our schools, our business community. Now, almost all areas of the city have successful Latino representation. And that event on the Plaza made it all a visual reality for me.

The festival was a huge success. It brought people from all walks of life together on the Plaza. We introduced the Museum to a whole new community of people. Latinos and non-Latinos moved from the Plaza to the Museum and back again learning about the influence Mexican-Americans had on the area. Mexican-Americans learned that the Museum is here for their history as well.

I saw not only Latinos, but the Plaza was crowded with non-Latino locals and visitors of all ages. It was truly an inter-generational, cross-cultural event that demonstrated that the Healdsburg of today and Healdsburg's Plaza of today is welcoming to all and proud of all who live here. The experience brought a tear to my eye.

The Plaza means many things to many people but without a doubt, in my mind, the Plaza is the heart of Healdsburg. It beats strong, it beats hard, and it is full of love.

Gabriel A. Fraire has been a writer for more than 40 years. He is also the current Healdsburg Literary Laureate. He can be reached through his website at: www.gabrielfraire.com.

Contemporary Plaza Poetry

Healdsburg Plaza

by Margo van Veen

Redwoods and palm trees
grace the square where history's
fingerprints linger
and bluesy jazz notes
float on a cool summer breeze
while cosmopolites flock
to old Healdsburg's hub
a visitors paradise
the eponymous Plaza

Ode to Plazas

by Michelle Wing

In Lima, a tuba and trombone blare out the beat, and everyone, los viejos, los jovenes, dances with white handkerchiefs. The church bells echo over the cobblestones of Morelia, while the rich scent of coffee rises from street-side cafes. At twilight in Santiago, es el tiempo del paseo, a stroll around the square, and the one-man-band's monkey holds his hat out for change. And in Healdsburg it is the same - I come to listen to the heartbeat of the city, perhaps throbbing fast with mariachi, or slow with the blues, maybe as whispered as a conversation or a single bird



Source: Gabriel Fraire

Healdsburg Plaza: “One of America’s Most Beautiful Town Squares”

by April Orcutt, Travel and Leisure Magazine, April, 2013

This leafy, year-round-green plaza features a “tree walk” that winds past northern California natives (oaks and redwoods) as well as introduced species like citrus and palm. Fountains and the refurbished copper-roofed gazebo add to the stately charm.



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