



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SPRING 2015 • ISSUE 128

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society

FITCH MOUNTAIN

Everlasting



In This Issue

In keeping with the theme of the current Healdsburg Museum exhibit, "Fitch Mountain Everlasting," this *Russian River Recorder* is a further tribute to Healdsburg's beloved local landmark. In addition to an overview of the mountain's role, this issue is full of fond memories of simple pleasures.

We have reprinted Charlotte Anderson's 2006 article on land use and ownership history of Fitch Mountain. Whitney Hopkins provides the source of the "Fitch" in Fitch Mountain. The late Zelma Ratchford, longtime owner of the top of the mountain, wrote about her hopes for Fitch Mountain preservation for future generations which are echoed by her granddaughter Mary Drew. Ann Carranza offers an updated report on the Fitch Mountain Park status and plans.

Former Healdsburg Museum curator Marie Djordjevich Shobe details early 20th century tourism, focusing on Fitch Mountain's Camp Rose, Villa Chanticleer (aka "Chanticleer"), Fitch Mountain Tavern, Bellevue Villa and Del Rio Woods. The late Billyjo Bennett Haley and Gladys Richards Engelke

recount their youthful days of Russian River fun and Big Band dances in the 1940s and 50s. Former Chanticleer manager Bill Wolking, interviewed in 1962, discusses the reputed gangster history of the Villa.

Walt Selover vividly describes his glorious Fitch Mountain summers as a vacationing teenager in the 1930s. Author Ted Calvert interviews several oldtimers, gleaning warm memories of the Palomar Dance Hall and Roller Rink. Marge Barnard and the late Charlotte Anderson remember the Big H Tradition of Fitch Mountain, describing the pride of Healdsburg High School sophomores for 30 years. Tracy Logan of Camp Rose Players writes an affectionate retrospective of some of the plays, roles and shared experiences of this community theater group.

We hope you find this issue—and the exhibit—informative and engaging.

Holly Hoods, Curator
Pamela Vana-Paxhia, Editor



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

The Official Publication of the
HEALDSBURG MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Edwin Langhart, Founder

Officers

Jim Brush, *President*

Ken Spadoni, *Vice-President*

Phyllis Chiosso Liu, *Secretary*

Phil Hartlaub, *Treasurer*

Barry Stallard, *Ass't Treasurer*

Ted Calvert, *Past President*

Directors

Rawleigh Fjeld

Louise Fowler

Sally Freelen

Lockie Gillies

Ann Howard

Jeanne Leal-Hartlaub

Larry Orr

Staff

Holly Hoods, *Curator*

Whitney Hopkins, *Asst. Curator*

Jane Bonham, *Office Manager*

Publication Staff

Pamela Vana-Paxhia, *Editor*

Healdsburg Printing, Inc, *Printing*

221 Matheson Street

P. O. Box 952

Healdsburg, Ca 95448

(707) 431-3325

www.healdsburgmuseum.org

Contents

- 4 The Fitches of Fitch Mountain**
by Whitney Hopkins
- 5 From Tsuno to Sotoyome to Fitch Mountain**
by Charlotte Anderson, 2006
- 9 The “Big Tree” of Fitch Mountain**
- 10 Fitch Mountain: Healdsburg’s Russian River Playground**
by Marie Djordjevich, 1997
- 14 “Good Clean Fun and Wonderful Memories”
Big Band Dances on the Russian River**
by Billyjo Bennett Haley, 1996
- 15 It’s the Palomar**
by Ted Calvert
excerpted from The Healdsburg Chronicles, 2009
- 17 The History Mystery of Villa Chanticleer: An Interview with Bill Wolking**
by Josephine Giometti and Marda Mitchell, 1962
- 19 The Camp Rose Players – My Memories**
by Tracy Logan
- 22 Remembering Fitch Mountain Summers of the 1930s**
by Walt Selover, 2005
- 26 The Big “H”: A Fitch Mountain Tradition for Thirty Years**
by Charlotte Anderson (2007) and Marge Barnard (2014)
- 28 “Fitch Mountain: My Magnificent Obsession”**
by Zelma Ratchford, 1995
excerpted from Grandma Zelma’s Journal
- 29 Remembering Grandma Z**
by Mary Drew, 2011
- 30 A Bottle of Fitch Mountain’s “Finest”**
by Ann Carranza
- 31 Fitch Mountain and Russian River Memories**
by Gladys Richards Engelke, 1997



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Sotoyome Rancho including "Fitch's Castle" and Fitch Mountain, 1905

The Fitches of Fitch Mountain

by Whitney Hopkins

Fitch Mountain's namesake, Henry Delano Fitch, was born in Nantucket, Massachusetts in 1799. His family was a well-connected and prominent East Coast seafaring clan.

As a young man, Fitch captained trading vessels along the West Coast ports of North and South America. In 1829, he docked in the Port of San Diego, then part of Mexico. It was there that he met nineteen year old Josefa Carrillo, one of the "Californios" who came aboard his ship to view the exotic wares being sold.



Source: Healdsburg Museum

Josefa's family was *Captain Henry Fitch* one of the early Castillian colonizers of California and had become wealthy and politically powerful. The couple fell in love, eloped and married in Valparaiso, Chile.

In 1830, they returned to San Diego with their infant son where they lived for 20 years. During that time, Fitch acquired large amounts of property in the form of Mexican land grants: a large livestock ranch near Ensenada, 15,500 acres in San Francisco (including the present site of Golden Gate Park, the Presidio and Cliff House) and the 48,800 acre Rancho Sotoyome in the frontier north of San Francisco (the present site of Healdsburg.)

Although Captain Fitch was granted the Rancho Sotoyome in 1841, he never actually lived there. Captain Fitch contracted first with Cyrus Alexander and later with Moses Carson to run the rancho. During the 1846-1847 U.S. military occupation, he served as an alcalde (magistrate) in San Diego. In 1849, Captain Fitch's sudden death under mysterious circumstances in San Francisco precluded his plans to move his family to the Rancho Sotoyome.

Josefa Carrillo Fitch, now a widow, and her nine children carried out Captain Fitch's plans and relocated to the Rancho Sotoyome. They lived in the adobe house known locally as "Fitch's Castle" that Cyrus Alexander had built for Fitch in 1841.

California, however, had changed under United States rule and many disillusioned gold miners had settled illegally on the rancho. Despite financial hardships, Josefa managed to raise her family and pay her taxes with proceeds from the cattle ranch and by selling off parts of the rancho to newcomers like Harmon Heald.

Josefa lived to the age of 83. She died in Healdsburg in 1893. Several of her children married into other local ranching families, including the Grant and Bailhache families. The family adobe was inherited by Josefa's daughter Josephine and her husband John Bailhache. The Fitch adobe was destroyed by fire in 1913.

From Tsuno to Sotoyome to Fitch Mountain

by Charlotte Anderson, 2006

Fitch Mountain has been an important local landmark for hundreds--even thousands--of years. The first people in the area were ancestors of the Southern Pomo who hunted and gathered on, and had settlements around the base of, the mountain they called Tsuno. In the late Pomo/early Rancho era, the mountain was briefly referred to as Sotoyome (after Rancho Sotoyome) and, finally, as Fitch Mountain. No matter what the name, the "mountain" catches the eye of travelers as well as residents to this day. It is also still being written about as it was in the 19th and 20th centuries.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Picnic on Fitch Mountain, March 31, 1873
Downing and Prince families, Joseph H. Downing photo*

Early Descriptions

"The most striking feature of the landscape near Healdsburg is Sotoyome, sometimes less appropriately called Fitch Mountain. It is a shapely, isolated hill, around the base of which Russian river winds a torturous course, as if reluctant to leave the flowery and beautiful valley to mingle its waters with the sea."

--*Sonoma County Historical Atlas*, 1877

"Sotoyome Mountain (Fitch Mountain) is a hill of much symmetry, the upper portion being well wooded, while at its base are rolling lands, offering the advantage of magnificent pasturage; around the foot of it meanders the Russian river, clinging to the fertile region as if loth [sic] to part with the luxuriant vegetation on its slopes."

--*History of Sonoma County*, 1880

"Fitch Mountain -- The Beautiful"

by Julius Myron Alexander

"Fitch Mountain comes from the valley, a lone mountain of close to 1000 feet in altitude. As a cone, it rises from the valley, while on its easy declivities are orange and olive groves; far up its sides grows the vintage of the vine, and all about it are the soft blossoms of the Vale of Sotoyome. On its north, as if an abutment for the great river, it bends it from its course, still winding, its waters bear far around, leaving it at last in their rush to the sea. From the summit of the mountain one has a magnificent view. Far to the east is blue Mt. St. Helena, and there on the north are the gray mountains of Mendocino, westward are the great redwood groves of the coast and far to the south Mt. Tamalpais, just shading the great city from the view. At its base the city of Healdsburg nestles as a great white swan midst the trees of green and the blossoms of the valley. It is the lookout mountain of the valley, easy of access and pays a rich reward to those who stand upon its summit."

--*Healdsburg Tribune*, January 19, 1910



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Julius Myron Alexander and friends at the top of Fitch Mountain looking down at the panorama

Early Ownership History

Eight square leagues in Sonoma and Mendocino counties were granted on September 28, 1841, by Manuel Micheltorena to Henry D. Fitch. The claim, the Sotoyome Grant, was filed February 2, 1852. (48,836.52 acres)

An indenture made on November 2, 1863 between Joseph Fitch, John B. Fitch, Charles Fitch,

and John Grant sold acreage containing the whole of Fitch Mountain to John Davis Hassett for \$2,500.

In 1877, J. D. Hassett sold ten acres on the south slope of Fitch Mountain to Fritz and Maynard for \$5000. The new owners built an earthen reservoir on the land, which had many natural springs, and piped water to Healdsburg, thus establishing the first water system serving the community.

When John D. Hassett died in 1887, part of Fitch Mountain went to two of his heirs, Louise C. Walker, his daughter, and Sarah E. Hassett, his wife, several hundred acres having been sold in the years since acquisition.

Upon the death of Sarah E. Hassett in 1908, attorney John Wesley Rose received 1,300 acres when he settled the Hassett estate (including the top of Fitch Mountain). J. M. Alexander prevailed upon Rose to put lots on the market for summer homes. As a result, "Camp Rose" was carved out of the tract. Then came the sale of "Camp Hale" to Nathan Hale of San Francisco. Later on Robert G. Cook acquired a portion of the mountain which was being subdivided and readied for sale as Del Rio Woods ("The River by the Woods") in 1924. "Del Rio Woods is the portion of Fitch Mountain extending from Villa Chanticleer on the north around the mountain side and down to the banks of Russian River to Camp Rose on the south. Thus it is that the northern, eastern and southern slopes of the mountain will become one large summer resort, ideal, picturesque and inviting. Every foot of the mountain at whose base flows Russian River will then be dedicated to rest and recreation--for be it known that the famous river actually flows around three sides of the mountain, approaching it from the north, circling it on the east, and departing from it on the south." (*Healdsburg Tribune*, August 22, 1924)

From the very first days, people have been drawn to the mountain for various reasons. In the early days, people hiked to the top and children were fascinated with the various trails that were on it. Fitch Mountain has been the subject of many "writings," not the least of which were the ones penned by Julius Myron Alexander. One writer not often heard about was Healdsburg's first mayor, Colonel L.A. Norton, who wrote a poem entitled "Written on the Summit of Fitch Mountain While Sitting on an Ant-hill." The first of the seven-stanza poem read; "Little ant, come, tell me why/ Thou hast

built thy home so high; These high cliffs why didst thou scale! And leave the warm and pleasant vale?"



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Russian River encircling Fitch Mountain, c.1915

Fitch Mountain or Fitch Hill?

A mountain is a land form that rises prominently above its surroundings. It is generally distinguished by steep slopes, a relatively confined summit and considerable height. The term "mountain" has topographic and geologic meanings. It generally refers to rises over 2,000 feet (610 meters). Compared to a hill, a mountain is defined by its greater height and volume.

The *Healdsburg Enterprise* reported on February 6, 1870 that "Dr. Thomson and his surveying class measured the height of Fitch Mountain as 1,037.89 feet."

According to a record on a tree at its summit marked down there many years ago, Fitch Mountain is 999.8 feet above sea level. The figures are from the official records of the geodetic survey, but they were taken so long ago that they are subject to change "in the event that the picturesque hill has sprouted any or slumped down in the past quarter century."

The *Healdsburg Tribune* ran two articles in 1924, the first on January 17 which stated "How high is Fitch Mountain?" The chances are that even the oldest resident of Healdsburg, who has lived for most of his life under the shadow of the picturesque mound that thrusts its shoulders up by the side of Russian River to the east of this city, doesn't know how far above sea level or above the floor of the valley the top of the mountain is.

"Six boy scouts of the second patrol of the Healdsburg High School troop, realizing the lack of information on the interesting subject decided to find out the answer to the question for themselves. So on Sunday they climbed the slopes of the hill and on its peak determined the facts with an aneroid barometer.

"Fitch Mountain, they learned, is 960 feet above sea level and 850 feet above the level of Healdsburg. Those who climbed with the 'andenoid thermometer' were Frank Sohler, Lieuallen Hall, Clarence Engelbret, James Robinson, Fred Comstock and Richard Warfield. W. Ellis Pickett was leader of the patrol on the climb.

"Previous measurements taken show Fitch Mountain to be just a little under 1000 feet above sea level. These are geodetic survey figures."

Uses of Fitch Mountain - An Old Controversy

"Fitch Mountain has been leased to parties who propose manufacturing coal from the growth that constitutes the principal attraction of this old landmark. It is a decided pity that the beauty of this, the pride of this section, should be marred by the woodsman's axe. What a contrast it now presents with what it will when the timber has been cleared off. While it will still be Fitch Mountain the timber that adds beauty and grandure [sic] will be wanting, and it will stand simply as a barren, desolate hill."

--*Healdsburg Enterprise*, February, 13 1889

Since there was an immediate uproar following the above article, the *Enterprise* printed another one the following week: "We have been informed by the owners of Fitch Mountain that it is not their intention to have the timber cleared from the mountain, but only to thin out an unusually thick growth or clump on the north side" where a fence is to be built. "The mountain is useless for other than grazing purposes, and appreciating its beauty as it now stands, they had not the remotest idea of converting it into a barren hill by cutting off the timber. The fears of the people that the beauty of the mountain was to be marred may therefore be set at rest, as the owners positively assure us that it is not their intention to destroy one of the most attractive objects of this section."

"Fitch Mountain to be Converted into a Scenic Park: Some of our leading citizens have come to the conclusion to improve, embellish and make accessible many of our surrounding points of natural

vantage, especially mountain views, romantic forest, valley and creek scenes, etc., by means of establishing easy and perfectly graded roads and paths, guideposts and boards, resting places and benches in convenient nooks, watering troughs and receptacles, using all springs and rivulets, information boards of all historical places and things of interest, etc.

"It is the intention to organize an embellishment club for this purpose, taxing its members the small sum of 10 cents per month or \$1.00 a year if paid in advance.

"If Healdsburg and environments are successfully improved and beautified, our own people and the people at large will be attracted and consequently bring life and money to our town and vicinity.

"The start was already made on July the 4th by the erection of a flag pole on top of Fitch Mountain and the hoisting of the stars and stripes thereon. In remembrance of this occasion the place was baptized 'Washington Heights,' and at this point we believe the work of embellishment will commence."

--*Sonoma County Tribune*, July, 12 1894

Two weeks later in the July 26, 1894 *Sonoma County Tribune* appeared the following: "A multitude of voices have been raised in objection to the name of 'Washington Heights' which is erroneously understood to take the place of that of Fitch Mountain, so gloriously suggestive of pioneer days and commemorative of the first settler. The title adopted is for the summit alone when the improvement club has built upon it a place for recreation and observation. The name of Fitch Mountain will never be obliterated and it is hoped this explanation will mitigate the opposition and make the appellation, Washington Heights, less indigestive."

Flag on Fitch Mountain

"Baron von Schilling has presented to the city of Healdsburg the large, costly flag which once was 'unfurled to the gentle zephyrs' upon the summit of Fitch Mountain. It was a generous gift and is an evidence of his love for this locality."

--*Sonoma County Tribune*, November 1, 1894

Flag on Fitch Mountain "George Stretter and a party of relatives and friends climbed to the top of

Fitch Mountain Sunday on a picnic excursion. Mr. Stretter has formed a strong attachment for the picturesque mountain that forms the background of Healdsburg, and about the base of which twines the Russian River.

“Mr. Stretter’s patriotism led him to purchase a large flag-8 by 12 feet-and this was taken up the mountain Sunday. The old flagpole, which was going to decay, was taken down and reset, underbrush and trees were cleared away, and the new banner-the Stars and Stripes-now floats from the top of the mountain.”

--*Healdsburg Tribune*, February 12, 1914

That flag and flagpole evidently did not last long because in April of 1917 there was another flag pole setting and flag-raising. The flag pole was anchored in the fork of an oak tree and the flag was raised. It flew there for seven years, finally coming down when lightning struck the tree in 1924!

In 1927, Del Rio Woods, including Fitch Mountain, was sold by Cook and Pohley to “a group of capitalists” headed by Thomas Scobel. Scobel was interested in a continuation of a road to the top of Fitch Mountain. In September of 1928, a steam shovel could be seen at work just above the letter “H.” Quick work was done and a “wonderful road winding up the northeastern slopes” was opened with the first automobile reaching the summit on October 3, 1928.

Another scheme was proposed in 1929, to put a “beacon light on the top of Fitch Mountain! If not a beacon light, why not decorate one of the trees like a Christmas tree or use some other lighting scheme that will show off at night time and attract the attention of the passing throng and afford a little advertising to this section.” Needless to say, that idea never lit up.

In June 1943, Earl Callicut, 13, of Del Rio Woods saw a plane crash on the mountain and led Saul Richman, former *Tribune* editor, and Dianne Wolking to the site. The plane, on a training flight from the “Fulton airdrome” evidently lost a stabilizer causing the pilot to lose control. “Army officials removed the body of the pilot to San Rafael and took such parts as they wished. Souvenir hunters made short work of the balance.”

--*Healdsburg Tribune*, June 18, 1943

Although many plans and hopeful ideas for the use of the top of Fitch Mountain, one strain has always remained the same—Keep It Natural! The

various owners, while at times threatening to build hotels and the like, have not carried out any of these things. John Hassett bought “the whole mountain,” and subsequent owners have owned 95% of “the top,” all of whom kept it in pristine condition.



Source: Charlotte Anderson

Fitch Mountain from Memorial Beach, 2004

In 1954, Zelma Ratchford purchased a 264 acre portion of the top of Fitch Mountain, calling the transaction her “Magnificent Obsession.” She and her family rode horses on the property, picnicked, and truly loved enjoying the views. Zelma hoped that the City of Healdsburg would one day combine her Fitch Mountain top acreage with Chanticleer City Park to create a beautiful regional park. This was her dream and her legacy.

So it was in 1994 that Sonoma County’s Open Space Authority Board approved the purchase of the top of Fitch Mountain from Ratchford so that the land would remain as open space. It looks as if, after 120 years since its first purchase, that this will no longer be an “obsession” but a reality!

Sources:

Healdsburg Enterprise, 1870, 1889, 1933.

Healdsburg Tribune, 1910, 1914, 1924, 1943.

History of Sonoma County, 1880.

Norton, Col. L.A., *Life and Adventures of Col. L.A. Norton*, 1887.

Ratchford, Zelma. *Grandma Zelma’s Journal*.

Russian River Recorder.

Sonoma County Historical Atlas, 1877.

Sonoma County Tribune, 1894.

Thanks to Eric Drew, Holly Hoods and Dan Murley.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Man standing inside Fitch Mountain redwood, Joseph H. Downing photo, 1873

The “Big Tree” of Fitch Mountain

There is a famous big tree near Healdsburg though the outside world may not have heard of it. It is about a mile and a half from town, and is situated on a spur of Fitch Mountain, northwesterly from the summit. It is a redwood tree and stands solitary in its grandeur. It has been a splendid monarch of the wood in its day, but is now shorn of much of its original beauty. The trunk is massive, but its southern face has been burned, so that a roomy apartment has been formed inside. A man on horseback could ride into this opening. Four Mexican woodchoppers spent a whole winter in this natural shelter a few years ago. The tree, as it stands at present, is about 100 feet high. Its top, which must have been at least as high again, is gone, and was probably riven by lightning or tempest. Its circumference at the base is 60 feet. Six feet from the ground the circumference is 33 feet, 6 inches. The inside of the burned out part is exactly 15 feet, 10 inches in diameter, each way. Many visitors, anxious for cheap immortality, have carved their names all over the charred interior of the woody cavern.

--Russian River Flag, October 23, 1873

In 1896, I vividly remember the old, but big, Redwood tree on Fitch Mountain standing outside the fence surrounding my mother's home. There was room for 20 picnickers in the hollow trunk. Its top was so high that it seemed, when viewed from our home-side, to pass the distant mountain and blend with the sky. One day I came home from school to

find the big Redwood on fire. Its open throat was roaring like a furnace. Mother told us that the lightning had ripped down from the clouds and struck it. The roar was terrible. We could stand on the hillside and watch the fire relentlessly burn the heart of our old landmark.

But another rainstorm came down, extinguishing the fire and the old tree was saved. Then suddenly a fearful crash and roar, the tree came down. We rushed to the spot – mother and the three children who were home. Was the tree gone? The nook seemed filled with the fallen trunk and branches. Quickly I returned to our cottage and secured a tape measure. Together we measured the top of the huge tree lying like a giant submarine on the ground. It was 90 feet long. Looking up, to my surprise, the tree seemed to be as tall as before.

-- Mina Ross Brawner, M.D., 1942

In 1943, Rev. Brawner returned to Healdsburg from Melbourne, Australia, hoping to see the beloved redwood. It was still there and she wrote, “Old Stovepipe they call you now, and wonder how it happened. But you and I remember. You have kept your secret all these years, but tonight I am telling the world you battled against all obstacles – and won out. Oh, joy! The old Redwood still stands.”

The Old Stovepipe redwood was renamed the General Eisenhower in 1972, and yes, it still stands in the parking lot of Villa Chanticleer.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Neon sign in downtown Healdsburg, c.1928

Fitch Mountain: Healdsburg's Russian River Playground

by Marie Djordjevich, 1997

"To be convinced of the immense possibilities of Fitch Mountain as an ideal summer resort with natural resources to attract thousands every summer, one has only to take a drive around that region. A Tribune reporter drove out into that part of 'nature's wild' one day last week. Think of it, in fifteen minutes' drive from the Plaza one can be completely shut out from the busy world.

Leaving the landscape, the garden, the orchard, and the vineyard behind, you are ushered at once into the jungles of the forest, where for ten miles around the base of old Fitch Mountain you are shut in from the outside world. You are in Nature's Park, hedged by the solitude and sublimity of Nature's handiwork. At your feet to the right flow the deep blue waters of the Russian River, Nature's reservoir for fishing, boating, bathing and swimming. On your left are deep gulches, shady nooks, and quiet retreats, surmounted by lofty peaks, dense forests, tall trees, mountain ferns and blooming flowers. Down these mountain sides may be seen gushing fountains flowing from 'Horeb's flinty side'—Nature's beverage that quenches thirst, but destroys not the brain of man.

Here is a beauty spot of nature lying at the door of Healdsburg, asking us to step in and occupy."

--Healdsburg Tribune, May 29, 1913

The Russian River region, from Healdsburg down to the ocean, was once a vacation paradise, a "playground for the world." The region covers about twenty one miles and at one time was lined with a

multitude of vacation homes and resorts. Hundreds of families from all over the Bay Area (San Francisco, the Peninsula, the East Bay and Marin), and from the Redwood Empire in the north would

either make weekend trips to the area, or settle in the Russian River section for the summer. Many mothers and children spent their vacations in summer homes along the river, the father traveling to be with them on weekends. Local people also enjoyed the river and took advantage of the many recreational activities—such as swimming, boating, sun bathing, fishing and canoeing—offered by the resorts.

Healdsburg's Fitch Mountain region, through which the Russian River flows, developed into a popular resort area about the turn of the century. 1905 saw the first road built from Healdsburg to the mountain at Camp Rose. Soon after, a road was built from Healdsburg to the mountain at Villa Chanticleer, as well as a road from the Villa to the river. In 1921, these roads became public roads and were rebuilt. They were connected on the mountain's east side to form a continuous six miles loop with both ends reaching Healdsburg. As a result, the mountain became more accessible to the populace.

People traveled to the river area by various means over the years. Early it was by stage, then by train to depots, from which horse-drawn buses would take them to resorts. Later, people were met at train stations by autobuses. When people began owning cars, they drove themselves, though in some cases ferrying across the bay was still needed. With the building of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937 and the development of the Redwood Highway through Healdsburg, private transportation to the resorts became extremely popular. Through it all Healdsburg's Fitch Mountain resort section developed and flourished.

Camp Rose

In 1905, attorney J. W. Rose built a road from Healdsburg to his undeveloped property on Fitch Mountain. He then set up tents, built a boarding house and established a summer camp which he called Camp Rose. That first summer season was successful, with at least 150 visitors by August. Rates that first year were \$7 per week at the boarding house; \$8 per week for boarding and tent care. \$1 per week was charged to those who brought their own tents. Well water was available, and a sulphur spring on the property was used for drinking. Over the next few years the property changed ownership several times, but both the property and the business flourished.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

The main building at Camp Rose

In 1908, new owner Carlyle Ray subdivided the lots. Cottages sprang up on the hillside, many of them purchased by out-of-towners for summer use. Bus service was provided from the train depot to the grounds for convenience. By 1912, Camp Rose was a permanent fixture on the grounds and included a store, tents and a dance platform.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Swimmers at Camp Rose, 1908

Villa Chantecler/Chanticleer

At one time the Villa Chantecler was the leading French resort north of San Francisco. A French native by the name of Auguste Pradel established the Villa in 1914 when he built several cabins and a screened dining pavilion. He then informed San Francisco's French organizations that this was the ideal spot for their vacation. A horse and buggy—and later a bus—were sent to the depot for the arrival of each train to take people up to the mountain.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Sign at Villa Chantecler entrance

The ownership of the Villa exchanged hands several times. In 1934, the Villa was purchased by Lucien Delagnes and his wife Madeleine and they ran the resort for several years. At the start of his tenure, Delagnes deemed his resort "40 Acres of Fun on the Russian River." His new additions to the resort included two cows which supplied fresh milk, a children's playground, a bridge-playing grotto, as well as new light fixtures and new beds and mattresses. The kitchen was remodeled and updated, and Chef Robert Layne promised "some fine French foods, served in the real French manner." Over the next few years Delagnes added new cabins, shower baths, other toilet facilities, and a six room house. Madeleine would cook country French meals for the guests, Lucien would take vacationers down to the river or wineries. They had bands and dances and a huge crowd was accommodated on Bastille Day. The French flag was flown, and almost everybody spoke French. The Villa remained a very popular summer retreat for Bay Area French families.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Diners at the Villa Chantecler

In 1943, Delagnes sold the Villa Chantecler to Jack Kent and W. Johnson. They possibly were going to remake it into a private gambling establishment. The Villa Chantecler's French resort days had come to an end.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Fitch Mountain Tavern

Fitch Mountain Tavern

In 1908, a new resort was built along the Russian River's Fitch Mountain 1 ½ miles from Healdsburg. Called Fitch Mountain Tavern, it was built by Mr. A. M. Ewing and his wife, who relocated here from San Francisco. The tavern had wide verandas and a rustic look. The property was subdivided, and cottages for summer residents and visitors were built. Many local residents made their home here during the summers. In 1913, a large dining room was added to accommodate the high number of guests. Large automobile parties frequented the tavern, sometimes up to sixty at a time.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Fitch Mountain Tavern guests

The Tavern eventually stopped being used, and in the late twenties plans were formed for demolishing the structure and building a 100 room hotel in its place. Plans were made by the Fitch Mountain Development company, Inc., a Delaware corporation, and in 1929 the old Fitch Mountain Tavern was wrecked and the land cleared.

In 1930 the hotel was started. Foundations were laid, the frame was built, but the money ran out and it was never finished. The property was foreclosed and bought by a Mr. Sherrer. Baseball player W. A. Autry and his wife May bought the property from him. They tore down most of the structure—except the west end, where they built their home—and sold the wood, as well as three lots that were part of the property.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Brochure for Del Rio Woods

Del Rio Woods

The Del Rio Woods property on the eastern slope of the mountain was bought and developed by Robert Cook and Joseph Pohley. They set aside several acres of the property for use as a park, and they sold several lots to Bay Area families who then erected summer homes. The remaining land was sold to Thomas Scoble, who built a road to the top of Fitch Mountain. He also sold off most of the public park, where subsequently many houses were built. An office and a store were built on the property. Swimming, horseback riding, and picnicking were all activities enjoyed by Del Rio Woods patrons.

Del Rio Woods became a popular summer resort in the 1930s due to the draw of the dances held at the dance pavilion. In 1927 a large dance platform was constructed in time for the opening dance at the end of May. Also included in the plans was the construction of an adjoining balcony, as a “promenade for dancers and their friends, which disclose one of the finest views of the Russian River

to be found anywhere.” (*Sotoyome Scimitar*, May 20, 1927) A dining room was planned for construction after the completion of the platform. By the next year—1928—the Del Rio dance pavilion was quite popular.



Source: Ted Calvert

The Palomar

Palomar

In 1937 Earl Frampton purchased part of the Del Rio Woods. Besides setting aside a tract of land for a public beach—which became a very popular spot for swimmers and boaters—he created a large airy dance hall which he called Palomar. In its heyday Palomar was one of the most popular dance places in Healdsburg, if not the county. Frampton set out to make it a welcoming place. The property was cleared and cleaned, and several redwood picnic tables were added under the trees. A latticed supper room was added to part of the pavilion, and a large porch, also for dining patrons, was added to the building. Lanterns were hung in the interior of the dance hall. Name bands played at the Palomar, including the popular Saunders King and Red Plummer.

After the era of Big Bands, attendance dwindled, and Palomar was turned into a roller skating rink.

End of an Era

Fitch Mountain’s resorts are gone now and private residences dot the area. The memories of those times remain imprinted not only in the minds of individuals, but in history as well. And the Russian River still flows through the mountain.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Merryland Pavilion and Beach, 1940s

“Good Clean Fun and Wonderful Memories” Big Band Dances on the Russian River

by Billyjo Bennett Haley, 1996

During the 1940s and '50s the Russian River sported “Big Name Bands” to dance to. Behind Fitch Mountain was Palomar Dance Pavilion. Another dance hall in Healdsburg was located at “Merryland” – which is now called Memorial Beach. Both of these dance halls became roller skating rinks after the Big Band era.

We didn't have to just stay in Healdsburg for fun. The high school crowd enjoyed big name bands along the southern part of the Russian River also. Mirabel near Forestville was owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Larry Berg. The Mirabel dance building was built out over part of the river so one could walk out on the deck for fresh air and the moon!

Rio Nido Dance Hall, located at Rio Nido, had huge crowds of all age couples – great music and good times. In downtown Guerneville in the center of town was the “Grove.” It had canoes and palm

leaves turned up on end for decorations. Guerneville Park also had a dance floor.

There really were a lot of Big Name Bands: Von Monroe, Harry James, Ted Fitterator, Bob Crosby, Phil Harris, Jimmy Dorsey, Les Brown, Ted Williams, Woody Herman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Gray, Russ Morgan. These were just some of the wonderful bands we danced to until they quit at 2a.m. and then we would fill the juke box and go on dancing.

If someone didn't have a date, it didn't matter; the girls would go together, and the boys would, or a brother or sister who could drive would take the whole bunch. No one ever sat out a dance.

It was a wonderful era full of fun and good times. I wish our kids and grandkids could enjoy something like this now: good clean fun with wonderful memories...and you didn't have to lock your car either!

It's the Palomar

by Ted Calvert

excerpted from The Healdsburg Chronicles, 2009

Whenever I pass by the old Palomar building on south Fitch Mountain's east side, next to Del Rio Woods beach, I am reminded of the powerful influence of the Palomar dance pavilion, bar and skating hall in our small town. When I told people I was writing about Fitch Mountain, many said, "You had better include the Palomar!" I now know why.

Many locals and Bay Area vacationers alike still hold enduring memories of the Palomar Dance Hall. It is where people met their future spouses, had their first dance, first skate, first kiss, first fight, first swim—and many lasting experiences never to be forgotten.

The Palomar is still standing, the present owner is living there, and it is in great need of repair. It is located at 2689 South Fitch Mountain Road, 2.6 miles east of Healdsburg's downtown plaza square, at the Fitch Mountain east foothills, next to the Del Rio Woods Recreational Park beach and the Russian River.

During the 1920s, '30s and '40s, Fitch Mountain and the Russian River east areas, i.e., Del Rio Woods and Camp Rose (prior to Palomar Hall being built) were the places to be seen. They were definitely the go-to places on Friday and Saturday nights. During the trying times of the Depression and World War II, the dance crazes "Jitterbug" and "Swing" were sought-after ways to unwind and remember the world as it was in better days. The Big Band Era, before television and today's techno distractions, marked a mood that affected the entire globe.

The Palomar Bar and Dance Hall was built by Earl C. Frampton, a local fruit buyer for CalPac Del Monte Corporation. The building included a bar at one end, a large fireplace and an orchestra section for the band and performers. Orchestras and entertainers, like Saunders King (a huge favorite and popular Black singer and performer), Glen Gray and Mel Heins and his band performed. Admission was 40 cents.

The Palomar opened in June 1936: *Representing an investment of something over \$12,000, the new Palomar dance pavilion opened for*

the season over the weekend, at Del Rio Woods. The maple floor, 60 x 100 feet, is one of the finest ever to be installed anywhere in the Russian River section. The interior is in natural knotty pine...(it has) overhead lighting...(an) orchestra stage...(and an) elaborate public address system. In connection with the pavilion is a 32-foot refreshment (soda fountain) counter.

Earl Frampton loved to dance but didn't like to drive the hour to and from the famous dance hall, The Grove, in Guerneville, where the big bands like Duke Ellington and Harry James played. Therefore, Earl purchased land from the Del Rio Woods subdivision—on higher ground adjacent to the Del Rio Beach and the Russian River. He named it the Palomar after Mount Palomar, east of San Diego, where the world's largest telescope would be installed. (Note: Originally, Del Rio Woods subdivision layout proposed that this flat area be a large public park.)

Earl's wife Ruby, a nurse and homemaker; son Woodley, a Harvard graduate and WWII Naval officer; and daughters Doris, Jane and Betty (all college graduates) worked at the Palomar. It eventually closed in January 1977, when it was sold and turned into a residence.

I remember...

Dance Hall at Palomar Before the Roller Rink

Dancing was something my dad [Earl Frampton] loved. He decided to open a dance hall at Del Rio, and in 1936, the Palomar opened to live bands for Friday and Saturday night dances. It was a big hit with the locals. Although we didn't have the big names, the music was dependably good for dancing. Saunders King was a black man who sang with the orchestra every Saturday night. He was terrific! My father was very proud of booking him at the Palomar.

After several successful years, heavy rains brought disaster. Water came down through Alexander Valley, (and) swept away huge redwood trees. It flooded a lot, because there was no dam up north. The river rose so high that it flooded the

beautiful dance floor that my father had so lovingly cared for, buckling it beyond repair. My poor dad was heartbroken; the floor would never serve for dancing again. Afterwards, it was used for roller skating.

--Doris (Frampton) Golden

I remember...

Days of Inner Tubes and Margaritas

Earl Frampton's son, Woodley, who managed the Palomar in 1939, met me, his future bride, Margaret, during the summer of that year, 1939, and we married in 1941. Floating down the river from Del Rio Woods beach dam, holding onto a large inner tube that was set up to hold margarita mixers, twenty of us would slowly float down to Camp Rose, a half mile downstream, and celebrate the whole day.

--Margaret White Frampton

I remember...

High Water at the Palomar

There were considerable floods before a dam was built to create Lake Mendocino, in Ukiah. You could count on high waters every year, which is why someone had the foresight to set the Palomar on higher ground with a lot of steps. Still, it would flood, and then everyone pitched in, using utensils—anything they could find—to remove the wet mud and debris from the wood. The cost of admission to roller skate was ten cents, and the kids skated to jukebox music all day long. Some skaters (even) danced to jukebox music

--Jane (Frampton) Way

I remember...

The Russian River Social Scene

In those days, you didn't bring your girlfriend along. You didn't have enough money. A lot of folks didn't have cars and couldn't go to the popular dance hall, The Grove in Guerneville. Those from the Bay Area would take the NWP (Northwestern Pacific-Ed.) railroad to The Grove and then hop on the NWP returning Sunday nights. Many families had summer cabins or would stay at Camp Rose, Bellevue Villa, or Villa Chanticleer resorts. Although local Healdsburg town folks called it the Palomar, those coming from the East Bay, mostly San Francisco, called it "Del Rio." The busy season was during the summer months when kids in San

Francisco were out of school. At 40 cents (admission) on weekends, the Palomar offered a terrific social scene. During the week, adults and big kids could put coins in the old jukebox in the Palomar and dance to Big Band music on 78 rpm records.

--Lou Foppiano



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Palomar Roller Rink Patch

I remember...

The Transition from Dance Hall to Roller Skating Hall

Del Rio Woods had its own outdoor dance floor, a large, round platform, before the Palomar was built. Les Bottini managed and ran the Palomar up to 1944. In 1944, the Palomar became a roller skating hall. When you entered the Palomar, you had to buy a ticket at the booth to your right. Seats were along the sides of the dance floor. At one side there was the soda fountain, the other the bar where beer, wine—and if you did business with Earl, a highball—were available. A lot of Healdsburg local boys would go mainly to see what those San Francisco "city" girls were about.

--John Minaglia

I remember...

Safe in the Summer

We didn't have TV or telephones, so everything was done by word-of-mouth. Summers we lived on Camp Rose beach...walked to the Palomar and Del Rio Woods (a half-mile) or swam back and forth. We felt safe...We were lucky to live that life. We walked everywhere. As kids living at Del Rio Woods/Palomar area, we would walk into town, see an outdoor movie in the plaza, then walk back to the cabin (5.2 miles round trip). It was a very healthy lifestyle. We came for whole summers...soon as school was let out!

--Carol McConnon



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

The “new” Villa Chanticleer, 1968

The History Mystery of Villa Chanticleer: an Interview with Bill Wolking

by Josephine Giometti and Marda Mitchell, 1962

Former Villa Chanticleer Manager Bill Wolking was Secretary-Manager of Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and a 30-year resident of Fitch Mountain in April, 1962 when he was interviewed for the City of Healdsburg by Josephine Giometti and Marda Mitchell. This previously unpublished manuscript is from the collection of Sylvain Borel, which has been graciously shared with the Museum by his son, Dr. Syl Borel.

In 1945, the Villa Chanticleer and twenty acres that surrounded it were purchased by two San Francisco men who “wanted a place away from San Francisco,” for \$35,000. This transaction was facilitated by Bill Wolking, a liquor salesman in San Francisco and the Bay Area in the 1930s-40s. In San Francisco, he became acquainted with Jack Kent, an ex-policeman, who was working in a Market Street cocktail lounge. Mr. Kent said that he was looking for someplace away from the Bay area to start a restaurant and bar business. A short time later, Wolking contacted Jack Kent in regard to the sale of the Villa Chanticleer, and the nineteen surrounding acres. Mr. Kent inspected the property, but stated that he did not have the \$35,000 asking price. However, he felt he might find a partner. Jack Kent

returned to Healdsburg with Joe Johnson, a San Francisco bartender. Together, they bought the Villa Chanticleer and hired Bill Wolking as manager. The Villa Chanticleer opened in May, 1945, for the summer season. It was still a family resort with a French atmosphere. On September 9, 1945, the closing night of the season, a fire started due to faulty wiring and the main building was completely destroyed. Bill Wolking



Source: Healdsburg Museum

Bill Wolking, 1940

telephoned the news to his employers. They replied that they would be up the following week.

The next week, Jack Kent and Joe Johnson came to Healdsburg with plans to build a new Villa Chanticleer. The new building was to be entirely different from the previous family resort. There was to be a huge ballroom, a dining room that would seat 350 people, an ornate bar, and most surprising of all, in the basement were two large vaults. Plans also included an adjoining building that was to be used as a game room. Bill Wolking remarked, "It looks to me as if you were going to have a gambling casino. How can you do this?" The reply was: "We have friends."

Indeed, they must have had friends! Stock was sold in the new enterprise. Several friends and backers came to inspect the new construction. One San Francisco judge invested \$50,000.

Suddenly, the newspapers were headlining the murder of an infamous underworld character, Nick de John. His dead body was found stuffed in the trunk of a car in San Francisco. It was discovered that he and his family had been living quietly in Santa Rosa under an assumed name. Nick de John's associates scattered. The "friends" of the Villa withdrew also. Many believed that Villa Chanticleer was to be a gambling casino built by the de John organization. Perhaps it can never be conclusively proven.

Bill Wolking was questioned as to the rumor that Nick de John, San Francisco gangster, was an investor. He replied, "I met many men during the building of the new Villa. I never was introduced to Nick de John. If he was ever there, he used another name."

I remember...

When the Original Villa Chanticleer Burned Down *by John Foster, 2009*

Around 1944, Bill Wolking decided to quit the liquor business and took a job as the manager of the Villa Chanticleer which, at that time, was a lovely Victorian converted to a resort and restaurant. He hired my friend Curt Salkeld as a busboy. One summer night [September 9, 1945] we went to pick up Curt after work. When we got there a fire broke out! By the time the fire department got there it was all they could do to contain the fire and keep it from starting a forest fire. We helped as best we could, but the place burned to the ground.

The Villa was completed at a cost of \$250,000.

The opening of the new Villa was planned and the food ordered from a San Francisco firm. This firm refused to deliver except for cash. Then the creditors began to close in on the Villa, and it was never opened. Everything moveable was repossessed, including the furniture, glassware, china, silver and refrigeration equipment.

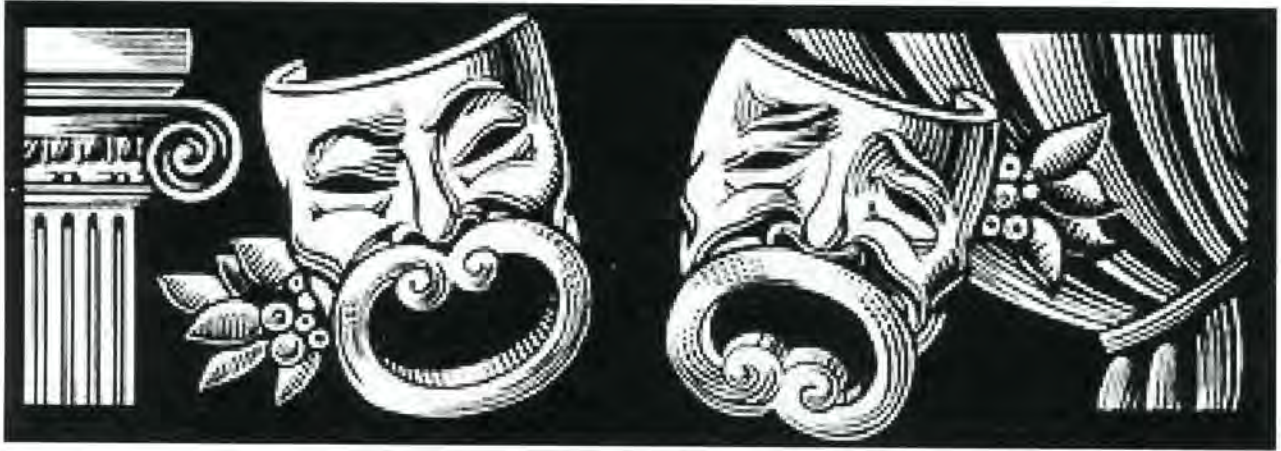
The glass contractor and the general contractor attached the property and subsequently acquired the whole property and buildings to satisfy their unpaid bills. For nine years the Villa stood empty.

In 1954, the City of Healdsburg sold their 30-year-old American Legion Hall and the land on which it stood for \$100,000 as a site for a shopping center [today the Mitchell Center at Piper and Center Streets].

A community planning expert, visiting Healdsburg, suggested that the city buy the Villa. Negotiations between the owners, Herebert E. Karleers, glass contractor and Al Swedburg, general contractor, and the City of Healdsburg began. In 1955, the City of Healdsburg purchased the Villa Chanticleer and the 20 acres surrounding it for \$45,000.

Local service clubs and improvement groups built barbecue pits, playground equipment and picnic tables. The city hired a caretaker and Americanized the name to "Chanticleer" for easier pronunciation. The Villa Chanticleer is once more the scene of family fun, weddings, baseball games, political rallies and all the social activities of Healdsburg.

It was all over by about 4:00 a.m., but then a funny thing happened. The restaurant had a meat locker and someone discovered, in the ruins, that the meat was cooked to perfection. In our effort to save as much as we could before the fire got out of control we had managed to retrieve bread, some condiments, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages and knives. The picnic tables were spared, so Bill Wolking, in his usual style, invited everyone to stay and have a party. It was a great feast and served to mask the tragedy that had just unfolded.



Source: www.camproseplayers.com

Masks of Comedy and Tragedy

The Camp Rose Players – My Memories

by Tracy Logan

In the early 1900s, Camp Rose was a recreational camp on South Fitch Mountain complete with an inn surrounded by small cabins. In fact, some of the area's existing homes were originally summer cottages available for rent through the Camp Rose Inn. Over the years, the inn evolved to a restaurant and later, in the 1970s, a dinner theater. While the restaurant has been closed for many years, the theater remains the home of the Camp Rose Players. With a seating capacity of 30, attendance at one of their productions brings new meaning to an intimate theatrical experience.

Here in the Historic Camp Rose Theater District (the neighborhood nickname coined by our founder, Jane E. Moore) out on Fitch Mountain just two miles east of the historic Healdsburg Plaza, a magical theater exists. A true creative Shangri-La, our theater is enchanting, bewitching and filled with tradition.

The Camp Rose Players are eternal in my life, taking center stage in my heart since 1983 when I first appeared in plays, right up to today when I anticipate the announcement of our next show on the horizon. I have performed on stage since I was about 16 years old and appeared in more plays with the Camp Rose Players than with any other theater company. Fittingly, I am also the non-family member Player who lives closest to the theater.

I met my former husband on stage with the Players and both our children have trod the boards right along with us. It is truly a family affair. It is not only the intimacy of this small, perfect theater space that makes it so, but the personality and love of our late resident director and leader, Jane E. Moore. As Jane always said, "The show must go on!" It goes on today with her daughter, Suzanne Salvon Webb, in charge.



Source: Tracy Logan

*Hello Dolly!, 1999, Jane E. Moore, director
Backstage Suzanne Salvon Webb and Jane E. Moore*

Jane will always be Miss Kitty to me or like a character out of *Show Boat* (a show Jane always dreamed of doing), a warm, captivating hostess. She had a clear theatrical vision, dedicated to tradition and stagecraft protocols; with high standards of production, direction and performance; and a wicked sense of fun and high spirits. This is not just a theater, it is also Jane's family's home and she opened her doors graciously.



Source: Tracy Logan

Dames at Sea, 1983, Lyle Fisher, director

From left - Stephanie Rice Ballachey, Tracy Logan and Jennifer Salvon Tremont

My first Camp Rose Players show was the Ruby Keeler/Dick Powell campy spoof, *Dames at Sea*, in the fall of 1983, directed by local actor/director favorite Lyle E. Fisher. Lyle commuted from San Francisco to direct. He even borrowed costumes from The Bohemian Club for some of his other four subsequent shows to augment our wardrobe.

At the time, Camp Rose was being re-launched as a dining establishment and its new owners, Donita Proctor and Patsy Nees, helped produce.

I remember that Jane Moore and her sweet husband, Bill Moore, were newlyweds then. In the play we had a miniature prop piano by George Baker that John Ballachey (as Dick) would "play" and I (as Mona Kent) would jump gracefully atop. In honor of their recent nuptials, this mini prop piano was christened "MOORE & MOORE."

At that time, the stage was upstairs near the bar. (Now the theater is downstairs.) We also offered not only the show, but dinner beforehand.

Backstage was actually outside on the deck, exiting and entering via open windows, as well as appropriated family bedrooms and bathrooms.

Lyle Fisher also accompanied the show. He and his piano were tucked away behind the set. Close quarters successfully created "Broadway on the River!" (Nowadays, this is the area that theatergoers are invited to visit following every show to meet and greet the cast and crew and enjoy refreshments.)



Source: Tracy Logan

Hello Dolly!, 1999, Jane E. Moore, director

From left - Peter Immordino, Cheryl Ricci Kopczynski, Tracy Logan and Karen Wallace

I remember *Hello, Dolly* (1999), Jane E. Moore, director, as a show when the Harmonia Gardens, New York City on our stage, took a turn for the wild. I played the widow/milliner, Irene Malloy. While hiding in a curtained off area with Karen Wallace (as Minnie Fay), John Guilfooy (as Barnaby Tucker) and Darryl Webb (as Cornelius Hackl), trying to keep from being seen by Peter Immordino (as Horace Vandergelder) who was having dinner with Cheryl Ricci-Kopczynski (as Dolly Levi), we noticed from our tight space that the dialogue was not going as usual. Although we had no good view of the stage, we knew that something was going sideways. It turned out that an opossum had wandered into the theater. Proceeding on its nocturnal perambulations, the opossum had climbed up into the rafters, first above the accompanist, who moved quickly off the piano bench and signaled "Horace" and "Dolly." "Horace" saved the day by embracing "Dolly" to get her out of the way as the opossum casually dropped onto the stage and ambled off, a wee bit annoyed by the stage lighting. Nothing like performing your heart out to find you have been upstaged by a critter!

Brigadoon, 1999, Jane E. Moore, director, brought home very personally the stage motto: "The Show Must Go On!" My husband, daughter, son and I were all in the show. It is a great musical - romantic, haunting, entertaining. It is an audience pleaser. My dad, Dick Logan, in excellent health when our rehearsals started, died unexpectedly just before the last weekend of the show. We four all had to go on; my father would have wanted it that way. Although I was devastated, I was focused, not wanting to make my "Meg Brockie" anything less than sparkling, because I did not want any audience member to be able to detect anything less than perfection in my performance.



Source: Tracy Logan

Brigadoon, 1999, Jane E. Moore, Director

From left - Tony Logan Immordino, Annie Logan Immordino, Peter Immordino and Tracy Logan

That was my tribute to my dad. That is how theater folk are - rather crazy I suppose. The show, and life, goes on.



Source: Tracy Logan

Sound of Music, 2000, Jane E. Moore director

***Back Row, from left - Tony Logan Immordino, Chelsea Ridgeway, Linnea Hill, Jessica Brock and Nicolette Connor
Front Row, from left - Annie Logan Immordino, Tracy Logan and Ben Brock***

The Sound of Music (2000), Jane E. Moore, director, was dedicated to my father. This show had my whole family playing principals: Georg von Trapp, was my husband, Peter Immordino; Friedrich von Trapp, was my son, Tony Logan Immordino; Gretl von Trapp, was my daughter, Annie Logan

Immordino; and I was Maria Ranier von Trapp. This show was a dream come true for me. In high school I had always been compared to Julie Andrews for my then innocence of attitude, look and voice, so playing her famous film role was tops with me. Camp Rose has a structural post (stage right) which you cannot get around. I remember it became an imaginary birch tree for me when I sang "The Hills Are Alive" at the top of the show.

This is one of the first shows that I remember the cast/crew actually outnumbering our 30 seat capacity audience! We had such a large group that we had to have a schedule on a clipboard to direct the bathroom breaks at intermission, followed up by a careful "Places!" to make sure all were accounted for.



Source: Tracy Logan

***Heaven Can Wait, 2014, Suzanne Webb, director
Tracy Logan and Cheryl Ricci Kopczyński***

Jane was always at every performance, a gift of support that not all directors give their players. Once the show opens, it belongs to the actors, but having Jane present at every performance is yet another example of her love of theater. Having her always there was calming. We performed *Heaven Can Wait* in the fall of 2014, directed by Jane's daughter, Suzanne Webb, who is carrying on the traditions.

I am excitedly awaiting the announcement of the next Camp Rose Players show.

Information on current or future productions may be found on www.camproseplayers.com, on Facebook www.facebook.com/CampRosePlayers or by calling (707) 473-0616.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Rowboats on the Russian River at Del Rio Beach, 1930s

Remembering Fitch Mountain Summers of the 1930s

by Walt Selover, 2005

We lived in San Mateo in 1927, where my older brother and I grew up. Two of my parents' best friends were physicians in San Mateo. Bill Murphy was an Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat specialist and his wife, Jewel Booth Murphy ("Judy"), was a pediatrician. She was our pediatric doctor. Judy inherited the cabin on Fitch Mountain from her mentor, Dr. Holdscraw, who had it built in the late 1920s. Holdscraw bought three lots that extended from Fitch Mountain Road to the river. She had the summer cabin built in the center so there would be some privacy. That area of the mountain came to be called Del Rio Woods, and did develop a homeowners' association of some sort. A small grocery store existed right on the road, called the Del Rio

Woods store, as I remember. It was easy walking distance, about a quarter of a mile down the road from the Murphy (Holdscraw) cabin.

My family's first vacation at the Murphy's cabin was either 1934 or 1935. We had the cabin for two weeks. I remember driving from San Mateo to the ferry terminal which was near the Ghirardelli building. They would drive the cars onto the ferry, then across the bay to the ferry terminal in Sausalito. The ferry trip alone was pretty exciting for kids. Drive off the ferry, and we were on vacation!

It was a long driving trip on the two-lane 101 [Old Redwood Highway] from Sausalito to Healdsburg through the middle of San Rafael, Petaluma, chicken capital of the world, the

Penngrove Hatcheries, Cotati and into Santa Rosa. I remember we always stopped there for gas, or something. Then off for Healdsburg. It was very exciting. Once we passed Windsor, my brother and I would start looking for Fitch Mountain. It was always a contest for which of us could spot it first. Then we knew we were on vacation. Over the bridge and into Healdsburg, the Plaza, out Matheson to Fitch Mountain Road. When we passed Camp Rose, we knew we were getting close. Then the Del Rio Woods store, and uphill a bit to a sharp turn (where the mountain road joins), and we're there. Before unloading the car, who would be first to put a hand in the river? Below the cabin, down a path past a huge redwood tree was the rock beach on the river.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Fitch Mountain Road, 1930s

Then, back up to unpacking, putting the cots out on the porch, and hanging the canvas hammock on the hooks. Old-fashioned light switches, and turn on the water heater in the kitchen. Get into our swim trunks as soon as allowed, and then down to the river. My father was a good swimmer, and taught us well. My brother and I loved the Russian River, swimming to the other side, skipping the thousands of perfect

skipping rocks - competing to see how many skips we could generate each throw. We hiked down the road to the Del Rio Woods store to get milk or bread, to buy candy or popsicles or a morning paper for our parents. We loved the Russian River and Healdsburg. We never wanted to go anywhere else for summer vacation. And we didn't.

Another summer vacation, don't remember what year, we found they had built The Palomar bar and dance hall at Del Rio Woods. It was huge. Big bands played there Saturday nights. That was for adults and big kids. But, it had a juke box, so during the week, we could play great big band music on 78 rpm records, and dance to it for a dime. Lots of teenagers we met on the beach each day were there every evening during the week. The Palomar was a terrific social scene.

I'm not sure of the year, probably 1936, the Del Rio Woods homeowners' association put up the money to create a dam in the river to make a wider, deeper swimming area. It was at the down-river end of the Del Rio Woods beach. It was a dam that could be removed in the fall, and put in place in the spring. The foundation was "permanent." There were upright posts about 10 feet apart so the whole structure was river bank to river bank. The posts had 4 inch slots from bottom to top to accommodate 4 x 12 inch boards 10 feet long. Eight to ten boards slid down the slots between upright posts to create a dam 8 feet or 10 feet high all the way across the river. For about 15 feet on the down river side of the dam, heavy boards received the water flowing over the top of the dam so the falling water didn't scour the river bottom. The dam increased the depth of the river upstream for at least half a mile. It improved swimming and boating significantly on this section of the river. The Del Rio Woods swimming area attracted hundreds more than before. A large pontoon-floated raft was moored in the middle of the river, which was a major attraction to the kids enjoying the beach. A restraining-rope area delineated the limits of shallow water for the very little kids. New wooden stairs were built to make it easier to get down from (or up to) the store, the road and Palomar level.

The Del Rio Woods dam made that beach the place to be every day for summer vacationers. Even guests at Bellevue Villa Resort on the north side of Fitch Mountain came to Del Rio Woods beach

regularly. In the fall, the boards were removed from the upright posts of the dam so it would not be a problem in the winter rainy season. The boards were slid down the slots in the uprights in late spring to raise the water level again. The dam did its job for a number of years. It is not there now. It appears that the water is not deep enough to swim there anymore. The Del Rio Woods beach now has one lifeguard but, on a Thursday in mid July [2005], there was nobody else on the beach. Weeds are growing up where hundreds of people used to have fun.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Del Rio Beach, 1930s

We enjoyed that cabin on two-week vacations every summer. If my father was unable to coordinate his vacations, he would always come up for the weekends with my mother, brother and me. Sometime, we would have a couple of high school friends with us for two weeks; and one year, our cousin from Southern California was with us for the two weeks. Over the years, we got to know kids from San Francisco and the East Bay who had summer cabins around Del Rio Woods. At the beach, on the raft, and dancing to the jukebox at the Palomar punctuated a great teenager social scene.

At least once, in each two-week vacation, my mother, father, brother and I would go out to dinner at Bellevue Villa resort and restaurant on Fitch Mountain Road north. The sign said, "Pete Roquier, Proprietor." Before dinner, my brother and I would go to the duck pin court, set the pins and bowl a couple of games. That was fun. The restaurant was very good, country French, with wonderful "vin ordinaire." My parents spoke French quite well and enjoyed conversations with Monsieur and Madame Roquier. The paté was always exceptional. My

parents allowed us to drink diluted red wine at dinner, and we were so proud. The entertainment was a terrific accordion player, Dino, a young Italian lad from San Francisco. He spent several summers there and was a favorite of all the regular patrons. He was an excellent entertainer and musician. His classic piece was "The Anvil Chorus" from Carmen. It was requested at every evening's performance. The Roquiers would not allow Dino to play it until all the glasses and utensils had been removed from the tables. Good reason. The first few evenings he had played it; the diners had picked up spoons and knives to keep time with the music and had demolished several glasses and plates. Thereafter, we were only allowed to clap and hit the dining tables in time with the music. I have no idea where Dino is now. And there no longer is a Bellevue Villa. Coming up from town on the north side, it had a long driveway up a hill left from (now) Fitch Mountain Road North. It had lots of cabins and a main building for the restaurant. It was a nice resort and often transported its young guests to Del Rio Woods beach. Bellevue Villa was around the hill toward town, and on the north side of the road.

In the summer of 1939, our parents felt my brother and I were old enough to spend a month of summer vacation on our own at the cabin. Judy Booth knew us well enough to let seven of us high school kids use the cabin for a month. We happily agreed to do some maintenance and repair projects on the cabin during the month. My brother and I invited five good friends to join us for the month. My mother, along with the mother of two of the friends, came up to get us started properly. They arranged to pay Mrs. Amesbury, who lived up the hill across the road from our cabin, to provide dinner for our group each day. We would make our own breakfasts and lunches in our cabin. Mrs. Amesbury was a year-round resident on Fitch Mountain. She was brave enough to agree. Providing food for seven hungry teenagers is a daunting task. I will say that she had come to know several of us kids in the years we had vacationed at the Booth cabin. She was wonderful and so was her food. We had three cars among the seven of us. My brother and I owned a 1931 Model A roadster, with rumble seat. Another had a 1934 V-8 sedan, and we had a 1930 Model A station wagon. At least one of the cars was used to run into Healdsburg each day to get provisions: bread, milk,

fresh fruit and ice for the ice box, plus other essentials like ice cream and watermelon.

We also had rented a canoe from the renter down river at the bridge. We had to draw straws to determine the two who were lucky enough to paddle up river to Del Rio Woods. The two carried it around the dam. Then, two of us would paddle the canoe from the Del Rio beach so it would spend the night on the beach below the cabin. Each day two of us would paddle it down to the beach by the dam, so it was available water transportation. The other five would walk down the road past the store to get to the beach by the dam. Sometimes, several of us would swim from the beach below the cabin to the Del Rio beach. We'd even swim back up-river in the evening. We were in very good shape, and the rule was that we never swam alone.

Over the years we got to know Mrs. Amesbury's daughter, Mary Katherine. A graduate of Healdsburg High, she was a student at Cal, in Berkeley during the school year. She spent most of the summer with her mother. MK was an older woman to us, a very lovely girl and danced with us on a few occasions. She had her own canoe and a steady boy friend, Freddie Lyons from Windsor, whom she met at Cal. We got to know him a little because while he worked during school vacation, he got to Fitch Mountain on weekends. We heard that they married in the early 40's.

All of us were fans of the Sanitary Dairy creamery on Healdsburg Avenue in the first block north of the Plaza. They featured what they called "frozen milkshakes." Spectacular! They filled the metal milkshake can with scoops of selected ice cream, the flavor syrup and a little milk. Then, instead of putting the can in the Hamilton Beach mixer, it was mixed by hand with a big spoon. The sides of the can would be frosted from bottom to top. The milkshake was so thick that we could turn it upside down for a moment without spilling. We've never forgotten Sanitary Dairy frozen milkshakes in Healdsburg.

About 1937 or '38 Judy Booth was able to buy a real, if ancient, jukebox for the cabin. Its revolving turntables held just 12, 78 vinyl records. We loaded-up the turntables with Big Band recordings, and a song or two that were on the Palomar jukebox. We didn't have to put dimes in it so; of course, we played it all day as it revolved from one song to another. We

had to turn the records over by hand to play the songs on the other side. It kept us busy when we weren't at the beach. And it was fun, because we were all Big Band fans. Still are.

Vacations at Russian River came to a halt after 1941. All of who us who had vacationed at the cabin over the years were in the Navy, Air Force, Marines or Army for 4 years. Not all survived the war, including my brother. In the early '50s, I was able to bring my wife and two of my children to Healdsburg, Fitch Mountain and the cabin at Del Rio Woods. We rented a canoe, swam lots. I worked as "tour guide" for my vacation experiences. Mrs. Amesbury was still up the hill. We had a wonderful time. Also in the early '50s at the cabin, we entertained two couples who were our close friends when we lived in Palo Alto. They loved it, though it took a little time to for them to learn the techniques for walking barefoot on the rocky beach. And the river was very good. Much has changed now, of course. There are other owners of the cabin at 2609 Fitch Mountain road, and it looks well cared for.

In the past, we were told that the wonderful redwood tree below the cabin is the largest redwood on Fitch Mountain. I would love that to be true, and perhaps it is. The Palomar looks to be in total disrepair. What a shame. The Del Rio Woods swimming hole is now a wading pool, but at least, the Russian River is still flowing enthusiastically. And Healdsburg is quite nice, but missing the Sanitary Dairy creamery. There is a Golden Gate Bridge now which makes the trip from San Francisco to Healdsburg quite a bit simpler. In olden days (the 1930's) we ended our vacations late Sunday afternoons -- had to get in that last swim! Returning to the Bay Area on old 101, mostly one lane each way, the line of cars backed up, to about Larkspur, waiting for the Sausalito ferries. As car ferries filled-up and left Sausalito, the line would move forward about 100 cars every 10 minutes. We got out of the car for a few minutes, to get back in for the next move forward. Yes, it was frustrating to get back across the Golden Gate, but that was the price of enjoying a vacation on the wonderful Russian River. It didn't deter us from vacations at Russian River the next year. The Golden Gate Bridge and the freeway make it faster to get to Healdsburg.

The Big "H": A Fitch Mountain Tradition for Thirty Years

by Charlotte Anderson (2007) and Marge Barnard (2014)

The story of the Big "H" is captured here through the reporting/recollections from various sources. A summary of its origins is offered by Charlotte Anderson followed by an excerpt from the Healdsburg Enterprise, November 9, 1933. Marge Barnard, Healdsburg High School class of 1942, recalls her youthful encounter with the Big "H" in an excerpt from her just-published memoir, The Barnard Journals: History, Humor and Healdsburg, edited by Shonnie Brown.

It was 1921 when the first ambitious group of Healdsburg High School students elected to demonstrate their school pride by climbing up and erecting a giant white wooden "H" on the side of Fitch Mountain overlooking town. At this time, the high school was located on Fitch Street, so Fitch Mountain was clearly visible behind the school to the east. The Big "H" on Fitch Mountain became a beloved school tradition, proudly passed on from class to class.



Source: Charlotte Anderson

Fitch Mountain with the Big "H" seen from Recreation Park

The teenagers did not have to trespass to erect the sign. It was considered to be an enterprise of school spirit, not graffiti or vandalism. Each fall, with permission of the owners, students would hike up the mountain in the light of day to repair and repaint the white sign. This annual trip evolved into a sacred sophomore obligation and adventure.

Other schools took notice of Healdsburg's lofty "H." It made a perfect target. One year on the night before a big game, rivals from Sebastopol's

Analy High School cleverly climbed up and painted the "H" into an "A." A memorable prank!

The erection of the big "H" on the mountainside was a "feel-good" story that regularly made news in the local papers. In November 1933, the *Healdsburg Enterprise* credited the men and boys who helped install a new "H."

"New 'H' for High School on Fitch Mountain"

Students at the Healdsburg High School on Sunday completed the erection of a new "H" on the side of Fitch Mountain to replace the old symbol which had become badly twisted and bent through the years. The new "H" is 18 feet by 13 feet, made of two-inch redwood, 24 inches wide, set on concrete foundations, and is expected to last for several years. The old letter was made of ¾-inch material and was 16 feet by 13 feet in size.

The material for the new letter was furnished by the Healdsburg High School student body and was made by A. Valette and F. Lafon, under the direction of Faculty Advisor George Stanley, who also is the shop teacher.

The "H" was erected on Sunday by G. McClish, R. Jones, L. Patterson, J. Silvas, L. Musselman, C. Mallon and F. Lafon.

Girl Power on Fitch Mountain

"The H is down!" Yes, the large, wooden, white block H up on Fitch Mountain is lying prone on the mountainside. It is not known who knocked it down, but the tradition in 1941 is that the sophomore boys of Healdsburg High School are responsible for keeping it standing.

Time goes by, and the boys keep putting off the job. It becomes an embarrassment for the sophomore girls, so we decide to put the H back up ourselves. We act confidently, but secretly we all

have doubts about our success. I hear that it weighs 900 pounds!

We don't want any boys harassing us, so we make our plans in secret. Eleven of us girls gather on a Saturday and head up Fitch Mountain with our equipment and two helpers, Mr. Giullou, Cynthia's dad, and Milt Brandt.

We work hard — pushing, sweating, hammering and digging. After a number of hours, we are ready to tie it down. But at this point, we hear screams and see a cloud of dust sliding down the shale mountainside. Bushes stop the sliding cloud, which begins to dissipate—and there sits Vivian Kramer, all hunched over, covered with dirt and dust. We all stop and stare for a moment before a couple of other girls and I rush to see if she is hurt. We help her up out of the shale. She shakes and dust flies off her like water off a wet dog. This trauma, the only one of the day, turns out okay because Vivian is not injured, just shook up.



Source: Marge Barnard

Putting up the Fitch Mountain "H"

Front row from left - Sis Schwab, Virginia Anderson, Charlotte Beckwith, Gloria Masini, Marge Barnard; Second row from left - Norma Kelly, Mary Wattles (Brandt), Vivian Kramer, Virginia Kramer, ?, Dorothy Childress

We then finished tying everything down before gathering under the crossbar of the "H" for a photo. We are tired and dirty, but excited and beaming with our success.

But less than two weeks pass before the H is down again. Word has it that the boys resented our

putting it up, so they cut it down in order to restore it to glory themselves.

We girls are now furious and vow to get even in some way. An opportunity presents itself towards the end of the school year. Junior class officers are to be elected and we decide we will not allow the boys the privilege of winning.

In secret, we plan our strategy—we will nominate a girl for class president. But who? After some discussion, I am selected. Thinking ahead to junior year with the Junior-Senior Prom, etc., I'm not sure I want the job, but everyone agrees that I can do it. More plans are made and we quietly speak to all the sophomore girls.

The last class meeting of the year begins and nominations are called for. A girl nominates me for president. A boy nominates a boy. All is going well and we smile amongst ourselves. A girl then nominates another very popular boy whom we had selected earlier. Voting is to be in a few days...

With great anticipation, Election Day arrives. As we girls planned, the boys' votes are split between the two popular boys and I am elected junior class president!

We celebrate our victory discreetly. Well, not too discreetly.

The Boys' Side of the Story

In the middle of the year, the sophomore girls decided it was time the "H" was once more hoisted to its place of honor. Twelve of the most ambitious scaled Fitch Mountain for that purpose. Eight hours later they descended triumphantly. The "H" stood, however, for only a week, and then again slid to a resting place far down the mountain side. This time the boys, determined not to be outdone, made short work of righting it.

End of an Era

The Big "H" tradition survived at Healdsburg High School until 1951 or 1952 when it ended for unknown reasons. (What happened, mid-1950s HHS students?) The spot where the "H" stood all those years is a large brown area consisting mainly of shale; no vegetation grows there. The brown patch midway up the mountain can still be seen from town. Look for it the next time you pass Recreation Park and imagine the "H" that once graced the mountain.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Prune blossoms in Dry Creek Valley heading toward town on Westside Road; Fitch Mountain is in background, 1930s

“Fitch Mountain: My Magnificent Obsession”

by Zelma Ratchford, 1995

excerpted from Grandma Zelma’s Journal

About one mile from the center of Healdsburg, on the gentle foothills of Fitch Mountain, [my husband, attorney Jess Ratchford, and I] found a beautiful seven acres with a small cabin. This site offered a view of the entire town and the mountains beyond. We purchased this property from Mrs. Crabtree in 1935. There was room for our horse, chickens and children. Now having lived on this spot for over fifty years, we count our blessings and continue to consider it the most beautiful place in the entire world.

Fitch Mountain has been my “Magnificent Obsession” since 1954! As time went on, I bought an additional 100-plus lots and parcels of Fitch Mountain. First, I bought all the remaining lots owned by Mrs. Johnson in the Del Rio subdivision. I bought a 50’ by 4000’ strip of land in the Camp Rose subdivision from the Delongs, then a number of tax lots. All of these acquisitions were for access to the 264 acres and to develop a package for sale at some future time. When I began my career in real estate, Healdsburg’s main agricultural crop was prunes. At that time one could not give away a grape ranch. Healdsburg was called the “Buckle of the Prune

Belt.” Our fine soil produced the finest and tastiest prunes, and we had a dehydrator plant here.

Today, April 1, 1995, is forty years or more since I purchased the 264 acres of unsubdivided Fitch Mountain property. We always had horses. My family and I often rode to the top of the mountain to enjoy the magnificent view of river, mountain and city.

Not knowing the right use for the mountain, I thought of perhaps asking for 35 acres to be annexed by Healdsburg for development near the Villa Chanticleer. The City of Healdsburg did not have money at this time to acquire more park property. Fitch Mountain has always been considered a great scenic background for the City of Healdsburg. Certain concerned people did not want to disturb its green beauty with buildings. The property adjoins the 17-acre Villa Chanticleer Park.

I am hopeful that Healdsburg will eventually combine my property and Villa Chanticleer City Park for a handsome well-located Regional Park; a satisfying solution. I feel lucky to be able to help Healdsburg and the surrounding area have a beautiful walking and wildlife park from my “Magnificent Obsession.”



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Zelma Ratchford

Remembering Grandma Z

by Mary Drew, 2011

Grandma Zelma bought Fitch Mountain when I was eight years old. My family would travel from Lodi, where I was raised, to Healdsburg several times every year to visit my grandparents. Each time we visited, Grandma Z would take us for a drive in her green 1950s Jeep *Wagoneer* to the top of Fitch Mountain.

As a child, I remember how exciting it was to take a drive on a narrow, steep, dirt road. I also remember thinking that there couldn't be any more beautiful place in the world than the mountain.

Spring was Grandma Z's favorite time of year. She made sure to show us her favorite wildflowers (red shooting stars) when they were in bloom. These particular flowers bloom in only one spot on the west side of the mountain.

When Grandma Z sold a private "forever wild" easement over Fitch Mountain to the Sonoma County Open Space District, she threw a picnic-party on the top of the mountain. Included as guests were the descendants of Captain Fitch. My husband and I purchased our home adjoining Fitch Mountain in 1986. My two sons, Devin and Daniel, and I have enjoyed walking and bicycling on the trail that is directly behind our house. We think of Grandma's passion for the mountains each time we are on the trail.

The red shooting star wildflowers are starting to bloom again, reminding me, as they do every year, of my Grandma's spirit and love for Fitch Mountain.



Source: Ann Carranza

A view of Fitch Mountain from Healdsburg, 2010

A Bottle of Fitch Mountain's "Finest"

by Ann Carranza

A bottle of Fitch Mountain's "finest" resides in Sacramento and, contrary to expectations, that bottle is not filled with wine. It is filled with the finest Fitch Mountain soil. The bottle was awarded to State Senator Mike McGuire, so he could take a piece of Fitch Mountain with him to Sacramento.

The bottle signifies the many years of hard work McGuire put in to save Healdsburg's own little mountain—the not-quite-official-mountain he rambled over as a teen, trespassing and enjoying the environment that he was destined to save. First as city council member, then as Fourth District Supervisor, McGuire's enthusiasm and desire to protect the mountain never waned. In a deal that took 20 years to achieve, Fitch Mountain was permanently protected on November 18, 2014.

In October, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors authorized \$1.5 million to purchase the land. The money came from Sonoma County Agricultural Protection and Open Space District funds. Following the supervisors' vote, the Healdsburg City Council unanimously approved the transfer of the land to the LandPaths, a stewardship organization. The City will also add \$400,000 over three years for park improvements.

Now LandPaths is creating the vision and supplying the volunteers and labor to develop a fire safety plan, build hiking trails and remove invasive

species. Fitch Mountain Park will be another link in the chain of LandPaths' "people-powered parks." According to their website, the "model works because it encourages those who care the most and know the land the best to get involved in its stewardship." After three years, Fitch Mountain Park will return to City ownership and open to the public.

Avid Fitch Mountain Park supporters Laura Tietz and Ray Holley have created the Fitch Mountain Fund. To date, they have raised more than \$60,000 for park stewardship. Their goal is to raise \$2 million over the next ten years as a park endowment.

Holley has nothing but good things to say about McGuire, the driving force for saving Fitch Mountain in perpetuity for the residents of Healdsburg—that once-teenager who trespassed on the little mountain kept it in Healdsburg's family.

"Mike McGuire was essential to the successful completion of this deal to purchase the top of Fitch Mountain and protect it forever," said Holley. "If not for Mike pushing it forward, I don't think it would have happened. The community owes him a debt of thanks."

The legacy of Fitch Mountain is the hill that calls itself a mountain, and that's the kind of thing that defines the spirit of Healdsburg.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Water Carnival, 1909



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Water Carnival Queen and attendants, 1909
From left – Helen Ferguson, Ruth Swisher, Stella Lufkin,
Theo Brown, Kathleen (Poppe)Swisher, Nina Luce Rose,
R. R. Dennes, ?and Marie Chappari Engleke

Fitch Mountain and Russian River Memories

by Gladys Richards Engelke, 1997

Memories of the Russian River span most of my life and even before, such as two pictures hanging on our wall in the den taken the first part of this century. One is of the Water Carnival showing off the beautiful floats that paraded down the river in all their pomp and glory, and the other one is showing the pretty Queen of the Court and her attendants. One of these lovely ladies is Marie Chappari Engelke, my husband's mother. I am sure it was a thrilling moment for them to be chosen, and I can imagine all the chit-chat that went on about what to wear. It looked like they chose frilly hats and long regal gowns. This event took place between the railroad and highway bridges at Healdsburg and, no doubt, was the biggest festival of the year. Those memories are from pictures, but they happened in the same area on the Russian River where my personal memories are forever imbedded.

My aunt and uncle came to our ranch in Windsor often and, of course, brought their four children. The treat was to head for the river. At that time our present Veterans Memorial Beach was called Merryland. We were all so excited as we loaded up in his polished Ford to take off for the beach. We would swim, splash each other, jump off the ramp and also build sand castles, make mud pies and dig holes resembling a marina where our

imaginary boats plied the rivers we carved. My aunt was noble and brave in being responsible for a bunch of kids at the river. She had all of us wearing different colored bathing caps in order to be able to make a fast count. (Now maybe you can figure that one out...)

After a day of fun in the sun it was baseball time (always hoping I would get chosen rather quickly.) The games lasted until the tall tree's shadow turned to dusk. Bay trees were in abundance and oh so fragrant. They emitted such an aromatic spicy flavor that I can still pick a bay leaf, crunch it in my hand and memories of the river days flow back to my mind.

As teenagers in Healdsburg, the river was our favorite spot. There were fun places to go all over Fitch Mountain. There was a dance hall around Fitch Mountain near the river that was called Palomar. I believe there was a policeman standing around or was that a ticket-taker? There were no big bands in person, but the music sounded OK to us. It was also fun to be invited to Helendale Autry Barrett's home or Milt Brandt's home because they both had great abodes right on the river.

After being a teenager, came marriage and children. That called for a ski boat, so there we were, back at the river skiing up and down. My good



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Gladys Richards and Catherine Hearing, 1939

friend Catherine Hearing Curtis was also doing the same thing with her family.

Next in my life was the joy of grandchildren. Two granddaughters, Chal and Lainie Bebbler, were lifeguards for several years – yes, down at Memorial Beach. Again I would head for the river even though we could not converse until they were off duty.

Yes, the Russian River is a natural beauty and I am glad Healdsburg is located on its banks. Last week my husband, Lee, and I went down to the same ole spot for a picnic and I am sure you can guess whose idea that was! While I was munching away on food, I was in awe watching this propelling unpredictable river heading for the sea. I was also conjuring and visualizing memories from yesterday(s).

Third Class



Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society
P.O. Box 952
Healdsburg, CA 95448

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
HEALDSBURG, CA
PERMIT 149