



# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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## HEALDSBURG'S IMMIGRANTS

## In This Issue

This issue accompanies the current Healdsburg Museum exhibit, "Healdsburg's Immigrants." In both our exhibit and this publication we have sought to gather diverse stories of our northern Sonoma County region, past and present. Of course there are many more stories that could—and should—also be told. We will continue to solicit, record and preserve immigrant stories of our community as an essential part of our Museum mission.

We are especially pleased to present the work of three professional writers in this issue of the *Recorder*. Shonnie Brown contributed significantly to the exhibit through her book "Healdsburg's Immigrants," an anthology of 24 stories of community residents. She shares four of their stories and her own journey in writing the book. Healdsburg Literary Laureate Gabriel Fraire articulates the struggle and fears of many immigrants, voicing his own grandmother's arduous trip to America. Ann Carranza profiles Danish immigrant and contemporary Healdsburg resident, Lisbeth Johansen Trotter, who arrived in America in the 1970s.

Historical articles include the first Chinese settlers in Healdsburg by Holly Hoods, a profile of Irish immigrant Jane Allman Miles Snider by Assistant Curator Whitney Hopkins and a foreign-language photo history mystery by Ann Howard. Kay Robinson writes about the Piñas, the first Mexican settlers in the area. Janet Sbragia Pisenti pays tribute to the vibrant Italian families of Limerick Lane. Joe Pelanconi delves into his own immigrant heritage of "courageous, hardworking, risk-takers who persevered while steadfastly remaining true to their Italian roots." Dolores Rovai pens a tender tribute to her deceased mother, Florence Buchignani Rovai.

The "Healdsburg's Immigrants" exhibit will be held over until January 3, 2016. For more stories about Healdsburg's Immigrants, the book of the same name is available for sale in the Museum gift shop.

As always, we hope you find this issue of the *Russian River Recorder* informative and engaging. We appreciate your readership and ongoing support.

Holly Hoods, Curator  
Pamela Vana-Paxhia, Editor



### RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

The Official Publication of the  
HEALDSBURG MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# Contents

- 4 We Are All Immigrants**  
*by Gabriel Fraire*
- 5 Healdsburg's Immigrants**  
*by Shonnie Brown*
- 8 How I Came To America**  
*by Aurelia Velez Guerrero*
- 9 Sonoma County Italian Immigrants**  
*by Joe Pelanconi*
- 12 Chinese Immigrants in Healdsburg: 1860-1900**  
*by Holly Hoods*
- 15 Early Irish Immigrant: Jane Allman Miles Snider**  
*by Whitney Hopkins*
- 17 The Piñas and their Rancho Tzabaco**  
*by Kay Robinson*
- 18 Merging**  
*by Karen Hayes, Healdsburg Literary Guild*
- 19 Photograph with a Mysterious Message**  
*by Ann Howard*
- 21 Lisbeth**  
*by Ann Carranza*
- 24 The Italians of Limerick Lane**  
*by Janet Sbragia Pisenti*
- 27 Somewhere Over the Rainbow**  
*by Dolores Rovai*
- 28 A Generous Land**  
*by Marianne Lyon, Healdsburg Literary Guild*



Source: Shonnie Brown

## We Are All Immigrants

by Gabriel Fraire, 2014-2015 Healdsburg Literary Laureate

My family came from Mexico during the Pancho Villa era revolution of the early 1900s. Most of them knew nothing of politics or revolution, but they all knew a lot about war and destruction.

My grandmother told me that when men with guns rode into her village, the girls would hide. It did not matter if the men were government *Federales* or revolutionaries. If caught, the women would be abused. It is sad and scary but, unfortunately, continues even today. Under the guise of freedom or revolution, warriors are abusing women and children right now. How horrible it must be to live under such constant threat.

When my great-grandfather had the opportunity to send my grandmother to *El Norte* (the United States), he did so knowing they might never meet again. It wasn't what he wanted. It wasn't what she wanted. It was what was necessary to survive. And she did. And her children achieved and her grandchildren thrived.

In so many of the immigrant stories, you will read of similar experiences. People do not leave their homeland easily; often they are forced. Whether endangered by Nazis, revolutionaries, communists, capitalists or bandits, most immigrants don't simply

leave their homeland—they flee their homeland. It is seldom a choice and too often a necessity. And they don't come to America expecting a "free lunch" or government handouts. They come knowing they will work very hard with only the hope that their offspring might have a better life. *Who can fault that? Who can object to a parent wanting more for their children?*

As long as Western Europeans have been on this continent, they have objected to the next wave of immigration—whether the immigrants were Irish, Italian, Asian, African or more recently—Latin American. It has always been the case and, unfortunately, may always be the case.

Work like *Healdsburg's Immigrants* is essential. It is vital. We need to record these stories so that others can know they are not alone, that their struggles are universal and that regardless of one's skin color or national origin, we are all the same. We all want food and shelter and love. Regardless of what brought our families here, we are all here now. And we need to respect and should admire the effort and struggle that brought our forefathers, and perhaps our neighbors, to this land.

We are all immigrants.



# Healdsburg's Immigrants

by Shonnie Brown

*Though I have always been intrigued by personal histories, I first became captivated by immigrant stories while writing the "Neighbors" column for the Healdsburg Tribune. I found myself interviewing local immigrants with fascinating adventures—stories I couldn't get out of my head. At some point I determined to create a book of these stories, and when Holly Hoods suggested we collaborate—my book and the Museum's exhibit—I was thrilled.*

*I had no idea there was such a richness of diversity in Healdsburg. I had no real goal, other than to tell 24 compelling and varied stories. I was surprised to find contemporary immigrants from all over the world in tiny Healdsburg, and in the end the book divided nicely into four sections—Healdsburg's Italian Heritage, Cuba, Mexico and Central America, Europe, and Asia and the Middle East. The personal memoirs in Healdsburg's Immigrants are just a sample of the astounding diversity that is Healdsburg.*

I began with Healdsburg's Italian families because our local agricultural industry is clearly rooted in Italian immigration stories. I have interviewed many incredible multi-generational Italian families, and one story I chose, that of Norma Rafanelli Cousins, has all the ingredients of a delicious Italian narrative, beginning with her father, Alberto Rafanelli, deserting the Italian Navy by jumping ship in Virginia at the age of eighteen. A carpenter by trade, he rebuilt homes in San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and married Letizia Tonneti, who had immigrated to San Francisco as a young, single woman from a winemaking family. Knowing that she would not prosper in Lucca, Italy, she married Alberto and then led him to rural Healdsburg where she taught him vineyard and winemaking skills. Norma was born in 1922 in their "barn winery," just off of Powell Avenue.



Source: Shonnie Brown

*Norma's parents, Alberto and Letizia Rafanelli*

The family prospered—Alberto built homes, acquired property and did some bootlegging during Prohibition. As Letizia served the Feds a little brandy with walnut biscotti, she'd often say, "We're not stealin' or killin'; just tryin' to get ahead in life."

Because her two brothers wouldn't let their sister "be raised in a barn," Norma's family moved into the Powell Avenue house (where she still lives at age 92). Alberto eventually purchased the 75-acre Foppiano Ranch on West Dry Creek Road, where Norma's nephew David Rafanelli runs the highly esteemed A. Rafanelli Winery today. An original pink lady at Healdsburg Hospital, Norma continues to work at the hospital gift shop and eats her Saturday lunch at McDonald's.



Source: Shonnie Brown

*Marie Mathieu as a tough little kid in San Francisco*

Marie Mathieu from Nicaragua was another of my favorite interviews. Three weeks after her birth in 1921, Marie's dad left Nicaragua on a sailing ship for San Francisco while Marie and her mother remained with Grandma who had her own saloon and Momma had a dressmaking shop. Marie told me that she would never forget the story Grandma told of two young cousins who were sought for military duty:

"The Nicaraguan Army came to our house and Grandma, who was sitting in a big wicker rocker,



hid the boys under her billowing skirts, one on each side, as she rocked back and forth while rolling her cigars. She told the officers that the boys were gone—off into the mountains. They searched the house, coming up empty handed. Then she gave them each a cigar and they went on their way. But the two boys remained wanted by the military dictatorship and were found a few years later. They were put to death when still only teenagers.”

In 1925, Momma decided she and Marie would immigrate to San Francisco where Papa greeted them with a “rags, bottles, sacks” man to transport them to their one tiny room. Marie grew up during the worst of the Great Depression. The family had to move every time the rent was raised.

Their second house was a basement flat on a small alley in the Mission District. There was no electricity and no heating other than a tiny fireplace and a teensy water heater. Marie said, “Papa, Momma and I used the same water to bathe—one after the other. When we couldn’t afford the gas for cooking, Momma made dinner in the fireplace with a pot on the coals. I remember paying fifteen cents for soup meat and five cents for a bunch of vegetables at the local grocery. One time I dropped my grocery money, which rolled into the sewer. A kind man found me crying and purchased the items for me.”

As a teenager, Marie participated in the weeklong celebration of the Golden Gate Bridge opening in May 1937. She wore western clothes and walked the entire bridge—“hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder—in a sea of people.” She lived and worked in San Francisco through adulthood, getting married and divorced and raising three children. Marie moved to Healdsburg in 2001 with her daughter Yvonne and Yvonne’s husband George. A very special lady, Marie died in 2013, shortly after our interviews.

Miro Tcholakov, winemaker for Trentadue Winery in Geyserville, came from a tiny town in Bulgaria and grew up under communist rule. After the 1944 communist revolution, the ruling party began expropriating private land from landowners at gunpoint. When Miro’s father was three years old, Miro’s grandfather was almost shot for refusing to give up his farmland. Grandma put herself between him and the communist guns, begging her husband to succumb to their demands. “Shame on you!” she cried to the soldiers. “You can’t do this to us!” And

she tried to chase the men away.

The family land then became part of a huge cooperative vegetable garden, where the grandparents worked and lived on one small acre of their former land. Farmers were a clear threat to the communists who denounced everything leading to possession and wealth, believing these things led to decadence. They separated boys from the land of their fathers by luring them into the cities. Miro’s dad went to high school in the city, then into the military, then back into the city to work in a factory.



Source: Shonnie Brown

*Miro and his grandparents at his military boot camp graduation in 1984*

Miro was born in 1966 into the “second generation under communist rule,” when the Party was no longer as powerful. When he was a college student in 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, marking the death throes of communism in Europe. In 1990, one of his fellow students intercepted a fax from FFA International in Alexandria, Virginia—an invitation for seven students to participate in an 18-month exchange program. Miro fit the qualifications and was sent to Dry Creek Vineyards where he remained until he became Trentadue’s winemaker in 1999. Since then Miro has won countless Gold, Double Gold and Best in Class awards and has become known internationally as a great winemaker and a wine competition judge.

John Edwinson recalls the Japanese bombing of Burma in 1942, the beginning of the Japanese occupation of his homeland. “On that day, my dad’s mother and his sisters went shopping in Rangoon. Grandpa, who was home in our town of Thingangyun, spotted a squadron of silver planes headed towards Rangoon pass overhead. He and my dad jumped into the jeep and drove like heck with Dad picking heads and body parts off the road and throwing them out of the way. Amazingly, they found my grandmother



and aunts in the Rangoon civic center bomb shelter.”

The family caravanned north, hoping to escape, but didn't get far. Burma had been bombed so badly that the Brits did not think the country worth defending, and they withdrew to India. During the ensuing Japanese occupation, the family was placed in an internment camp in Zawgyi—a Catholic village—along with two Burmese priests, a dozen nuns, and orphans from the convent.

“My father and mother met at the internment camp as teenagers,” John said. “Dad used to put river clay on his face and crawl under the barbed wire to get leaflets with news from the British. While at the camp, he saw men who had to dig their own graves and were then beheaded and fell into these graves. My Uncle Dick's sister-in-law, a blonde and blue-eyed woman, was taken away by the Japanese and never seen again. Grandma Dorothy's brother George lost his whole family after he put them on a caravan to escape. He never knew where they went and he never saw them again. Now I thank God my parents were interned. Otherwise, I fear they wouldn't have survived.”

Burma went through constant political change during John's childhood, and by the early 1960s it was clear that his family must leave their homeland and join Uncle Dick in San Francisco. They did not want to go, but the new government would surely have put John's dad in jail for being part of the old regime. John's parents had to leave everything behind except for the cash stuffed in John's socks and the jewels Mom sewed on their clothes as buttons! They spent what cash they could turning their immigration into a grand vacation.

The journey of John's family exemplifies what I learned from most of the interviews I conducted. People leave their homeland under threat of death or to escape from institutional violence. They leave because of extreme poverty and/or hope of a better life for themselves and their children. They often leave as the only option to remaining together as a family. Sometimes (as in the case of Miro and Cassie Call) they leave for an educational opportunity as a way of improving their life. But in almost all cases, they leave for survival.

We are fortunate to have these deeply personal stories set against a backdrop of the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression, Prohibition, World War II, treacherous foreign civil wars, and a Europe

occupied by the Nazis and Soviets. If we examine each story for what it is, we learn two things: (1) each storyteller came to this country at great personal risk and (2) each storyteller has a well-earned appreciation for the U.S. that some of us can barely begin to understand.

I will end with John Edwinson's description of his return to Burma after fifty years: “I returned to my dad's village and saw two thousand-year-old Buddhist temples. I made it a point to go to the Strand Hotel, a place where my parents went ballroom dancing. This iconic five-star hotel in Yangon remains awe-inspiring—as Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham and George Orwell frequented its bar and billiard parlor back in 1920.



Source: Shonnie Brown

*John and sister Stella, 2013*

“I sat at that bar reminiscing about the old steam engine trains we would take to school every day, with a rickshaw ride for the remainder of the trip. The river jetty brought back memories of our family vacations to Mergui, a small fishing village on the Andaman Sea with pristine blue waters and small islands inhabited by monkeys. But remembering the constant heat and humidity of Rangoon brought a fond reminder of our ideal climate in Sonoma County, so I downed a couple of cold Myanmar beers and left with the experience of being blessed knowing both worlds of East and West.

“My heritage is diverse—a background of ethnic colonial mixed with Burmese. I am humble and proud to be part of the working class, and I raised my three daughters with strong family roots and an appreciation for the multi-faceted culture in which we are blessed to live. That cliché ‘only in America’ rings so true, with all the varied success stories creating this melting pot in which I, for one, am proud to be called an American.”





Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Felix Rodriguez Borruel, Amparo Velez Borruel, Aurelia Velez Guerrero, Victor Terrazas Guerrero, 1923*

## How I Came to America

*by Aurelia Velez Guerrero*

All my youth was filled with war. They called it a revolution. We only knew it as war. Many times the federales raided our village. When they came we all tried to hide. The last time my sister and I hid in the storeroom near the back of the house. Outside we could hear all this noise and the soldiers were yelling "Donde estan las chicas?" Then suddenly the door to the room was knocked down. We could smell the dirty federales and hear them rummaging around the room. We didn't cry or say anything. We just hung in a rack of clothes, keeping our feet off the ground. They didn't see us and left. When we finally let ourselves down, we cried and hugged for hours. After that, many men left town to join the revolutionary generals in fighting the federales. All my brothers, including the youngest who was only 13, went to join the most famous of the northern revolutionary generals, General Francisco Pancho Villa, the hero of every Mexican, living or dead.

I never saw any of my brothers again. Then, one night, my father pulled me out of bed and paraded me into the kitchen with my sisters. A man I had never seen walked back and forth, inspecting us, as if we were livestock. When his hand came down upon my head and I heard him say, "I'll take this

one," a shiver went through my body. Was I being sold or married off? I did not know. I knew nothing of the revolution other than to fear the federales. And I knew nothing of el Norte. The man was carrying people north, away from the war, and my father had only enough money to have one of his daughters go. Since he could not pick one of us over the others, he let the driver choose. The driver chose me because I was the smallest and would take up the least amount of room.

For many days I rode in a horse-drawn wagon with many people I did not know. When the wagon finally stopped, we were in Texas. Everyone began to get off. The wagon man came around to the back and told me it was the end of the line. When I asked him what I was supposed to do, he said it was not a concern of his.

And that is how I came to America, alone, as a twelve year old girl.

*Aurelia Velez Guerrero is the great-grandmother of Maria and Elizabeth Fraire of Healdsburg and the grandmother of Gabriel Fraire. Variations of this story appear in Gabriel's play "Who Will Dance With Pancho Villa."*



# Sonoma County Italian Immigrants

by Joe Pelanconi

My maternal grandparents were Italian immigrants from Massa-Carrara, a region in Northern Tuscany once favored by the Medici and not far from where Michelangelo secured the marble for his celebrated sculptures. My paternal grandparents were immigrants from the spectacular Italian Alps in Lombardia, the birthplace of Pliny the Elder, the noted scholar and Roman military commander, as well as near where Leonardo da Vinci lived and painted *The Last Supper*. Now, if folklore fostered at family reunions is to be taken seriously, one might assume we descended from scholarly Italian aristocracy, or at the very least, we possess the blood of skilled artists and craftsmen. However, extensive genealogical research has painted a less noble reality —yet one that is not lacking in adventure, courage and perseverance.

My grandparents were typical Sonoma County Italian immigrants. Nearly all who immigrated to the county between 1880 and 1920 were from Northern Italy, poor, uneducated and hungry. The world-wide depression and the political situation in newly unified Italy sent thousands of Italians to America. They possessed little loyalty to their impoverished and chaotic homeland, while America's 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act created a labor shortage that provided an attractive lure. I recently asked an Italian cousin living in our family village why he thought my grandparents had left such a beautiful place. His quick reply was that "they were tired of eating chestnuts three meals a day." My paternal grandfather often mentioned that times were tough and he fled to avoid conscription into a military for which he had no loyalty.

Giuseppe Pelanconi, my paternal grandfather, was born in 1880 in Gordona, a tiny Alpine village. His family subsisted by herding cows and goats in the scenic and inhospitable Alps, selling meat and milk. In 1903, Giuseppe and a cousin, Giovanni Gianoli, headed across the Alps on foot and into France. In Le Havre, they signed on to a ship headed for North America. Upon arrival, they promptly jumped ship and rode the rails across Canada to Vancouver. They then signed onto another ship, sailing for San Francisco, where they again jumped ship and entered

the U.S. as eager and illegal aliens. From San Francisco they headed north and found work making railroad ties for 50 cents a day on the coast at Stewart's Point, Sonoma County.



Source: Joe Pelanconi

*Brothers Joseph and Giuseppe Domenico Pelanconi*

Giuseppe and his cousin eventually rendezvoused with two of Giuseppe's brothers, Domenico and Guglielmo, who had also immigrated to California. The foursome then became part of a scheme to procure their own land. In 1905 much of the rugged land between the Sonoma Coast and the Russian River Valley was government land open for homesteading. Homesteaders were required to be U.S. citizens, own no land and be willing to live on the homestead parcel for two years, after which time they could receive title. Ineligible for homesteading, Ed Norton was one of a number of landowners who devised ways of increasing their own holdings. As a prominent lawyer, Norton procured citizenship for the foursome (reportedly for 50 cents each) and assisted Giuseppe and crew in submitting their homestead applications. They each homesteaded 160 adjoining acres in the Flat Ridge area of Northern Sonoma County.



Giuseppe built and lived in a primitive cabin on Flat Ridge for the required two years. For cash, he peeled tan oak bark on the property and hauled wagon loads into Geyserville where it was sold to tanneries. As agreed, Norton scoured bank defaults for smaller land parcels closer to civilization and purchased them for Giuseppe and his cohorts, which he traded for the homesteaded land. In 1909, Giuseppe received in trade 40 acres near Geyserville, while Domenico got land in West Dry Creek, Guglielmo on Chalk Hill Road and Giovanni near Cloverdale.



Source: Joe Pelanconi

*Clementina and Giuseppe Pelanconi*

Giuseppe then sent notice to Gordona, requesting that a young woman eight years his junior, Clementina Pelanconi, accept his offer of marriage and come to America. Both from a tiny village of a few hundred and with the same surname, Giuseppe and Clementina swore they were not blood relatives. Clementina left Le Havre, France on a ship headed for Ellis Island. From there she took a train to San Francisco, where they were married in 1909. They eventually settled on the Geyserville property. My

father, Amerigo, was born in 1910. Giuseppe died in 1926, the victim of asphyxiation while cleaning a clandestine Prohibition-era wine tank. Widowed Clementina, along with my teenage father and his sister, Elena, struggled to make a living on their Geyserville property. Clementina eventually remarried and died in 1968.

My maternal grandfather, Abramo Trusendi, came to California in 1898 as an 18-year old from Posara, a tiny village in Massa-Carrara. He was accompanied by his older brother-in-law, Giuseppe Mazzoni, who left a wife and child in Italy. Like other new arrivals to Northern Sonoma County, they found work at Italian Swiss Colony in Asti, where they met Eduardo Seghesio and Francesco Baiocchi, both of whom had land at Chianti, a train stop between Asti and Geyserville. Abramo and Giuseppe soon acquired land in Chianti and built two houses there in 1890. In 1905, Abramo was tending his ranch and occasionally working for wages. While working for the railroad near Santa Rosa, he met Maria Pigoni Pretazzini.



Source: Joe Pelanconi

*Maria Pigoni Trusendi*

Born in 1886, Maria was from Agnino, a village a short distance from Posara. She was the oldest child in a large family that struggled to put food on the table. In 1905, at age 19, she was encouraged to flee to America, where a cousin



promised work in a Santa Rosa hotel. She described her voyage as a miserable seasick experience in crowded and dirty conditions. She vowed to never again set foot in a boat. Her Ellis Island arrival record noted she was Italian, illiterate, had a train ticket to San Francisco and 17 dollars on her person. She worked in the hotel where she met Abramo, whom she had never encountered in Italy, and they were married in 1906. They lived in the Chianti house and had two sons, Alan and Melvo, and my mother, Amelia, who was born in 1915. Abramo died of pneumonia in 1917, leaving Maria to run the ranch and raise her three young children. She eventually remarried, had another daughter and died in 1981.

While my grandparents immigrated to California under different circumstances, they had much in common and were typical of the thousands of Italians who came to Sonoma County from 1880 to 1920. Most striking was that while seeking a new and better life, they lived here in much the same way they had in Italy. They had small properties and struggled to be self-sufficient. They raised cows, pigs, chickens and rabbits. They planted fruit trees, small vineyards and had large vegetable gardens. They made wine, hunted wild game and picked wild mushrooms and berries. They made sausage, salami and prosciutto as well as butter and bread. They earned extra money occasionally by selling what they grew, cutting wood and through occasional wage labor. More than a few, like Giuseppe Pelanconi, ventured into enterprises fueled by Prohibition. They worked hard and struggled through the Depression and two world wars. It should be noted that not all were successful and 40% of Italian immigrants to California actually returned to Italy.

The immigrants lived in a closed Italian culture, often not learning English or experiencing the outside world. Over 80% of Northern California Italian immigrants were from the northern Italian regions of Toscana, Liguria, Piemonte and Lombardia, and unlike southern Italians, they did not experience a great deal of prejudice. Many were from neighboring Italian villages and were related, while others intermarried. Abramo Trusendi's five immigrant sisters are a noteworthy example. They married men from Massa-Carrara named Domenichelli, Lombardi, Barilani, Tedeschi and Mazzoni, all of whom, with their own families, lived

in the Geyserville area. Similar connections were common. While not particularly religious, they were culturally Catholic and their social life often revolved around the church. Family gatherings for holidays, weddings and baptisms were often epic. There was loud talking, singing, eating, drinking, card playing and bocce.

The Italian language, including regional dialects, was spoken almost exclusively among the immigrants. They tended to distrust most forms of American authority and government. Most did not encourage their children to further their education. This distrust was undoubtedly driven by their experiences in Italy as well as the Italian trait of having family allegiance trump all other loyalties. Experiences regarding Prohibition, the fact that Italy was on the wrong side of two world wars and the lingering cloud of possible Mafia connections also contributed to this self-imposed isolation.

In summary, my Geyserville grandparents and their countrymen lived a full and difficult life in what might be called a rural Italian ghetto. Nearly all were "contadini" or poor dirt farmers and certainly not aristocrats or skilled artisans. However, to their credit, they were courageous, hard-working risk-takers who persevered while steadfastly remaining true to their Italian roots. It was left to my parents' generation to assimilate into American society - and up to mine to fantasize about a noble Italian heritage and rekindle the unique Italian culture the immigrants brought to America.

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Personal Recollections/Conversations with numerous Italian immigrants.



# Chinese Immigrants in Healdsburg, 1860-1900

by Holly Hoods

*Every February over 150 years ago, the sky over Healdsburg crackled with the festive explosions of thousands of firecrackers. Pioneer Healdsburg, like most mid-19<sup>th</sup> century western towns, had Chinese residents from its earliest days and New Year was always celebrated as an important holiday in Chinese culture. Chinese New Year became a major event in 19<sup>th</sup> century Healdsburg. It was especially exciting to the non-Chinese children of the community who were thrilled to embrace a celebration that involved fireworks, costumes and candy.*

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Immigration

Life in northern Sonoma County generally held more bitter hardship than sweet celebrations for its early Chinese residents. Hundreds of Chinese immigrants came to California during the Gold Rush. Political unrest and economic pressures at home prompted thousands of Chinese immigrants to move to the western regions of the United States in search of temporary work during the 1850s. Thousands more arrived during the 1860s and '70s to build railroads. Once the railroad tracks were laid, many Chinese men stayed in the state, usually taking low-skilled jobs as manual laborers in mining, construction, manufacturing, agriculture or service industries.

As early as 1860—three years after Healdsburg was founded—Healdsburg had its own small Chinese population. Vegetable merchants peddled produce from baskets along the plaza and several Chinese laundries dotted the east side of Healdsburg Avenue (then “West Street”). Some of the wealthiest families employed live-in Chinese cooks and nearly all the hotels did too.

Nearly 300,000 Chinese immigrants entered the United States between 1850 and 1889, although historians estimate that as many as half ultimately returned to China.

The 1890 U.S. census counted a Chinese-born resident population of more than 100,000. Unfortunately, this wave of Chinese migration was accompanied by growing anti-Chinese sentiment and discrimination. In 1882, the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, a law that prohibited Chinese migration to the United States and barred Chinese residents from obtaining U.S. citizenship. Though the law was repealed in 1943, little Chinese immigration was permitted until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 overhauled the U.S.

immigration system and significantly expanded migration opportunities for non-European immigrants.

## Healdsburg Wash Houses

By the mid-1870s, there were about 60 Chinese residents in Healdsburg, all of them male. They were variously employed in farming, lumbering, mining, hotels, laundries (or “wash houses”), kitchens and household jobs. At the time Chinese men were often called “pigtails” by whites in reference to the queue hairstyle they favored. There were four Chinese wash houses in town at that time. The *Healdsburg Enterprise* reported in February 1877:

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

By the early 1880s, there were two large Chinese-operated laundries in Healdsburg.

Former Healdsburg resident Arthur Price remembered his fascination with them as a young boy:

*There were always four to six pigtails employed in each institution and both turned out perfectly beautiful laundry at a very nominal sum, and that was something in that day of many flounces, voluminous skirts, ruffled dresses and drawers, to say nothing of the stiff starched shirts, collars and cuffs which were worn by the men. It was great fun to look in through their open door and watch them iron with their gigantic irons. First they*



would spread out the garment on the board, take a sip of water from a bowl, and spew this water in a fine spray all over the piece to moisten it and then proceed with the ironing, at the same time keeping up a string of conversation in Chinese. Their work, their customs, their language, in fact their whole ensemble, fascinated us small boys.

According to William Shipley in his *Tales of Sonoma County*, Jo Wah Lee's laundry was located near the plaza in an old one-story wooden building between the City Hall and Nosler's Skating Rink [on Center Street where the Police Station is today]. He had a thriving business. The other laundry was operated by Sing Lee and was just behind Connor's Livery Stable on Center Street at Piper Street on posts or piling over the slough [what we call "Foss Creek" today].

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

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

*The town was rather well divided between those who took off Jo Wah Lee and those who followed the banners of Sing Lee. These laundrymen were the town's Walter Winchells, and at times, the Dun and Bradstreet, for they saw all, heard all, knew all and told what they thought best; also they knew who did and who did not pay their bills.*

Each Chinese New Year, the laundrymen brought huge bags of candies and nuts to hand out to their customers. In addition to the candies and nuts, each patron was presented with a lily bulb which

would grow and bloom in a bowl of water and pebbles. These were tokens of good luck. Arthur Price also recalled:

*They would fly beautiful kites with hummers and shoot off long ropes of firecrackers, all of which gave the small boys in town a great thrill.*

### **"The Chinese Must Go"**

Despite the relative harmony that developed between most of the Chinese and white residents of Healdsburg, the town was not immune to the prevailing racism of the time. Throughout the state, white working men's resentment of the Chinese men's willingness to work for low wages began to focus pro-labor sentiment into a full-fledged anti-Chinese backlash. Some of the loudest protests came from recent white immigrants.

By 1878, "Anti-Coolie" clubs began forming throughout California, in which whites pledged not to hire Chinese labor or patronize any business who hired Chinese workers. That year Dennis Kearney, the infamous anti-Chinese agitator from San Francisco, visited Healdsburg several times. His slogan was the uncompromising, "The Chinese Must Go." Some of his ideas took root. Anti-Chinese meetings were organized and held in Healdsburg. The meetings were held at Roland Truitt's Theater, directly across the street from Jo Wah Lee's laundry. Among other things, the group plotted to attract a "white steam laundry" to town. Perhaps they recognized that many townspeople were more practical about laundry than political about the subject of Chinese labor.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*San Francisco anti-Chinese agitator, Dennis Kearney*



According to a Healdsburg correspondent to the *Santa Rosa Daily Republican*, “the anti-Chinese movement, which is sweeping over the county, struck our town like a tornado” in January 1886. That same month Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Wickersham were found murdered at their remote ranch 28 miles northwest of Healdsburg. The prime suspect in the slayings was Ah Tai, the couple’s Chinese cook, who disappeared after the crime. The tabloid headlines about the murder and search for the culprit further inflamed anti-Chinese hysteria. Three hundred members of the Healdsburg Anti-Coolie Club, “representing all classes of men from bankers down to daily laborers,” signed a pledge to withhold money from Chinese businesses and to use “all lawful nonviolent means” to drive the Chinese from town.



Source: History of Sonoma County, 1880  
*Jesse Wickersham*

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

*who would collect ancient eggs, rotten vegetables or some other obnoxious substance, and at night would gather in front of a laundry. One of their number would rap on the door and run out of range, so that when the Chinaman opened the door, the rest of the mob would give him a volley of garbage, which would get inside and foul up everything it came in contact with. The lives of the (Chinese) were made miserable and the*

*old feeling of mutual trust and confidence faded.*

In February 1893, the *Tribune* reported—chillingly—that the Chinese New Year was celebrated “with utmost tranquility” in contrast to the previous year in which “several hundreds of dollars were spent on firecrackers and pyrotechnics.”

In 1894, Jo Wah Lee’s laundry burned to the ground. The formerly prominent business owner found himself unable to rebuild in his old location, because the town had just passed an ordinance banning Chinese laundries within City Limits. Jo Wah Lee grudgingly moved to the seedy section of West Street [Healdsburg Avenue north of Piper Street]. There his nearest neighbors were Lucinda and Eli Walker’s brothel and Ed Pruitt’s Kentucky Saloon. Jo Wah Lee objected strenuously to the racist regulation that somehow outlawed his laundry, but permitted white steam laundry owners to wash within the City Limits. Few of his respectable customers were loyal enough to follow him into the shady neighborhood with their business. Prospects began drying up.

#### “With Considerable Snap and Tanglefoot”

By the early 1890s, there were only a handful of Chinese residents still living in Healdsburg and by 1910 there were none. Most of the work opportunities were gone and further immigration was restricted. Given the many setbacks of the previous decades, the last Chinese New Year celebration in Healdsburg in February 1897 was an act of cultural defiance. The *Tribune* bore witness to the final proud spectacle:

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

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Healdsburg Enterprise, 1888-1893.  
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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Four generations of Miles family women: left to right - Pauline Phillips Black (mother), Elizabeth Miles Phillips (grandmother), seated, Jane Allman Miles Snider (great grandmother), in lap - Virginia Black (daughter), c. 1907*

## **Early Irish Immigrant: Jane Allman Miles Snider**

*by Whitney Hopkins*

*Irish immigrants were arriving in the United States in Colonial times, but the biggest wave of Irish arrivals came between 1820 and 1860, when the Irish constituted over one third of all immigrants to the United States. Ireland's potato blight between 1845 and 1852 led to an especially large wave of departures from Ireland. Most Irish immigrants initially settled in urban areas, but often moved on to other destinations.*

Irish immigrants also moved to Healdsburg in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and were present in the early days of the town. Jane Allman was born in County Cork, Ireland in 1836 to Thomas and Eliza (Dougherty) Allman. While there is some uncertainty in the family about Jane's age, her gravestone says she was born in 1836. It is believed that her father came from the Allman Distillery family, and her

mother's family had a brewery. As a child at the age of twelve, in 1848, she sailed across the Atlantic to Boston, either with, or to join, her family. In 1856, Jane and her brother boarded a ship, bound for California. They crossed the Isthmus of Panama on foot since the Panama Canal was not yet built. On the Pacific side, they boarded the SS Tennessee which took them to San Francisco.





Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Grandmother Snider's home on Dry Creek. Owned and built by Jane Allman Miles Snider, 4694 Dry Creek Rd. Built about 1875 and burned about 1962. (The road is actually straight; the curvature of the lens makes it appear curved.)*

Following her arrival in San Francisco, Jane lived for a time with a brother there. Family history is vague as to whether she met Thomas Miles, a native of Illinois, in San Francisco or Healdsburg, where her brother John Allman eventually owned a livery stable. She married Miles in 1858. Miles had come west in 1854. The couple settled on a ranch six miles northwest of Healdsburg in the Dry Creek Valley. They had four children: John, Thomas, Jr., Mary and Elizabeth. Sadly, Thomas, Sr. died in his 30s in 1866.

Three years later, in 1869, Jane married John Durham Snider. John, born in 1827 in Kentucky, arrived in the Dry Creek Valley around 1850, where he is said to have bought the land of Thomas Miles, upon his death, plus that of others. They separated after having three children: George Lee, (Mary) Ellen, and Lucy. After their separation, John spent much of his time at his cabin in the mountains west of Dry Creek Valley. He died in 1900.

Jane built a house at 743 Johnston Street (on the southwest corner of Johnson and Sherman Streets) in Healdsburg circa 1898, which still stands

today. She left Dry Creek and moved into town temporarily thinking she would not live long. Eventually she got tired of town, and missed the country, so moved back to her home at 4694 Dry Creek Road, where she remained until the end of her life in 1929. She is buried in Healdsburg's Oak Mound Cemetery.

Jane's son George Snider, who lived next door, helped run the farm where hay, grapes and fruit trees grew. Today, descendants of Jane Allman Miles Snider still live in Dry Creek Valley.

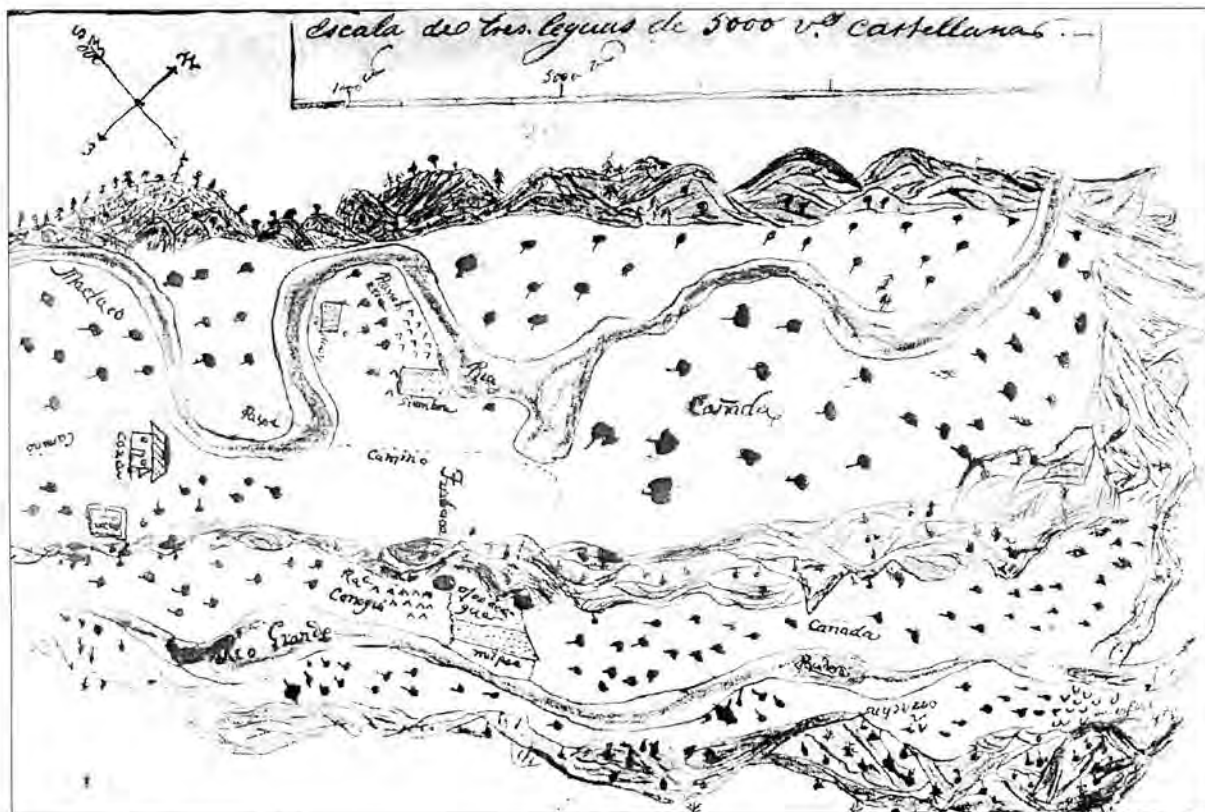
**Sources:**

Obituary for Mrs. Jane Snider, *Healdsburg Enterprise*, September 19, 1929.

"Mrs. Jane Snider," *History of Sonoma County, California. Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified with its Growth and Development from the Early Days to the Present*, 1911, Historic Record Company, Los Angeles, CA.

Snider, Walter. "Memories."





Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Tzabaco Map

## The Piñas and their Rancho Tzabaco

by Kay Robinson

*José German Piña, the first Mexican settler in the Healdsburg area, once owned all of Dry Creek Valley. "German" was the second of seven children in the family of Lázaro Piña and Maria Placida Villela. The patriarch, Lázaro, was born in approximately 1795 and raised in Ciudad de Mexico, Nueva España. His wife, Maria, the daughter of Marcos Villela, a Mexican soldier, and Viridiana Carrillo, an Indian "neofita," was born in approximately 1809 at Villa de San Miguel de Branciforte. Lázaro arrived in (then-Mexican) Alta California in 1819 as a soldier in the Mexican Army. He married Maria in 1823 at the Mission San Francisco de Asis. Lázaro joined the military revolt of Joaquín Solís against Governor José Maria Echeandía in 1829, the same year that his son, José German, was born.*

*Lázaro and Maria became the parents of six sons, (Jesus (b. 1826), José German (b. 1829), Francisco (b. 1831), Antonio (b. 1831), Luis (b. 1834)) and one daughter, Clara (b. 1836). In 1838, Lázaro Piña came under the command of General Mariano Vallejo in Sonoma. He was soon promoted to a second lieutenant and became one of Vallejo's trusted men. When Maria Placida Villela died in 1844, Lázaro married Maria Ignacia Pacheco.*

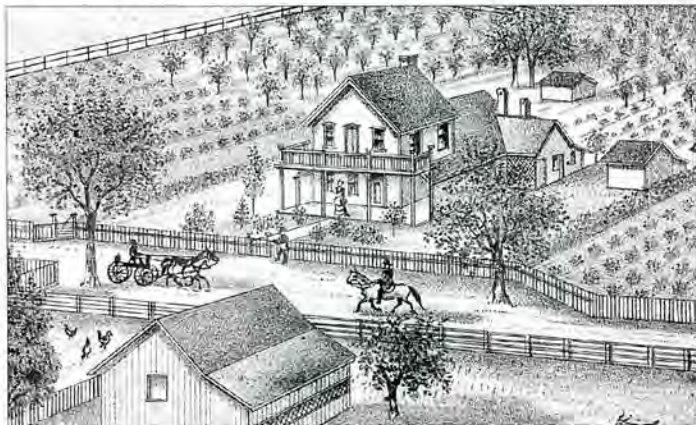
José German Piña was born at Mission San Francisco de Asís (Mission Dolores in San Francisco) in 1829. By the time he was 11 years old he was scouting for potential rancho land in the Russian River valley. In September 1843, at the perhaps not-so-tender age of 14, he made a successful petition to Governor Micheltorena in Monterey for a tract of

four square leagues (about 17,000 acres) to be known as the Tzabaco Rancho.

The origin of the adobe which was at the heart of his new grant is not fully understood. One theory is that the adobe is, in fact, the fortification that General Mariano Vallejo caused to be established in 1833 "somewhere in the Russian River valley" - an



outpost that lasted only one month. Supporting this idea is the fact that a cannon and several 2-pound cannon balls were found on the property during the early twentieth century. The conservative theory is that the adobe was built in 1843 by the Piña family as the headquarters of their new rancho.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Tzabaco Rancho adobe, 1844 Atlas*

When German, also known as "Chino" ("curly haired"), settled on his rancho his older brother José de Jesus and several other family members joined him. The *diseño* (map) which accompanied the grant identified the *rio* (Dry Creek), *Rio Grande* (Russian River), *siembre* (grain fields), and *milpas* (seeded field) among other notations.

One year later, in 1844, German's mother died and in 1847 German's father Lazaro was killed at the Battle of Cerro Gordo in Mexico under the leadership of Santiana. At eighteen years of age in 1847, Jose

German Piña died of unknown cause at Mission San Francisco de Solano in Sonoma. Everything German did seemed to belie his age - scouting for land, petitioning for rancho land, establishing the Tzabaco Rancho. Even his will spelled out his possessions, debts and debtors - although just passing mention is made of his rancho. He even identified a trade for the horses to pull his hearse.

With increasing family debt by 1850, a portion of the rancho was sold at public auction. Squatters settled on other parts of their land. After the murder of German's brother Antonio in 1853, the remaining four brothers, for \$20,000 compensation, signed over their interest in the rancho to John Frisbie, an American entrepreneur who was acting as the attorney for the Piñas. However, the contract was not to take effect for five years. The Land Commission spent the years 1852-1855 reviewing the validity of Tzabaco Rancho, which was finally confirmed at 15,439 acres.

In 1855 partners Samuel O. Heaton and Duvall Drake Phillips journeyed to Sonoma County to survey land for purchase. It is not known why they came specifically to Sonoma County. However, a close friend of D. D.'s from his Missouri and Army days was Sterling Coulter (later a prominent Sonoma County citizen) who had settled in the Santa Rosa area in 1851. Rebuffed by the Piñas in 1855, Sam and D. D. returned in October 1856 and successfully bought 137¼ acres of the Piña's Tzabaco Rancho for \$1,730.45.

## Merging

by Karen Hayes, Healdsburg Literary Guild

With dust on bodies  
 earth on hands  
 we come to renew our lives  
 carrying hope  
 dreams for selves and children  
 leaving old countries for new  
 bringing skills, learning others  
 to do our best, hard work  
 coming through Nova Scotia, Mexico, from lands far away  
 forsaking homelands  
 for opportunity  
 sharing our cultures  
 blending  
 becoming American





*Handwritten text in cursive script, likely Russian or German. The text is written on the back of the photograph. It includes a date 'Dec. -1937' and a reference to 'the Eastlick house'. There are also some words in blue ink that appear to be 'Dry Creek flood' and '1937'.*

Source: Harry Bosworth Collection

Photograph of 1937 Dry Creek Valley flood and mysterious writing found on the back of the photo.

## Photograph with a Mysterious Message

by Ann Howard

In December, 1937 a photograph was taken of a flooded road now known as Yoakim Bridge Road in upper Dry Creek Valley. The Eastlick home and orchards shown on the left once stood on the property where the current Dry Creek Peach and Produce now operates its orchard business.

According to lakesonoma.org, in 1937 the Russian River experienced extremely heavy flooding that prompted Congress to authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to study the feasibility of constructing dams on the river to help control flooding and provide a water supply.

What is curious about this photograph is the word written on the lower left of the front of the photograph and the lengthy inscription written in a

foreign language on the back.

Under the message is the stamp “Genuine Krystal Gloss, Bear Photo Service,” with the stamped profile of a bear enclosing the barely legible date December 17, 1937.

The words “Dry Creek flood, the Eastlick house” and “Dec. -1937” were added by someone in blue ink and are additional clues.

This photograph was found the Harry Bosworth family collection. Harry’s mother, Marie (Glaser) Bosworth, was the daughter of Albert Ludwig Glaser (1877-1940) and Sophie (Ludmann) Glaser (1878-1971), and the granddaughter of Fridrich and Katharina Glaser who lived in the two homes that still stand on the west side of Dry Creek



Road at the junction of Canyon Road. Fridrich and Kate along with their five children left their home in Weilundorf, Baden-Wurtemberg, where he had been a bricklayer and arrived in the United States in March 1894 on the ship "Russia."

In 1902, Sophie Ludmann came from the Glaser's homeland in Germany to the Glaser home in Dry Creek Valley as a stranger. The family convinced her to stay. She and Albert were married on November 23, 1902. Sophia and Albert had two children, Albert J. and Maria.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Sophia (Ludmann) Glaser, Albert J., Marie, and Albert Ludwig Glaser at home at the junction of Dry Creek and Canyon Roads, 1913.*

Marie eventually married Obed Bosworth and had two children, Louise born in 1936 and Harry in 1938. Obed, Marie and baby Louise were living near the railroad tracks in Geyserville. During the 1937 Russian River flood, they had to leave home in a rowboat. (The word "Geyserville" is found in the text written on the back of the photograph.)

Edward Pearl Sherman Eastlick (1864-1938) and his wife Atlanta Jones (Morrison) Eastlick (1882-1939) were married about 1902. According to the census records, they lived in the home in the photograph from 1910 to 1930. They had one daughter Alice who was born in 1911 and was a close friend of her neighbor, Marie Glaser, who was three years older. Edward died in 1938 and Atlanta died in 1939 shortly after the December 1937 flood. Both are buried in Oak Mound Cemetery.



Source: findagrave.com

*Wedding photo of Edward "Pearl" Sherman Eastlick and Atlanta "Attie" Jones (Morrison) Eastlick, c. 1902.*

The inscription on the photograph is being offered with hopes of translation. Harry Bosworth offered some additional clues. Harry explained that his ancestors came to America from Swabia, which covers much of Germany's southwestern state Baden-Wurtemberg, including its capital of Stuttgart. There Swabian (Schwabisch with two dots over the "a") is spoken, one of the Alemannic dialects of High German according to Wikipedia. Swabian is difficult to understand for speakers of Standard German, in pronunciation, and some vocabulary differs altogether. Harry said that when German visitors arrived later they could not understand the Glaser family's use of the old dialect,

Harry thought he might be able to translate the message if it had been printed. At the moment a hopeful guess is that either Harry's grandfather Albert Glaser or his grandmother Sophie took the photograph and wrote the message on the back.

Please contact the Healdsburg Museum if you can translate the inscription and solve this mystery.

#### **Sources:**

Beers, Marie Glaser Bosworth, oral history with daughter Louise Bosworth Davis, 1986.  
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 findagrave.com.  
 Friends of Lake Sonoma, lakesonoma.org.  
 Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934.  
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 U.S. Census records.





Source: Lis Trotter

*Lisbeth Johansen, 1964*

## Lisbeth

*by Ann Carranza*

Lisbeth Johansen Trotter is a force to be reckoned with. Vociferous, joyful, and direct, the larger-than-life woman exudes hospitality and a *joie de vivre* matched by her husband, Jack Trotter. The Healdsburg couple travels, dances and enjoys time with their blended families.

And Lis is an immigrant. She was born in February 1945, as World War II was nearing its end, in Copenhagen, Denmark.

She considers her adoption into a loving family a positive blessing. Her musical and cultured family lived in an apartment in the city and had a summerhouse in the countryside north of Copenhagen.

At age three-and-a-half years, she was sent to the Royal Academy of Ballet and at four-and-a-half she began to learn ballroom dancing. Both gave her a lifelong love of dancing. However, she learned early on that an abnormality in her left leg meant she would not become a professional dancer.

She attended public school through high school in Copenhagen. She continued dancing and engaged in a wide range of sports, from ice skating

and skiing to badminton and croquet. She learned to ride horseback on her uncle's farm.



Source: Lis Trotter

*Lisbeth, age 4, proudly wearing a sweater her mother had just finished knitting for her.*

Their summerhouse had no electricity and no bathroom. They used oil lamps for lighting, had an earthen root cellar and used blocks of ice to keep foods cold. They slept in bunk beds.

"The mothers cooked all day long," said Lis in a recent interview. "The house was filled with the



scent of good food.” One of her favorite meals was *frikadeller*, a type of meatball made with veal, pork and beef. They also ate open-faced sandwiches. White bread was eaten only in the morning, as toast, and it was accompanied by yogurt and cereal.

During the post-war years, Lis and her parents traveled throughout Europe by car. They often took along a picnic basket, eating the food they prepared in advance. Often they stayed in private homes or in *gasthoffs* (guest homes). Lis enjoyed traveling and embraced the cultural exchange that took place when they stayed with people who opened their homes to visitors in order to earn a little money. For a long time, Europeans continued to receive ration cards to secure food.

Becoming fluent in a number of languages was and is encouraged and taught in Denmark. Lis learned English, German, Latin and French.

“Family unity always sticks out,” said Liz. “One of my grandfathers would go to the bakery and bring back *Berliner von kuchen* (a type of doughnut) for us for afternoon coffee. He walked five miles to bring us the treat.”



Source: Lis Trotter

*Lisbeth, age 9, on her way to school.*

Both sides of Lis’ family were happy and they put a high value on all the children getting educations. “We had a rich, fun life,” said Lis. “We are all educated and we’re all artists on the side. We have architects and engineers. Family members

could be formal, then pull out a harmonica or go to the piano and play.”

Old-fashioned pleasures dominated their family gatherings. They played darts and badminton; they sang; the women were always sewing and knitting. They also played cards and other games.

“My father was a little Scottish,” said Lis, with a big laugh, as she indicated that he was frugal. “We would prepare throughout the year for Christmas, making gifts.” She remembers savoring her first banana, then her first orange. These fruits, not readily available in post-war Europe, were rare and precious treats.



Source: Lis Trotter

*Lis, age 12, all dressed up for a dance competition.*

The whole family traveled by bicycle and by public transportation. She often visited her grandparents, who lived five miles away, getting there on her bike.

“There were no Safeways,” she said. “We got our charcuterie at one shop, our bread and butter at another, our veggies at still another. We got one candy on Sunday and, if we had visiting family, we might have ice cream.”

She said, while their lives were simple, they never lacked in any way. They had fun, family and laughter.

“I had a lucky and fortunate childhood,” said Liz.

Lis wanted to be a nurse. At that time, nurse candidates were required to be nannies for a year in a home where the mother was present. She first went to a home that had four children—ages five, seven, nine and 11. Afterwards, she spent four years at the



hospital-college where she trained to be a nurse.

"They were very strict," she said. The women had to sign in and out and lived in dormitories at the hospital.

In May 1967, she married Mogens Bach. They were engaged for several years before they got married. Mogens was an engineer, who wanted to come to the United States to learn more. They soon had a son, Christian. They both applied for permanent resident cards (green cards) with permission to live and work in the United States. The process took a year and "cost a fortune," said Lis.

"The United States was *Never-Never Land* for us," said Lis. "Everything was bigger and more exciting."

Mogens Bach came to the United States first, to find a job and a place to live. He originally got a job with Boeing in Seattle, though he moved to the Bay Area before the first year was up. Through friends, he got a job as a civil engineer in Alameda. He worked on the Bay Area Rapid Transit system.

Lis followed Mogens to the U.S. in early 1972. She first had to fly into Seattle, as her visa gave her only permission to be there.

After a long flight, she went to the State Department in Seattle to get permission to fly to San Francisco to join Mogens. He secured an apartment for them in Tiburon. Christian was then two years old.

At first, Lis didn't work, but after a time, she got a job with a doctor at 2000 Van Ness Ave. in San Francisco, where she worked a half-day in the afternoons. She couldn't work as a registered nurse, as her degree wasn't accepted in California. However, she began as a certified nursing assistant, and later became a licensed vocational nurse. Lis' education, skill level and knowledge were excellent, so she often performed duties above normal expectations.

Daughter Pinella was born at UCSF Moffat Hospital on Parnassus St. in 1973. Susanne was born in 1974. Mogens was doing very well on the job, working for a number of different companies, as each BART station went out for bid.

Lis had always worked from her home. She babysat for other families in their apartment complex. As their family grew, they continued to live at the same complex, moving into larger apartments. They were also able to buy a summer home in Tahoe.

Later, Mogens started a home office and Lis went back to work outside the home. Her first job was as a hostess at a Chinese restaurant. She and her husband started a soccer league and met Pele, the famous soccer star. Lis embraced friends from a number of countries and continued to enjoy learning about people and different cultures.

Lis was active with her children and their schools. She made their clothing and chaired various events.

When she and Mogens separated, Lis went back to Denmark for five years. The children stayed with her every summer. She went back to work at the same hospital where she had trained. She continued to come to the United States for a week every year to keep her permanent resident card current.

When she returned to California, at the request of her husband, she worked in home health care. She worked in hospice for three years during the height of the AIDS epidemic.



Source: Lis Trotter

**Lis and Jack Trotter with Lis' daughter Pinella**

Eighteen years ago, she met Jack Trotter, the man who, according to Liz, is "the love of my life."

"Jack was tense in crowds at first," said Lis. They had dated for six months, when she invited him to go with her to Denmark. They had a marvelous time traveling and it cemented their relationship. They have blended her children and Jack's into a loving extended family.

They married 13 years ago in a Western-themed wedding, cowboy boots and all.

Now, Lis and Jack spend time with family and travel often. They blend their two passions—hers for architecture, his for history—when they travel. They are saving to visit Denmark again.



# The Italians of Limerick Lane

by Janet Sbragia Pisenti

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, ships carrying immigrants from Europe were packed. Thousands of them were Italians, while hundreds of those Italians had the same destination in mind, Healdsburg, California! They were Toscanos from Tuscany, from the area surrounding the city of Lucca. We will never know how they heard about Healdsburg, what it looked like or even how to pronounce it. Yet, they heard it was a good place to live, work and own some land—more land than they could ever own in Italy.

After their arrival in Healdsburg, a few settled down on a mile-long country road, named by early Irish settlers—Limerick Lane. Limerick Lane is situated south of town, off Old Redwood Highway, heading east toward the low-lying hills.

Limerick is actually the name of a city and county in Ireland in the region called Munster. It is also a form of poetry, a five-line rhythmic poem, usually with a humorous ending. As an example, one version of a well-known verse is:

*There once was a man from Nantucket  
Who kept all his cash in a bucket  
But his daughter named Nan  
Ran away with a man  
And as for the bucket, Nan tucket.*

Well! When the Italians arrived, I doubt they cared much about limericks. They probably had a few witty sayings of their own, but like the Irish who missed their *Ma* and *Da* back in the *auld sod*, so did the Italians miss their *Mama* and *Papa* in the old country.

Up to the 1960s, these are the family surnames of those who owned property on Limerick Lane: Babbini, Bacchi, Bellagio, Belluomini, Dal Coletto, Del Fava, Diany, Dinucci, Giorgi, LaFranchi, Lituano, Modena, Pedroncelli, Ponzo, Ricci, Sales, Santarini, Simoni, and Sodini.

## Life on Limerick Lane

Life on Limerick Lane did not include Irish stew, but it did include *chicken cacciatore*. It did not include Irish soda bread, but it did include *panettone*. They never drank Irish coffee, but they loved their *coffee royals*.

Food for the table came mainly from their gardens, producing a bounty of vegetables and herbs used at every meal, with fruit from their trees and vines, such as: figs, olives, apples, pears, prunes and grapes.

The chickens' feed was bought at Nelligan & Sons feed store and their eggs were sold to Poultry Producers. Their fruit was sold to the Geyserville Growers, Sunsweet, California Packing Corporation, Mayfair, Mariani and Miller Fruit Company.

Even though prunes were the local dominant crop, they planted grape vines for their homemade wine. The vines close to the house were trained to grow upward enough to cover a pergola over the outdoor table for a meal *al fresco* or they planted enough vines to start a winery. Bartolomeo Bacchi

and Giuseppe Sodini were found in historical records as each having vineyards and a winery on Limerick Lane before Prohibition.



Source: Gene Ricci

*Anacleto Ricci and his wife, Ida, picking grapes on the Ricci property on Limerick Lane.*

During Prohibition, home winemakers were allowed to make 200 gallons each for "home use,"



although some of the residents engaged in bootlegging, making more than 200 gallons and selling some of the grape juice in the form of whiskey or grappa. Old timers also remember the parties, where they happily drank whatever was on hand—legal or illegal.

Many of the Italian men also engaged in hunting and fishing, possibly some of it illegal, but, as Gene Ricci added, “We ate what we caught.”

John and Corina Mancini Azevedo owned the biggest farm and dairy at the eastern end of the road, where the family raised cows for milking and beef cattle. Their children, Albert and Evelyn, grew up with two large Portuguese and Italian families. Now Albert’s son, John, farms grapes on the property.

“My grandfather, Jose Azevedo, from the Azores Islands, bought the property in 1904 and my father was born there in 1905,” Evelyn recalled. “We (John, Corina, Albert and Evelyn) lived on Piner Road in Santa Rosa with the Mancini relatives before arriving at Limerick Lane in 1944. The others were already here.”

Raising pigs was part of the Azevedo’s farm life, as well as most of the other families on Limerick Lane. “Some people were not able to watch butchering pigs,” Evelyn recalled. Yet, we can surmise that the results of that butchering, the good salamis, sausages, prosciutto, pancetta, and coppa, were enjoyed by all.

When summer came to an end, it only meant one thing. It was time to pick prunes! And grapes! “After picking enough prunes, I was relieved to be hired as a shaker, shaking down the prunes from the trees, or as a truck driver,” Gene Ricci added. After that ordeal, going to school and getting an education became a lot more important!

School started in September or sometimes in October in this prune-picking county. The children walked up the railroad tracks to the nearby one-room Grant School on Grant School Road [now a private residence.] Gene’s memories included how he and Albert Azevedo would drive an old Model T truck to school every day. Al was the driver and Gene, the passenger. They were close in age, and would arrive at the school and park behind it. The teacher said nothing and life went on. “I started driving when I was 8 years old on the ranch.” Neither one of them had a license, of course.



Source: Evelyn Azevedo Parrish  
*Students at the one-room Grant School on Grant School Road, taken between 1911 and 1915.*

Evelyn, Gene, and Diane Leoni McDowell, all past students of Grant School, enjoyed recalling the teachers’ names: Mrs. Kirkpatrick, Mrs. Holbrook and Mrs. Hazel Wolfe.

“We had a championship baseball team during those years,” Gene added, “and we played against other one-room schools in the area.” After graduation, they all rode the bus to the high school located in those days on Fitch and Grant Streets.

Gene Ricci also remembered some of the old Italians’ card-playing evenings. “They played Pedro and they played two or three times a week,” he recalled. “They got so loud sometimes and angry, too. If someone didn’t play right, they wouldn’t speak to each other for months!”

On Sundays, the Italians attended St. John’s Church on Matheson Street [now torn down]. The young people received their catechism lessons from Mae Schwab, enabling them to receive the sacraments, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. It was usually run by Irish priests, where they occasionally heard an Irish accent.

Near the church was St. John’s Hall [also torn down], where many of them enjoyed a Saturday night dance or wedding reception, accompanied by the sound of the accordion. If they didn’t dance there, they danced at various grange halls throughout the county.

### **Then things began to change . . .**

During the 1960s, Limerick Lane began to change. Evelyn explained, “My brother sold 100



acres; the Reimans sold some acres; and my sister-in-law, Pat, sold 19 acres.”

It is a longer road now, with a right-hand turn at the old Azevedo place, heading south and includes many more houses, becoming more attractive over time with large estates, acres of vineyards, and the addition of six wineries: Limerick Lane Cellars, Christopher Creek Winery, Viszlay Vineyards, Meitz Cellars, Mutt Lynch and Deux Amis. The descendants of the original families who live on Limerick Lane today are fortunate, indeed.

### Limerick Lane Memories

Longtime Limerick Lane residents, Evelyn Azevedo Parrish, Gene Ricci and Leon Dal Coletto were very helpful in recalling names and humorous incidents.

Evelyn and her son, Dennis, live south of Limerick Lane on Parrish Lane, named after Dad Bill Parrish, where Dennis and Marjorie were born.

Gene and Darlene St. Clair Ricci live on Foreman Lane, where they raised two sons, Charles and Jim, and grandchildren and where they grew prunes and grapes. The zinfandel vineyard on Limerick Lane, which their family planted, was sold to the Mayo Winery in Kenwood and its wines won seven gold medals.

Leon and Myra Dal Coletto also live in Healdsburg, where they raised their children, Yvette and Sean. They have all been a part of Healdsburg for five or six generations.

I could not have enjoyed my imaginary walk down Limerick Lane without the help of Evelyn, Gene, and Leon. It actually turned into a walk down memory lane, since I have known these families almost all of my life.

### The Residents

In lieu of a family history of all the Limerick Lane residents, their names are remembered here:

The **Babbini family**: Italo and Ines and their children, Bruna and Ronnie; the **Bacchi family**: Bartolomeo and Colinda and their children: Bruno and Anna Bacchi Serafem; Bruno and Barbara's children: Brenda and Bruce; the **Bellagios**: John and Helen; the **Belluomini family**: Francesco and Rosie

and children: Elvira and Frank. Matteo and his wife, Marie, and their children: Raymond and Lorraine; the **Bonanni family**: Joe and Dena and their children, Elsie and Renato or “Ray”; the **Dal Coletto Family**: Basil and Marie Louise (Giorgi) and children: Peter, Leon, and Ramona; the **Del Fava Family**: Neri and Marianna and their children: Gina, “Cheri,” Guido, Rico (and Edna), Mario (and Betty), Caesar “Babe” (and Leah) and son, Charlie; the **Dinucci family**: Adolph and Ernestine and son Angelo; the **Giorgi family**: August, Lena, Louis, and Amelia; a second **Giorgi family**: Giacomo and his wife and children: Marie Louise (Dal Coletto), Joe, Eva, and Mary; the **LaFranchi family**: Charles and Claudina and their children: Charles, Carrie, Leah, Irene, Ruth, Dorothy, Walter, and Hilda; the **Lituanio family**: Gisconti and daughter Marie; the **Modena family**: Joe and Odilina and children: Dan and Irene (Scardina). Dan and Rose Modena's son was Danny Modena; the **Pedroncelli family**: Baptista and Marianna and their children: Anita, Fides, Gloria, Gina, and Robert; the **Ponzo family**: Philip and Elvira and their children: Philip, Elvira (Goodyear), James, and Robert; the **Ricci family**: Anacleto and his wife, Ida (Rosa), and their children: Gene, George, Gilda (Santarini), and Debra (Solie). Gene and Alma, their son, Robert, and Alma's parents, Frank and Ione Diany; George and Ann Muhar Ricci and their sons, Gene (and Darlene) and George Ricci; the **Sales family**: Al and his wife, who was Italian, and children: Joe, Victor, and Manuel; the **Santarini family**: Antonio and Gilda and son Michael; the **Simoni family**: Louie and Marie and son, Floyd. She was married to Matteo Belluomini first; the **Sodini family**: two brothers, Napoli and Giuseppe, and Giuseppe's wife, Giulia Buchignani, and their children: Andrew (and Jennie) and son Adrian, Virginia (Catelli), Rose (Modena), Mary (Buffi), and Ida (Smitherman).

### Sources:

Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society.

U.S. census 1930.

Leon Dal Coletto, 2015.

Evelyn Azevedo Parrish, 2015.

Gene Ricci, 2015.



# Somewhere Over the Rainbow

**Florence Buchignani Rovai**  
**Miss Redwood Empire, 1932**  
**June 21, 1914 to July 3, 2013**

*by Dolores D. Rovai*

Beloved Mother,

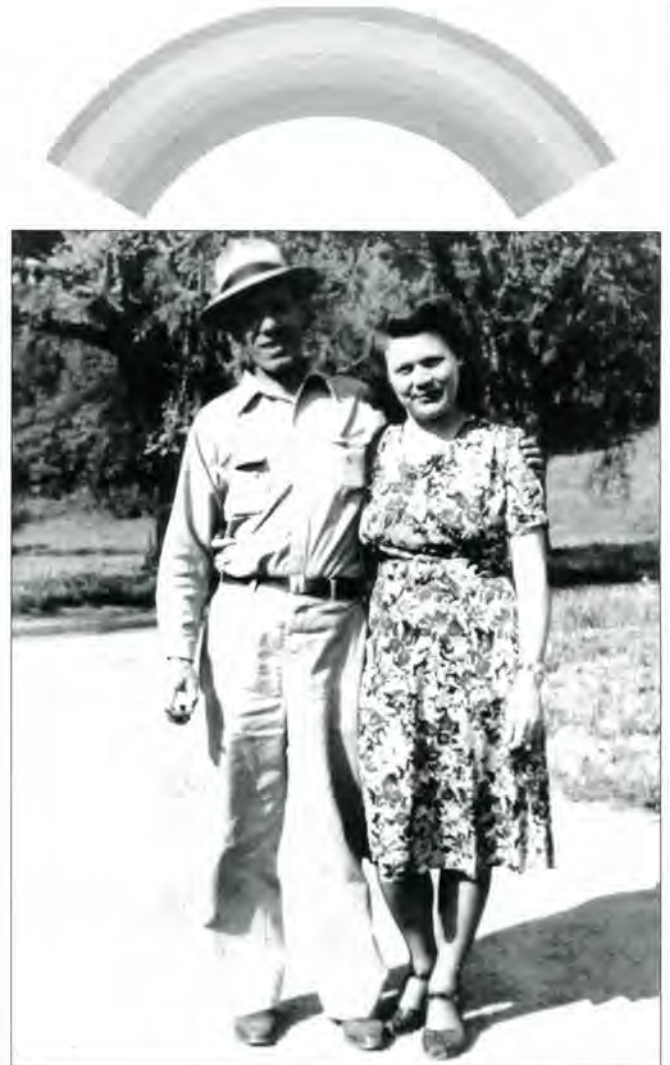
From Barbara, Dolores, and Marilyn, your grandsons David, Daryl, Michael and Kevin, your great-grandchildren, nieces and nephew David Rafanelli, along with your sister-in-law, Edwina (Dolly) Buchignani, many cousins and friends, we miss you so very much. You are over the rainbow and above the clouds looking down at us.

You are in heaven with Dad (William Americo Rovai), your father Esaia Buchignani, your mother Gioconda Marselli Buchignani and all your sisters and brothers. You were the last of the tribe, the head of the Dry Creek tribe with Esaia Buchignani, your father and my grandfather. Grandfather couldn't say my name so he called me Gloria (smile). He used to say I looked like his mother. Blessed are those days too.

We were blessed with wonderful parents. You and Dad showed such pride and compassion and gave unconditional love to us. You gave us a great education. Thank you Mother, we are so proud of you and the integrity bestowed on us.

"Until we meet again," from your three daughters: Princess Barbara, deceased April 4, 2010, Princess Dolores, and Baby Princess Marilyn, deceased April 10, 2010, daughters of a Queen.

William Americo Rovai and Florence Regina Buchignani Rovai in Dry Creek Valley at the home of her father Esaia Buchignani and mother Gioconda Marselli Buchignani.





# A Generous Land

by Marianne Lyon, Healdsburg Literary Guild

I am weary  
depleted soil's lament  
moans in my callused hands  
only a pale sea of gaunt children  
I seek a generous land

I am devout  
cast off stinging oppression  
cathedral of trees dazzle in sunlight  
clouds unravel soft hymns  
I dream a canticle of freedom

I am mighty adventurer  
leave entangled limits  
gold and grapes  
percolate into songs  
mischievous hope  
romps deep inside

Third Class



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