

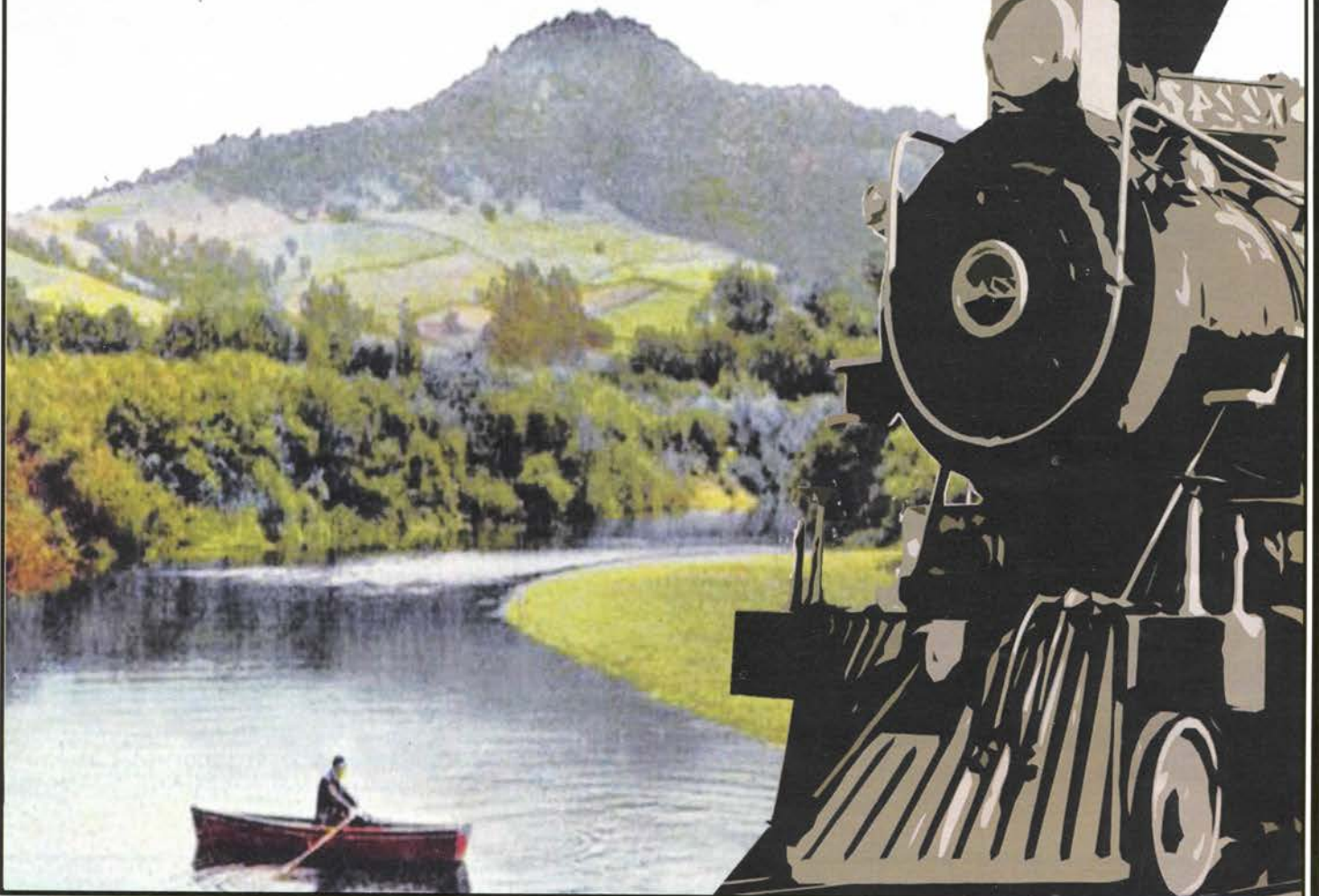


RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SUMMER 2017 • ISSUE 136

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society

DESTINATION HEALDSBURG



In This Issue

This issue of the *Russian River Recorder* accompanies our current Museum exhibition, "Destination Healdsburg," documenting Healdsburg's surprisingly rich history of tourism. In fact, tourists in Healdsburg are noted as early as 1869 in a listing of the town's assets found in the *Russian River Flag*.

We open with the late Millie Howie's overview of Healdsburg tourism, reprinted from *Sonoma Discoveries* magazine. This sets the stage for Margaret Kidder's fond recollections of early 1900s at The Geysers resort, the first tourist destination in the area. Margaret shared her story with Cleone Snook Stevens Tilley in 1978.

Healdsburg's Fitch Mountain region developed into a popular resort area after the turn of the 20th century. Hundreds of families from the Bay Area, the East Bay and the Redwood Empire to the north would make weekend trips or settle in the Russian River section for the summer. We have updated former Museum Curator Marie Shobe's 1997 article about the Russian River resorts. Museum member Marie Butler has written a charming new story accompanied by personal photos about her own family's connection to Del Rio Woods. Marie also contributed a historic overview of the Chamber of Commerce and

Visitors' Bureau, with an update by current Chamber C.E.O. Carla Howell.

By the 1920s, people began using trains less and less for transportation. The automobile became more reliable and affordable. Healdsburg became a more accessible and popular place to spend a vacation. Assistant Curator Whitney Hopkins has written about the White City Auto Court with wonderful photos and information from Ron Harris, whose family operated the popular auto campground that once stood on Healdsburg Avenue where 7-Eleven is today.

It seems that difficulty in finding a place to park is a perennial problem and went hand in hand with the increased popularity of the automobile. Whitney also wrote about Healdsburg's efforts to promote designated parking for tourists in the 1920s.

We close with an update to the late June Maher Smith's 2000 history of band concerts in the Plaza, a beloved local tradition.

We hope you enjoy the summer and invite your friends and family to visit "Destination Healdsburg" at the Healdsburg Museum.

Holly Hoods, Executive Director/Curator
Pamela Vana-Paxhia, Editor

RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER
The Official Publication of the
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Destination Healdsburg

by Millie Howie

reprinted from *Sonoma Discoveries*, May 2016

There are those who are surprised to see throngs of smiling visitors strolling up and down the streets of Healdsburg, shopping, dining and tasting wines, but there is really nothing new about the lure of this relatively small town. From its earliest days, Healdsburg's citizenry enjoyed having fun and devised dozens of ways to celebrate the beauty of its setting, its salubrious climate and spirit of fun.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg Plaza view looking northwest, 1892

One of the greatest attractions in Healdsburg, the tree-studded Plaza in the heart of town, owes its existence to the foresight of the town's founder, Harmon Heald who made a gift of the verdant square to the town, dedicating its use, forever, as a pleasure ground to be held free from business or public buildings.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

View from the back of Fitch Mountain looking west, c.1915

Healdsburg is blessed to be sited within its own wide curve of the Russian River that flows past Geyserville, passing through Alexander Valley and in two large loops wraps itself around Fitch Mountain before turning to run south to the Pacific Ocean. In season, the Russian River offered fishing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking and an exciting sequence of water pageants, drawing city residents north where enterprising entrepreneurs welcomed them with resort accommodations set up on the slopes of Fitch Mountain.

The grandest of these, Villa Chantecler (sic), went through several transformations before its 17-acres of parkland and its rustic lodge, complete with ballroom, dining room, lounge and horseshoe-shaped bar, were purchased by the City of Healdsburg.

Some of the most colorful events staged in Healdsburg owe their creation to the routine summer damming of the river at Veterans Memorial Beach, creating a four-mile length of quiet and deeper water. A good many of the old-time water festivals are no longer indulged in, but for many years, visitors from up and down the state flocked to the Swim and Ski Festival, sponsored by the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce each August.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Swan float in the 1908 Water Carnival

The festivities began with a swim meet, held in the open water of the Russian River at Memorial Beach on Saturday of the two-day event. Fourteen swim events were scheduled and approximately 300 youngsters participated. Sunday was dedicated to a

daredevil water ski exhibition with comedy acts by clowns and their trained dogs and a thrilling ski-jump competition.

Off and on, from 1907 through the 1950s, with interruptions during the two World Wars, Healdsburg staged some of the most resplendent festivals and carnivals ever held in the state. The annual Water Carnival, combining sports competitions on land and water, concerts and even auditions for roles in motion pictures, had its own queen who presided over the two-day fete. The carnival began on a Saturday with a parade to the river where floats, including one spectacular creation in the shape of a swan, passed in review. Activities continued with competitions climaxing with hose-cart races that attracted teams of fire fighters from Mill Valley, San Rafael, Petaluma and Healdsburg. The day concluded with a concert in the Plaza, a grand electrical illumination, fireworks and dancing.

Another of the grand draws to the area were The Geysers, which brought health-seekers and the curious to see the phenomenon often referred to as the second greatest natural wonder in California, surpassed only by Yosemite National Park.

When William Elliott stumbled upon the geothermal fields of The Geysers while out tracking a grizzly in 1847, he unwittingly set the stage for a tourist attraction that would draw visitors from around the world and include visits by three presidents, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and Grant, and noted journalists such as Mark Twain and Horace Greeley. The Geysers soon became a renowned tourist spectacle, and resorts with fanciful names were quickly built to provide accommodations for those seeking the healing powers of the steam jets.

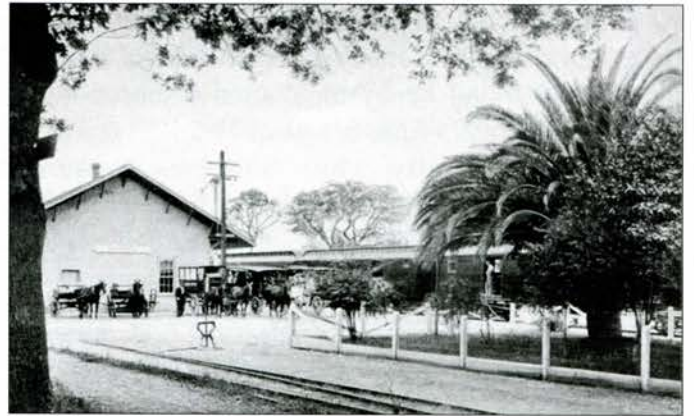


Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Clark Foss driving the stagecoach from Geysers Resort, 1909

Stages pulled by teams of six horses made daily trips up the Redwood Highway from Petaluma to Cloverdale. The most famous and hair-raising rides were those with legendary driver Clark Foss at the reins. Writers of the period chronicled Foss' "casual disregard of precipices as he careened along the narrow roads, over Hog's Back Ridge where on each side the mountain plunged straight down thousands of feet to the ravines below."

All of the major hotels in Sonoma County advertised stage trips to the Geysers. Roads were built from Healdsburg and Cloverdale. When journalist Bayard Taylor visited in 1862, he reported: "The rocks burn under you. You are enveloped in fierce heat, strangled by puffs of diabolical vapor and stunned by the awful hissing, spitting, sputtering, roaring, of a thousand hell-cats."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg train depot, 1909

In 1871 the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad reached Healdsburg, bringing carloads of tourists from the Bay Area and helped put the Russian River and Healdsburg on the map as a desirable vacation spot. Additional easy access to the popular recreational area was provided when the Sonoma County Transportation Company began operation of regular runs between Healdsburg and Santa Rosa on six auto-buses that could carry 18 passengers each. Next came the Golden Gate auto ferries, then the Golden Gate Bridge was completed and the rush was on.

Still, basically, Healdsburg was an agricultural town. As Prohibition forced the closure of the area's wineries, vineyards were ripped out and prune trees were planted. The more enterprising grape growers, who thought the Volstead Act would soon be repealed,

hedged their bets by planting their trees between the rows of vines.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Prune trees in blossom, 1963

Prune crops flourished and Healdsburg became celebrated as “The Buckle on the Prune Belt.” Then with the residents’ unquenchable spirit of frivolity and pride in the bounty from their fertile valleys, one of the most beloved and best-remembered celebrations was born – the Annual Prune Blossom Tour. Every March, as millions of fluffy white blossoms transformed thousands of acres of valley orchards into seas of snow, the word went out that, for one full weekend, the prune was king. The 30-mile pilgrimage began with free coffee and prune cookies at the Villa Chanticleer (by then the spelling of its name had changed). Drivers of private cars and busloads (as many as 23 from Oakland alone) followed the curving roads through Alexander and Dry Creek valleys, some stopping for the antique show at the Alexander Valley church, and all assembling at some point between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. for an old-fashioned country lunch at the Alexander Valley Community Hall. Cost of the lunch was \$1.75 for adults and 75 cents for kids under 12.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

First wine tasting room at Simi (Montepulciano) Winery, 1940

With the Repeal of the 18th Amendment and the first signs of the renaissance of the California wine industry, much of the promotional activities of Healdsburg and its environs became centered on wine. One of the most successful of these ventures was the Russian River May Wine Fest sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce annually, starting in 1971. Estimates were that more than 5,000 tickets had been sold and recognition of Healdsburg and its surrounding vineyards had started their climb to prominence. Recognition of the quality of the region’s wines had begun.

Time has brought some new “must see” spots, such as Warm Springs Dam with its hatchery, hiking trails and a host of other outdoor offerings. New hotels, bed and breakfasts and a wide selection of restaurants presenting a diversity of cuisines now add to the hospitality and charm of Healdsburg, as do fascinating shops catering to every imaginable taste.

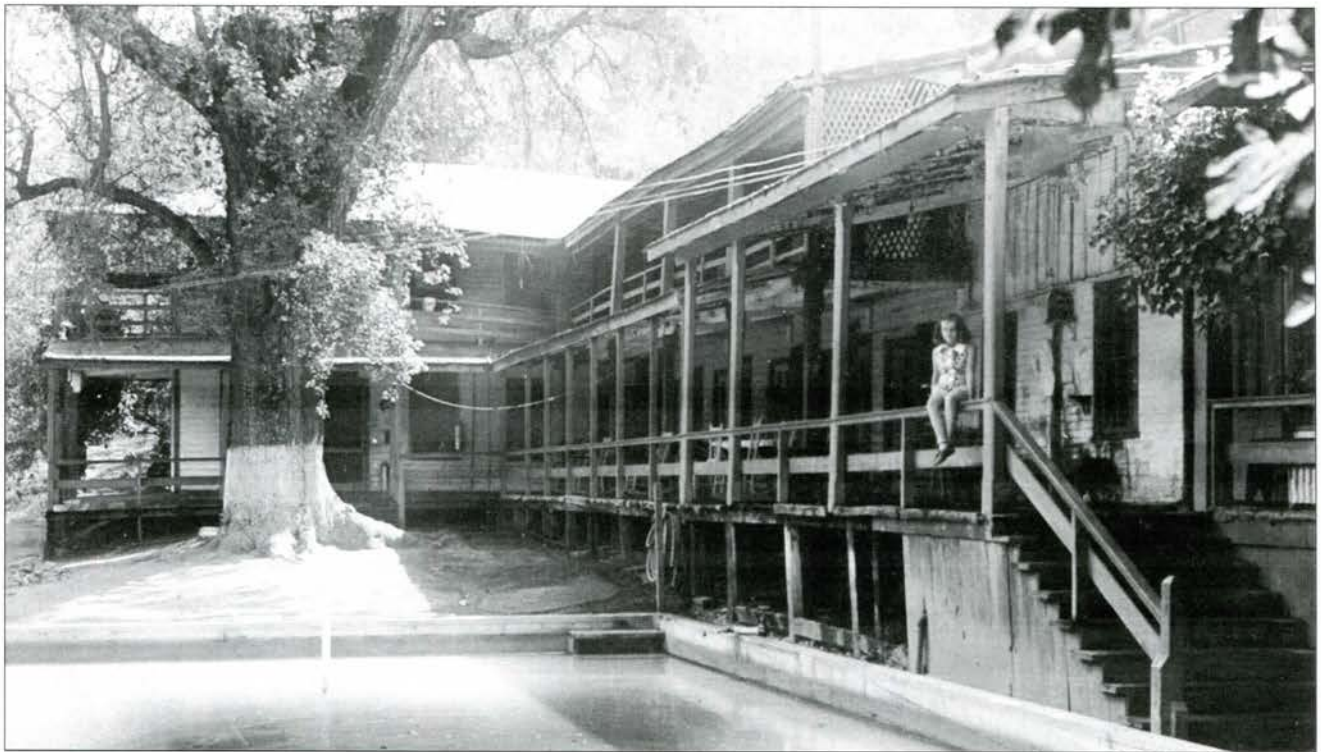


Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

4-H and FFA members in the sheep showmanship class during the Healdsburg Future Farmers Country Fair, 1957

And not all of the early recreational events have been discontinued. The best example of the longevity of Healdsburg’s traditional, predominantly local and agricultural events is the Future Farmer Country Fair now in its 67th appearance (to be held on May 26, 2016). The Twilight Parade, animal auctions and arts and crafts exhibits prove indisputably that Healdsburg respects its heritage as a farm-based city and holds fast to the values of its founding generations.

What lures visitors from all points of the compass to Healdsburg may change, but the eternal beauty of this river area and its friendly inhabitants make it worth the journey from where you are to here any time of the year.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

The Geysers hotel and swimming pool, c.1930

Childhood Memories of the Geysers Resort

by Margaret Powell Kidder

In 1978, Margaret Powell Kidder of Toronto, Canada, described her fond memories of the Geysers Resort as she remembered it at the turn of the 20th century. Margaret's father, Dr. David Powell, had been the owner of the resort during this period.

In 1885, my father, Dr. David Powell of Marysville and Uncle Howell Powell of San Francisco, bought "The Geysers," a famous resort in California's early days. It was situated in the Coast Range Mountains about 80 miles north of San Francisco in Sonoma County.

The early registers in the hotel were full of priceless signatures, for many famous people stayed there, enjoying the health-giving waters and famous steam baths. Unfortunately those registers were lost (in the tragic fire of 1938).

It was a unique place of 1,000 acres on a small river called Pluton Creek. The south hillsides were covered with a thick forest of pine, laurels and madrone. The north hillside, sparsely wooded, was gashed by a canyon belching forth boiling mud, by steam fumaroles and by a variety of hot and cold mineral springs. There were banks of sulphur, Epsom

salts and silica. Can one imagine a more interesting and lovely spot to spend a part of every year, as I did, from the time I was six months old until I was twenty-three!

The hotel was always under lease and for a time the rights to bottle the hot magnesia water, cooled and carbonated, were let. The company must have failed, but I have vivid memories of a shed housing "The Bottling Works" and for many years, I suppose as long as the bottles, corks and machinery held out, we bottled our own water. There were even labels that had the picture of a lovely lady on them and the words "Geyser Water."

We also had one of the earliest ice-making plants and made our own electric power. Water for it was brought from high up the creek in a wooden box-flume and emptied into a concrete reservoir on a hillside behind the hotel. How often I went with the

man-of-all-work to start the dynamo at dusk, and what fun it was to help the ice out of the large containers by playing the fire hose on them.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Geysers's power plant, c.1915

My sister and I begged for beds on the open part of the porch so that at dawn we could look up to the top of the tall pine tree touched by the sun coming over the mountains and hear the blue jay's raucous call from the topmost branch. My sister always insisted that the jay was her favorite song bird! We had a swimming pool in the creek—the boulders taken out and a wood dam put in each year. The water was a most perfect temperature, due to the hot springs bubbling up here and there. There was a row of cubicles on the bank for changing into our bathing costumes, and what decorous bathing costumes we wore! Mother's, knitted by Gantner and Mattern of San Francisco, was long sleeved and high necked, with stockings and canvas soles attached. My sister and I had woven one-piece affairs called "Annette Kellermans;" then sailor-collared taffeta dresses worn on top. I never remember learning to swim—I learned at such an early age—but how we managed to stay afloat so decently garbed, I will never know.

Our steam bath was truly unique and I'm sure very unsanitary by the standards of today. Steam was piped directly from the hillside into a small room in a bath house. The building was a wooden affair with an oval tank about four feet deep and about 12 or 14 feet long by 10 feet in width. There was a shower of cold water and three dressing rooms, each with a brown leather-covered couch, so one could relax after the bath, which of course we never did. The procedure, after donning French chemises, the fine linen hand-embroidered kind, (all our old ones were saved for this purpose—modern nudism would never have been condoned), was to go into the little steam room, which had benches along each wall, hold a wash cloth

over your face and sit until the perspiration was pouring from every pore. When we could take it no longer we dashed into the plunge (we could regulate the temperature of the water to suit ourselves), then into the cold shower. No modern sauna can compare!

We usually began the day with the steam bath, then spent the day riding, with a swim in the late afternoon, walking up from the swimming pool just in time to see the stage arrive with its dust covered passengers. There was always a man stationed at the stage landing with a feather duster to dust off the passengers and their luggage. I wonder if there is such a thing as a feather duster extant. They must have been made of turkey feathers bound to a wooden handle.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Auto stage to the Geysers, 1920s

Our picnics were often very different too, for we would get the Chinese cook to mix Boston Brown Bread batter and put it in a coffee tin and to give us some raw eggs. Then we would take them to a boiling spring by the side of the creek and put the bread in to boil. It would be done in a couple of hours, so after a climb up the creek or a walk in the woods, we would come back and retrieve it, and boil the eggs. How good they tasted!

One year Father was given a fawn by a "grateful patient." He decided it should be shipped to The Geysers—after it became big enough to be dangerous in the confines of our stable yard in Marysville. We had named it Sampson, for the naval hero of the Spanish-American war. Poor Father! The deer was a very costly animal, for while waiting to arrange to ship him to the Geysers he was put in the care of the man who cared for the cemetery. There he got loose and did a great deal of damage to the cemetery plot. Then, when we arrived in Calistoga, our beloved Charlie Foss thought he should be taken

for a walk before being put on the stagecoach. The result was a number of wrecked store fronts along the main street. But at last he was safely in a paddock at the Geysers leading a very happy life among the Manzanitas and other shrub. The next year, a mate, "Fanny," was found for him. Some years later a disgruntled stable hand let Sampson out of the paddock, the day the deer season opened, and he was killed by a hunter not far from the hotel. Fanny lived on for many years and was allowed to roam free, with a bell around her neck. She was very wise and always stayed close to the hotel when deer season opened.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Sampson, the pet fawn

When we were children I can remember that the bartender in the hotel was always our friend and trusted ally. Once, my cousin and I hid underneath the bar and consumed the best part of a large bottle of maraschino cherries before we were found. The smell of limes and lemons and, I suppose, whiskey, still lingers in my mind with the remembrances of the little drawer that held the powdered sugar and the long, twisted-handled spoon that stirred our Geysers-water lemonades. There was always one made for us when we came up from our swim, got our mail in the little post office of the hotel and retreated to the cottage porch.

The hotel was a large wooden building with a wide verandah upstairs that ran completely around, except where the building joined the dining room and kitchen, which must have been an addition to the original building. The dining room was large and airy. We had all our meals there at a large round table in one corner.

There were usually Chinese cooks, who were our friends, and when we visited the kitchen we were entranced by the rattlesnakes hanging up by the outside door. The Chinese valued them as medicine and to eat. There were always snakes about so they hunted them assiduously.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
John D. Grant at the Geysers, 1920s

Throughout my life I have always felt The Geysers was my true home. After much roaming, it is the one place that gives me a feeling of "homesickness." I always wanted those I knew to love the place as I did. Eventually, after my father's death, the property had to be sold (to John D. Grant in March, 1925).

It is now [1978] the source of power generated from the natural fumaroles, by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. It is one of three places in the world where power is derived from natural steam. New Zealand is one and the Po Valley in northern Italy another. I am sorry that its commercial use has spoiled it for the use my Father and Uncle always intended for it—a place of healing for body and spirit.

The Fitch Mountain Resort Era

by Marie Shobe, 1997
updated by Holly Hoods, 2017

The Russian River region, from Healdsburg to the Pacific 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. Healdsburg’s Fitch Mountain region, through which the Russian River flows, developed into a popular resort area about the turn of the century. Hundreds of families from the Bay Area 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.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Camp Rose on the Russian River, c. 1908

Camp Rose

Attorney J. W. Rose established Camp Rose in 1905 on Fitch Mountain. He set up tents and built a boarding house, and had 150 visitors the first season. 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. In 1912, owner Carlyle Ray subdivided the lots. Cottages were built on the hillside, and many of these were purchased by out-of-towners for summer use. A permanent Inn was built with a store, tents and a dance platform. Camp Rose is still a thriving community today.

Villa Chanticleer

Villa Chantecler/Chanticleer was at one time the leading French resort north of San Francisco. Victor Pradel, a Frenchman, established the Villa in 1910 when he built several cabins and a screened-in dining pavilion. He marketed his resort to the French organizations in San Francisco. Ownership of the Villa changed hands several times, but the resort stayed French.

In 1934, the Villa was purchased by Lucien and Madeleine Delagnes who advertised the resort as “40 Acres of Fun on the Russian River.” The Delagnes added a children’s playground and an outdoor grotto

for bridge playing. They hosted bands and held dances. Cows furnished fresh milk for the table and Chef Robert Layne cooked fine French food “served in a real French manner.” French was spoken and the French flag flown, as well as the American flag. Bastille Day was a big event.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Entrance to Villa Chanticleer, 1930s

New cabins, shower baths and a six-room house were added, as well as tent cabins. Madeleine Delagnes prepared country French lunches. Lucien would take vacationers down to the river or on outings to taste wine at Italian Swiss Colony or Montepulciano Winery.

Wine tasting was quite a novelty in the early 1930s. Italian Swiss Colony opened the first wine tasting room in California, at Asti north of Geyserville, in 1934, followed by Fred Haigh and Isabelle Simi Haigh at their Montepulciano Winery in north Healdsburg. People had become accustomed to stronger alcohol during Prohibition. After Repeal of the 19th Amendment in 1933, consumer palettes had to be reeducated about the pleasures of wine and food.

Del Rio Woods

Real estate developers Robert Cook and Joseph Pohley established Del Rio Woods in the early 1900s on the eastern slope of the mountain. Several acres of

the property were set aside to use as a park. Bay Area families bought lots and erected summer homes. The remaining land was sold to Thomas Scoble who further developed it. Scoble built a road to the top of Fitch Mountain in 1929 and subdivided the public park where subsequently many houses were added. Soon it featured an office, a store, dance pavilion and dam.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Boating at Del Rio, 1930s

The Del Rio Recreation District was formed in 1936 to secure financial support for erection and maintenance of a dam. From that year on until the early 2000s, Del Rio beach had a dam. The dam's wooden planks were installed every summer and removed every fall, but the foundation was permanent. Due to the listing of salmon and steelhead on the federal Endangered Species List, the boards for the dam were not replaced in 2000. In August 2014, the dam's "permanent" foundation was permanently removed.



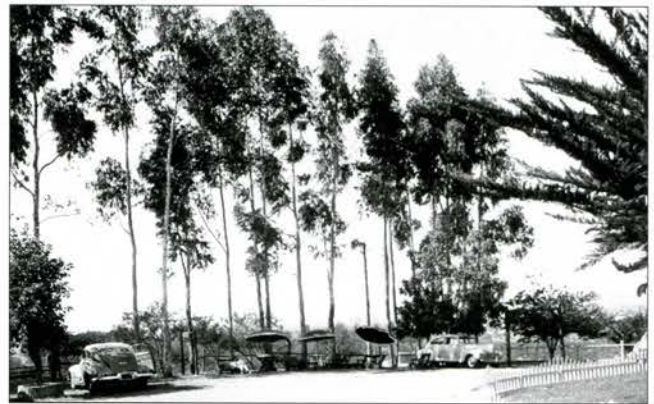
Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Fitch Mountain Tavern, 1920s

Fitch Mountain Tavern and the Grand Hotel that Never Happened

Fitch Mountain Tavern opened in 1908 along the Russian River on south Fitch Mountain 1 ½ miles from downtown Healdsburg. Built by A. M. Ewing, the tavern had wide verandas overlooking the river and

a rustic look. The property was subdivided and cottages for summer residents and visitors were built. Ewing also built a trout hatchery on Fitch Mountain, which kept the Tavern's table well provisioned.

Fitch Mountain Tavern declined in popularity during Prohibition, and in the late 1920s plans were made to demolish it. A proposal to build a grand 100-room tourist hotel in its place was circulated, but the plan never came to fruition. In 1929 the old Fitch Mountain Tavern was demolished and the land was sold. Baseball star W.A. "Chick" Autry built a house from the salvaged wood on the site of the former Fitch Mountain Tavern.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Bellevue Villa, 1940s

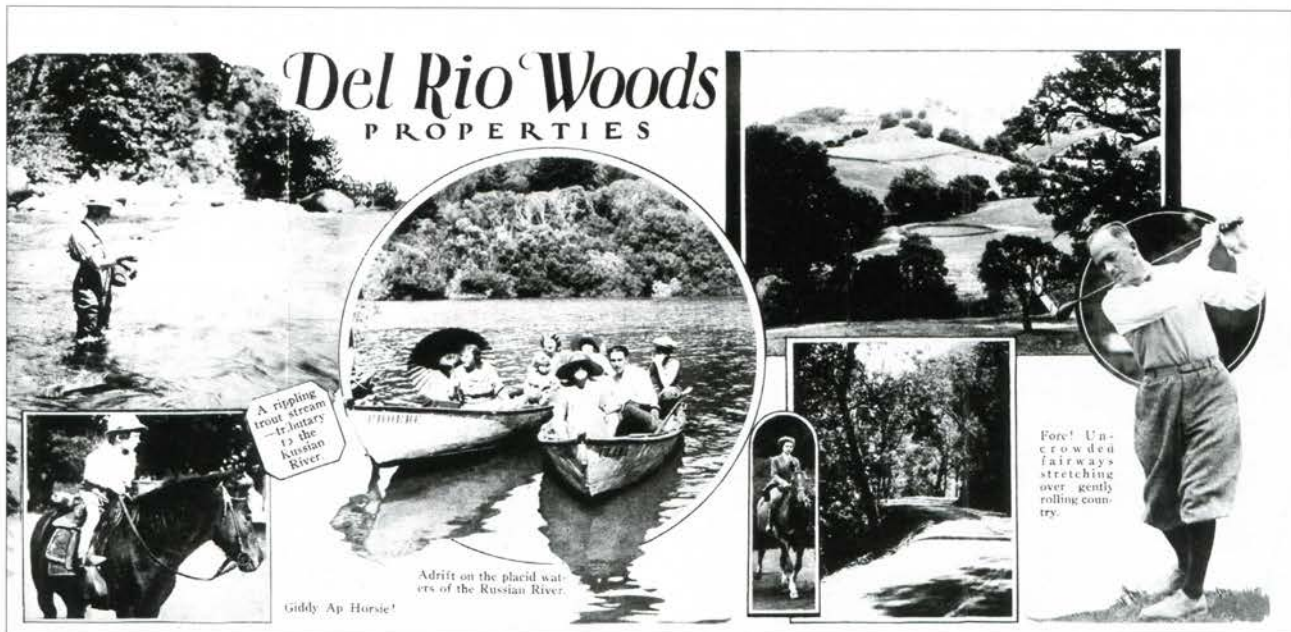
Bellevue Villa

Bellevue Villa was a popular French resort that was opened in 1947 by Syl Borel, Emil Richard and Manual Maharas, soon joined by Margaret Jachetta. The 30-acre property with a panoramic view became a resort with a full-service restaurant, 52 cabins and rooms, plus a bowling alley. Guests were charged \$7 daily or \$40 weekly for the American Plan with French Cuisine comprising three meals a day, including wine.

Bellevue Villa ("The Villa") was primarily a summer resort open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. During the off-season, including New Year's Eve, they hosted banquets, weddings and conventions. Today Borel Road and Jachetta Court mark the location of the original Bellevue Villa.

End of the French Resort Era

The golden era of family-operated French resorts on Fitch Mountain came to an end during the 1950s with the sale of Villa Chanticleer to the City of Healdsburg and the closure of the resort portion of the Bellevue Villa in 1958.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Promotional brochure for Del Rio Woods, 1930s

Destination Del Rio

by Marie Butler

“Hello Healdsburg!”

Northward ho! To make the trip north to Healdsburg and to the popular French resorts in the late 1920s, my family would first load up my grandfather’s prized Graham-Paige car with food, summer clothing, and one dog – the size and breed varied. The Golden Gate Bridge had not been built yet, so they drove onto the ferry boat docked at San Francisco’s Ferry Building, disembarked in Sausalito and proceeded to Healdsburg via the long and often dusty Redwood Highway. *“Hello Healdsburg!”* the children (and adults) always exclaimed as they traversed the middle of the bridge into town.

Among the favorite spots to vacation was Rouquier’s, a resort in the area, with the Villa Chanticleer (*sic*) another desirable gathering place. Both were built and developed by French entrepreneurs and catered to visitors from near and far. Delighted with the Russian River, outdoor activities, familiar food and the camaraderie of fellow compatriots (and eager to leave the City for a respite), my family decided to build a summer home of their own. They soon found a vacant hillside lot about a block from Palomar, at Del Rio Woods on Fitch Mountain.

Family lore says that my great-grandparents, Martin and Marion Peyran, built the house at Del Rio Woods in 1929; county records indicate 1928. They both may be right: begun in one year, finished the next.

The forest-green, two-story house on North Fitch Mountain Road (which is still standing) was around the bend from winding Hilltop Road. Peppery-scented laurels and madrones with peeling red bark edged the property that climbed to the hill above. The friendly next-door neighbors lent my grandparents the blueprints of *their* home. My family did a reverse plan and voila—mirror images of the same house.

It had a screened-in porch with main living quarters upstairs; below was a downstairs apartment with a full kitchen, including an ice box. On the other side was a musty, primitive wine cellar—a must for my grandparents. (In later years, my grandmother worked for Georges de Latour of Beaulieu Vineyard.)

Multi-colored, paper Chinese lanterns were strung merrily from the house’s porch to the gravel driveway and carport below. It was promptly christened “Villa Georgette” after my mother; there was an etched sign with that moniker hanging from

two connecting arched trees, at the base of the twisting, terraced path up to the main stairs. It greeted the steady stream of friends and extended family (both French *and* Norwegian) who came in relays, sleeping in any spare spot, and enjoying my great-grandmother's excellent cuisine: flan, piperade, gigot, and sweetbreads.



Source: Marie Butler

Georgette Hansen Galloudec posing on a road in Del Rio Woods preparing for a performance in the Plaza

My mother, Georgette Hansen Galloudec, was an aspiring thespian as a child, and would tap-dance and do recitations in the Plaza in the 1930s. Bystanders would applaud and toss her pennies. Old photos from that time show people posing under parasols, kayaking, and sunbathing on the beach. Little Georgette was seen riding a pony named "Johnny."



Source: Marie Butler

*Boating on the Russian River
(Georgette on far left, Marion Peyran without a hat on right)*

Each August or September, Del Rio Woods friends would bid adieu to Healdsburg and drift back to the Bay Area, often to reunite there. There was only one, lone bachelor nearby who was a year-round inhabitant. He lived across from us, his home distinguishable for many years by a large lion's head sculpture that adorned his road-side redwood garage door.

Bucolic times would not last. In late 1941, my grandfather, George Hansen, and some other men were making winter repairs on the house. They saw cars suddenly race past on the road, horns honking wildly.

"What's going on?" my grandfather called out.

"Haven't you heard?" was the response. "We're at war!"

While my family still utilized the house in the 1940s, gas-rationing and war-times must have made the trips less frequent, and the company more sporadic, as young men were drafted or enlisted and traveled far beyond San Francisco and Healdsburg.

Still, life went on and it was a good distraction to come "up the country." In the summer of 1942, my seventeen-year-old mother and some close friends were at the beach. A group of young guys were rough-housing in the river, showing off for the teenage ladies. A mutual friend introduced my mother to Ray Galloudec, one of the "ruffians." Ray and his parents, Jeannette and Yves, were staying at one of the resorts. Georgette was from the City, Ray was from Oakland, but they traveled 70 miles north and fortuitously met in Healdsburg.



Source: Marie Butler

Georgette and Ray with friends on the road in front of the Del Rio house on North Fitch Mountain Road

They began courting when they were here; swimming parties (always chaperoned by a watchful grandmother or aunt), hikes up to the top of the Mountain, or swinging on the wooden swing under the eaves of the Villa. (Alas, that swing is now long gone.)

An engagement followed the next year, with plans for a big San Francisco wedding in 1944. The War intruded, and in October, 1943 they hurriedly married while he was home on leave, and before he shipped overseas to Europe. There was no time for a proper honeymoon. But, there *was* the house on Fitch Mountain. So, off they drove, and spent a few, brief autumn days at the rustic home at Del Rio Woods. My mother had not yet learned to cook; the only thing she could prepare was a dessert called "Prune Whip." My dad dutifully ate it and declared it delicious. It was years later that she discovered he hated prunes.



Source: Marie Butler

Georgette, Marie Hansen (in background) and Marie Galloudec Butler as a baby in the Plaza

Post War, in the early 1950s, my grandparents, George and Marie, decided to divide their time between San Francisco and Del Rio Woods and open a French Basque, family-style restaurant and bar in Healdsburg. The restaurant portion never materialized after she became ill. The bar continued, though, as "The Sportsmen's Lodge" on then 245 West Street (now Healdsburg Avenue). It was a popular spot for both locals and summer folks, with its jukebox playing 78 RPM records, the long wooden bar, and a pot of lentils or soup simmering on the stove in the kitchen. My grandfather always had a

handout ready for the "hobos" who would come to the back door.



Source: Marie Butler

Marie Butler tubing down the Russian River

What a rarified childhood I had, being able to spend long summers at Del Rio Woods, as my mother had before me. It was a slow pace, and any missives from the busy outside world were delivered to our Rural Route mailbox on the road. I drifted in the river for hours. In late August, my friends and I counted the newly-hatched frogs by its alluvial banks. Long games of croquet were played at a neighbor's regulation-sized, dirt-packed court, and I honed my pinball skills at George and Joyce's store next to Palomar and the "little beach." Games of dominoes or reading were the preferred pastimes in the evenings, with citronella candles warding off the insects. How idyllic. My grandfather even allowed me to ride my red tricycle in the bar, the building's front doors open wide to air out the traces of beer and smoke from the previous night. Children and dogs seemed to roam freely in local taverns in the 1950s.

My mother decided to sell the Del Rio Woods house in the mid-1980s. The lure of Healdsburg was too great, though, and we moved from the Bay Area into town permanently in 1987. Not to Del Rio Woods, but that is all right. My heart is still there midway around the Mountain.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

West St. (Healdsburg Ave.) looking south from Plaza St., c. 1935

Tourist Parking

by Whitney Hopkins

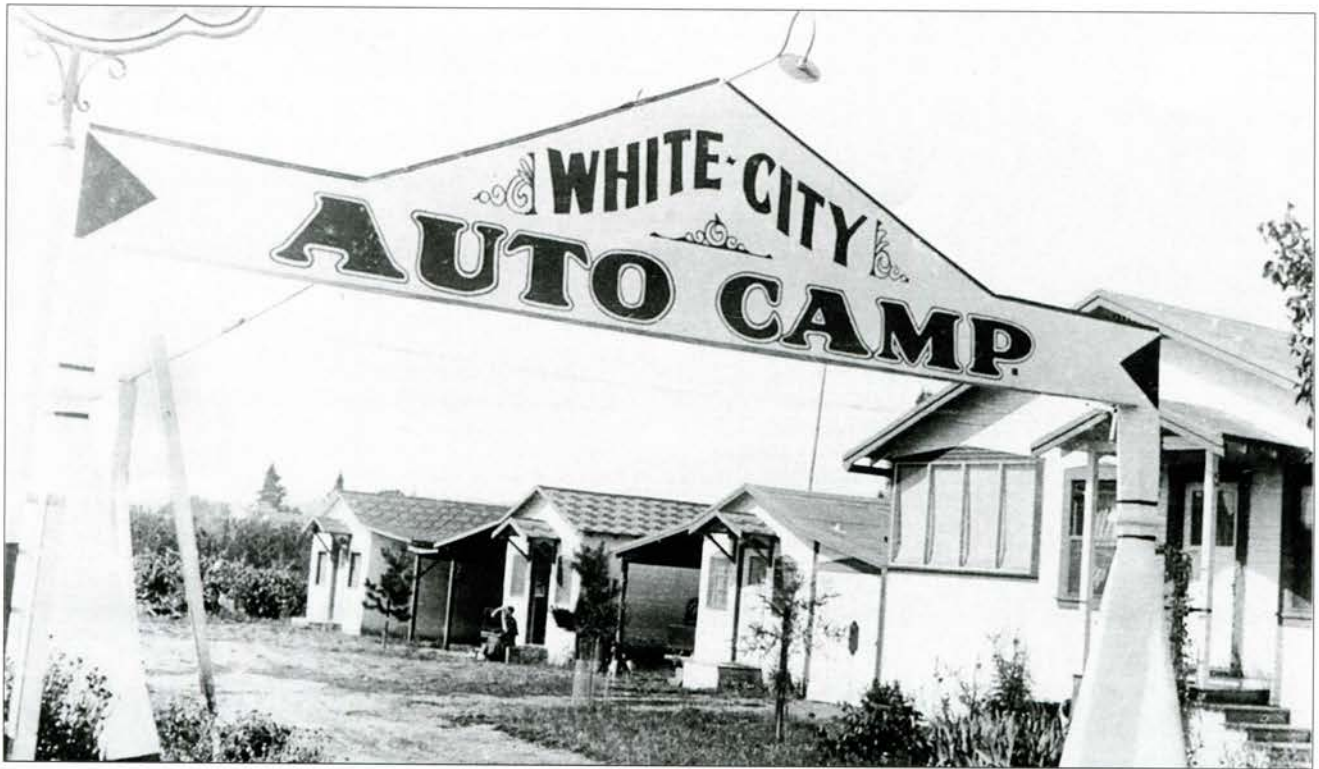
On August 15, 1929, the headline in the *Healdsburg Enterprise* was “Tourist Parking Problem Discussed at Kiwanis Meeting.” The “problem” at that time, according to Kiwanis members, was that local people were leaving their automobiles parked all day on the streets of central Healdsburg, forcing tourists to either seek side street locations or continue driving on to the next town.

The Kiwanians agreed that it was imperative to put a parking limit on cars allowed to remain in one place. It was also agreed that it would be good business for the entire community if a space in the center of the business section was reserved expressly for tourists during the height of the summer season. Otherwise, they felt that Healdsburg businesses would not reap the benefits of tourists traveling on the Redwood Highway.

Beginning in 1930, after the urging of Kiwanis and the Chamber of Commerce, the City Council

decided that the east side of West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) between Matheson and Plaza Streets, along the Plaza (where the bus stop is located today) would be dedicated to tourist parking between May 1 and October 1. The newspaper noted that Healdsburg was one of the few cities that had not adopted a time limit for downtown parking and this new step would demonstrate Healdsburg’s hospitality and consideration for visitors.

A sign was installed in June, 1930, to indicate the “Tourist Parking.” One month after the sign had been installed, traffic officer William Navas reported that many travelers regularly expressed appreciation for Healdsburg’s gesture of hospitality. The newspaper also noted that other towns, including Santa Rosa, followed suit to designate tourist parking, and replicate the “Healdsburg plan.” Healdsburg continued to maintain its seasonal tourist parking space on West Street for at least ten years.



White City Auto Camp, c.1930s

Source: Ron Harris

Auto Tourism in Healdsburg: The Sullivans' White City Auto Camp

by Whitney Hopkins

The popularity of the automobile at the beginning of the 20th century created a whole new travel culture for Americans. In Sonoma County, automobile tourism increased in the 1920s with the promotion of the Redwood Highway (101) from Sausalito up to the Oregon border. The opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937 further increased car traffic to Healdsburg.

Around 1920, free municipal campgrounds were set up in many American towns, including Healdsburg, to accommodate auto travelers. The popularity of the automobile quadrupled the number of car registrations in the U.S. from 4.6 million in 1917 to 19.2 million in 1926. Municipal auto camps became a necessity for travelers as they were the only economically viable places the majority of citizens could stay while traveling.

According to the United States Touring Bureau, a 1922 survey disclosed there were 1,200

cities and towns in the country offering camping grounds and facilities to auto tourists, many without charge. Most provided conveniences such as electric lights, toilets and cooking facilities, but travelers would be responsible for bringing their own tents and cots. These public camps were often sponsored by the chamber of commerce to encourage campers to camp near town and purchase goods from local businesses. The Healdsburg Chamber created free tourist auto camp grounds in the early 1920s.

The more basic tourist auto camp soon evolved into privately-owned cottage camps. Travelers desired more convenience with less work. Small cabins offered solid structures to protect travelers against inclement weather, easy access via automobile, parking, an informal atmosphere, and some privacy. During the Depression, such "auto courts" became profitable small businesses since tourism continued despite the economic downturn. Typically set up on

the edge of town, small cabins were usually erected around a court area with a gas pump nearby.

Healdsburg's White City Auto Camp is an example of one of those successful small businesses, which emerged to cater to automobile travelers during the Depression. In May of 1930, the *Healdsburg Tribune* reported that work had started on a new Standard Oil service station and tourist depot at the southwest corner of West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) and Powell Avenue, at Healdsburg's northern city limits, on a property jointly owned by Mrs. Maggenti and her sister, Miss Elvezia Lorenzini. Standard Oil leased the lot, and subleased the tourist depot accommodations to Mrs. Caroline Ross.



Source: Ron Harris

*The service station and first cottages on the west side of Healdsburg Ave., c.1930s
(Note the Oliveto Winery building in the background.)*

In January 1932, the *Sotoyome Scimitar* newspaper in Healdsburg reported that Thomas Walter Sullivan and son-in-law Fred Kimble took over the new "Ross Inn and auto service station at Powell Avenue and West Street." At the time, this was the northern city limit and the northern entrance into Healdsburg on the Redwood Highway. It was considered an ideal location for a tourist stop.

The newspaper noted that the Sullivans planned to continue operating the restaurant by the service station opened by Mrs. Ross, and stock gasoline and auto supplies at the service station. Natural gas was installed on the property and a series of two-unit auto camp cabins of modern type would be erected. The cabins would be of white stucco construction and equipped with a sleeping room, hot and cold showers and toilet. Plans also called for a heating system for the winter months, which was an innovation for auto camps. The article noted that there was sufficient room to erect 14 of those stucco cabins

on the property, which would be named the White City Auto Camp.

The name "White City" was a nod to the roots of Tom and Mary Sullivan, the founding owners of the White City Auto Camp. The Sullivans, originally from Minnesota, had lived and worked in Chicago prior to their initial arrival in California. The term "White City" was first used in Chicago to describe the 1893 World's Fair, whose neoclassical buildings were clad in white stucco and featured extensive use of street lights at night.

Tom Sullivan worked as a manager for the messenger department at Chicago Postal telegraph company. He and his family were also the proprietors of the Chicago Postal restaurant.

Presumably Tom Sullivan connected with Guglielmo Marconi, pioneer in the telegraph and radio industry, during this time. In 1913, Tom accepted a position with Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company. Tom and wife Mary Sullivan moved to Bolinas, California to work at Marconi's new hotel, built for single personnel at his radio transmitting station. Together, they likely worked as manager and cook. Following the completion and opening of the Marconi Hotel, the Sullivans opted to leave the foggy coastal Marin weather and returned to the Midwest in 1915. The 1920 census records show that the Sullivans were operating a hotel in Minneapolis.



Source: Ron Harris

Mary and Tom Sullivan at White City, c.1930s

At some point, the Sullivans decided to return to California. The Sullivans, with the support of their children, opened the "White City Auto Camp" in Healdsburg in 1932. They made Healdsburg their

home, and in 1933 celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with their three children, Nell, Alice and Denis, and grandchildren. In 1934, the Sullivans purchased several acres of prune orchard across the highway from the service station to expand their business. The business was known as both White City Auto Camp and White City Auto Court.



Source: Ron Harris

Mary Sullivan with her three children Denis George Sullivan, Nell Sullivan Utman, and Alice Sullivan Kimble

In 1937, in reference to White City Auto Court, the *Healdsburg Tribune* noted that one of the finest auto and trailer courts in northern California was rapidly nearing completion at the corner of the Redwood Highway and Powell Street, the property of Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Sullivan and F. W. Kimble.



Source: Ron Harris

White City Auto Court, c.1930s

Six new cabins had been completed, gravel concrete walks and graveled drives completed and work on the gardens in the front was under way. An electrically lighted sign was to be placed on the arched entrance way to the courts. The cabins, made of white

stucco, were finished inside, with new linoleum on the floors, hot and cold water in each room and many small conveniences, not found in the older types of cabins.

The entire front yard of the property was reserved as community property, part of the orchard has been preserved and a large fish pond has been built in the center. A grape arbor and other features would be added. The view from the gardens to the tree and vineyard covered hills of Dry Creek was noteworthy.

Work had begun on the section of the property in back of the cabins for a trailer court. This would accommodate 20 trailers, and would be equipped with gas and electric light hook ups and sanitary accommodations.

Sadly, Tom Sullivan died in Healdsburg in 1937 following an illness. Sullivan had been very active up until the time of his illness and did a considerable amount of the construction work on the new auto court, and the landscaping of the grounds. Following a funeral service at St. John's Church, Tom was buried in Healdsburg's Oak Mound Cemetery.

After Tom Sullivan's death, the work of maintaining the auto court was too arduous for his wife Mary. Tom and Mary Sullivan's son-in-law Frank Kimble, a naval reserve officer, was called to duty during the war and was unable to assist with the auto court, so the family sold White City Auto Court. Adolph Biedermann and family of Hayward purchased White City.

Mary Sullivan, age 85, moved to San Carlos to live with her daughter, but "deeply regretted leaving Healdsburg," and the many friends she made there. Mary, who lived to age 100 in 1961, is buried next to her husband in Oak Mound Cemetery.

In the 1950s, the auto court became known as the "White City Motel." Despite the fact that the business changed hands multiple times, the name "White City" remained for all of those years after the Sullivans established and named the business, inspired by their years living in Chicago. White City Motel was demolished in 1984 to make way for a 7-Eleven convenience store.

Sources:

Healdsburg Tribune

Sotoyome Scimitar

Special thanks to Ron Harris, grandson of Mary and Tom Sullivan, and Richard Nielsen who grew up at the Bolinas Marconi transmitting station.

Historic Highlights of the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau

by Marie Butler, 2011

“The Chamber Today” updated by Carla Howell, 2017

“A Step Forward – A Chamber of Commerce Formed.
Citizens Determined to Place Healdsburg in Ranks of Progressive Cities.”
Healdsburg Tribune, November 21, 1907.

1907 to 1929 – The Early Years

As reported in the *Tribune*, a “large and enthusiastic” group of local citizens organized the town’s Chamber of Commerce on Monday, November 18, 1907. The assemblage felt the need for an organization that would “tend to the building up and the advertising of this section of Sonoma County, in a direct and practical way.” Dues were set at 50 cents per month.

The organization’s name evolved over the years and was originally referred to as the “Business Men’s Association and Chamber of Commerce.” Formally incorporated in 1912, the Chamber’s early membership rosters read like a “Who’s Who” of town leaders: Garrett, Rosenberg, Hayes, Cerri, Truitt, Harmeson, Langhart, Imrie and Frampton.

Its early slogan was the somewhat lengthy, “Healdsburg: The Leading Wine, Grape, Hop and Fruit Section of Sonoma County.” That evolved into “The Home of the Triplets: Prunes, Grapes, Hops,” as personified by three healthy, round-cheeked young girls.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

The Healdsburg Triplets (prunes, grapes and hops) in 1915 promotional campaign

In 1924, the Chamber sponsored a contest for a new slogan and chose the winner from over 2,500 entries: “Healdsburg, The Buckle of the California Prune Belt.”



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Prune goddesses and goblet on a 1933 parade float with the winning slogan, “Healdsburg, the Buckle of the Prune Belt”

As early as 1919, the Chamber contracted with G.E. Pryor, leader of the Healdsburg Municipal Band to perform summer concerts in the Plaza. The Chamber paid the sum of \$60 for each concert, agreed to pay for the board and lodging for any band members that needed it and graciously purchased new music for the season, but only if the cost did not exceed \$30.

1930s – Depression and Pre-World War II Years

In the austere years following the Depression and the end of Prohibition, the Chamber resurrected itself and buoyed the local business community as well.

In November, 1935, Chamber representatives presented a proposal before the City Council to erect a new building to house the Chamber. In 1936, this Mediterranean-style civic building financed by the

WPA and local boosters was completed at 217 "West Street" (now Healdsburg Avenue). It remains the present site of the Chamber today.

The Depression years were hard on Healdsburg. In 1937, 65 business and professional men met at the American Legion Hall to consider a plan to revitalize and reorganize the Chamber. Forty men signed up as members that night and committed to pay dues of \$24 a year. One early issue faced by the reorganized Chamber was lack of parking spots in front of stores, a persistent issue throughout the years.

The area naturally lent itself to a Harvest Festival in the 1930s and '40s.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Harvest Festival Parade, September 1, 1940, with Darla Williams Budworth crowned "Little Miss Healdsburg" on the float

Thinking globally, the Chamber sent a delegation to "Healdsburg Day" at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition held on Treasure Island. There, the group hosted an open house in the Redwood Empire Building.

1940s – The War Years

By 1942, a search began for a full-time Chamber manager. Owen Sweeten was hired for the job and received a salary of \$150 a month.

The Chamber sponsored an ad campaign to buy local bread. "Buy Bread Baked in Healdsburg," "Support Home Industry – It Supports YOU" and "Bread Like Mom Used to Make" declared the ads placed in local papers.

Local farmers were asked to pledge to grow 200 acres of tomatoes with the prospect of a canning firm coming to town.

Sweeten pushed to have the War Board and Mining Engineers group examine local properties to

determine if tin deposits existed for use in the war efforts.

Band concerts were discontinued during this somber time.

The Chamber proposed a "credit plan" for membership dues, to be paid after the war was over.

In 1945, local tavern owners met at the Chamber office and formed the North Sonoma County Tavern Association. Since the old quip was that there were "an equal number of bars and churches" in town at that time, it must have been a substantial committee.

Surveys were sent to local businesses to determine issues and needs. Merchants responded by suggesting a need to improve the local shopping center. A "Shop in Healdsburg" campaign began in earnest. Parking meters were installed downtown... and promptly vandalized by irate citizens.

1946 was the year that Santa flew into Healdsburg, at Norton's Skyranch.

1950s – Local Business Boom

Healdsburg's Centennial arrived and the Chamber issued commemorative wooden nickels to be used around town.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Wooden nickel business promotion, 1950s

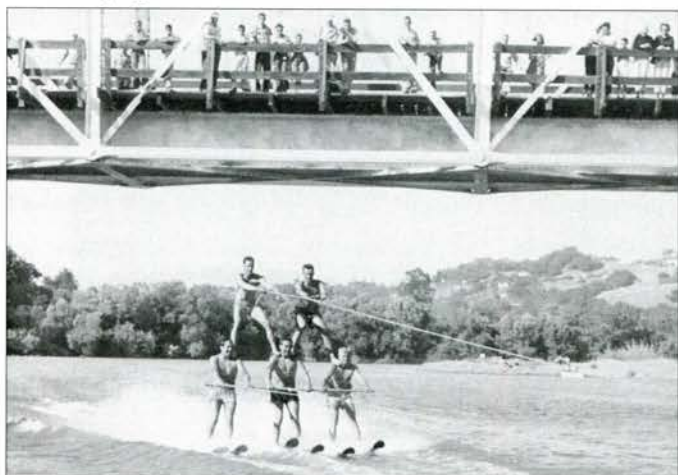
When a campaign in 1957 for a new City Hall did not stir up much interest, the Chamber turned its attention to organizing a Junior Chamber of Commerce.

"Let's Clean Up West Street!" was a recurring cry. Locals were concerned about the "ghost town" look south of the Plaza.

The first ribbon cutting for "Hiway 101" happened, with local politicians in attendance.

In 1956, G.F. Miller, Chamber President, attended the first run of Northwestern Pacific's new streamlined daylight train to Eureka, named "The Redwood."

The Chamber sponsored an annual swim meet, boat show and beauty contest and paid for half of the beach equipment at Memorial Beach.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Tandem waterskiers on Russian River with railroad bridge above, Ski and Boat Show, 1960s

A new "Recreation in Healdsburg" flier touted fun activities like bowling at Healdsburg Bowling Lanes, hunting, swimming, golf and more. We were, after all, "Where the Russian River and Redwood Highway Meet."

1960s – 101 North!

The new Highway Committee urged highway construction north of Geyserville to Cloverdale.

In the early 1960s, the Chamber supported the City bond election for a new City Hall. A new Senior Center and the use of a landing strip for a City municipal airport were also endorsed.

An historic occasion occurred, as well. For the first time, not one, but three, women were elected to the Chamber Board for the 1961 fiscal year.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

New Highway 101, south of Central Healdsburg exit, 1961

The freeway between Santa Rosa and Healdsburg was dedicated on November 1, 1962, and the Chamber was there!

By 1963, the proposed "Dry Creek Dam" was a hotly discussed issue.

The City airport was dedicated in September, 1963 and the following June, the Chamber arranged to have a plane taxi down Healdsburg Avenue.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Plane taxiing down Healdsburg Avenue, 1964

The young Prune Blossom Festival drew 1,500 visitors in 1965.

The Chamber investigated elimination of the pesky downtown parking meters; it was decided to "hood the meters" for 90 days over the holidays as a gesture of goodwill.

January, 1966 brought Ronald Reagan to the Chamber installation dinner at the Villa; he was Republican candidate for governor of California. The event sold out.

1970s – Starting Traditions

An event was born in 1972 that would continue for the next 25 years: the "Wine Festival." When the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) balked at issuing a permit, the City Council came through with a special day permit. The Wine Fest began with nine wineries, some music and food. Wines were sold for 20¢ a glass for standard varieties and 30¢ for premiums.

San Francisco Mayor Joe Alioto appeared as the keynote speaker at the Chamber's 1974 installation dinner.

In 1975, President Gerald Ford toured The Geysers.

Taking note of the "jogging craze," a marathon race around Fitch Mountain was organized.

What became known as the "Fitch Mountain Footrace" was later turned over to the Kiwanis Club.

1980s – New Leadership, Economic Challenges

The decade began with attempts to revamp the Blossom Tour – it needed "new life." In 1981, there was a panel discussion on industries most likely to shape Northern Sonoma County: Warm Springs Dam, wineries, The Geysers and the growth of the area were discussed.

A Beautification Committee took shape, and promoted Healdsburg as the "Petunia Capital of the World."

The Plaza hotel plans were proposed and the Chamber sponsored a logo contest. A new "grapeleaf" logo was chosen and promptly adopted by the City, too.

The City Redevelopment's Agency had a façade program to improve downtown commercial buildings.

In July, 1986, the Board bid a warm farewell to Director Helendale Barrett. Barrett retired to "play golf and travel." Lynn Woznicki was chosen as the Chamber's top staffer. It was noted that "a good portion of Woznicki's energy will go into her specialty – marketing – and Healdsburg will be the product she sells."

Another new fundraising event was developed, the Bicycle Tour. The popular Invitational Golf Tournament was still in place.

Concern about health care in 1988 created access to a "moderately priced health insurance program," as a benefit of membership.

Members were asked for input regarding a citywide smoking control ordinance. The results favored no smoking – quite a switch from the days when Chamber fundraisers were gents' "Smoker" cigar parties.

1990s – Soggy and The Commons

1990 began with the news that Marta and Pete Peterson and Charles J. Brown of Raicor were remodeling the corner of Matheson and Vine Streets. The major construction was to include a parking lot and site development with two new buildings. It was called an incubator concept, offering a starting place for businesses.

Monthly Business After Hours meetings continued at various venues, including the Healdsburg

Airport. Free flights were provided to the delight of attendees.

Parking was still a problem; signage was finally erected in 1991 stating 7-day-a-week parking enforcement, "in the hopes of discouraging those longterm abusers."

The Healdsburg Commons was scheduled for January, 1993. Its purpose was to draw together a representative group of up to 100 citizens to consider, "What should Healdsburg look like in 10 years?"

There was a disturbing trend of businesses closing (or for sale) in 1994. Downtown retail rents had been raised to "prohibitive levels." An emergency brown bag discussion was held at the Raven Theater.

Another Brown Bag Roundtable discussed the city's proposed Utility User tax. The city revised its plan as a result of Chamber efforts.

An Economic Development Office was created.

The Adopt-A-Class Program was also born and the Board appointed a new advisory position: Schools Representative.

The 1994 Commons was an even bigger hit than the 1993 one. As Rollie Atkinson, Editor of the *Tribune* said, "Healdsburg is a verb! Healdsburg is not just a place to live; it is a way of life."

Torrential rains in 1995 caused flooding in downtown. There were sandbags everywhere. It took a toll on local businesses and some were already struggling to make ends meet.

The Board announced the decision to discontinue the Wine Festival in 1997.

2000-2007 – Celebrating 100 Years

The year 2000 arrived with no computer disasters or major glitches – business went on as before. The Chamber launched a citywide web portal for the new century.

The Hospital was faltering, and the Chamber supported Measures G & H, to help "save Healdsburg Hospital."

SOB? There was an active Save Our Beach campaign and petition drive, in danger because of state and federal regulators' belief that it hampered the migration of salmon and steelhead.

Construction on the new Alliance Medical Center was underway. The board voted to support the

“Hospital Turnaround Plan,” a plan that included a parcel tax increase.

Say “Chardonnay!” The first town picnic and photo took place in June, in the Plaza. Over 1,300 people joined in for a concert and photo.

On the move – there was a ribbon cutting at the new Amtrak bus stop, located at the Singletree Inn Café. It took place right in front of the longstanding, unofficial “South Chamber of Commerce” sign.

A new “Downtown Holiday Party” held the day after Thanksgiving provided horse-drawn carriage rides, live music and entertainment, merchant open house and, of course, a visit from Santa.

In 2007, the Chamber celebrated its 100th anniversary and Healdsburg celebrated its 150th.

The organization had over 750-member businesses, thirteen of which had been in good standing for over 50 years.

2017 – The Chamber Today – Carla Howell

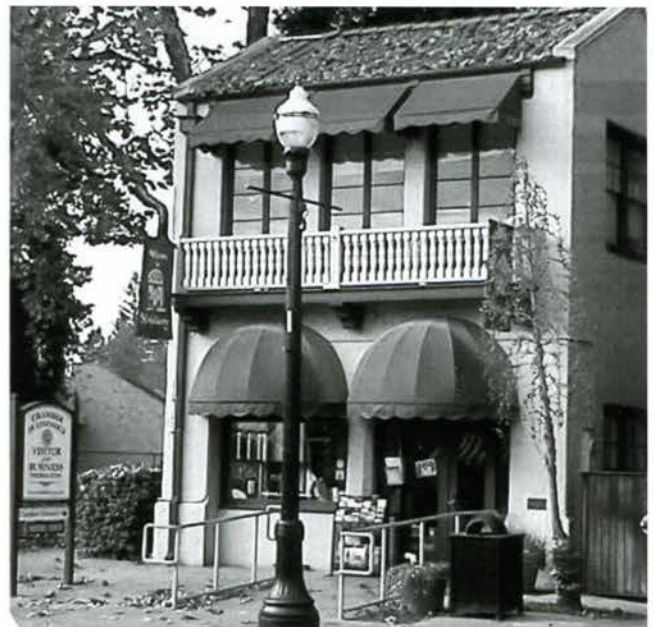
The Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center is still opening the front door to the many visitors who travel to see our beautiful community. But, more than this, we continue to be the voice for business in Healdsburg. We provide business counseling and workshops ranging from writing business plans and how to qualify for business loans, to the use of technology and media. Once known for pancakes and pageants, the Healdsburg Chamber is becoming better known for our role in the economic development and viability of our community.

One area of attention is workforce development. Starting as early as Junior High, our work with the Mike Hauser Algebra Academy links local businesses with youth to help students understand the need for mathematics in everyday business situations. Chamber members are often called upon to mentor students and to make presentations at the high school, passing on the local legacy of hard work and entrepreneurship.

The Chamber staff is keenly aware of the challenges facing young business people today and have established Healdsburg Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, otherwise known as HYPE, just for this group. Along with a monthly meeting and speaker series, HYPE provides networking and socializing opportunities for the forty and under demographic.

The Chamber is also called upon to help manage the Healdsburg Tourism Improvement District. This benefit assessment district made up of local lodging properties is the marketing arm for Healdsburg. The Chamber manages their books, keeps agendas and meeting minutes and oversees contracts for the district.

Balancing the needs of residents and the needs of visitors seems complicated, however it can be simplified by remembering that the things that we locals love about Healdsburg are the same things that our visitors enjoy as well. Preserving our small-town qualities, like the beauty of our surroundings, and friendliness of our residents, are values that the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center really strives to protect, while assuring that we are an economically viable and sustainable community as well. This message is shared each day by the many volunteers who staff our Visitors Center. Their love of Healdsburg and their excitement about sharing our home with the rest of the world is evident with each encounter.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce office, 2017

The Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce will continue to play a vital role in the City of Healdsburg. We are probably not going to revive pancake breakfasts or Miss Healdsburg pageants, but we are going to continue to be the best cheerleader for Healdsburg.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Concert in the Plaza, 1901

Music in the Plaza

*by June Maher Smith, 2000
updated by Holly Hoods, 2017*

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

Early Healdsburg Bands

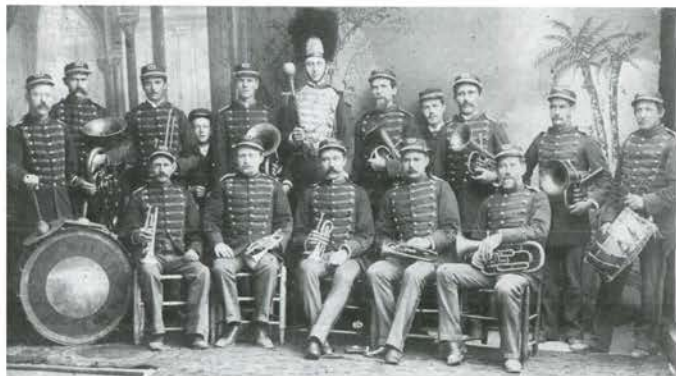
The Russian River Brass Band was the first organized band here. John S. Williams, who came to Healdsburg as a young lad, noted in his "Pioneer Recollections" that he remembered hearing that band in the late 1850s. The conductor was James E. Fenno, a jeweler and watchmaker by trade. It is doubtful this band played in the Plaza, as back then the block donated to the City by Harmon Heald was still covered with oak and madrone trees. It was used

mostly as a parking lot for wagons since there were no fountains, benches or bandstands.

The Russian River Brass Band was still in existence in 1866 when Professor Carl V. Wilmot became the conductor. Prior to moving here, he had been with the Presidio Regimental Brass Band.

In 1873, the native trees were cleared from the Plaza and pines, fir and eucalyptus were planted. (This was just the first of the various Plaza landscaping projects over the years, but that's another

story.) About five years later, the bell tower and the first bandstand were built.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Sotoyome Band, c.1884

By the mid-1880s the Russian River Brass Band must have disbanded, for another group, the Sotoyome Band, was formed by some of the same musicians. In March 1888, this new band gave an open-air concert in the Plaza, the beginning of a series of Saturday night concerts that year. In 1891, Professor O.C. Smith moved from Fresno to conduct the Sotoyome Band. According to the *Sonoma County Tribune*, Smith was “the leading cornet soloist on the Pacific slope.” Also in that year, the City fathers granted the band the privilege of erecting a bandstand adjoining the bell tower and furnishing benches for the audience’s comfort. Weekly Saturday evening band concerts started in May that year.

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

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

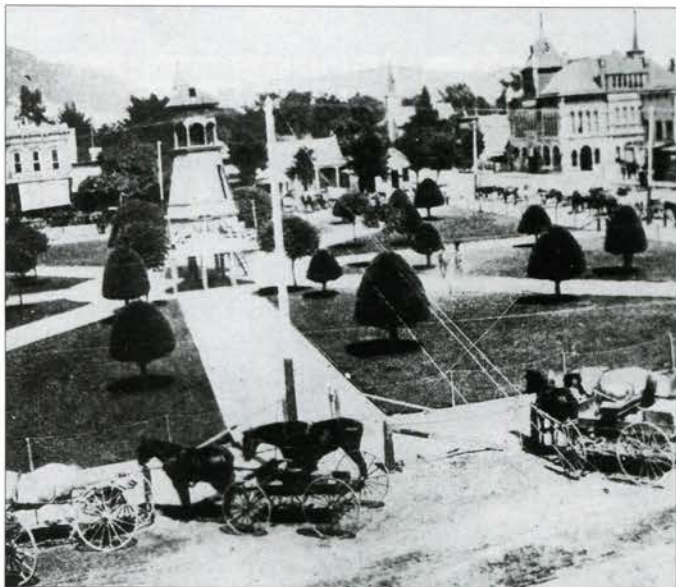


Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Sotoyome Band, c.1900

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

Not even an earthquake could stop the Saturday night concerts in the Plaza. Two months after the disastrous 1906 quake, the band played two numbers by Healdsburg composers: “The Gaiety Girl March” by Will L. Livernash and a march-song, “The True Sons of ’49,” words by Arthur Price and music by Louis Meyer. The latter was dedicated to the San Francisco earthquake and fire sufferers.

The band was reorganized in 1916 as the Healdsburg Brass Band. Ed Pryor was the director and there were 19 other members. Three of them had played in the previous brass band: John Fay, Dave Bane and Temple Bailhache. This group also played for people living out on the coast. Band members



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Plaza with a newly constructed bandstand attached to the existing bell tower, 1892

loaded their children and instruments into a large wagon and spent a couple of summer weeks camping at various spots along the ocean. In the evenings, they would give a concert in one of the small coastal towns.

Wartime Concerts

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

In the late 1920s, the Lytton Boys' Band (Salvation Army Band) was providing the Saturday night music. During the 4th of July weekend in 1927, they played six concerts over three days. Major Taylor conducted the band, which continued playing on Saturday nights for several years, using Healdsburg High School students to fill out their numbers. Guerdon Miller remembers playing with them in the mid-1930s. In addition to being present for the Plaza concerts, Guerdon says that they had to attend two weekly rehearsals in the gymnasium at the Lytton Home. Their weekly "salary" totaled 10 cents—a whole dime to spend on an ice cream cone.



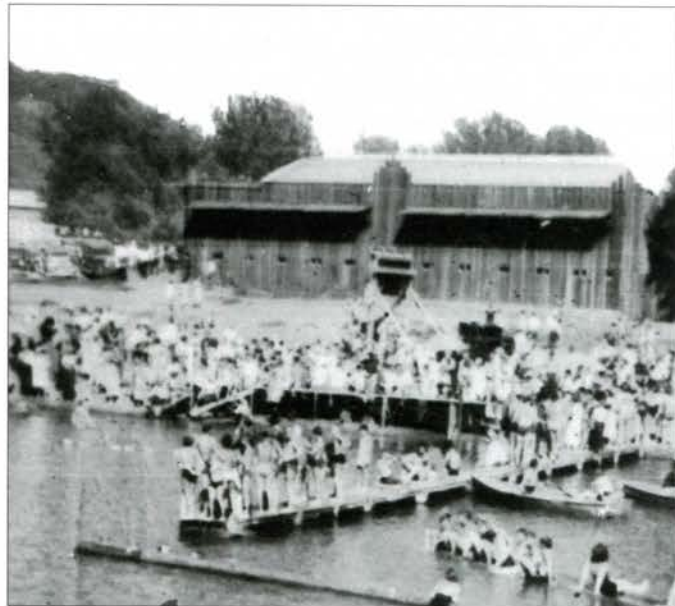
Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Lytton Springs Band, 1930s

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

Owen Sweeten Revives the Concerts

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

Museum member Ben Madison recalled the kindness of Conductor Sweeten, who gave him a small baton of his own to "guest conduct" when Ben was a youngster in the 1930s. The child's baton is part of the Museum collection.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
In 1930s Healdsburg, Sweeten opened his "River Garden" dance and roller skating pavilion at what was called "Merryland" Beach, now Memorial Beach

The Healdsburg Municipal Band concerts he directed not only featured band music, they also starred local talent, both young and old, contests and other diversions, such as bathing beauties. They drew large crowds to the Plaza on Saturday nights.

The *Tribune* reported that "close to 4,000 people attended the July 5th concert in 1941." At a concert the following month, bottles of wine donated by Italian Swiss Colony were given to the three oldest people in the crowd and the one from the farthest distance. Patriotism was building in this last peacetime year: the "Star-Spangled Banner" was played at the beginning and end of each concert.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Owen Sweeten with the Municipal Band, 1941

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



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Band Concert in the Plaza, Owen Sweeten, Conductor, 1937

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

The old bell tower, bandstand and fountain are gone and the gazebo on the east side of the Plaza now serves as the stage for various groups who fill the Plaza with all sorts of music. In 1982, the Healdsburg Community Band was founded by Lew Sbrana and Doug and Judy Price. Some of the original members included: Larry and Judy Price on trombone, Milt

Brandt and Guerdon Miller on drums, Tony Heitz on trumpet, Jason DeStefano a high school senior, on trumpet, and Doug Pile, who still is a member, on clarinet. Lew Sbrana was the first conductor. In 1987, the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce hosted a free weekday noontime concert in the Plaza. The "Picnic in the Plaza" series grew and offered nine concerts, including Elmo and the Hi-Rise Hillbillies, Hi-Jinks and the Community Band on summer Sunday afternoons. The summer concerts continued in 1995 as "A World of Music."

Plaza Concerts Move to Tuesdays

In 2004, a new format was introduced for the Summer Music Series, "Tuesdays in the Plaza!" Lynn Woznicki, C.E.O. of the Healdsburg Area Chamber of Commerce, championed the idea of changing the traditional Sunday afternoon concerts to Tuesday evenings. She gained support from merchants, locals and the Healdsburg Certified Farmers' Market, hoping to create a more neighborly gathering at a cooler time of day, midweek. Concerts have included Stompy Jones, the Sorentinos and Norton Buffalo.

Today the concerts are funded entirely by sponsors and private donors. Record crowds attest to the ongoing popularity of the Tuesday format. Healdsburg is likely to enjoy many more years of music in the Plaza, a longstanding local tradition.

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Owen Sweeten Scrapbook at Healdsburg Museum.

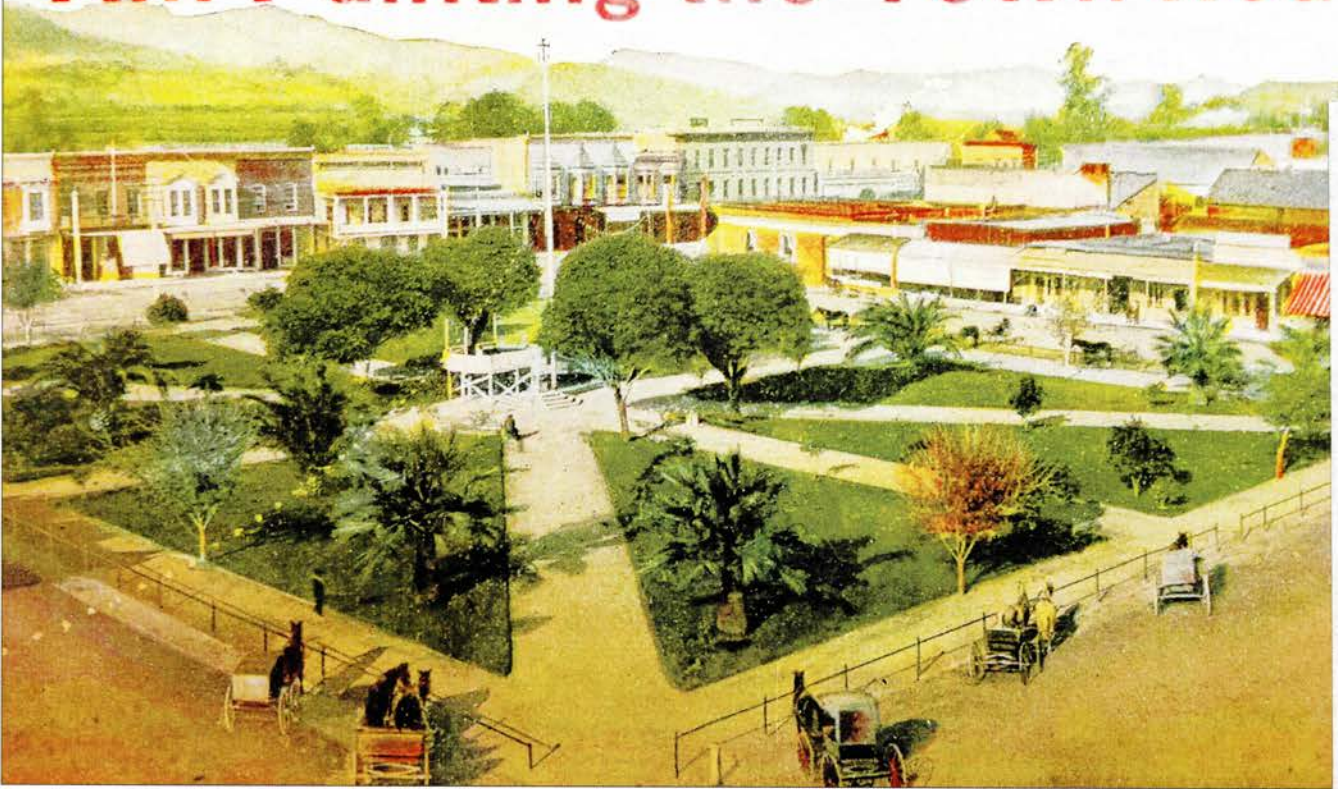
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The Plaza, Healdsburg, Cal.

Am Painting the Town Red



Healdsburg Plaza postcard, c.1904

Source: Healdsburg Museum Collec



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