



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society

HEALDSBURG'S

PIONEERS

Part One

In This Issue

Welcome to our first in a series issue of the *Russian River Recorder* focused on "Healdsburg's Pioneers." Once a year we will publish an issue filled with profiles of the people who settled and built our town in its first twenty years, 1857 to 1877. Some of the names may be familiar; some will be less well known. In either case, we think you'll discover new and interesting stories about each of them.

Executive Director/Curator Holly Hoods establishes the historic context of this era with the appropriately named article, "Life in Pioneer Healdsburg." This vivid description of a small town's early years quickly dispels any romantic notions regarding the realities of pioneer life.

We happily welcome several first-time contributors to our publication. Not surprisingly, all of them are talented ancestral detectives. For several years, Museum volunteer Wayne Lindahl has provided our organization with valuable genealogical research. He has produced a comprehensive piece about leading citizen Ransom Powell, his many achievements...and his many wives! As the family historian, Jean Taeuffer has extensively researched and written about the eventful life of her great-great-grandmother, Agnes Call/Vanderwalker Congleton Wilson. Christopher

Cardiff contributed an interesting profile of his great-great grandfather, the prominent pioneer Healdsburg merchant Franz Conrad Rudolph Hertel. Great-granddaughter Lynda Taylor Pheasant has written a compelling "genealogy of a house" by revealing the interconnected early residents of the Mary Thistle cottage.

The Museum staff writers have each produced a new piece for this issue. Office Manager and avid historical researcher Jane Bonham, who can trace her own Bonham roots to the founding years of Healdsburg, provided additional context with her piece on Healdsburg's pioneer builders. Holly Hoods presented the unusual journey of the first African-American residents of Healdsburg, the Martha and William Scott family. Museum Intern Lauren Carriere conducted extensive biographical research on the William H. and Jane Gray Kelley family while researching one of their Healdsburg homes. The presence of a whaling captain in Healdsburg will probably come as a surprise to many.

We hope you find this to be a tantalizing preview of the many pioneers to come.

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



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The Official Publication of the

HEALDSBURG MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

“Just off the corner where the Bank of Healdsburg is, with only space for a wagon to pass, was the large madrone tree which everyone of those early times will remember. Its spreading branches reached well across the street and, like great arms, held over the place a grateful umbrella of evergreen coolness.” Healdsburg Tribune, March 26, 1908

Life in Pioneer Healdsburg

by Holly Hoods

excerpted from Russian River Recorder, Summer 2007

Any romantic notions of life in “pioneer days” like the 1908 description of the town’s legendary madrone tree provided in the caption above are quickly dispelled with this vivid description of Healdsburg in its earliest days.

Adventurers, Rowdies and Gamblers

The 1857 town of Healdsburg had aspirations, if few pretensions. Bars and dance halls dotted the west side of West Street (Healdsburg Avenue), while churches encircled the plaza. W.T. Heald later

described the social composition of the pioneer community of Healdsburg:

“Besides the Indians ... there were two classes of people here who made up the population of the town ... The one class consisted of those who had

come to find themselves homes and to establish a civilized community. The other was composed of adventurers, rowdies, and gamblers. Cowboys, some of them Americans, some Indian, some Spanish ... would flock into town and spend their time in gambling and carousing for weeks at a time. Dances would be given at which these would be brought into contact with the young men and women of the town. Mothers would go and take their knitting and knit while their children danced."

It was impossible in a community with a Euro-American population of 500 for the respectable and the rowdy elements to avoid rubbing elbows. Prostitutes solicited right out in the open. Their drunken street and bar brawls were deplored by the virtuous townspeople, but there was little they could do about it except write indignant letters to the editor, once the first newspaper was established by Alexander J. Cox in 1860. Alcohol and guns also made a combustible combination when many men drank in the saloons and routinely carried firearms.

In such a small town, there were no "bad" neighborhoods—for the first 20 years. The commercial and the residential sections were, in fact, intermingled in the original town. By the 1870s, however, a nefarious neighborhood was well established. The "disreputable district" of bars and brothels was located north of town, on what is today the west side of Healdsburg Avenue between Piper and Grant Streets.

The Slough and the Tan Yard

A tan yard (for tanning leather) was located between Center and East Streets near the intersection of the two with Piper Street. Erected before any ordinances were envisioned, this business emitted a pungent odor that wafted for blocks. Several early residents who recalled the pioneer town commented on the stench of the tan yard because of the decomposing animal carcasses and piles of waiting deer and cow hides. This area was also near the slough, which acted as the town dump. Early resident Julius Myron Alexander later vividly recalled the setting:

"The extension of Center Street, now between North and Piper Streets, was a quagmire of slough water, frogs and tadpoles. Out of the mud grew reeds, cat tails and willows. Into it was dumped the

refuse of a pioneer town: old pack saddles, ox yokes, demijohns, woolen shirts, bullet molds, cowhide boots, sun bonnets and straw tick mattresses. Across this Slough of Despond was ... a long wooden footbridge ... connecting the madrone groves of the Knaack foothills [Johnson, Lincoln, Sherman and Grant Streets] with the metropolitan life of West Street."

To fight fires in the pioneer town, a Hook and Ladder Company was established in 1858 with Henry Lee as foreman. Supported through the subscriptions of its members, this fire brigade was primarily a bucket brigade. They were severely hindered by the lack of hydrants or piped water in town.

In 1859, a big fire burned most of the wooden buildings downtown. It was fortunate that Ed Rathburn's brick building finally stopped the spread of the flames, since most of the fire brigade's equipment was also burned in the fire. The Hook and Ladder Company then disbanded (for the time being). Most of the buildings were subsequently rebuilt.

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Healdsburg's Earliest Pioneer Builders

by Jane Bonham

The First Buildings

Harmon Heald was the first pioneer from the east to settle along the heavily traveled path between San Francisco and the northern gold mines. He planted grain and, with the sale of that grain, built a small cabin in 1851 and a store in 1852. It was likely constructed with wood from March's Mill and helping hands from his brothers.

The young Heald men brought experience from Missouri for the building and running of the mill. Harmon's older brother, Samuel, helped William March complete the region's first grist and saw mill on a creek in the coastal hills. Harmon's younger brother Thomas found employment overseeing the sawing operations.

The next two buildings were established near Heald's store. The second was built by the blacksmith, Mr. Morse. (Partners William Dodge and William Dow later purchased Morse's shop.) In 1855 a woodworker, August Knaak, set up a wagon repair shop next door. These buildings, like those of the incoming settlers who followed, were small, rectangular boxes with a simple gable roofs, later added-on as needs arose.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Early West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) buildings
Early businesses like these soon would soon be sold and torn
down for larger, better built structures like the future
Sotoyome Hotel.*

The Growing Population

The Heald family played a significant role in populating the emerging settlement. Harmon's younger brother Jacob purchased land from David

Hopper, creating the first farm in the immediate vicinity. Thomas also bought a place down river. There he planted an orchard with trees provided by early settler Cyrus Alexander. More than once, Samuel travelled back to Missouri, enticing friends and former neighbors with descriptions of the bountiful, weather-friendly valley. Those who answered the call included family names some will still recognize: Patton, Espey, Bledsoe, Pool, Freshower.

But let none think that there were not already many other history makers moving about Healdsburg at that early date.—W.T. Heald, family historian

Among the earliest of the "other history makers" was Heald's boyhood friend Thomas Hudson. When he and his wife first arrived, they occupied the rear of Heald's store. They helped to enlarge the store and later purchased it.

In 1852, Henry M. Wilson joined the group. Henry also "kept store" at Heald's Station, until he was able to establish his own retail store. He also created the first ferry service on the river in 1853.

In that same year, T.A. Shaw married Sarah Heald, the only sister to accompany the brothers to California. After the wedding, Shaw bought young Jacob Heald's farm and, being a skillful builder himself, built a sturdy family home. After the birth of their first child, the couple left the area for mining in Tuolumne County. Returning, they sold their farm to Jerome Hobson and purchased a lot in Healdsburg. Later, they sold out and moved to Cloverdale.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

*Lindsay Carson's ranch house at 641 West Street
(Healdsburg Avenue) still stands today.*

Ranchers and farmers outside of Harmon's settlement showed a preference for starkly simple two-story lodgings like those built by Lindsay Carson in 1855.

Uncertainty about Ownership

When the territory changed hands from Mexico to the United States, some pioneers expected the previous land holders' grants would be voided and the land would be awarded to those who had settled and held it. This scenario had been the general rule in the expansion from the East Coast to the West, however, title to the land grants had been made under the Spanish and Mexican governments.

The question was brought to the courts. Harmon Heald and others believed the ruling would favor the Fitch family holdings and other local grants in Dry Creek Valley. Serious settlement expansion would need to wait until the matter was resolved.

To the Highest Bidder, the Spoils

While the Fitch grant was confirmed in 1856, the court challenge proved costly and there were property taxes to be paid. The auctions began. As in any auction, the highest bidder wins. Nothing prevented a settler's home and land from being sold.

Some were able to meet the purchase price. Jacob Heald, for example, paid the Fitch family \$468 for the title to his ranch.

Some who were willing to buy back their settlement were not financially able; some were unwilling. These "squatters" defied the court's decision. When the sheriff mobilized a large posse to begin evictions, they were met by armed men and women. The state militia was called in: tensions rose, shots were fired, one man died. Some squatters were roughly evicted; their homes and structures burned. Finally, this action encouraged others to negotiate and not to resist. Regardless of the inevitable, it was a bitter time called the Squatters' War.

Subsequently, most of the expanding township entered into a time of real estate profits and expansive property development.

Wheeling and Dealing

In 1856, Harmon bought three parcels of land. Surprisingly, the first parcel he purchased was not where his cabin stood nor was it included in the town plat he later created.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Harmon's Plat, the heart of the new town, is labeled "Original Town" in the lower left section of the map. Sections like "Matheson Annex" directly to the east and "Hudson's Addition" along the river were established at the same time. See how much Healdsburg grew in twenty years.

The 100 acres he purchased from the Fitch heirs for \$200 had already been settled by Ridley Ross and Joseph Feese. What he bought at auction in June, Heald sold back to Ross in September for \$250. That same day, Ridley sold the south half of the property to Joseph for \$225 (who remained there the rest of his life.) Two months later, Ridley Ross sold

his remaining half to John Dunne for \$500, who in turn sold it to John Flack for \$3,000 two years later.

By the end of 1856, Harmon Heald purchased two more parcels, a total of 65 additional acres, from his brothers-in-law Aquilla Aull and George Espey and designated the town plat. Brother Thomas left his farm at that time to join Harmon as counselor, assistant and "attorney in fact."

With greater confidence, at last, others purchased and developed properties, inside and outside of the Heald city perimeter, now confident of their holdings. With greater confidence, larger buildings were erected.

In 1856, James Mead, a carpenter by trade, built a Greek Revival residence for his family south of the heart of the town; no doubt an advertisement for his skills, considering it still stands today. (What might James think of a seven-figure price tag?)



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Mason Street residence built by carpenter James Mead, 1856.

About the same time, prominent San Franciscan Roderick Matheson purchased 300 acres east of Heald's parcel and built a stately two-story home for his family in 1857.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Originally the home of Colonel Matheson, built in the 1850s, it became the Jirah Luce home pictured here, c.1893.

Establishing a Town

In March 1857, the town plat was formally recorded and immediately Harmon sold 16 lots to eight settlers who already had houses in the town: August Knaak, William Dodge (who purchased Morse's shop in partnership with William Dow), C.W. Hooper, Charles Mitchell, Benjamin Bonham, Johnston Ireland, Henry Walsworth and John Domes.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Sotoyome House sometimes called Sotoyome Hotel and, at one time, The Tourist Hotel on West Street (Healdsburg Avenue), 1873.

Jacob and Thomas Heald bought several properties and erected buildings in the new town. Jacob sold his ranch for \$2,500, initially buying two lots. In May, he joined John Raney and together they purchased a lot from August Knaak who rebuilt his shop further north. On the site of the old blacksmith and woodworking shop, Jacob and John built the first

hotel in Heald's town. Within a few years the building burned down and the partnership dissolved. Undeterred, John Raney built the Sotoyome Hotel on the same site.

Thomas Heald also built several buildings, starting in 1857. The first he built for his business, a furniture store, was at the corner of West and Powell Streets (Healdsburg Avenue and Plaza Street). It was a two-story structure, with his household merchandise downstairs and room upstairs for meetings of the Sons of Temperance. He soon sold it to the Masons in order to build a better, larger building a few doors to the south. Again, his store occupied downstairs and the temperance league (now named Knights of Templar) was lodged upstairs.

Thomas's sister-in-law, Emelie Middleton, secured a lot in the summer of 1858. Her husband, William, was an architect and built a number of buildings in Healdsburg, presumably including the Middleton residence.

In 1858, G.H. Peterson and B.F. Tucker moved from San Francisco to the new town. They purchased a lot where "one of the principal mercantile houses" was built. Their business, "Peterson and Tucker—Dealers in Groceries and Provisions, Hardware, Liquors, Clothing," was conducted across from the Plaza.

Peterson and Tucker dealt considerably in property outside of the original plat. (Tucker Street was later named for B.F. Tucker.) The partnership was dissolved by mutual consent in 1866.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Healdsburg's first brick building, 1858.

All too soon, it became apparent to the citizens of Healdsburg that wooden buildings were vulnerable to fire. Bricks provided a ready answer. Between 1858 and 1860, E. Rathburn, a pioneer carpenter and brick mason, bought properties and

built many of the earliest brick structures, including the McManus store along West Street (Healdsburg Avenue's 300 block).

In 1857 Mitchell and Hooper established a partnership and built a frame building. In 1858, they built the brick Daly building. After that, rather than build, they established a general merchandise store on the east side of West Street north of Powell Street and supplied building materials for the rapidly growing new town.

Historical Accuracy

Since much of the history is handed down from the memories of those who were witnesses, or from those who heard about it later, there are bound to be differences in the telling. In his *History of the Heald Family*, for example, W.T. Heald passed along information from Logan Tombs, that Mr. Rathburn built the main portion of the John Daly building. Later, in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake, the newspapers published "a tangle" between old timers regarding just who had built the first brick building. This "tangle" culminated in a bet that Charley Mitchell's building was the first.

To untangle the debate, Mitchell responded in the May 26, 1906, *Healdsburg Enterprise*: "In 1858 [Hooper and I] built the corner brick structure known as the Daly building, the *second* brick building in the town. You pioneers had better have a reunion and we will have a general pow wow over this affair. Now if J.S. Williams, who had an article [that the Daly was first], betting buttermilk against vinegar on a ten to one shot, will call here and pay his bet, we will be pleased."

Good humor in hard times is a gift.

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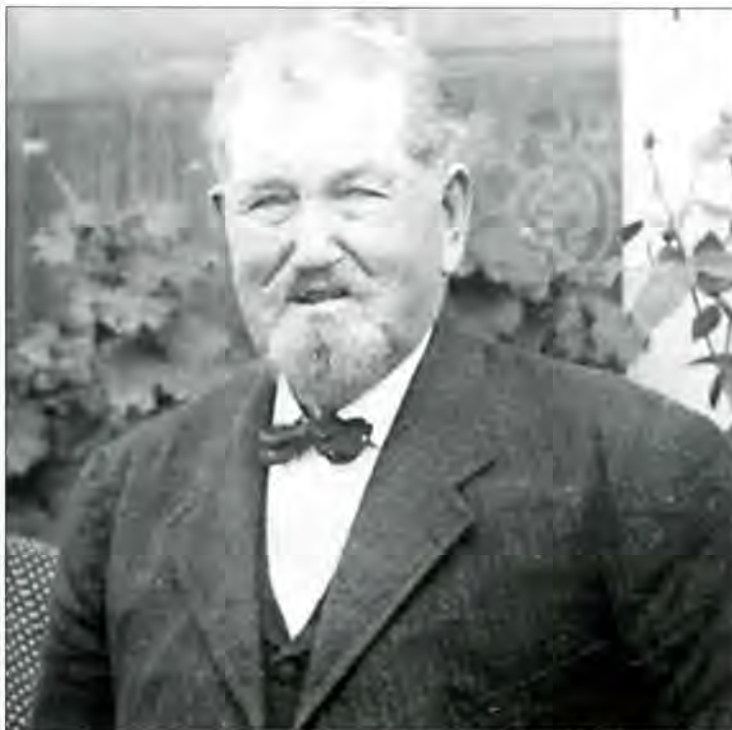
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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Ransom Powell

Ransom Powell: A Man for His Time

by Wayne Lindahl

Ransom Powell was one of Healdsburg's wealthiest and most influential pioneers. Arriving in Healdsburg just as the town was beginning to form, Powell initially continued his career as a storekeeper, however, he did not limit himself to the retail trade for long. A highly successful entrepreneur, Powell always seemed to have his finger on the pulse of the community's needs. While he realized his greatest financial success buying/selling real estate and, at times, owned more property than anyone in the area, Powell also became involved in the development of retailing, agriculture, mining, banking and politics.

Powell also had the distinction of three roadways (Powell Street, Powell Avenue and Powell Court) and a theater (Powell's Theater) simultaneously named for him.

Ransom Powell was born in Springfield, Robertson County, Tennessee on January 11, 1824, to Reuben and Nancy (Ethridge) Powell. Both of his parents were born and raised in North Carolina. His mother died about 1824, possibly due to childbirth complications. She was 36 years old. Powell was the seventh of twelve children born to his father; seven by his first wife and five by his second.

Powell was four years old when the family moved to Franklin County, Illinois, where his father died three years later. After his father's death, Powell lived with his stepmother for three years. At the age of ten, he went to Kentucky where he began a three-year apprenticeship in the tailor's trade.

Powell next moved further west to Howard County, Missouri, and opened his own tailor shop. He continued in the tailoring business until the start of the Mexican-American War. With the outbreak of the war, he enlisted in Company G of Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan's 1st Regiment of Missouri Mounted Volunteers. In 1846 he went to Mexico, going through Santa Fe and El Paso, to Buena Vista, where Colonel Doniphan and his men joined General Taylor a few days after the battle at Buena Vista. On the way, Powell and his comrades took part in a number of Indian skirmishes. About 18 miles from Chihuahua they met a force of 7,000 thousand Mexicans, which their little band of 1,000, only 600 of them Americans, fought and conquered.

At the end of his term of service in 1847, which was also the close of the war, Powell took the company's band of horses back to Howard County. There, for a short time, he was engaged in business in the town of New Franklin.

The following year in Howard County, on June 20, 1848, Powell married Elizabeth Huls, the daughter of James Huls and Agatha (Calloway) Huls. Elizabeth was born about 1827 in Clark County, Kentucky. She also came from a large family, having two sisters and an additional eight half-siblings from her father's first marriage.

The discovery of gold in California brought Powell across the plains in 1849, arriving in September at Coloma. He mined for gold on the American River until the rains set in, making further mining difficult. Powell left for Sacramento and engaged in hauling freight from that city to the mines. On one load alone, he cleared \$1,100! Powell continued in the freighting business throughout the winter. The following summer, he returned to Howard County where he had left his family, making the journey by way of the Isthmus of Panama.

In 1851, following his return to Missouri, Powell engaged in the dry-goods business. In 1852 he sold his interests in Missouri and again crossed the plains to the west with his wife and young son, George Lorin "Lory" Powell, who was born in Howard County on October 2, 1851. The arduous trip across the plains resulted in the death of Powell's wife. Completing the journey with his young son, Powell settled on the Sacramento River, opening a lumber yard in what is now Clarksburg and lived there for several years.

It was there, in 1853, that Powell married his second wife, Frances M. Ware. He and Frances had no children. Frances died on May 13, 1859, after they had moved in 1856 to Sonoma County, settling in and around Healdsburg.

When Powell arrived, Healdsburg was just beginning to develop as a community. In 1852, the Healdsburg area population was just a few squatter families and about 100 native Americans. Harmon Heald had built a small squatter's cabin in 1851. In 1856 Heald purchased land at Josefa Fitch's land auctions in what is now downtown Healdsburg.

After the death of his second wife, but before 1860, Powell married again. Mary VanCapp born in

Arkansas on July 10, 1844, was his third wife. This time the wedding took place in Sonoma County.

Powell and Mary had at least three children. Perry Powell was born before 1860 and died before 1870. He was buried in Oak Mound Cemetery. John Davidson Powell was born in October 1862 in Healdsburg. John spent his childhood in Healdsburg and later moved to Sacramento where he practiced as a dentist. He married Mary Elizabeth "Mamie" Condryn on April 31, 1891. They had one son, Loring Davidson Powell on September 29, 1892. John died at the age of 51 on April 14, 1914, in Alameda County. The third child of Powell and Mary was Annette "Nettie" Powell, born in Healdsburg on August 8, 1871. Nettie married Thomas Howell Roscoe in the early 1890s and had three children: Alice P. Roscoe, born October 21, 1895, in Healdsburg; Ransome Alexander Roscoe, born September 14, 1901, in Healdsburg and Thomas B. Roscoe, born July 9, 1912, in Alameda County.

For his first three years in Healdsburg, Powell was in partnership with John McManus, a childhood friend from Missouri, in an extensive mercantile business. After selling his interest in the store, Powell turned his attention to real estate, buying and selling land throughout the county. It is believed that, at times, he owned more property than any other person in the area.



Source: ancestry.com

Ransom Powell and son George Lorin "Lory," 1861

Powell's third wife Mary died on November 14, 1871. Shortly after her death, Powell's oldest son, Lory, hired a friend, Jimmy Dunn, for \$300 to

kill his father. At the last moment, Dunn exposed the scheme to Powell. It seems that Lory wanted his inheritance right away. Powell, through friends, gave his son \$500, had him taken to Sacramento and put on the next train going east. (Lory apparently straightened out his life after that affair. He ultimately settled in Oklahoma to raise a family where ironically, he ran for sheriff of Caddo County.)

In September of 1872, Powell sold all of his real estate and most of his personal property in Sonoma County and announced his intention to leave the area and move to either Southern California or Arizona. He ultimately purchased a 2,700-acre ranch in Monterey County for \$5 per acre.

Leaving Sonoma County was not permanent, however, because Powell married again. His fourth wife was Katherine "Kate" Caroline Beeson whom he married on November 17, 1872, in Sonoma County. Kate was born in Sacramento on April 21, 1855, and died at the age of 30 on May 5, 1885, in Healdsburg.

This union produced an infant daughter who was born in Healdsburg on July 18, 1874, and died the same day and one son, Jesse Ransom Powell, born in Healdsburg on May 25, 1877. Jesse, who became a student of medicine at the University of California, passed away at the Healdsburg home of his parents five weeks before his graduation, after ill health forced an end to his studies. A young wife, Katherine Irene "Katie" Powell survived him.

In April of 1873, Powell traded his ranch in Monterey County for property in Healdsburg where he spent his remaining years.

The following years would prove to be a busy and productive time for both Powell and his adopted town. He took on a dizzying array of projects; some for personal gain, others for the benefit of the community.

In 1875 Powell became part owner of the Sotoyome House, then considered the finest hotel in Healdsburg. Powell ultimately sold his portion to his partner John Bailhache for an undisclosed amount approximately one year later.

Powell also undertook an extensive renovation of his in-town residence on North Street (now Camellia Inn). He had acquired this property in a trade in July 1872. The sixteen-room house

included elegantly furnished twin parlors separated by folding doors along with a large dining room which opened to a conservatory. The newly appointed kitchen was furnished with all the latest conveniences. As the *Russian River Flag* raved, "Mr. Powell has spared neither pains nor means to finish and furnish his residence in a handsome and complete manner."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Powell's North Street residence on right, 1873

In 1876 Powell also acquired Liberty Hall on Center Street. At the time it was the largest hall and roller skating rink in the county. He quickly orchestrated an extensive renovation of the building, converting it to an elaborate theater. In addition to the required structural improvements, the new configuration included a mezzanine level, an orchestra pit, private viewing boxes, dressing rooms and various storage areas. The new theater could seat up to 500 people. Again, Powell's efforts were described as "sparing no expense." At the time of its opening in early 1877, he also established "special rates...to Church and other local societies wishing to give benefit entertainments" so as to make it affordable for a wide variety of uses and making it "so popular that none need be denied its use." According to the *Russian River Flag*, "To show Mr. Powell the appreciation by the citizens of his public spirit, he has been generally requested to permit the hall to bear his name" and so the building was appropriately renamed "Powell's Theater."

In September of 1877 Powell joined forces with other key Healdsburg businessmen to organize and underwrite a new bank, the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Healdsburg.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Sonoma County pioneers, E. H. Barnes, Ransom Powell, L. A. Norton, and R. H. Warfield (left to right), at Sotoyome Bank, c.1875

In May 1878 Powell established a new saw mill about nine miles west of town on Mill Creek. As with so many of his other enterprises, Powell assumed operational supervision. As a side benefit to the community, Powell also made major improvements to the roadways connecting the mill and town to ease transportation of the material. The business was a success with the saw ultimately reaching a cutting capacity of 8,000 feet of lumber per day. Not surprisingly, this business was named "Powell's Mill." In 1880 Powell sold the business and the saw was subsequently moved to Guerneville.

During this period, Powell was also active in local politics and various community activities. He was one of the founding members of Healdsburg's Sotoyome Masonic Lodge, a very active member of the Odd Fellows Lodge, an elected Healdsburg Board of Trustee for many terms and a Healdsburg representative at Democratic Party Conventions. In 1876, he was selected to be one of the founding members of the Healdsburg Library Association. He served on the committee to establish Healdsburg's first college, the Healdsburg Institute. Powell was also chosen to be part of the committee working with Petaluma on a proposal to separate Sonoma County into two counties, the newer

portion to be called Russian River County. This attempt was ultimately unsuccessful.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Powell Street (Plaza Street) storefronts - Ransom Powell's hardware store, a saloon, Farmers and Mechanics Bank, Sept. 4, 1889. Ransom Powell in wagon

Powell's other real estate/business holdings during this time included various farms and ranches including portions of the original Sotoyome Rancho, a drug store, a local express office, a gas company and a local quicksilver mine.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

George Madeira (back row, right), Ransom Powell and Louisa Madeira "Lulu" Powell (front row, center and right)

In 1887 Powell married for the fifth time. His new wife was Louisa "Lulu" Eleanor Madeira, the daughter of George David Madeira, Sr. and Louisa E (Mitchell) Madeira. Lulu was born in Santa Cruz County on April 9, 1862. In this final

marriage, a daughter was born about 1890, but died soon after.

For about three years, from 1889 until 1892, Powell owned and managed a hardware store in Healdsburg.

After selling the store, he purchased a 50-acre ranch one mile west of Healdsburg on West Grant Street. This was his home until his death. Here, as with every other industry Powell had been interested in from time to time, he gave his whole thought and attention. From a rough, uninteresting tract of land, Powell developed a garden spot with one of the most productive fruit ranches in the county. Peaches, pears, apples and prunes were grown, the last-mentioned fruit yielding 20 tons from 550 trees. With more than 150 different rose varieties planted on the site, the estate was appropriately named "Rose Villa."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Powell's residence, "Rose Villa," still stands at 644 West Grant Street. Photo taken for Sonoma County Trade Journal, c.1905

Powell died at his home in Healdsburg on April 8, 1910, after a very brief illness of only a few hours. He was one of the best-known men of Sonoma County and had reached a ripe old age of 86 years. The funeral, under the auspices of the Masonic lodge of which he was so long a member, took place at his residence near Healdsburg. He was buried in Oak Mound Cemetery alongside many of his family members.

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Source: Christopher Francis Cardiff
Rudolph Hertel

Rudolph Hertel, Immigrant Merchant

by Christopher Francis Cardiff

Christopher Francis Cardiff is named after his grandfather, Francis Westerfeld Hertel, and his great-great-grandfather, Franz Conrad Rudolph Hertel.

During the summer of 1862 in the eastern United States, the Civil War was raging. On June 1, General Robert E. Lee was given his first command, the Army of Northern Virginia. In his first engagement as commanding general, he forced General George B. McClellan to retreat in the Seven Days Battles. Within 90 days of taking command, Lee reversed the role of the Army of Northern Virginia from defending the Confederate capital in Richmond, Virginia, to threatening an attack on the Union capital in Washington, DC.

In the western theater of war, bounded largely by the Mississippi River, the Confederate armies were not so successful. With the exception of Vicksburg, Union forces had captured most of Mississippi, including New Orleans, a port critical to the Confederacy. Lee's ultimate nemesis, General Ulysses S. Grant, played a key role in these victories, defeating the Confederates at the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862.

The western states and territories, however, were virtually untouched by the Civil War. Yet in California's Sonoma County where Rudolph Hertel made his home, a different kind of civil war was underway. Known as the Squatters War, it had its roots in the Mexican-American War of 1848. That war left many land titles in dispute which resulted in "squatters" occupying land to which they did not have a clear, legal title.

On July 15, 1862, Hertel joined a large posse formed to remove the squatters. The Sheriff of Sonoma County and over 200 citizens rode to the home of Cornelius Bice where they were confronted by approximately 40 armed men who refused to disperse or vacate the property. Believing there to be an additional 200 armed men in the vicinity who supported Bice, the Sheriff and his posse backed down, avoiding a pitched battle. Thus, ended the penultimate episode of the Squatters War in Sonoma County.

California Immigration and the Gold Rush

Like many of the posse, Hertel was a leading citizen of Healdsburg, which had been founded just five years earlier in 1857. Harmon Heald, founder of Healdsburg, had been a squatter himself during the early 1850s. It was not until 1856 that the courts resolved the ownership rights of the Rancho Sotoyome, a Mexican land grant to Henry Fitch.

In 1856 Heald purchased several tracts of land from the Fitch family and proceeded to lay out the town of Healdsburg. In March of 1857 he began selling parcels of land to his neighboring squatters at very decent prices (\$15 per lot). In February 1858, Heald sold one of the prime town parcels, across from the central Plaza, to Hertel for \$225.

This did not resolve the squatter problem. In fact, it made only a small dent in it. The Gold Rush had brought tens of thousands to northern California. Many of them failed in their dreams to get rich quick and started farming on land they did not own along the Russian River and the fertile valleys surrounding Healdsburg.

The Squatters War in Sonoma County lasted about seven years, starting in 1856 with the forced auctions of Rancho Sotoyome and ending in 1862 when California Governor Leland Stanford dispatched troops to back up the sheriff and his posse. The military assistance was a response to an affidavit describing the confrontation of July 15. Hertel signed that affidavit, along with many other leading citizens of Healdsburg.

Hertel's Path to Healdsburg

Hertel and his younger brother George arrived in San Francisco sometime between 1852 and 1855. No doubt they were attracted by the same thing as the hordes of other young men immigrating to California at the time. At its peak in 1852, Gold Rush immigration accounted for 67,000 people from the eastern United States and around the world.

There is no record that Hertel attempted any mining. He found a much surer path to wealth by launching his own business. He started in San Francisco in 1855, when, with his brother George as witness, he married Elise Benecke at the German Evangelical Lutheran Church. Two months later, again with his brother as witness, he became a naturalized citizen of the United States. In May of 1857, his first child, named after his brother George,

was born in the brand-new town of Healdsburg. Eight months later, he purchased the Healdsburg property where he built a dry goods store, Hertel's, R. Hertel, Proprietor.

Hertel had several years of experience as a merchant to build upon. He and his younger brothers, Eduard and George, had first immigrated to the United States in 1847, when Hertel was only 21 years old. They landed in Baltimore and spent their first years there. Hertel described himself as a "merchant" in the earliest available immigration record and as a "grocer" in the 1850 census.

German Emigration and the Revolutions of 1848

What drove Hertel and his brothers to leave Germany for the new world? His full name was Franz Conrad Rudolph Hertel and he was born in Lamstedt, Germany, the fifth of seven children. His father, Carl Heinrich Martin Hertel, was the respected pastor of Lamstedt Evangelical Lutheran Church where he had presided as senior pastor since 1820. He married later in life, at the age of 48, to Anna Margaretha Wilhelmina Vier, the daughter of one of his colleagues, the pastor of St. Jorgen. When Pastor Hertel died in 1843, at the age of 74, his son Rudolph was only 17 years old.

Germany was not the single nation then that we know today. In January 1826, Rudolph was born in the Kingdom of Hanover, one of the largest and most influential of the 39 independent, sovereign germanic states. William IV ruled when Rudolph was born; when William died in 1837, he was succeeded by his brother Ernest Augustus while his niece, Victoria, became Queen of England that same year.

Ernest Augustus' reign was not a peaceful one. He threw out the Hanoverian constitution, which no doubt contributed to the widespread political unrest sweeping the germanic states and much of Europe. The unrest erupted into civil war across Europe in the Revolutions of 1848.

However, like the American Civil War a dozen years later, Rudolph and his brothers escaped much of the conflict by emigrating from Hanover in 1847. They became part of the flood of German immigrants to America. Between 1840 and 1880, Germans were the largest group of immigrants, numbering in the millions. This enormous wave of immigration included not only the poor looking for

opportunity, but also the educated and professional classes, especially following the failed Revolutions of 1848. It is not surprising to see the well-educated younger sons of a pastor join this wave.

America, Land of Opportunity

For Hertel, America proved to be the land of opportunity. As agriculture blossomed in and around Healdsburg, Hertel's dry goods store became the foundation of his financial success. Between 1860 and 1870, his net worth increased by a factor of ten from \$3,000 to \$36,000—the equivalent of several hundred thousand dollars today. In 1869 the local paper reported that he had sold his stock of goods and rented his buildings so that he and his family could “tour for a year or more to the Eastern States and Europe.” His two surviving children, Herman Rudolph and Helena Elise, were eight and six years old at the time.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Hertel's store (center left) on West Street (Healdsburg Avenue), c.1860

Upon returning from his travels Hertel apparently went back into business before selling his buildings and closing his doors again in 1877. He continued in the role of community leader during this time, petitioning the Healdsburg Board of Trustees to widen one of the main streets and serving as a deacon in the First Presbyterian Church. As one historian described him, “Mr. Hertel was a man well loved and he was a great lover of children. Good natured and friendly, a natural sportsman, he was often provided his breakfast from quail killed by himself in the Plaza.”

In 1881 he sold his home in Healdsburg and he and his wife Elise moved in with their son Hermann in San Francisco, where he described his profession as “capitalist.” Hermann worked as a stock clerk for Levi Strauss Co. In 1887, Hermann married Emma Westerfeld and moved to Pasadena

in southern California. There he followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a community leader and establishing Hertel's Department Store, a fixture in Pasadena for almost ninety years.

Hermann's sister Helena married James Shearman in 1885 and they blessed Hertel and Elise with their first grandchild, Benjamin Roth Shearman, in 1886. While Hertel was to see the births of his next three grandchildren, Anita Marion Hertel in 1888, Francis Hertel Shearman in 1889 and Elmer Louis Hertel in 1889, Elise was not. She died in 1887, shortly after Hermann's wedding.

Hertel grieved deeply for his departed wife. In 1889 he helped refurbish the Oak Mound Cemetery in Healdsburg where she was buried, painting and gilding the fountain. He fell into a deep depression.

In 1890, after making final arrangements with a lawyer, he took his own life at the age of 65.

Rudolph Hertel's Legacy

Hertel left behind an extensive legacy. As an entrepreneur in the wake of the Gold Rush he helped found and build the community of Healdsburg that continues to thrive more than 150 years later.

The training and experience he provided his son Hermann were the foundational building blocks Hermann used in turn to launch Hertel's Department Store and become an important and respected figure in building the community of Pasadena in its early years.

The fortune Hertel bequeathed his children provided much of the capital to accelerate the growth of Hermann's business.

It is easy to trace Hertel's legacy to the next generations as well. His granddaughter Minna Ida, born just a year after Hertel's death, became an office manager at Hertel's Department Store for decades and died a very successful businesswoman. His youngest grandson, Francis Westerfeld, became a community builder in his turn. As a young geologist he helped turn the sleepy town of Ventura into an oil boom town, earning him the nickname “Mr. Ventura Oil.”

Immigrant, merchant, entrepreneur, pioneer, community builder, capitalist, brother, husband, father, grandfather: the legacy of Rudolph Hertel continues to stretch across the generations.

Agnes Vanderwalker Call Congleton Wilson: Minnesota Girl Finds Her Life in Healdsburg

by Jean Taeuffer

My great-great-grandmother began her life on February 14, 1861, in the tiny snowbound village of Moscow, Minnesota, as Agnes Vanderwalker. Sadly, her mother, Clarinda Stokes Vanderwalker, died in childbirth, leaving her father, Isaac Vanderwalker, with six young children. When the Civil War broke out two months later, Isaac decided it would be best to place the infant in the care of a local couple, John and Mary Call, who wanted to expand their small family.

Agnes' early years were spent in the village of Lansing, Minnesota, where the Call family lived and attended services at the Methodist Episcopalian (M.E.) Church. Her adopted father, John Call, operated a shoe store that offered boots and shoes as well as custom work.

California, Land of Opportunity

The lure of the life in the West soon became irresistible to the Calls. Perhaps it was the bitter cold Minnesota winters or the limited opportunities in the small town that spurred them to leave. No sooner was the transcontinental railroad extended to San Francisco Bay in November 1869 than the little family was on a train west. Years later, Agnes would tell her daughter, Helen Wilson, that, on the way to California, the train was stopped and boarded by a group of American Indians. Mary Call was so scared that she pushed nine-year-old Agnes under the seat and covered her with a pillowcase. The Indians exited the train without incident, but it was an exciting experience that Agnes would never forget.

By early 1870, little Agnes was attending school in Healdsburg and her father John had set up a new boot shop next door to Hertel's store on the west side of the Plaza. Things went well for the family and by November 1871 John Call opened a new shoe shop in the Odd Fellows lot on the south side of the Plaza, next door to the Lockwood & VanSlyke bookstore.

Meanwhile, Agnes was fitting in well at school in her new town. In the "programme" presented by the Healdsburg Public Schools in 1875,

14-year-old Agnes gave a presentation called "Young Curiosity Shop." Around that same time a missionary school was being held at the home of Mrs. Hugh McLeod, called the "Busy Bee Society." Children of various Christian faiths were provided instruction in the manufacture of fancy goods in addition to moral guidance. This group put on a fair at the Presbyterian Plaza Church in 1876 where they sold goods they had made to raise funds. Entertainment was also provided and 15-year-old Agnes Call, along with three of her chums, Misses Libbie Jewel, Lizzie Smith and Ella Laymance, known collectively as "The Country Cousins," provided a narration.



Source: Jean Taeuffer

Agnes Vanderwalker Call Congleton Wilson, c.1899

Busy Year in Healdsburg Society

Agnes Call spent 1877 in a whirl of Healdsburg Society. That year witnessed a variety of festive community events. In February, 16-year-old Agnes enjoyed a well-attended soiree at the elegant

Oakwood Villa located just southeast of Healdsburg on the road to Windsor. The 47-acre estate sat on an elevation providing views of Fitch Mountain, Mount St. Helena, the Russian River and the town of Healdsburg. The party was held in the ten-room house which boasted all the modern conveniences, including hot and cold running water. The attendees enjoyed waltzing to the music provided by the Sotoyome String Band before partaking of coffee, cakes, fruits, nuts and candies.

Lest this type of foray into society go to Agnes' head, in March 1877 she became one of the 28 charter members of the Charity Temple, No. 14, lodge of Juvenile Templars. Membership required a pledge of "abstinence from malt liquors, wine and cider as beverages, the use of tobacco and from all profanity." The lodge was an offshoot of the International Organization of Good Templars (IOGT), a group that advocated an alcohol-free life. At the first meeting of the Healdsburg chapter, Agnes was elected to serve on the Executive Committee.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Knighthood Tournament

At the 1877 May Day celebration hosted by the Healdsburg Grange Association, "King Godfrey," played by Captain L.A. Norton, presided over a medieval-style tournament between chivalric knights. The event drew an estimated crowd of 6,000 people to the town whose population at the time hovered around 1,000. In addition to the tilting and ring spearing contests, a harvest feast and hundreds of private luncheons were enjoyed before the crowning of the Queen of May. The day closed with a grand ball held in Powell's Theater. Agnes Call was among the ladies attired in beautiful costumes who danced to the tunes of the Santa Rosa String Band.

The social hoopla continued ten days later with a two-day concert and festival put on by the Ladies of the Presbyterian Church featuring entertainment and refreshments, held in Powell's Theater. The program included singing, musical interludes, various tableaux and a colloquy called "Mrs. Partington's Tea Party" starring 16-year-old Agnes Call as Mrs. Partington. The event netted over \$100 to be used for the completion of the new parsonage being built on Fitch Street.

Agnes continued her more serious activities when, in May 1877, she served as one of the Healdsburg delegates to a meeting of the Sonoma County Lodge of Good Templars held at Two Rock (located between Petaluma and Tomales Bay). The events of that month concluded with a festive party at the home of J. McManus attended by Agnes and many other daughters and sons of prominent Healdsburg families.

Sudden Transition into Adulthood

On Valentine's Day 1878, Agnes turned 17. Seven months later she married George Washington Congleton at her parents' home on Bailhache Avenue by Rev. William Angwin of the M.E. Church. George was a well-known figure in Healdsburg at the time. He was one of the players in the popular Healdsburg Amateur Minstrel Club and his reputation was that of an easygoing, devil-may-care young buck. Their daughter, Lula Mae Congleton, was born six months later on Valentine's Day, 1879, Agnes' 18th birthday.

In the next two and one-half years the couple added a son, John Esley Congleton, on May 21, 1880, followed by a second son, Aden Claude "Porter" Congleton, on December 4, 1881.

George Congleton was not cut out to be a responsible husband and father. Despite his growing family at home, he continued to kick up his heels at various events in and around town. His employment record was spotty and he managed to get into a number of scrapes with the law.

Finally, on October 3, 1887, Agnes was able to obtain a divorce on grounds of desertion—the only legal reason available to a woman at that time.

Sadly, their seven-year-old son, John Esley Congleton, would die that same year.

Starting Over

Three years later, on October 26, 1890, Agnes married Oregon native Albert Allen Wilson. He was eight years her junior. The couple set up housekeeping on Bailhache Avenue next door to Agnes' parents. Albert would expand the family's land holdings and soon become known for his innovative farming methods.

On June 10, 1903, 42-year-old Agnes and 34-year-old Albert welcomed daughter Helen Agnes Wilson. This late in life child would become the light of their lives, particularly after the tragic death of Agnes' 24-year-old second son, Claude Congleton, in a train accident in 1906.

Lodge Activities

Albert Wilson was active in the Forresters of America lodge. In 1897, Agnes and her eldest daughter Mae Congleton became officers in the auxiliary organization, the Sotoyome Circle Companions of the Forest. In 1900, Albert became an officer in Friendship Lodge, No. 91, Knights of Pythias. By 1914 Agnes was elected an officer in that organization's auxiliary, the Madrona Lodge of Pythian Sisters, rising to Most Excellent Chief the following year. After serving two years in that capacity, in 1917, she became a Past Chief. The Past Chiefs held monthly meetings where refreshments were served and card games were played. Agnes hosted many and attended most of these monthly meetings for the next 20 years. The Past Chiefs also presented comedic entertainment at various joint meetings of the Knights of Pythias and Pythian Sisters, often starring Agnes Wilson.

In 1925, the Pythian Sisters built a home for their elderly members in Los Guilicos. Agnes joined other members of the lodge there for annual visits to put up fruit for the use of those living there. The ladies would preserve anywhere from 1,000 to 2,500-quart jars of peaches, pears and apples.

Agnes also served as an officer of the Progressive Grange from 1915 through 1917, continuing her long tradition of civic and political involvement.

In the 1930s when her great-grandchildren entered school, she became involved with the PTA, leading a seven-lecture parent education series about modern child development.

Social Life

As busy as Agnes' lodge work kept her, she also maintained strong ties to her family, friends and neighbors. Agnes and Albert participated in regular dinners with members of her daughter Mae's extended family which usually featured competitive games of Progressive Whist (a popular card game). They also frequently hosted out-of-town visitors, mostly former neighbors with whom they had remained close.

Another constant in Agnes' life was her love of sewing. She had done seamstress work during her first marriage to support her children and, in 1910, she and seven other Healdsburg ladies formed the "Busy Bees" sewing club which met twice a month. In 1913, they changed the name to "The Social Neighbors Club" and continued to meet until World War I interrupted them. In 1930, the club was revived and then, in 1931, changed briefly its name to the "PTA Sewing Club." The ladies continued to meet as the "Pythian Sewing Club" through 1935.

About this time Agnes' health began to suffer and on October 8, 1937, at the age of 76, she passed away at her long-time home on Bailhache Avenue. She was laid to rest in Oak Mound Cemetery, next to her son Claude Congleton.

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Interview: Helen Wilson Peterson as told to Maria Buchignani Taeuffer

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Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Martha and William Scott family at home on Matheson Street, 1872.

The Martha and William Scott Family

by Holly Hoods

The Scott family became Healdsburg's first African-American residents when they arrived here in 1866. William was an accomplished barber, who advertised his services as a "Tonsorial Artist." Martha was a dressmaker and seamstress, operating her business from the family's substantial brick house on Matheson Street.

Martha was born in Virginia in 1824; her husband William was born in North Carolina in 1822. Their early history is unknown.

By 1850, they were free inhabitants of Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio. They were described on the census as "Mulatto," as were their three young children, Susan, Charles and William, all born in the free state of Ohio.

As "Free People of Color," the Scotts enjoyed highly favored status for their race at the time. They had many of the same rights as white residents, though they were required to carry papers identifying themselves as free. As Free People of Color in Ohio, they had been accustomed to mixing socially and professionally with whites, so they

settled comfortably in Healdsburg, evidently undaunted by the lack of other people of color.

The Scotts were gracious, educated people with professional skills. Both Martha and William could read and write; naturally, they expected their children to enjoy the advantages of literacy. The fact that blacks paid taxes—with no guaranteed access to public schools—was one of the rallying issues for outspoken African Americans striving for better lives and opportunities after the Civil War. Such strivers characterized themselves as wanting to "uplift" or "elevate" their race from the degradations of slavery, ignorance and poverty. The Scotts were definitely uplifters. They subscribed to the *Elevator*, San Francisco's black political and social newspaper. There is even mention in the *Elevator* of W.A. Scott as an orator at a political conference in 1872.

The most eloquent clue to their politics was apparent in the name of their second daughter, "Harriet Beecher Scott." Harriet was born in 1853; the year after Harriet Beecher Stowe published her groundbreaking novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a

sympathetic account of heroic African American slaves and an evil master in the South. Ironically, this child who was named after a white author, still could not enter a white public school to learn to read 20 years after the book had been written!



Source: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first edition, 1851

Illustration from "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" by Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1851.

By 1870, the oldest children, Susan and Charles, were grown and living on their own. William and Martha still had daughter Martha, born in 1858, and (May) Bell, born in 1861, living at home.

John Howell, the sympathetic editor of Healdsburg's *Russian River Flag* newspaper, wrote about the injustice of young Martha Scott being denied admission to school in 1872:

Mrs. W.A. Scott sent her little girl to the Healdsburg Public School this week, but she was refused admission. The child belongs to a family that is as decent and well-behaved as any in town, yet in the eye of prejudice, these people have one grave defect—their parents were not all white.

White children visit Mrs. Scott's children, play with them; stay all day at their house; eat at their table with them, but the California custom says that they may not learn to read and write under the same roof as white children. In all other countries of the world, and in most cultured and enlightened portions of the United States, colored children are admitted into school on equal terms with white children.

The laws of California provide that where there are ten or more colored children in a school district, a separate public school shall be established for them; but if the number is less than ten the children are left to grow up in ignorance. No teacher of a private school can admit them, for the white patronage would be withdrawn.

No matter how intelligent and respected a colored citizen may be, or how much taxes he may pay, his children are debarred by the white man's prejudice from receiving an education. Is this enlightenment? Is it justice? Is it Christianity?

Civil rights for blacks was a hotly debated topic in many parts of California during the time. Since many of Healdsburg's first settlers were from Missouri, it was of great interest here also.

Despite their persistent efforts, the Scott family could not break the school racial barrier. The family could have moved to Santa Rosa which by 1866 had attracted enough students to justify the expense of building of a separate "Negro" public school for them. Instead, the Scotts chose to remain in Healdsburg and tutor their children at home.

They continued to have a respected role in the community, but opted to leave after 12 years. In 1878, the Scotts and a number of Healdsburg residents moved to Washington Territory, drawn by stories of better opportunities there.

The Scott family became part of Washington's pioneer heritage.

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The Kelleys: Healdsburg's Whaling Family

by Lauren Carriere

It is unclear just when humans began viewing whales as "objects worthy of pursuit." The whaling industry, however, existed from the late 1600s to the early 1900s. Europe, the American Colonies and later the United States were all participants in this maritime industry. Whaling brought important capital and goods to the participating countries.

The importance of whale products rose significantly during the mid-18th century. In Europe and the American Colonies, whale products were being used to light cities and coastlines, lubricate machinery as well as light the homes and businesses of the rich. Whale products were also becoming important to the fashion industry. Whale oil was used in processing the tough cloth needed for military uniforms and whalebone was used to make corsets and petticoats.

From the end of the War of 1812 to the late 1850s, the American whaling industry had its golden age. In 1846, the United States fleet consisted of 735 ships. This was the "largest whaling fleet in history." The main whaling port in the United States up until the early 1820s was located on Nantucket. In the mid-1820s the industry shifted to New Bedford where their harbor could better accommodate large whaleships.

It was in New Bedford during this golden age of whaling that William Henry Kelley came on the scene. In 1849, at the age of 16, William became an apprentice on a whaling ship. Apparently, the voyage went well because he became a captain and dedicated much of the rest of his life to whaling. (Perhaps whaling was in William's blood, since his older brother Edmond also became a whaling captain.)

Captain William Henry Kelley

William often hunted for whales in the Arctic, a harsh environment with dangerous ice flows, freezing water, low air temperatures and gales that were as violent as they were unpredictable. In the Arctic, captains had to weigh their chance of catching more whales against their chance for disaster.

William was the captain of the *Gay Head* during the Arctic Disaster of 1871. The Arctic Disaster was caused by a multitude of factors that stemmed from the whalers' unquenchable thirst for catching increasing numbers of whales. When whale hunting began in the Far North during the late 1840s, the weather was mild and the whales were plentiful. After the first few successful seasons, Arctic whaling became increasingly popular. As the whales were hunted off farther south, the ships followed them north. Unfortunately, the further north the ships traveled, the colder and harsher the weather became.



Source: collections.whalingmuseum.org/
Whaling Museum 1871 White Ivory and Tortoise Shell Carving made by Captain William H. Kelley

The 1871 whaling season was far colder and harsher than the conditions found in the 1840s. The ships went further north in search of whales. Though the first ship casualty occurred in late June 1871, the whalers pressed on. While trading with the native people, they were warned that the winter of 1871 would be a harsh one and that they should not stay. The captains did not listen and what ensued was the Arctic Disaster of 1871.

Ultimately, the *Gay Head* was stuck in the ice. William and his crew had to be rescued.

William H. and Jane Gray Kelley Family

William's life was not solely dedicated to the sea and the pursuit of whales. He also managed to marry and have a family.

In 1860 William met and married Jane Gray. Like William, Jane was born and raised in New York State. Their time as newlyweds was short-lived, however, as William left on a whaling voyage in October 1860.

William and Jane's first child, Ella Kelley, was born on May 27, 1861. William was whaling when Ella was born and did not return from that voyage until his daughter was almost four years old.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection

Captain William Henry Kelley and daughter Ella Kelley

The next whaling trip William took was in 1865. This time he brought Jane and their daughter along with him.

On October 15, 1866, Camelia Kelley was born while the family was on the expedition. Their ship, the *Gay Head*, made port in Fayal, Azores, just in time for the child's birth.

It is not clear where the ship went in the years it was gone, but this trip was likely one of the two arctic expeditions that Jane accompanied her husband on. The family returned from their whaling expedition in 1870.

The Kelleys' first son, Charles E. Kelley, was born in New York on September 25, 1872, during William's 1872 whaling expedition on the

James Allen. The child passed away in February 1875, a year before his father returned from the expedition.

Jennie Kelley was born on November 12, 1876. She was the third girl and the last Kelley child to survive to adulthood. Jennie was born in San Francisco just before the family moved to Healdsburg.

The Kelley Home

When the Kelleys moved to Healdsburg in 1878, it was as if the town had gained a celebrity family. William had been a whaling captain during the golden age of whaling and he had many harrowing tales of his journeys.

In addition to his whaling career, William was also an artist or a draughtsman. He also frequently wrote about and drew scenes from his voyages, some of which were printed in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*.

William and Jane purchased property that ran from Johnson Street to an alley (present day Prince Street) along the north side of Grant Street. In 1878, William and Jane had a home built on their property near the corner of Johnson and Grant Streets. The home was described as an "elegant residence on the most beautiful site in the city." The house was a cottage "with lofty, well-arranged and well-furnished rooms." The home was great for entertaining; one of the rooms held a piano that provided enjoyment for guests. The dining room was large enough to accommodate twenty people.

Jane Gray Kelley

Newspapers and other written accounts did not pay much attention to Jane Kelley in comparison to her husband. Though it was common for wives to be left out of stories, this was particularly true for Jane because of her husband's local fame and prestigious career. While primary sources rarely described her, information can be inferred through newspaper articles on the Kelley family.

Jane lived through the Victorian era. During this time, the strength of a woman was often proved by the suffering and self-sacrifice she endured. The social capital she gained from her hardships, however, allowed her to have influence over others. Victorian writer Elizabeth Oakes Smith suggested that it was a woman's duty to suffer, especially for

her husband and children. If Jane and her contemporaries subscribed to these Victorian ideals, she was likely seen as a particularly strong and influential woman.

Jane did indeed have a life of hardships. As the wife of a whaling captain, she spent most of her married life away from her husband. This separation was probably made even more difficult with the deaths of two of their children. Charles Kelley died in 1875 at about two and one-half years old. The second child died at 57 days old. The infant does not appear to have been given a name, so it is likely that the child was not expected to survive.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Jane Gray Kelley

In addition to the burden of burying two young children, Jane also outlived her adult daughter Mary Ellen, her husband William and her sister Mary Gray. (Mary Gray was struck and killed by a car just outside the Kelley home.)

Though the newspapers never mention it, Jane also likely encountered financial problems. As the wife of a whaling captain, her duty was to take care of the home, the children, the budget and just about everything else—except making money. After William's death in 1891, Jane no longer had a source of income. She was also not able to sell

William's vessel, the *Jane Gray*, because it was seized by the United States Revenue Cutter Service.

Though Jane did not have an income, she still owned and lived on the large lot on Grant and Johnson Streets.

These dire financial conditions probably provided the impetus for Jane to have a home built on the corner of Grant and Prince Streets in 1906. In choosing to build a rental house on the property, Jane could make extra income while holding onto the family property. In a newspaper article about the home being near completion, the C. D. Evans family was listed as the future occupants of the home, suggesting Jane intended this home to be a rental. The home had seven rooms and was described as "modern and very attractive."



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
The Kelley home at 221 Grant Street

Unfortunately, it appears the rental property did not generate enough income because Jane ended up selling some of her undeveloped property on Grant Street. Though she was unable to keep all the land she originally owned, she deeded the original Kelley home (606 Johnson Street) and the Kelley rental home (221 Grant Street) to her two surviving daughters upon her death.

Although Jane suffered a great deal of tragedy and encountered financial difficulties, it appears that she led a very active and social life. Her life was filled with family, friends and her church.

Jane was a dedicated member of the Christian Church. She was involved in church fundraisers and even hosted some in her home. She also became a deaconess in the Christian Church.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Camilla Kelley Wallace

After Camilla was married and Mary Ellen passed away, Jennie was the only child left living in the house with Jane. They appear to have been very close. Jane and Jennie often hosted friends and family at their Johnson Street home. Jane's daughter, Camilla Wallace, who lived in San Jose with her family, frequently came up to Healdsburg to visit Jane and Jennie. Family members from New York as well as friends from Pacific Grove were also guests in the Johnson Street home.



Source: Healdsburg Museum Collection
Jennie (Henrietta) Kelley Laymance

In addition to hosting guests, Jane and Jennie traveled to see friends and family. They regularly went to San Jose to stay with Camilla's family. One year, they spent the entire winter in San Jose! They also went to San Jose for special occasions like birthdays, holidays and to meet other family members. The mother/daughter duo also traveled to places like Stockton and Sacramento.

Jane Gray Kelley had a long life full of struggles and hardships, but she was a very strong woman who did not let that stop her. She loved her family and thrived in an environment where she could make guests feel welcome in her home on Johnson Street. Though she never achieved the same level of fame as her husband, Jane should be remembered as a strong, independent, and noteworthy Healdsburg Pioneer.

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Source: Holly Hoods

Thistle cottage on Grant Street, 2000

The Mary Thistle Cottage

by Lynda Taylor Pheasant

Lynda Taylor Pheasant is the great-granddaughter of James and Mary Thistle and the granddaughter of Ezra and Annie Thistle Taylor.

For more than a century, the small cottage was located on the south side of Grant Street between West Street (Healdsburg Avenue) and Grove Street waiting for time to overtake its destiny. In 2000, a historic survey was made, detailing components of the well-aged structure. Little was known about the genealogy of the house.

During the 1860s, James M. Thistle, a tanner by trade, was among the wave of Irish immigrants who chose to make Healdsburg their home. Thistle's Tannery was advertised as located "north of the slough" (now known as Foss Creek).

In 1864, James married Irish native Mary Bulger in Healdsburg. Four children were born to this marriage: John (1865/66), Mary Elizabeth (1868), Anna E. (1869) and baby Isabelle Catherine (1870) born five months after her father's death.

On May 3, 1869, James was elected to the Board of Trustees for the town of Healdsburg. He served just a few months before his death which was duly noted in the Council minutes of October 4, 1869: "Owing to the sudden and untimely death of James Thistle, a member of the Board of Trustees, resolutions expressing the known sentiments of the

remaining members were ordered to be drafted relative to the sad affair."

During the 1870s, the small town of Healdsburg began to flourish. Excerpts from the *Russian River Flag* describe building activities on West Street (Healdsburg Avenue), the main business street and most westerly road in the growing town.

In December 1870, Felix Mulgrew sold Mary a lot, 40 ft. x 150 ft., in Dow's Addition for \$100. New construction in 1871 referenced: "Mrs. Thistle built a new residence at an expense of about seven hundred dollars."

The next year, Mary married Louis Ottman, a German who had come to Healdsburg by way of St. Louis, Missouri. Ottman set up a "one-horse brewery" on the Thistle property. In August 1873, Ottman's death was recorded in San Francisco, again leaving Mary a widow with four small children.

Tragically, in June 1874, Mary (Bulger) Thistle Ottman died. Her orphaned children were dispersed. John, age eight, was sent to St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum in San Rafael. Lizzie, age six, and Belle, age four, remained with "aunt" Margaret Ryan in Healdsburg. Annie, age five, was "adopted" by

Thomas and Ann (Murphy) Clark, a childless couple residing in Ventura County who, in 1864, had rented land near Healdsburg.

John is said to have died while an inmate at the Orphan Asylum. (No orphanage records or death records have been found.)

His three sisters fared much better.

In 1885 eldest daughter Lizzie married Frank M. Muller, a native of Alsace-Lorraine, who, at age 15, had joined his extended family in California. In 1893, F.M. Muller was noted as operating the Willows Hotel in Glenn County. After the birth of their only child, Anna, the family moved to Vallejo.

In 1889 youngest daughter Belle married Eugene H. Mead, son of James A. and Caroline (Zimmerman) Mead, well-known Healdsburg pioneers. Sadly, their marriage ended four years later with the death of Mead, at age 25. Widow Belle next married Healdsburg resident Robert J. Webber. Following a subsequent divorce, Belle married Lieutenant Frederick Evans, recently widowed with an infant son. Belle raised the boy as her own. She became Vallejo's first Gold Star Mother when Ensign

Even F. Evans died on board the *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor.

Middle daughter Annie grew up in Ojai. She was first married in 1886, John H. Clark, nephew of her adoptive parents. Their child, Thomas Ernest Clark, was just six months old when his father died in a farming accident. Nine years later Annie married Ezra Taylor, a machinist and well-driller of Irish descent, who had come to California from Quebec. Four children were born to this marriage: Ezra Felton, Reba, Fern and Allan. In 1918, with her eldest son serving in the European theatre, Annie moved her family to Claremont where she became the house mother for a college girl's dormitory. Her daughters graduated from Pomona College and later married into the Stover and Pitzer families, names prominently associated with the early development of Pomona College and Claremont.

The Mary Thistle Cottage, enjoyed so briefly by the original family, served as framework for the strength and tenacity of generations to come. The Thistle story is symbolic—prickly with sadness, varied in character, beautiful and enduring.

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