



ST. HELENA
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

THE ELECTROLIER

February 2015, Volume 13, Number 1

ILLUMINATING ST. HELENA'S HISTORY

Vineland Schoolhouse: Our Future Home?

BY SKIP LANE, BOARD PRESIDENT

Almost from its inception in 2002, the St. Helena Historical Society (SHHS) has been looking for a place to call its own. We are eternally grateful to the St. Helena Public Library for the space they have granted us on their second floor. We have operated out of that space since our beginning, but it just isn't adequate for us at this point.

We have no public access for research, no exhibit space, and little room for our ever-growing collection. Over the years we have checked out numerous possible sites for SHHS but have been unable to find anything that was both suitable and available.

Always in the back of our minds, though, was the possibility of building a history center on the city-owned property on Adams Street next to the library. In past years, we have approached the city council about this idea without success.

This past June, we again made a presentation to the city council and this time were met with a positive and enthusiastic response. All five council members were in favor of a history center presence on Adams Street, probably in conjunction with a new community center.

Since June, we have been meeting with Peter White and Greg Pitts, the two councilpersons appointed by the council as a subcommittee to meet with SHHS and pursue plans for a history center. Several meetings have been held, which at various times have included representatives of the library, the RLS Museum, the Napa Valley Wine Library Association, and the Community Center, Inc.

During this same period last fall, when these meetings were taking place, we became aware of a situation on the Hall Winery property that involved Vineland School, a one-room schoolhouse that was built in the 1870s to serve St. Helena area's children. The Halls commissioned a resource evaluation of the school, which had most recently been used as a residence and had fallen into disrepair.

The resource evaluation essentially said that the concrete walls of the building were crumbling and that it didn't make sense to try to preserve it on its present site.

SHHS was interested in the historic value of the schoolhouse and proposed moving those parts of it that could be saved (roof, windows, doors) to the Adams Street property. Our plan would be to reconstruct the walls of the schoolhouse and then add the old roof, windows, and doors so that it would duplicate as closely as possible the schoolhouse as it looked in 1870.



Imagine a St. Helena History Center on this site—somewhere from the corner of Library Lane and Adams Street to the library. The center would start with acquisition of the old Vineland Schoolhouse.

We presented this idea to the Adams Street subcommittee and garnered their immediate support. In the short run, the reconstructed schoolhouse would act as a headquarters for SHHS, establishing a presence in the community and giving us a place to operate a fundraising campaign and to display part of our collection. It would also be available to community groups as a meeting place.

The initial siting of the schoolhouse on the Adams Street property would be such that it could be relocated to a permanent site on the property

continued on page 2

Future Home

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

once the overall history center/community center plan was developed, which might be years away.

In the long run, we would like to see the building shown according to its original use: as a one-room schoolhouse. We would furnish it with desks, blackboards, and other fixtures that would have been used in the 19th century. It would then become a field-trip destination for local school children, who would experience education as it used to be, with a school teacher dressed in appropriate clothing and giving lessons taught in former times. This concept has been implemented in other places with success. Students and teachers alike rave about the experience.



Vineland School as it appears today.

We incorporated our schoolhouse ideas into our overall plans for Adams Street and presented the whole package at a special city council study session last October. Once again, we were met with an enthusiastic and unanimous affirmative response from the council. The council directed the city manager to use staff time and money, as available, to pursue the project.

In recent weeks we have met with Jennifer Phillips, our new city manager, to outline next steps and get an idea of what might be required of SHHS at this point. The first thing needed is some kind of agreement between the city and SHHS. We are currently working on a draft of a lease/use agreement that would allow us to move the schoolhouse to the Adams Street property. The larger issues of a history center/community center are being postponed for the time being while we determine the fate of the schoolhouse.

It is certainly an exciting time for us; we will let you know of developments in future newsletters.

The Electrolier, February 2015, page 2

A Brief History of the Old Vineland School

The old Vineland School is located on Hall Winery property just off of Highway 29 in Milani's trailer park. The Vineland School District was founded in 1870. School was held outside at first. After a rain-storm chased the class into nearby barns, district trustee John Lewelling donated land to build the concrete schoolhouse that is still standing today. The exact date the schoolhouse was finished is unknown, but it was one of the first concrete edifices built in Napa County.

By 1883 the Vineland School District was one of the largest "country districts," boasting 50 students and two teachers. After a school bond to build a new



Vineland School as it appeared in 1885.



A class photo in front of Vineland School as it looked in 1885.

school failed in 1905, the 35-year-old structure was repaired in 1907 and used for another decade. In 1920, the four districts of St. Helena, Vineland, Lodi, and Spring Valley were combined into one district, and students began going to classes at St. Helena Elementary School. At some later date, the old schoolhouse was converted into the private residence it is today.

St. Helena Unified School District Entrusts Historical Society with Artifacts & Photos

BY BONNIE THOREEN

A major highlight in collections development this past year was the completion of an agreement between the St. Helena Unified School District (SHUSD) and the St. Helena Historical Society (SHHS) for the long-term loan of artifacts and photographs from the school's archives.

The collection documents the history of education in Napa County, particularly focused on the St. Helena area. The history begins in the 1800s when numerous one-room school houses were situated throughout the county, accessible to students on foot or by buggy. Toward the end of the 1890s, the first high school opened with classes held at the Presbyterian Church. The following year, classes began to be held at Turner Hall in Lyman Park.

In 1910, Frances Grayson Crane donated land for

storage areas on the third floor of this old building. Late in 2013, both SHUSD and the SHHS recognized that these valuable bits and pieces of history needed to be cared for and documented for posterity. Thus began discussions between SHUSD and SHHS. After some negotiations, SHUSD agreed to transfer the items to our collection, on loan for five years and with an understanding that the agreement can be renewed and reviewed over time.

In June 2014, the artifacts and photographs were inventoried and given to SHHS with the understanding that they would be housed in a safe environment. There are over 200 items in all, including photographs of one-room school houses such as the Old Monticello School, Spring Mountain School, and Rutherford School. Some of the photos show just the



The photo on the left shows the freshman class of 1919. The one on the right, taken around that time, shows electric car #44 making a stop at St. Helena High School. Possibly staged, it appeared in the June 1919 "Far Darter" high school yearbook. Both photos are from a collection of high school-related photos given to the high school by the Dave and Kathy Kernberger in 1988.

a permanent school building, which was constructed at the corner of Grayson Avenue and Highway 29. The simple stone building boasted a laboratory, woodshop, and basketball court, as well as classrooms. Over time, this building, which we now call Vintage Hall, was declared unsafe for student use because of potential earthquake damage. Fortunately, over the years other classroom buildings, an auditorium, a gym, and a library have been constructed so that the Vintage Hall classrooms could be vacated. Vintage Hall has since been restored and retrofitted to meet seismic safety standards. It currently houses SHUSD offices, a cafeteria, and a state-of-the-art meeting room used by SHUSD and St. Helena city government for board and committee meetings.

During all of this time, artifacts and photographs had been accumulating in closets, office shelves, and

school buildings, while others include children and horses and buggies. Several class composite photos date back to 1903, and many go up to the 1970s.

Also contained in the collection are more contemporary items, such as culinary tools from the home economics classroom, photos of the current elementary school and Vintage Hall, and fairly recent photographs of staff and faculty.

SHUSD also preserved school registers documenting student attendance and noting teachers of record. For example, a register of the 1904-05 second- and third-grade class recorded May Wells as the teacher.

SHHS recognizes the archival stewardship that the SHUSD has exercised in preserving these treasures and is both proud and excited to be taking on the role of new custodian.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT CONTINUES

BY BONNIE THOREEN



Thanks to a grant of \$1,000 from the Napa Valley Heritage Fund, the St. Helena Historical Society's Oral History Project is moving forward. The grant has enabled us to transcribe more oral histories from sound to print.

To date we have transcribed five histories, and four more are in progress. For example, Nancy and David Garden were interviewed twice (by myself and Mariam Hansen): one focusing on the White Barn, the other on David's family and their early history at Rancho Otranto.

Other interviews include one with local government veteran Guy Kay (interviewed by Skip Lane) and one with acclaimed National Geographic photographer Chuck O'Rear (interviewed by Julie Worthington).

Additionally, we have transcribed a group of interviews that were taken during the Museum for a Day event in March 2014.

Today's voices of St. Helena are an important resource for our historic families, historians, and future generations.

If you would like to volunteer to interview or be interviewed, please contact Bonnie Thoreen at 707-963-7529 or bthoreen@gmail.com.

RAINFALL CHART FROM THE PAST LENDS PERSPECTIVE ON DROUGHT CONDITIONS



Susanne Salvestrin holds a rainfall chart donated by Betty Wilms of Pope Valley. The handwriting is that of Ed Paulson, St. Helena's weather watcher for over 50 years. From July 1, 2014, to the present, St. Helena has had 17.66 inches of rain; normal rainfall for a year is 33 inches. The chart, which records local rainfall between 1907 and 1968, shows that the lowest annual rainfall was 14 inches in 1923-24. The highest annual rainfall was

59 inches in 1913-14. The wide range of rainfall shown in the chart, which spans over 60 years—between 14 and 59 inches—indicates that it is not unusual for St. Helena to have low rainfall in any particular year. There's hope!

TO THE SUNDOWN SEA LECTURE SERIES A HIT

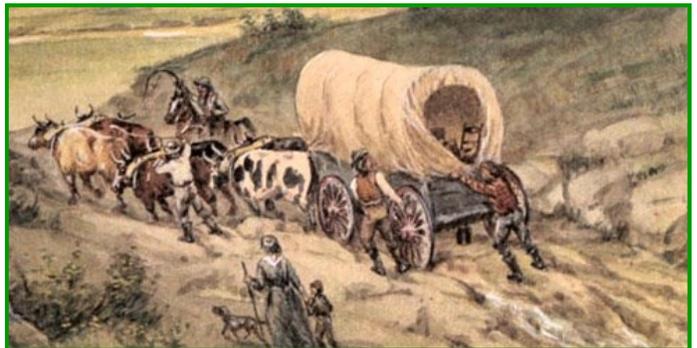


The St. Helena Historical and Napa County Historical societies are in their second month of co-sponsoring an eight-part historical series about America's westward expansion, which is being held at the St. Helena Public Library on second and fourth Tuesday afternoons through April, from 5:00 to 6:30 pm.

Called "To the Sundown Sea: The Westering of America," the lectures are researched and presented by Jay Greene, a well-known local historian.

So far, the series has attracted an enthusiastic following; the last lecture was attended by over 50 people.

Word is spreading, and more are expected to attend in February for this fascinating account of how America got so huge so quickly. The series is free and open to members and nonmembers alike.



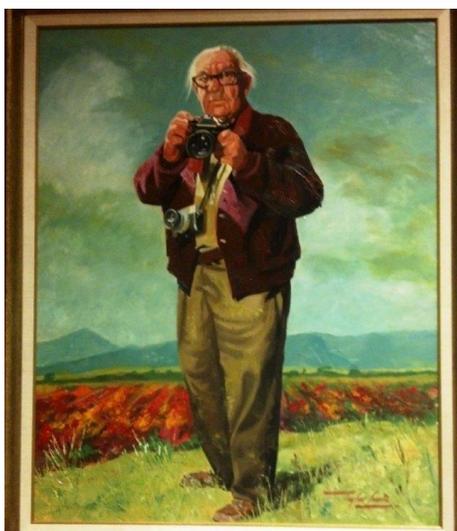
This painting of pioneers crossing Platte River Valley was painted by William Henry Jackson during the 1860s.

Here is the schedule for the remaining lectures. For more information, consult the library's website (shpl.org) or pick up a detailed brochure in the library. Also watch for monthly email reminders from the Historical Society.

- February 10: **Ho! For Oregon and California**
- February 24: **Manifest Destiny**
- March 10: **Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hills!**
- March 24: **I've Been Workin' on the Railroad**
- April 14: **Cowboys 'n' Indians**
- April 28: **To the Sundown Sea**

Mark your calendars for April 23, 7:00 pm, for another library program sponsored by SHHS that ties in to the series: a musical treat of songs from the pioneer era and the Old West, plus local history.

**January Exhibit & Talk
at the Library Showcasing
Artist Taylor Biggs Lewis**

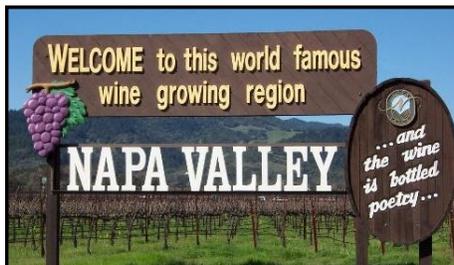


This portrait of St. Helena Star owner Starr Baldwin was one of those exhibited at the St. Helena Public Library in January as part of a retrospective of Taylor Biggs Lewis, a local portrait painter. Mariam Hansen curated the exhibit and gave a talk about the artist after a reception opening the show. SHHS and the library thank Sandra Ericson and Larry and Annette Smith for the loan of their paintings. Others hang permanently in the library.



Marilyn Aquila Doss places roses at the newly installed plaque that she and husband Jack sponsored. She is holding a photo of her parents, John and Angie Aquila, who were primarily responsible for saving the old street lights ("electroliers"). Acting for SHHS, Mariam Hansen helped shepherd the project to completion.

**Sullivan's Napa Wine
Available with
Membership or
Gift Donation**



The Historical Society has recently acquired several copies of the book *Napa Wine: A History* by Charles Sullivan. It is the second edition, published in 2008. It is illustrated by legendary Napa Valley artist Earl Thollander and the foreword was written by Robert Mondavi. It is a handsome and scholarly tome, well documented and researched.

We are offering it as a gift to anyone who wishes to join or renew membership at the \$100 level or higher. Our current membership levels are:

<i>Life</i>	<i>\$500*</i>
<i>Business</i>	<i>\$200*</i>
<i>Sustaining</i>	<i>\$100*</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>\$50</i>
<i>Dual</i>	<i>\$40</i>
<i>Individual</i>	<i>\$30</i>

** If you are using our printed return envelope to join or renew, use the "Additional Donation" line to indicate membership levels of \$100 or above.*

Another option is to purchase the book from the Historical Society for \$25 (Amazon lists it at \$40+). The book will automatically be sent to you with your \$100+ membership. To purchase a copy, please email bthoreen@gmail.com.

Your membership or purchase will be a welcome contribution to the St. Helena Historical Society. And the book will be a great gift for family and friends or a substantial addition to your own library.

**2014 Memberships at
the \$100+ Levels**

Thanks to all those who joined SHHS, renewed your membership, or donated in 2014! You help make SHHS possible!

\$100-\$199

- Victoria Blackwell
- Jane & Peter Bram
- Inez Carlenzoli
- Sue & Stu Clark
- Elizabeth Couse & Bernard Vash
- Barbara & James Fetherston
- David & Nancy Garden
- Tom Giugni
- Patrick Kenealy & Tracy D'Orta
- Robert & Gayle Navone
- Helen & Bruce Nelson
- Robyn & Joe Orsini
- Marden Plant
- Stanley & Linda Rice
- Susanne & Ed Salvestrin
- Dario Sattui
- Eric Sklar
- Marilyn Walters
- Susan Wight
- Don & Katherine Winter
- Susan & Bill Wren
- Napa Valley Vintners

\$200-\$499

- Francis & Eleanor Coppola
- David Legier
- Marie May, The Sherry House
- Mary Novak, Spottswode Vineyard
- Pestoni Families
- John & Joanne Sales
- Rich & Shannon Salvestrin, Salvestrin Winery
- Jake Scheideman, St. Helena Cyclery
- Silver Oak Cellars
- Jim Smith, Wine Country Inn
- Howard & Lyndal Walker

\$500

- Jule Grant
- John Komes
- Gail Lane
- Sharon Scott
- Roger Trinchero

A Sad Good-Bye as Bill Savidge Leaves Board

In December, the Historical Society reluctantly said farewell to Bill Savidge, who tendered his resignation from the board. Bill brought a sense of local political history, having served on the City Council and in various other capacities. He also brought a common-sense factor to our discussions. Bill's creative solutions and calm demeanor will be missed. As Skip Lane wrote to Bill: "Your contributions over the years have been invaluable. You brought a sense of the history of our city, a willing ear to engage new opportunities, and a voice of reason to all of our discussions. You will be missed."

Welcome to Our Four New Directors Elected to the Board

As SHHS begins a new year, it is with pleasure, pride, and excitement that we welcome four new board members: Nancy Caffo, retired school teacher; Catarina Sanchez, manager of Stonebridge Apartments and former City Council member; Larry Merla, a longtime St. Helena resident and contributor to local history; and Christopher Hill, owner of the Christopher Hill Art Gallery on Main Street.

Each of these new directors will bring a unique perspective and a different energy to the society's deliberations and future development. Please connect with them and other board members—tell them what you want from the St. Helena Historical Society, and also let us know how you'd like to contribute.



The Board of Directors of the St. Helena Historical Society is seeking new board members, volunteers, and general members and supporters. Our mission is simple and clear: "to collect, preserve, exhibit, interpret, and provide access to the history of the St. Helena area from the ancient settlements of the first Native Americans to the present day."

We need support from you, our community, to continue to move this mission forward and to open up new horizons for the future. This is about your history, our history, and about our future.

It is an especially exciting time to be involved with SHHS. We are looking forward to building a permanent home for the collection—an actual History Center. We are working with the city and Hall Winery to relocate a one-room schoolhouse, Vineland School, as an educational center for children, visitors, and all of you (*see articles on pages 1 and 2*).

Other on-going activities include building the collection of photographs and artifacts, providing educational and entertaining programs, and supporting historians and locals who want to research and document the lives and deeds of our local history makers, past and present.

Take a look at our website at www.shstory.org; or email us at shstory@shstory.org; or phone us at 707-967-5502. We hope you'll contact us soon!



ABOUT US

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Skip Lane, *President*

Susanne Salvestrin,
Vice President

John Sales, *Treasurer*

Nancy Caffo

Frank Harrison

Christopher Hill

John Komes

Shannon Kuleto

Larry Merla

Helen Nelson

Catarina Sanchez

ADMINISTRATOR

Bonnie Thoreen

VOLUNTEER STAFF

Kim Farmer

*Collections Registrar &
Memberships*

Mariam Hansen

Research

Helen Nelson

Susanne Salvestrin
Collections & Acquisitions

Robyn Orsini

Newsletter Editor

ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 87

ST. HELENA, CA 94574

TELEPHONE: 707-967-5502

EMAIL: shstory@shstory.org

WEBSITE: www.shstory.org

FACEBOOK: ST. HELENA

