



ST. HELENA  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

# THE ELECTROLIER

*July 2013, Volume 11, Number 3*

ILLUMINATING ST. HELENA'S HISTORY

## New Exhibit at 1111 Main Street

We are grateful to 1111 Main Street (formerly Napa Soul, next to Sunshine Foods) for their generosity in allowing us to install a large and unique exhibit. Come see the large historic photos of downtown St. Helena and sit on bar stools at the original bar from Gee Gee's Tavern. This longtime popular haunt was located at 1113 Hunt Avenue, west of the railroad tracks in what was once the St. Helena Brewery Building. It is now the location of a newer building occupied by Albion Surveys. Stop by 1111 Main Street to enjoy the ambience of yesteryear.



Gee-Gee and Frances opened their bar at the former location of a saloon owned by brothers Ed and Carl Heymann (shown above, at left, in 1886). The building (including the original bar) was built in the 1880s and probably remained a saloon until Prohibition shut the business down—about 50 years.

When the building was torn down in the 1970s, Fred Beroldo salvaged a 10-foot section of the original bar, a 16-foot top of a newer bar, the back bar mirror, four stools, and the wood stove, which he stored in the basement of his home in St. Helena.

Twenty years later, Jack Smith (Calistoga) found out about the bar and finally convinced Fred to sell it to him. After enjoying the bar in his game room for another 20 years, he arranged with board members Helen Nelson and Susanne Salvestrin to give it to the Historical Society. Its new home is not far from its original location!



*Above, owner of Gee Gee's Tavern, Felix "Gee-Gee" Freilone serves an unknown customer in 1934. Gee-Gee was born in Italy and immigrated to Napa Valley in the 1920s. He opened the bar in 1933 after the end of Prohibition. He and his wife, Frances, (shown below) served beer and home-cooked meals to locals for over 30 years.*



*Board members John Komes, Bill Savidge, and Helen Nelson are hanging historical photos opposite the bar.*

# Local Women Affected by World War I

By Mariam Hansen, Research Director

Our program *Women in War*, held at the library in June, focused on the many ways women have been affected by war, both as participants and as relatives of those who served. Below are some stories of local women who served at home and in the service during World War II. For details about local women serving in wars from the Civil War to the present, see [www.shstory.org/collections-and-research/research-library/](http://www.shstory.org/collections-and-research/research-library/).

It is estimated that 400,000 women served in the military during World War II. But they had many war roles at home, too. For example, St. Helena women stepped in to harvest the crops in 1942. Their work relieved a serious labor shortage on area farms and saved valuable crops from destruction.



Women's service in other areas is indicated by this news flash from 1943: "Hundreds of women between the ages of 18 and 45 will be needed at Mare Island Navy Yard within the next few months. All women who are not engaged in a vital war occupation, including agriculture, are urged to apply. Navy bus services operated at cost have been inaugurated between Mare Island and St. Helena to insure transportation for all women for the duration."



In March 1943, St. Helena's airplane spotting post opened. Some of the first women to work at the post were Mrs. A. R. Percy, Susan Thompson, and Mildred Griffith.



Louise (Lynn) Garden (shown above), sister of David Garden, was commissioned to be an ensign in the Navy in August 1943. She had been attending officer training school since June. She was assigned to Seattle as a medical illustrator.



Iola Hitt (shown above), who has lived in St. Helena for the past four years, served abroad as an army nurse for several years during World War II. Bob Winters wrote a book based on her letters home called *No Place for a Wall-*

*flower*. Mrs. Hitt and Mr. Winters were both present at the library program and recounted some of her war experiences.



Katherine Lee Dennis (shown above) was a World War II Army veteran who served as first lieutenant in the Signal Corps, participating in the Philippines and New Guinea theaters. She lived at the Veterans Home, where her husband was employed. Kay was elected commander of American Legion Post 199 in St. Helena in June 1973, the only woman ever elected to that position. She also served as district commander and California vice-commander for the American Legion.

Other St. Helena women who served in World War II were Mary Galli, Peggy Baker, Nellie Graf Levy, Dorothea London, Genevieve York, Patricia Campbell, and Maria Sander.

## Cornerstone By Skip Lane, President

The society's board of directors recently thanked Kim Farmer, a founding board member, for her 11 years of service to SHHS. She attended the founding organizational meeting in 2002 and became the first treasurer. For many years, she was the newsletter editor. Over time, she also took on the collections and membership committees, as well as many website functions. Kim will continue her work in these capacities as a volunteer. Thank you, Kim, for all your efforts, past and present!



*Skip Lane and Kim Farmer are all smiles as Kim accepts a plaque acknowledging over a decade of service as a board member, given to her at May's board meeting.*

In June, the board welcomed Bonnie Thoreen as a new member of the board. Bonnie is the retired dean of the Napa Valley College Upper Valley Campus and the former Napa Valley College librarian. Bonnie currently serves on the Napa County Grand Jury.

The board has been looking for an administrative staff person to take on some of the duties that have traditionally been handled by individual board members and other volunteers. Soon after Bonnie joined the board, it became evident that she is uniquely qualified to help us out in a staff capacity. We are working toward hiring her as an independent contractor and making full use of her wealth of experience. In this eventuality, she will probably resign her position on the board but will still attend meetings.

Baksheesh Fair Trade had a shopping night on July 19 to benefit the society. The store remained open from 6:00 to 8:00 pm and donated 15% of their sales proceeds (\$2,400!) to the SHHS. We appreciate their support and hope to do a similar fundraiser with them during the holidays this year.

## Collections News By Kim Farmer, Collections Committee

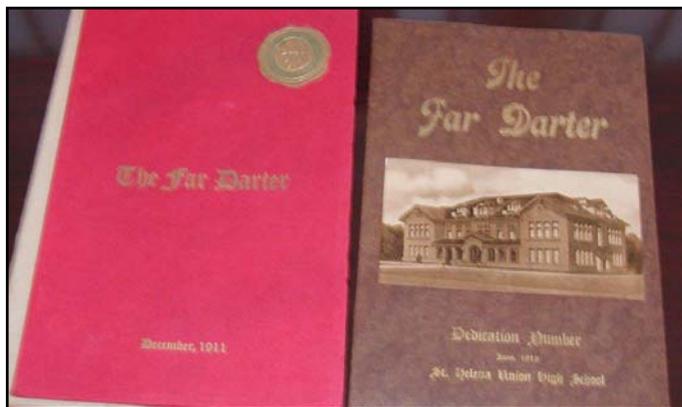
Two important things will be happening over the next several months that will help us take better care of our collection and make it more accessible.

First, we've applied for and been awarded a Collections Assessment Program grant for 2013. The CAP grant provides funding to hire a professional who will spend a couple of days with us assessing our entire collection program, including the policies, practices, and conditions that affect the collection's care and preservation. We will then be provided with a written report of the findings, which will serve as a guide to future preservation and care of items in our collection.

We will also be working over the summer with the Napa County Historical Society. NCHS research librarian Alexandria Brown will spend some time with us to help develop "finding aids" to the collection, enabling the public to more easily know what we have and to access collection items. She will also help orient volunteers to our museum software, called PastPerfect.

We are excited about these opportunities, both of which deepen our commitment and ability to preserving local history.

## Call for Yearbooks



*Do you have a St. Helena High School or Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School yearbook that needs a home? The society is building a collection but is missing the following years: 1906, 1907, 1908, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1916, 1928-35, 1946, 1950, 1952, 1954, 1955, 1957-58, 1965-66, 1968-69, 1971-82, and 1984 to present. For RLS, we have 1966, 1967, and 1969, and are missing all others. Please call 707-967-5502 if you can help.*

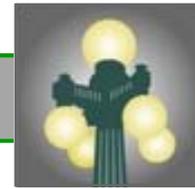
SAVE THE DATE  
Cemetery Tour

The 11th Annual Spirits of St. Helena Cemetery Discovery Walk will be held on Saturday, September 21st, at Holy Cross Cemetery. The tour will continue last year's theme focusing on local vintners. The event begins at 10:00 am. Groups led by a docent will visit 5 to 6 gravesites to hear stories about those laid to rest there. More information will follow as the tour draws near.

Consecration of Ner Tamid Jewish Cemetery  
ST. HELENA CEMETERY



On the morning of May 29, members and guests of the Ner Tamid (Eternal Flame) Jewish Cemetery Association formally consecrated their newly established sacred Jewish ground located in the St. Helena Cemetery. Roger Berry created the eternal flame sculptures shown above. Below, Donna Mendelson greets Berry and his wife. The ceremony was attended by about 100 people.



ABOUT US

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Skip Lane, *President*
- Susanne Salvestrin, *Vice President*
- John Sales, *Treasurer*
- Mariam Hansen
- Frank Harrison
- John Komes
- Shannon Kuleto
- Helen Nelson
- Bill Savidge
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- Collections Registrar & Memberships*
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Join SHHS Today!  
See the website for details.



The stained-glass window shown above is in St. Mary's Chapel at Holy Cross Cemetery. Consecrated in 1901, the cemetery has served local Catholics for 112 years.



Do you know your board members? Well, here they (mostly) are: front and back rows, Skip Lane, Bill Savidge, John Sales, Bonnie Thoreen, Mariam Hansen, Helen Nelson, Susanne Salvestrin, Shannon Kuleto, and John Komes. Not pictured is Frank Harrison..

Star News – 1870s

**June 6, 1876.** Joe Straus only caught 105 trout in York Canyon on Tuesday. He is going back after the rest soon.

**March 7, 1879.** A woman cured her husband of staying out late at night by going to the door and whispering, "Is that you, Willie?" Her husband's name is John. Now he stays home every night, sleeping with one eye open and a revolver under his pillow.