



THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Fall 2003, Vol.1 No.3

The History of the St. Helena Public Cemetery

By Mariam Hansen

A stroll through our public cemetery is a visit with the famous and the ordinary people who came before us in St. Helena. The pillars flanking the main gate once supported the façade of the St. Helena Grammar School. Contractor Harry Thorsen installed them in 1933. The engraved sign reads "Established 1856".

William Hudson came across the plains in 1845 with wife, Sarah, and their eight children, accompanied by the Grigsby, York and Elliott families. In 1853, William purchased part of the Bale Grant "from Allyn Avenue West to the Sonoma County line, north to the lands of John York, and south as far as Sulphur Creek". Eventually Hudson built the Hudson House, home of Beringer's School of American Chefs. Around this time, the town was founded when J. Henry Still bought 126 acres from Bale west of Main Street, between Madrona Avenue and Sulphur Creek.

Before becoming a public burial site, the oldest block of today's cemetery was the Hudson family's private cemetery. Lot One, Block One is the family plot, which holds the oldest burial: Sarah Hudson, wife of William Hudson, died October 24, 1856, aged 42 years. William Hudson died in 1866 at the age of 53. For many years before his death, William talked of deeding this land to the city for a cemetery. After his death, his daughter signed the deed to hand it over.

On March 30, 1872 a meeting was held to establish a public cemetery association. The leading men present were: Mist-ers Logan, Edwards, Davis, Krug, Vann, Ewer, Smith, McCord, Hastie, Pellett, Clark, Elgin, Sheehan, Anderson, Penwill, Montgomery and Warren. The corporate name was and remains "St. Helena Cemetery Association".

On April 6, 1872 A. Lafley was elected president and J.I. Logan, an undertaker, was elected secretary. Original board members were Mist-ers Krug, Vann, McCord, Sheehan, Warren, Carver, Hunt, Rule, David Hudson, and Judge Serranus Hastings, first Chief Justice of California.

The April 17, 1883 edition of the *St. Helena Star* describes an annual association meeting: "The association met at the town hall on April 7. Revised by-laws were adopted and everything found to be in satisfactory condition. The following were elected trustees to hold office for three years: Mssrs Carver, Fountain, Pratt, and Simmons. The follow-

ing officials were re-elected: President, J.H. McCord; Vice President, B.R. Sheehan; Treasurer, D.B. Carver; Secretary, J.I. Logan; C.C. Maguire, Sexton. The Board of Trustees now consists of Mssrs Krug, Hunt, Merriam, Sheehan, Vann, Anderson, McCord, Logan."

By 1877, there were 354 graves in the cemetery. Today, the total is nearing 12,000. The grounds have been expanded many times through purchase of additional property. In 1889, W.F. Krueber agreed to sell the Association four acres of land for \$2,000. To pay for the land, the Association had to borrow \$900 from Miss Ida Fulton, daughter of David Fulton, at 8% interest. An additional 6.84 acres was purchased in 1917 from Krueber's widow for \$2,500. In 1973, 5 five acres were acquired from Harold Smith. The property now encompasses 32 acres.

Cemetery records are kept by hand. Index cards are made for each person buried. These refer to a lot and block number. The plot can then be located in the large old ledgers, where the burial date is noted. All people in the same plot are listed in the map. Once the burial date is known, it can be found in the chronological ledger. The record for each burial begins in 1856; including the date of death and birth, place of birth and death, cause of death, and attending doctor's name. Causes of death in early days included dropsy, paralysis of the throat, softening of the brain, gunshots, hanging, and old age. The office gets many inquiries regarding people buried there.

A favorite cemetery tale goes as

follows. Chugging a bottle of wine while working was a common pastime of grave diggers years ago. A man working on a particularly deep grave had a little too much and fell asleep in the hole. Some men who worked downtown stopped for a drink at a bar, then shortcut through the cemetery on their way home. One man, coming home at dusk, happened to walk past the fresh grave site. The gravedigger, covered in dirt, pulled himself out of the deep hole and asked, "Do you have the time?"

During the 1870s and 80s, coffins were made of pine boards, and later of redwood. As the wood deteriorated over the years, the ground would sink. The cemetery now requires a coffin be put in a concrete liner or vault.

(cont. on page 3)



Photo of Lemme gravesite courtesy of the Kernbergers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the third issue of the St. Helena Historical Society *Electrolier*! This past quarter continued the busy pace of activities of Society members. A number of new donations were added to our collections (see the list on p.3), the *Cemetery Tour* was held November 1st, we again had a booth in the *Harvest Festival* celebration, a general membership meeting was held at the Vine & Fig Tree Farm, the first SHHS publication became available and some new volunteers took on important jobs.

Ann Kindred took over the essential job of membership chairperson. Ann works at the Silverado Museum as their Associate Curator/Museum Archivist. Thanks, Ann for taking on this important job for the Society!

The St. Helena Library and the St. Helena Historical Society this quarter jointly purchased a museum management software package called *PastPerfect*. It is a networked version and has been installed on the archivist's computer and is available through the SHHS computer as well. It will allow us to manage the collection, our membership list and will eventually enable us to significantly enhance the Web site. A new SHHS member and volunteer, Tricia Westbrook, is busy learning the package and working on some procedures for other volunteers. Tricia is also looking to schedule some training in use of the package. Thanks, Tricia!

Some very exciting news this quarter was the acquisition of the bound volumes of the St. Helena STAR newspaper from 1874-1993. A total of one hundred and one volumes were donated by the Napa Valley Publishing Company. Frank Harrison and I have worked on this acquisition for over a year and it has finally come to fruition. Although the bound newspapers will not generally be accessible to the public, their acquisition was extraordinarily important to the preservation of our local historical record. It is hoped that someday the digitization of these bound newspapers will become economically feasible. Currently, all issues of the newspaper are available on microfilm.

The first publication of the Society became available this quarter. *St. Helena History of 1881*, is a reprint of portions of *History of Napa and Lake Counties*, published in 1881 by Slocum & Bowen. More details about this publication are available elsewhere in this newsletter. Spearheading this project was SHHS vice-president Mariam Hansen. Thanks, Mariam!

If you're available, come join us at the City Council meeting in Vintage Hall on November 25th. I'll be doing a presentation on the future of the St. Helena Carnegie Building. We'll be asking the council to consider the conversion of the Carnegie into an historical museum for our community.

Our web site can be found at: www.shstory.org. Check it out for the latest information on Society activities, events, acquisitions and volunteer opportunities.

Finally, we're excited to report that our membership is now approaching 100! Welcome to all of our new members!

Larry Hlavsa, President

P.S. Remember our General Meeting for December has been replaced by a Christmas Party for members at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 2, 2003 at the historic Dr. Crane home (Sunny Acres Bed & Breakfast, 397 Main Street). Bring an appetizer! Don't miss it!! For info contact: Susanne Salvestrin at sacres@napanet.net

St. Helena Historical Society
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www.shstory.org

Officers

President, Larry Hlavsa
Vice President, Mariam Hansen
Secretary, Gwen Becker
Treasurer, Kim Farmer

Directors

Gwen Becker
Kim Farmer
Mariam Hansen
Frank Harrison
Larry Hlavsa
Elaine Hudson
Kathy Kernberger
John Sales
Susanne Salvestrin

Committee Notes:

The **Collections Committee** coordinates and manages the acquisitions of new materials. It meets the last Monday of the month at 4:30 in the library upstairs meeting room. Current chair of the committee is Frank Harrison you can email him at: jackielfrank@aol.com

The **Fundraising Committee** plans and produces events that teach the public about our local history and raise funds for the Society. The Committee is currently planning for an Antiques Appraisal event in February, 2004. Please contact committee chair Mariam Hansen to volunteer. You may call her at 963-5748, or email her at: wartuhi@comcast.com.

I'd like to join the St. Helena Historical Society!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Individual	\$20	Family	\$30
Business/Organizaton	\$100	Life	\$500

I would like to:

Volunteer _____ Make a donation to the Society _____

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITY BRIEFS

Harvest Festival

Our booth at the festival allowed us to make contact with many potential members. It was a good way to advertise our efforts to the townspeople. We spoke to Superior Court Judge Scott Snowden, who offered to portray Serranus Hastings (first chief justice of the California Supreme Court) on the next cemetery tour. Hal Morrison, owner of the Pritchard Building on Adams, requested historical photos of St. Helena to place in the foyer. Shirley Sparks, who donated an important collection of photos to us then moved away, came by to say hello. We met a descendant of Jean Laurent, who built the old winery at the center of Markham Winery. Kimberly Laurent wanted photos of her Great-Great (GG) Grandfather. Bill Ogletree told us that the rear section of the Native Sons Hall was once an outdoor dance pavilion at the end of Hunt Street. Local author Lin Weber came by. She is looking for photos for a pictorial history of the upper valley. Colin MacPhail told us he could get us a tour of the Edge Hill Winery, former Martini family home now being restored by Leslie Rudd.

People enjoyed our photographs and many membership brochures were given out.

SHHS Publishes First Book

St. Helena History of 1881 is the first book produced for sale by our group. It is on sale for \$15. The chapters are: Early Settlement of the Upper Valley, Founding & Development of St. Helena, Churches of St. Helena, Beginnings of the Wine Industry, Wine Cellars in the St. Helena Area, What Was Known About Phylloxera in 1881, Table of Grapegrowers, and Biographies of Notable Citizens. The information was taken from *History of Napa and Lake Counties*, published in 1881 by Slocum & Bowen.

Contact Susanne Salvestrin to purchase a book at sacres@napanet.net. They make great Christmas gifts!

Cemetery Tour

All Saints Day turned out brisk and sunny for the first SHHS Cemetery Tour on Nov. 4. Society members presented 10 biographies of early upper valley residents, most in period costume. They were: Susanne Salvestrin as Nancy Maria Crane, Nina Wemyss as Carolina Krug, Lauren Bruck about Dr. Bale (his GG grandfather), Jack Stone as Clark Foss (his GG Grandfa-

ther), Tom Clark as John Howell (his GG grandfather), Diane Dillon as Caroline Reed (her GG grandmother), Fulton Mather as David Fulton (his GG Grandfather), Dink Mather as Mary Fulton, John Sales as John York, Gwen Becker as Sarah Hudson (the first person buried at SH Cemetery in 1856) and Nancy Lussier as Julia Etta Kister. Pictures of the event can be seen on the web at <http://dell.shutterfly.com/osi.jsp?i=67b0de21b35787b18479>

The Society plans to stage another cemetery tour next year.



Dink and Fulton Mather as Mary and David Fulton

Cemetery History (cont. from page 1)

A large poor section of the cemetery contains small tombstones marked with a number. Records in the office indicate who was buried there. A section nearby contains the graves of many Chinese. At a Chinese funeral, the procession to the cemetery marched down Spring Street with banners, signs, and flags. They carried gold pieces, bowls of rice and other delicacies to leave on the grave of the departed. In the 1930s, a flood in Sulphur Creek washed away many of these graves.

In the 137 years since it was established, Saint Helena Cemetery has served the town of St. Helena well.

COLLECTIONS/ITEMS RECENTLY ACCESSIONED

DONOR:	ITEM/COLLECTION:
Mariam Hansen	Inez Forni Settler autograph book John Wichels book on Yountville Picture of Pope St. Bridge construction
Napa Valley Pub. Co.	101 bound volumes of <i>St. Helena Star</i> from 1874-1993
Carolyn Kalperis	Large group of St. Helena postcards
Clyde Tucker	11 photos from different St. Helena Studios, including one of the Weinberger Winery
Mrs. Alice Zatarain	Group of slides of the Lewelling House taken by her mother

Thanks to all of our donors!

Calendar

November

Nov 25: City Council Meeting, 7 pm, Vintage Hall. Larry Hlavsa, Historical Society President, will give presentation to City Council on "Future of the Carnegie Building". Members encouraged to attend.

December

Dec 2: Member's Christmas Party, 6 pm at Sunny Acres B&B, 397 Main Street. Current home of Susanne Salvestrin and historic former home of pioneer Dr. George Crane. Bring an appetizer to share. 397 Main Street. For info contact Susanne at 963-2826.

January

Jan ??: Oral History Workshop presented by members Dorothy Mackay-Collins and Susanne Salvestrin. (date to be announced on SHHS website www.shstory.org)

Jan 6: General Meeting, 4:30pm, in the Community Meeting room at the Library (see website, www.shstory.org for possible change in location)

Jan 26: Collections Committee Meeting, 4:30pm, Library upstairs meeting room.

February

Feb 2: Board of Directors Meeting, 5:00 pm, Carnegie Building.

Feb 3: General Meeting, 4:30pm, Community Meeting room at the Library (see website, www.shstory.org for possible change in location)

Feb 22: Antiques Appraisal Clinic 1-4pm at Native Sons Hall

Feb 23: Collections Committee Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library upstairs meeting room

Be sure to visit the Society website at www.shstory.org for any changes or updates to events

Mission Statement

The St. Helena Historical Society is a public educational organization. Its mission is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and provide access to historical materials of all kinds from our community as well as to promote public awareness and participation in the collection of such materials.

Mark your Calendar
And
Plan to Attend

"Discover Hidden Treasures of the Valley"

Antique appraisal clinic and show will be held at the Native Sons Hall from 1-4pm

On

**Sunday, February 22,
2004**

Help is still needed
in many areas for this event

If you would like to volunteer
or if you know an appraiser
who can volunteer his or her
time, please call
Mariam Hansen at
963-5748.

St. Helena Historical Society
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