



THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Spring 2004, Vol.2 No.2

Hannah Weinberger by Kathleen Kernberger

St. Helena has always been noted for having a population of strong individuals and the subject of this article was certainly no exception.

Hannah Emily Weinberger shown here on her 80th birthday in 1920 was born in 1840 in New Albany, Indiana. Her parents were John H. and Dorothea (Kloening) Rabbe, both born in Hanover, Germany. After immigrating to the United States, they finally settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, where John became a merchant. In 1871, Hannah became the second wife of John C. Weinberger, who's first wife, Mary, had died in 1866. Along with her own children, Hannah also helped to raise Anna and John's daughter, Minnie.

Originally, a German candy maker, John Weinberger fell in love with California and St. Helena after a trip in 1869. After their marriage, the couple came to St. Helena where they bought 240 acres just north of the town. Originally, described as "a wild piece of land," the property was located on the west side of the highway, across from today's Markham Winery. In the next 6 years, they cleared the land, planted grapes, among them Zinfandel, and built both a winery and a house with formal gardens. The winery remains today as a private residence. Stones for the buildings came from a quarry on the property.

Along with making wine, John also introduced the making of grape syrup to St. Helena. Early on, he discovered a ready market for this product, which many people claimed to prefer to maple syrup. Three gallons of grape juice produced about one gallon of syrup. While saddened by the deaths of daughters, Emily, 2 1/2 and Mary, 6, all in all, life seemed to hold great promise for the Weinberger family. The winery and syrup businesses were expanding and doing well. Their 3 surviving children were healthy and growing.

Active in community life, John helped organize the Bank of St. Helena, served on the County Grand Jury and belonged to many local civic organizations. These included the Masons, St. Helena Viticulture Club, and the Grange. Hannah was active in the Presbyterian Church, which gave her a great deal of pleasure.



Hannah Weinberger on her 80th birthday

Life changed tragically on Tuesday, March 21, 1882. John received a telegram asking him to meet a friend at the Lodi Station. When the train arrived, he was met, not by his friend, but by a former employee, William J. Gau. Gau had fallen in love with Minnie Weinberger, who had no

desire to encourage his love. Fired from his job at the winery, he even followed Minnie when she went to stay with a relative "back East." His actions there completely destroyed whatever feelings she might ever have had for him. When she returned to St. Helena, again, he followed her, shifting his anger over to John, whom he believed had forbidden her to marry him. Gau continued to brood, making threats against both John and the family, which, unfortunately, were ignored. Getting off the train, Gau called out to John, who ignored him and, wishing to avoid a confrontation, began walking away. Gau drew his gun, shot John twice in the head, killing him and then shot himself. One man on the train platform, L. P. Castner had tried to call out a warning, but train noises drowned out his voice.

The entire town attended John's funeral. Several different church choirs sang at the services preformed by Rev. Mitchell. Over a mile long, the funeral procession took over an hour to go through St. Helena. In contrast, Gau's body remained unclaimed and was, eventually buried in a pauper's grave by the city.

After the death of her husband, Hannah took over operation of the winery and vineyards, possibly becoming the first woman winemaker in Napa County. A capable organizer, she also assumed her husband's seat as a director of the Bank of St. Helena. When the Women's Improvement Club was organized in 1905, Hannah was asked by the other members to serve as its first president, which she did. It was felt by many that the early success of this group was due in large part to her leadership. In May, 1931, in failing health, Hannah died quietly in her home, at the age of 90. People remembered her many contributions to the community, and noted how much she would be missed.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Your volunteers have been busy planning for the society far into the future. We are now members of the American Association of Museums (AAM). St. Helena Historical Society member and professional organizational development consultant Tricia Westbrook, volunteers her time with the Society putting policies and procedures in place that are consistent with accepted standards of museum management in America. AAM has given us model codes of ethics, collections policies, job descriptions, etc. Early on we decided that our collecting area would be the St. Helena School District boundaries at the time the St. Helena Historical Society was formed. But which types of items will we collect? A collections policy is necessary to formalize and guide our activities. Part of the procedures is the new Collections Ledger and Registration System, which registers each artifact as it is donated to us. We are the envy of the Napa County Historical Society, who wishes they had an operational plan such as ours at the beginning of their existence.

We are seriously considering that the best way for us to accomplish our mission will be to evolve into a local, historical museum. As we develop the society, we are establishing a framework that will allow us to do that if and when the time is right. Our activities now are foundation for this exciting effort and we hope that many of you will join us in this work!

There are two important functions that our group needs members to volunteer for: membership and marketing. We need two or more volunteers to take over these positions.

Membership involves processing new member forms and maintaining a current list of all members. We have software program for this and training is available. It also includes leading a Membership Committee in promoting the society by mailing membership materials and staffing a table at events. It's a great way to meet new people and introduce them to the society.

The marketing volunteer will be our liaison to the media: newspapers, magazines, radio, etc. When events are planned this person works with the fundraising committee to attract attendees. If you have enthusiasm, good writing skills and are willing to learn basic marketing skills, you could be a great help to the society!

Our Board of Directors will hold the annual meeting, as required by our bylaws, on May 3. During that meeting we entertain nominations for prospective board members. Any is eligible to be nominated to the board. Board members sign a conflict of interest disclosure statement to ensure their private collecting activities don't pose an ethical quandary for the society. Please contact me at 963-5748 if you are interested.

Our next event promises to be a beautiful afternoon at one of St. Helena's most historic estates: the Vine & Fig Tree Farm on Sulphur Springs Road. Victorian High Tea will be served on Saturday, June 26 from 3-5pm. Hats will be worn. A limited number of guests can be accommodated, so we suggest sending in your reservation early using the form in this newsletter. Members and their guests have priority.

Mariam Hansen, President

St. Helena Historical Society
P.O. Box 87
St. Helena, CA 94574
707-963-5244 ext. 187
www.shstory.org

Officers

President, Mariam Hansen
Vice President, Susanne Salvestrin
Secretary, Gwen Becker
Treasurer, Kim Farmer

Directors

Gwen Becker
Kim Farmer
Mariam Hansen
Frank Harrison
Larry Hlavsa
Elaine Hudson
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. These, and other events raise funds for the Society. The Committee is currently planning a Victorian Afternoon Tea, Saturday, June 26 at the beautiful Vine and Fig Tree Farm on Sulphur Springs Avenue. See page 3 for more information on this event.

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 _____

Questions? Comments?

Call or email the Newsletter editor,
Kim Farmer, at 963-0630,
ksfarmer@seedgrain.com

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITY BRIEFS

Museum Software Training

Recently, the St. Helena Historical Society and the St. Helena Library jointly purchased a software package for the management of archival and museum collections called PastPerfect. Used by over 1300 museums this powerful package allows the cataloging, organization and processing of collections of artifacts, documents and photos. An add-on module we acquired allows the easy creation of virtual Web-based exhibits of museum materials. In late April, SHHS board members Tricia Westbrook & Larry Hlavsa and library archivist Chris Kreiden traveled to Vacaville to get all-day training in the program's four modules. The quality of the training received was excellent and we hope the vendor returns soon to our area so that others may be trained. Tricia Westbrook is providing much needed expertise in getting our collections management organized and we hope to be using the PastPerfect software to manage our collection within a month or two. Archivist Christina Kreiden will be overseeing the quality of the records as they are added to the database. Thanks, Tricia and Chris!

Discover Hidden Treasures of the Valley

The second annual "Discover Hidden Treasures of the Valley" antiques event was staged by the society on February 22 at the Native Sons Hall. The new venue was very popular among the dealers who came to evaluate antiques, as well as the guests who brought their treasures. There were 9 dealers evaluating and 2 trades giving repair estimates. Artistry in Gold saw and cleaned many fine pieces of jewelry. Antiques on Second brought her collection of teddy bears and dolls. Restoration Studio showed how they can piece together a ceramic piece from small fragments. Jan's Cane worked on re caning a chair and explained the process. In addition, there was a silent auction of collectibles, wine and antiques. A feast of sweet and savory goodies awaited in the smaller room, as well as wine, coffee and tea. Everyone was very pleased with the turnout, guests were happy to learn about their heirlooms and a good time was had by all. The third annual "Discover Hidden Treasures" will be on February 20, 2005 at the Native Sons Hall.



Ladies and Gentlemen, mark your calendars, and Join us for a gracious repast.

A Victorian Afternoon Tea

To benefit the St. Helena Historical Society

Saturday, June 26th, 2004

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

The Home of Mrs. Elizabeth Peters

Vine and Fig Tree Farm

2455 Sulphur Springs Avenue

St. Helena, California

\$25 per Guest

For reservations please return the clip-out coupon below with your check or money order not later than Wednesday, June 16th, 2004. Note: Advance reservations only. Reservation tickets will be held at the door. If you have questions please telephone (707) 963-5244 ext: 187 In the Victorian tradition Hats Will Be Worn. Please bring your favorite Tea Cup. Music provided by Harpist Hollis Fennen. Reservations will be limited – first preference given to SHHS members.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Number of Guests: _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Check or Money Order to be made payable to St. Helena Historical Society. Mail to P.O. Box 87, Saint Helena, Ca 94574.

WELCOME! NEW MEMBERS SINCE FEBRUARY

Cal Baker
Joice Beatty
Nancy Brennan
Janice and John Brown
Lynda Burton

Kathy Coldiron
Patty Dineen
Anthony Gantner
Edmund Holmes
Babe Learned

Peter and Peggy Molinari
Rose Serrano
Barbara and Richard Shurtz
Karen Sternad
Diane Stremel

CALENDAR

May

May 3: Board of Directors Meeting, 5:00 pm, Silverado Brewery

May 4: General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room (see website, www.shstory.org for possible change in location)

May 24: Collections Committee Meeting, 9-11:30 am, Library Community Room

June

June 1: General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room (see website, www.shstory.org for possible change in location)

June 26: *A Victorian Afternoon Tea*, 3-5pm, at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Peters. See details elsewhere in this newsletter.

June 28: Collections Committee Meeting, 9-11:30 am, Library Community Room

July

July 6: General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room (see website, www.shstory.org for possible change in location)

July 26: Collections Committee Meeting, 9-11:30 am, Library Community Room.

August

Aug 2: Board of Directors Meeting, 4:30 pm, Carnegie Building

Aug 3: General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room

Aug 30: Collections Committee Meeting, 9-11:30 am, Library Community Room

Be sure to visit the Society website at www.shstory.org for possible 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.

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More information on Page 3

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