



THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Summer 2008, Vol.6 No.3

HISTORY OF THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY IN ST. HELENA: 100 YEARS OF SERVICE

by Larry Hlavsa, St. Helena Library Director, 2001-2007

The heritage of the St. Helena Public Library is distinguished by over one hundred thirty years of strong local commitment to service. Begun privately as a subscription library by townspeople in 1875, the first library became a city library in 1892 and was housed initially in the International Order of the Oddfellows Building (IOOF) on Main Street. The library was small, but popular, and its rented space quickly proved inadequate. While 1907 daily circulation was only 27 items, the city had a small but devoted group of citizens who wished to see a more permanent home for its public library. But how would it fund a library building?

St. Helena found its benefactor in the person of Mr. Andrew Carnegie. Mr. Carnegie was the immensely wealthy founder of United States Steel Company who at age sixty-five, had sold the company for \$500 million to financier J.P. Morgan. One of Carnegie's lifelong interests was the establishment of free public libraries to make available to everyone a means of self-education. There were only a few public libraries in the world when, in 1881, Mr. Carnegie began to promote and fund his philanthropic idea. He and his corporation would ultimately spend over \$56 million to build 2,509 libraries throughout the English speaking world. One of those libraries was the St. Helena Public Library.

In 1903, the Town Council asked Mr. Frank Mackinder, editor and publisher of the *ST.*

HELENA STAR, to write Mr. Carnegie and request \$7,500 to build a town library. Correspondence and negotiations continued for four years before an agreement was reached. Part of Mr. Carnegie's requirements for the donation may have delayed the project in that the city was required to furnish a suitable site for the building. In March, 1907 a property tax proposal for funding a Carnegie site passed by a public vote of: Yes-209; No-27. In 1908, the St. Helena Public Library Carnegie Building became a reality.

The architectural plans for the Carnegie Building were drawn by W.W. Wilson of Santa Rosa, California. Mr. Wilson's design was in the popular and uniquely Californian "mission-style" of Architecture, and construction was done by the Hoyt Brothers, also of Santa Rosa, with J.E. Pomeroy in charge. Local mechanics were hired

Cont. on page 3.



Photo of Carnegie Library, 1908. Courtesy of Napa County Historical Society.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Summer has traditionally been a slow time of year and a difficult time to get anything accomplished. The Historical Society has managed to plow ahead and make some progress in a number of areas, as well as plan for a very full slate of events for the Fall.

We have been staffing a booth at the Farmers Market this summer, displaying photos of old St. Helena. As a result of our presence we have added many signatures to our History Center petitions (we now have about 600) and have enrolled some new members. We are continuing to put together written materials describing our History Center ambitions, and hope to be ready to make presentations to local groups in another month.

Work is nearly complete on the restoration and framing of the wonderful 1876 Napa County map which was donated to us by Marie Oliver. We look forward to a public unveiling as early as October.

And speaking of Marie Oliver . . . She is doing an earthquake retrofit on the Sherry building located on Railroad Avenue and in the process uncovered several old bottles, apparently left over from days when the building was a saloon. She kindly donated her find to us – look for an upcoming article in the *St. Helena Star*.

The Historical Society has decided to undertake the writing of a book on St. Helena history. Arcadia Publishing specializes in local history books. They've just published one on Calistoga and another is in the works about Yountville. These books are primarily photographic histories, with lengthy captions describing the events pictured. It is our hope to assemble 200 or more photographs of St. Helena history which have never been published before. We are seeking community help in this venture and if you, or anyone you know, have access to photos of St. Helena through the years, we would love to hear from you about including them in this project.

Our upcoming schedule of events, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of Mariam Hansen, begins with a Chinese trunk show to be held at Rianda House on September 2. This is a presentation of the Napa Valley Museum and celebrates the history and influence of Chinese culture in the Napa Valley.

October features a stop at the Oakville Grocery and a look at its history, and you will also find us at our Harvest Festival booth on October 18.

In November we will again sponsor a Cemetery Tour, this year featuring the stories of those early residents for whom our streets are named.

And in December we will co-sponsor a program at the Library marking the 75th Anniversary of the repeal of Prohibition, as well as seeing all of you at our annual holiday dinner.

Skip Lane

St. Helena Historical Society
P.O. Box 87
St. Helena, CA 94574
Voice mail: 707-967-5502
Email: shstory@shpl.org
Website: www.shstory.org

Officers and Directors

Skip Lane, President
Susanne Salvestrin, Vice President
Mariam Hansen, Secretary
Kim Farmer, Treasurer
Donn Black
Frank Harrison
Mariana Olguin
John Sales
Tricia Westbrook

Committee Notes:

The **Collections Committee** coordinates and manages the acquisition of new materials. It generally meets on the last Monday of the month at 9:30am in the library meeting room. Current chair of the committee is Susanne Salvestrin. Email her at Susanne@salvestrinwinery.com

The **Program Committee** plans and presents programs and events to teach the public about our local history. If you would like to volunteer or want more information, please call Mariam Hansen, 963-5748.

Questions? Comments?

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Individual \$30 Family \$50

Business/Organizaton \$150 Life \$500

I would like to: Volunteer _____ Make a donation to the Society _____

A Reminder...

Renewal letters were mailed in June. If you have not already done so, please renew your Historical Society membership today using the form in this newsletter. Thank you!

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

HELP WANTED FOR ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

The St. Helena Historical Society is planning for its annual Cemetery Discovery Walk, "Spirits of St. Helena," on November 1st. This year we will be highlighting the lives of people for whom St. Helena streets are named.

Our honorees are:

- John C. Money for Money Lane, born 1855, died 1944
- Daniel Otis Hunt for Hunt Avenue, born 1831, died 1915
- John Hall Allison for Allison Avenue, died 1893
- George Lincoln Pratt for Pratt Avenue, died 1920
- Edward Starr Baldwin for Starr Avenue, died 1984
- Marietta Voorhees for Voorhees Circle, died 1989

Anyone who is a family member, friend or knew an honoree is asked to contact the St. Helena Historical Society to share memories and stories. Please call 967-5502 or email shstory@shpl.org.

The formal opening of the Carnegie Building occurred on Nov. 22, 1908. The following "Report of Librarian" appeared in the December 4, 1908, ST. HELENA STAR:

Report of Librarian

The following is the report of the library for November, from the 23rd to the 30th inclusive: Circulation-- lectures and essays, 6; poetry, 1; history and travel, 2; fiction, 193; total, 271; daily average, 39. Number in the reading rooms 161. Visitors to the library on day of opening, 122. New members, 13. Cash received, \$1.90. Mrs. E. B. Huntington presented the library with the number — of Scribner's magazine for 1907. A book entitled "Miscellaneous Writings," written by Mrs. M. B. Eddy was presented, bearing the inscription "Presented to the Public Library of St. Helena, with the compliments of the Sunday School of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Napa, Cal."

SOPHIE ZIERNGIBL
Librarian.

Cont. from p. 1

to do practically all of the construction work including electrical (Elmer Cox and Ernest Marr), plumbing (J.H. Steves) and painting. The original contract provided for completion of the main floor with the upper floor and basement to be left in the rough. As the work progressed, however, "the desirability of completing the entire building was made manifest" and an appeal was made to Mr. Carnegie who provided an additional \$862 towards the project. The Women's Improvement Club would occupy the upper floor, while the basement would contain a large reading room for men. Work on the building was "carried out in a workmanlike and conscientious manner" and the Library Board had "none but words of commendation for those who carried the work to completion." The building opened on November 22, 1908.

The Carnegie Building was used as the St. Helena Public Library from 1908 until 1979. During that time the library was served by eight library directors: Miss Sophie Zierngibl, Ms. Geneva Eckfeldt, Mrs. Fannie Anderson, Miss Alice Armstrong, Ms. Anabel MacPherson, Miss Barbara Bradbury, Mrs. Betty Reed and Mrs. Clayla Davis. A building campaign in the late 1970s and the donation of a land parcel by the well known John Charles Daly (journalist, game show host-- "What's my Line?", author and actor) and his wife Virginia resulted in a new facility being build at 1492 Library Lane. When the library moved to its new location, the Carnegie Building began a new career as offices for the City Recreation Department, a site for City Council Meetings and as a meeting place for recreational activities and community meetings. The Carnegie Building celebrates its 100th birthday this year!

CALENDAR

Call our voicemail to reserve a space: 707-967-5502. See our website: www.shstory.org

September

Sep 2: Chinese Culture in Napa Valley, 4pm, Rianda House. See box below. No RSVP needed.

Sep 18: Board of Directors meeting, 4:30pm, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

Sep 30: Collections Committee Meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room

October

Oct 7: Oakville Grocery, 4pm, Hwy 29 @ Oakville Cross. Historical program on Oakville and the Grocery. RSVP requested.

Oct 16: Board of Directors meeting, 4:30, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

Oct 18: Stop by and visit the Historical Society booth at the St. Helena Hometown Harvest Festival.

Oct 27: Collections Committee Meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room

November

Nov 1: Annual "Spirits of St. Helena" Cemetery Discovery Walk, 1pm at the public cemetery on Spring St. (See inside for more information.)

Nov 20: Board of Directors meeting, 4:30pm, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

Nov 24: Collections Committee Meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room

December

Dec 2: Annual Christmas Potluck dinner. Location not yet confirmed. RSVP requested.

Dec 3: Program at the St. Helena Library, 7pm. Celebrate 75 years since the repeal of prohibition with a program and a toast. No RSVP needed.

Dec 18: Board of Directors meeting, 4:30pm, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

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.

St. Helena Historical Society
Napa Valley Museum
Rianda House Senior
Activity Center

Present

Chinese Culture
in Napa Valley

September 2, 2008
4:00 p.m.

Rianda House Senior
Activity Center

1475 Main Street,
St. Helena

The Napa Valley Museum trunk show brings history to schools and other sites in the valley. Docents enliven a story and relay facts with professionalism and passion. This program, which includes a slide show and items from daily life, will describe the Chinese contribution to Napa Valley from the mid-1800s through the early 20th century.

St. Helena Historical Society
P.O. Box 87
St. Helena, CA 94574