



Saving our history

Just about 15 years ago, a small group of people realized, somewhat to its chagrin, that there was no historical society in St. Helena. A committee was formed to develop a mission statement and prepare proper legal documents. By 2002 a nonprofit organization was formed: The St. Helena Historical Society. Because one of the founders happened to be the director of the St. Helena Public Library, a workspace for the society was eked out of the second floor of the library. Volunteers began their work collecting photos and artifacts documenting the early days of St. Helena.

The founding group was enthusiastic and optimistic. They clearly expected that a history center would be established and the collection would be available to the public within just a few years.

Here we are in 2016. The historical society is still in its "temporary" quarters on the second floor of the library. In spite of numerous efforts to find a home for the collection, 14 years later we are still homeless.

Hope springs eternal

During the revision of the 1993 General Plan, a visioning document was developed for the city-owned Adams Street property. Included in that plan is a history/community center. However, the plan stalled and there is little short-term hope that development will happen on the property. As recently as the March 22, 2016, council meeting, the City Council heard from an ad hoc local group promoting a sophisticated, but divisive, plan that will probably just "push forward" the years' old debate.

In the meantime, the historical society's collection has grown to include hundreds of photographs and artifacts. We have textiles, Native American tools, furniture, a classic 19th century safe, the bound volumes of the St. Helena Star, a carriage, and 2 trucks, as well as collectables, printed materials, and photographs.

Where are these photos and artifacts? Those that fit are stored in museum quality boxes and files upstairs in the library.

Those that don't fit in our limited library space are stored in various buildings, storage containers, and garages around

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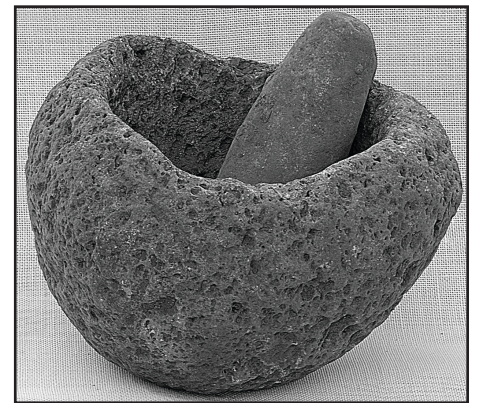
Save the Date: May 21...MUSEUM FOR A DAY!

The community is invited to view many of the artifacts from the St. Helena Historical Society's collection as we also honor our founding families.

10:00 - 4:00 ~ Catholic School gym

Food will be available for purchase

A sampling of artifacts in the collection of the St. Helena Historical Society



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town. A poor, but necessary, choice for preserving historic artifacts. Two of those storage containers are parked at Harold Smith and Sons property along Sulphur Creek. Recently, a complaint was filed with the city stating that Harold Smith and Sons are not permitted to rent out storage space. We received our eviction notice just a few weeks ago.

The pictures in this newsletter will give you an inside peek at some of the historic artifacts in the society's collection, as well as a picture of what our "history center" looks like today. We are still looking for a home. Any suggestions?

Offsite container storage



At the library



Vehicles



Exciting opportunity for photo buffs!

- Do you want to learn more about the history of our fair city of St. Helena?
- Do you enjoy looking at photos that show what our town was like long ago?
- Would you like to help document these photos for the St. Helena Historical Society?

Then a Golden Opportunity awaits you upstairs at the St. Helena Public Library. We need your help in scanning and cataloging our wide collection of amazing photos. It is not difficult and comes with complete training. You have the chance to make a huge impact on the preservation of our history.

Give us a call at 967-5502 if this volunteer opportunity appeals to you.



One of the historic photos in the recently acquired Paulson Family Collection.