



ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THE ELECTROLIER
Illuminating St. Helena's History

May 2025 • Volume 23 • Issue 2

Coming up at the Heritage Center
Rustic Roots: St. Helena Barn Tour, May 18, 2025 | 1-5pm



Prager Winery & Portworks

Greetings!

Last year we partnered with Napa County Landmarks to produce our first Garden Tour in 20 years, and it was an unqualified success.

So this year we're teaming again with Landmarks to produce **Rustic Roots: St. Helena Barn Tour**. This is a self-driving tour, and you can visit the barns in any order. There will be docents at each barn to provide historical details on each property. Pick up tickets and a map at the St. Helena Heritage Center.

- **Early-bird tickets and event details are still available--through May 10--on the [SHHS website](#).**
- **Chart your own tour.** You can buy your tickets now, and if you **synch your tour on Google Maps**, you can circumvent stopping at the Heritage Center on the day of the event.
- **Singer/guitarist Kendall Osbourne** will be playing under the trees at the Olive Oil Company from 1:00-2:30 pm. This is a great time for a break. The Olive Oil Co. has lovely picnic-style food or get takeout drinks and bites from one of St. Helena's cafes and restaurants. [Buy your tickets now](#)





Look Forward to A Walking Tour of St. Helena!

The City of St. Helena has reviewed requests for nonprofit funding and is recommending that our funding be approved. The City has awarded us \$2,448.

According to the proposal, we will use this money to develop and promote a walking tour of our commercial area, featuring those buildings on the Historical Register.

Specifics will include a microphone system so that both the moderator and participants can hear each other over the traffic noise on Main St. We'll create a brochure that displays the buildings in their early formats.

We hope to get the walking tour up and running by July.

For the love of wine: The David Fulton Winery

One of the barns featured on the Barn Tour belongs to Fulton Winery. Founder David Fulton was a bit of a renaissance man. He was an inventor, a visionary leader and the first generation of the oldest, continuously family-owned and operated vineyard in California.

Mather: The evidence is irrefutable

While there are other wineries that make this claim, Fulton Mather, the last family owner, in a family whose genealogical footprint goes back a century and a half, insisted that the evidence is irrefutable.

While Charles Krug is generally attributed with being the first commercial winery, Fulton Mather's great grandfather purchased 40 acres in 1860, a full year before Charles Krug came on the scene!

Fulton Winery: Just 14.5 acres of petite sirah

Mather inherited the winery from the aunt who raised him, and he took pride in being the fourth-generation owner of this historic winery on just 14.5 acres.

Fulton Mather worked at the winery as a child and during summer breaks during high school and college, but he pursued a variety of divergent, but successful careers—he was a teacher and a psychologist, a researcher, a tennis pro and a computer scientist.





It was later in life that Mather pursued winemaking

Mather took a crash course in viticulture at UC Davis to help him understand the challenges he would be facing in his new career. He said, "This is a great location for this varietal--not as hot as Calistoga, but still plenty hot. I took my first wine to the state fair and got a gold medal." That was in 1996, and he won a gold medal the following year.

Taking over the winery in 1999, Fulton Mather and his wife Erma released nine vintages. The Fulton Winery itself now sits in the same footprint as it did in the 19th century. The rock base is virtually the same as it was when his ancestor built the winery. The family sold the property to Fortunate Son Winery, who will save the history.

The contributions of David Fulton

Fulton invented a one-horse plow. Growers could plant vine rows eight feet apart instead of 12 with the standard, two-horse plows, making better use vineyard land.

Fulton also helped create the wine organization, Sonoma, Napa and Solano County Grape Growers Association. He partnered with historic

St. Helena pioneers Charles Krug, David Hudson and John York in starting St. Helena's first waterworks. Fulton also was a trustee in the first St. Helena church.

David Fulton died in 1871, and it was his wife Mary who then shouldered responsible for the future of the winery.

She changed course: Instead of making wine, Mary began selling her grapes. Mather believed that they would have lost their land if they'd stayed in the wine business at that time.

Other barns on the tour

The Napa Valley Olive Oil Factory

A modest white barn, a couple of flags and a homemade sign in a residential neighborhood. An inauspicious beginning. But once you step into this space, the pungent smells of cured meats, stinky cheese and garlic transport you to a neighborhood grocery store in Italy.





Jacob Meily Barn

Jacob Meily was part of the Swiss immigration wave. In 1883 Meily bought David Edwards' 22 acres on Pope Street. He planted a vineyard and began making wine. J.C. Mixon & Co built a new winery for Meily in 1885.

According to a Star article in November of 1885, Meily made 20,000 gallons of wine that year.

Dinner at the Museum: July 26 2025

Last year's event exceeded our expectations, so we're planning another Dinner at the Museum. Same great paella, same guitar player. More great silent auction items.

Same great cause: Keeping history alive.

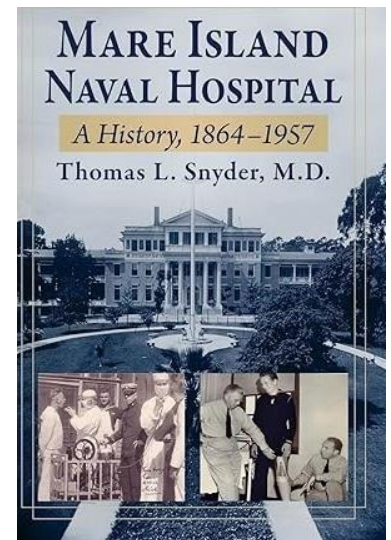


A History of Mare Island Hospital, Aug. 7, 2025, 4pm

Thomas Snyder, MD, spent part of his career at Mare Island Hospital, which has an interesting history. It grew from being a primitive facility in the 1860s to the Navy's premier amputee center for Marines and sailors returning from the war in the Pacific theater.

Located in the Navy's largest California shipyard

The hospital's patients benefited from sunny California weather that permitted creation of a tent hospital to care for Spanish flu victims. Navy Yard engineers helped create the Navy's first ambulance boats, and in World War II, it was known for treating amputees. Dr. Snyder has written a book and will be sharing his experience with the audience.





ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THE ELECTROLIER
Illuminating St. Helena's History

VOLUNTEER AT THE HERITAGE CENTER!

Open the first Saturday of the month from noon-4pm

We're looking for volunteers to help staff the Heritage Center on the first Saturday of the month. Noon-4pm shifts. Contact shstory@shstory.org, 1255 Oak Avenue, St. Helena, CA 94574



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS	VOLUNTEER STAFF
Steve Ericson, President	Kathleen Carrick	Mariam Hansen, Research Director
Kathleen Coelingh, VP	Helen Nelson	Kim Farmer, Membership
Nancy Caffo, Secretary	Stephen Taplin	Nancy Caffo, Helen Nelson, Marilyn Coy, Sandra Price, Collections & Acquisitions
Jennifer Chiarelli, Treasurer	Pam Wieben	
Research Director, Mariam Hansen	Bonnie Thoreen	

JOIN ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On our [website](#) you can download a membership form or pay online. Membership is critical to the Historical Society's success! [Please join us!](#)



DONATE

SUPPORT THE ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Visit the Heritage Center: 1255 Oak Avenue, St. Helena, CA 94574 • SHHS Mailing Address: PO Box 87, St. Helena, CA 94574 • shstory@shstory.org • 707.967.5502 • shstory.org • 501(c) 3 Nonprofit Organization • Tax ID#: 30-0087096