



# THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Winter 2005, Vol.3 No.1

## ***Methodist Church in St. Helena***

*(On January 4, 2005, the St. Helena Historical Society met at the United Methodist Church. SHHS member and Church historian, Ann Wolf gave a talk about the history of the church. The following article is excerpted from her talk.)*

The history of the Methodist Church in St. Helena is linked to the early circuit rider system; traveling preachers who rode a circuit, gathering congregations and preaching the Gospel along the way. Asa White was one of these circuit rider preachers and a key figure in the founding of the Methodist Church in Northern California. Arriving in San Francisco in 1849, he brought about the building of that city's first Methodist Church. He then moved to what is now Arcata and founded another church, seeming happiest when he was organizing churches. Ill health forced him to leave Arcata and in 1852, he purchased land near Healdsburg where he went into the stock raising business. He preached in the settlements in Sonoma and Mendocino counties, holding meetings and church services in school houses and courthouses.

It was in this same year of 1852 that he made his first appearance in the Napa Valley. Here he met and became friendly with the Florentine Kellogg family and made his headquarters with them whenever he was in the valley. He preached his first sermon in a grove nearby, in what is now Bothe Napa Valley State Park. The area around Dr. Bale's grist mill was the up-valley community of the day.

Living in the Bale grist mill area were several pioneers, strong supporters of Methodism. Florentine Kellogg, a zealous Methodist layman, arrived in the Napa Valley in 1844. He was hired by Dr. Bale to work on the grist mill. Kellogg was paid with 600 acres of land below the mill. He did all of the metal work on the mill. He also built a home for his family near the mill. That home, known as the Lyman House, still stands next to the Bale Mill and is recognized as the oldest frame house in the county. Reason Penelope Tucker was another Methodist pioneer living in the area of Bale's mill.

When a Bible class grew large enough, a church was built at

that location. The up-valley class became the Methodist Episcopal Church when the first church building in Napa County—the White Church—was dedicated on November 13, 1853 by Rev. Asa White, its founder. It was built on land deeded to it by Reason Tucker, who had also obtained land for a ranch from Dr. Bale. Lumber for the church was furnished by Dr. L. G. Lillie who was leasing the Bale Mill at the time. Rev. James Corwin, a carpenter, went about building the White Church. It was a 22' by 32' frame building which had two entrances—one for men, the other for women and children. During services, they sat on opposite sides of the church. The church was not far from the home built by Florentine Kellogg. Kellogg kept a room in his house known as "the preacher's room." This was reached by an outside stairway from the front porch and was especially dedicated to the use of the pioneer preachers,

who always found a cordial welcome. They could stay as long as they pleased "without money and without price."

There are two versions of why the pioneer church was known as the White Church. One is that it was named for its founder, The Rev. Asa White, the other, that it took the name of its whitewashed color.

A land survey in 1855 led to a period of uncertainty regarding title for the church. A decision was eventually reached in 1872, but by then, the church had

been abandoned. It stood as a landmark of pioneer days for more than 50 years until destroyed by fire on September 12, 1906.

During the period of uncertain title in 1863, Rev. Corwin, built a parsonage in the new community of St. Helena. Methodist services were held in the newly built Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In 1867, the original parsonage was sold, and the present church and adjoining parsonage were built with a membership of 86 and Rev. W. S. Bryant in charge. In 1873, Rev. William Angwin, brother of Edwin Angwin for whom the town of Angwin was named, was appointed minister. In that same year, founder Asa White died. He is buried in St. Helena Cemetery.

(cont. on page 3)



*White Church, date unknown (photo courtesy of D&K Kernberger)*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to 2005! It's going to be a great year for the St. Helena Historical Society. After long hours of work by volunteer Tricia Westbrook and the Collections Committee, we now have an Acquisitions & Collections Management Policy. This policy will guide our work as we evolve into a museum for St. Helena history. There are several volunteer jobs associated with this function and we hope members will step forward to be trained for them.

**"St. Helena Museum For a Day"** will be the next exciting event, held on Sunday, February 20 at the Native Sons Hall from 12-4pm. We are inviting anyone with St. Helena photos or objects to exhibit to contact us by Feb 16. The owner should come tell about the objects and watch over them. Please call Susanne at 963-2826 to participate.

We enjoy the notes that members send in with their membership dues:

*My mother was born in St. Helena in 1895. L. Isabel Mooney (Baker) later taught school in the little one room school house on Silverado Trail for a short time.*

*I was born in Oakland but was raised in St. Helena, graduating with the Class of 1941 (high school – I am now near my 81<sup>st</sup> birthday). After high school I went to Sacramento to attend junior college. But then the war broke out and I joined the Navy and spent 3 years on submarine duty. I came back to Sacramento and worked for 35 years for the Pacific Telephone Company. My mother, father & brother are all in the St. Helena Cemetery, along with numerous relatives in the 2 Mooney plots. One day I will join them as will my present wife. My late wife is also there.*

*I would like to know if a roster of your members is ever issued.*

*I hope my donation will be a little help.*

*Calvin O. Baker*

The Society received many donations in memory of member Janice Wight. These memorial contributions have been put to good use to enhance our events. We purchased a cordless microphone and amplifier, which was used for the first time on February 1 at William Cole Winery. Everyone was able to hear the lecture with the microphone. The meeting was recorded using the new Canon Elura 70 Camcorder. Still photographs of historical sites and photos can now be taken with our new Canon Powershot A95 digital camera. Many thanks to the Wight Family and all generous donors.

### Volunteer Opportunities:

**Membership Manager**-sends out renewal notices, processes new and renewing members, keeps membership list. Call Mariam Hansen at 963-5748 if interested.

**Public Relations Manager**-notifies the media of our events, sends emails to list of media outlets, occasional phone followup, posting event flyers. Contact Mariam Hansen

**History in the Schools**- upon invitation from teachers, talks to children about our St. Helena history or takes them on walking tours of downtown or the cemetery. Call Susanne Salvestrin at 963-2826.

"History of St. Helena of 1881" book reproduction **work day**, copying and collating our book on library equipment. **Urgently needed.** Group can schedule convenient hours. Contact Mariam Hansen

As we move on with our work in 2005 there will be more opportunities for members to become involved. Indeed, it is crucial that we get more help.

Please contact any Board of Directors member to volunteer.

*Mariam Hansen, President*

St. Helena Historical Society  
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www.shstory.org

### Officers

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Vice President, Susanne Salvestrin  
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### Directors

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Tricia Westbrook

### Committee Notes:

The **Collections Committee** coordinates and manages the acquisition of new materials. It meets the last Monday of the month at 9:00am in the library upstairs meeting room. Current chair of the committee is Frank Harrison. You can email him at jackielfrank@aol.com

Questions? Comments?

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

### Corrections:

Thanks to observant reader Tony Gantner for pointing out an error in the article on the October General Meeting. The Bear Flag Revolt was in 1846, not 1864, as stated in the article.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITY BRIEFS

### *A Visit to William Cole Winery, formerly Weinberg Winery*

The St. Helena Historical Society’s February meeting was held at the William Cole Winery across from Markham Winery. The beautiful stone building was built in 1876 by John & Hanna Weinberger with 80,000 gallons of capacity. Very large for those days!! Their Victorian residence was built north of the winery, but did not survive. John was in the nursery business and the landscaping in the old photos showed it. The grounds were designed by famed landscape architect Thomas Church, whose original designs are framed and hung in the living quarters.

Our tour guides were owners Bill & Jane Ballentine, who bought the five acre property and began restoration in 2000. The tour began on the ground floor, which is being renovated into a modern winery. This part of the building had been unused for about 50 years, while the two upper floors were converted into a residence in the 1930s.

Today three new stainless steel tanks sit near the winery door, waiting to be installed. The stucco covering the natural stone interior has been removed, exposing the beautiful Howell Mountain stone. The wood support pillars have new concrete

bases and have been repainted. There is still room for the his ‘n hers horse-drawn carriages, once belonging to the Weinbergers, inside the tank room. The next room will be the barrel room. Since the roof of this room will be the patio for the residence, concrete slabs supported by steel beams form the ceiling. On one side is a small cave, which has been resurfaced and decorated with lights. A decorative wrought iron door will protect the library wines soon to be stored there.

The next smaller room shows the original fir ceiling joists. A 1930s stairway leads up to the future patio. This will be the winery’s tasting room.

Walking up the drive, around the building to the front door of the living quarters, we note the stone plaque above the entrance “1876”. What is now the family’s living room was once a barrel storage area—the room is fit for a castle. A stone fireplace is in the corner. A huge picture window looks out over the future patio, pool and back garden. The room is furnished with comfortable couches and armchairs. Visitors made themselves at home, while they listened to Kathy Kernberger tell about Hannah Weinberger. Elaine Hudson spoke to the group about the founding and first year of the Federated Women of Upper Napa Valley, now celebrating its 100th birthday.



St. Helena Methodist Church, circa 1910 (photo courtesy of D&K Kernberger)

(cont. from page 1)

A tower was added to the church in 1874 to house a bell purchased from Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which had been destroyed by fire in that year. The bell still hangs and rings today. Over the years, a number of improvements have been made to the church including a pulpit in 1876, steel ceilings and Gothic windows in 1897. In 1968, it became the United Methodist Church and is presently the oldest church building in St. Helena.

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

***I would like to:*** Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Make a donation to the Society \_\_\_\_\_

## CALENDAR

### February

**Feb 20:** “St. Helena Museum for a Day,” 12 to 4pm at the Native Sons Hall, 1313 Spring St. See below for more info.

### March

**Mar 1:** General Meeting at Elmshaven: Guided Tour of the Ellen G. White House. Tour begins at 4:30pm at 125 Glass Mountain Lane, Deer Park. Take a trip with us to the home of a prophet of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Mrs. Ellen White is such an important religious leader, her home has been restored just as it was when she died in 1915. The house was built by Robert Pratt in 1885 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

### April

**Apr 5:** General Meeting, 4:00pm at Edge Hill Distillery Tour and Lecture, 2585 Sulphur Springs Rd. Reservations required, limited to 25 participants. Call 963-5244 X 187 to reserve. William Scheffler purchased the property in 1879 and gave it the present name. In 1880 he built a “fermenting house”, the present distillery. The winery was converted to a residence, later occupied by the Martini family. Leslie Rudd, the present owner, is converting the building back to a winery.

### May

**May 3:** General Meeting, 4:00 pm. Nichelini Winery Tour & Tasting, 2950 Sage Canyon Road (Hwy 128). Roberta Oswald, a Nichelini descendant, will be our hostess at the Chiles Valley winery. [www.nicheliniwinery.com](http://www.nicheliniwinery.com)

*Be sure to visit the Society website at [www.shstory.org](http://www.shstory.org) for possible changes and 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.**

Discover  
the  
**“St. Helena Museum  
for a Day”**

Sunday, Feb. 20

from 12 to 4pm

at the

Native Sons Hall

1313 Spring Street

Donations requested at the door.

Experience the dream of a St.  
Helena Historical Museum.

View exhibits by local families  
and businesses, a photo collec-  
tion of babies delivered by long-  
time St. Helena doctor, Dr.

George Wood, and much, much  
more!

Refreshments served.

For more information, call Su-  
sanne Salvestrin at 963-2826.

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