



# THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Spring 2005, Vol.3 No.2

## *Museum for a Day*

*By Mariam Hansen*

The St. Helena Historical Society held its first annual “St. Helena Museum for a Day” on February 20 at the Native Sons Hall. The event was intended as a sneak preview of what a historical museum in our town might look like. Exhibits from 20 exhibitors and SHHS collections filled the hall. The visitors’ register showed 150 people attended, in addition to the exhibitors and volunteers. Everyone agreed it was an educational and delightful af-



Peering over old maps of St. Helena in Steves Hardware exhibit

ternoon, made more so by the sumptuous repast prepared by Roberta Oswald and her crew.

Eight long-time families displayed their photos: Bourne-Hayne, Fulton-Mather, Conn-Dillon, Crane-McPike, Palmer-Morgan, Penland-Mee, Mooney-Baker and Beringer. Three wineries brought items: Beringer Blass, Edge Hill Wine Company and David Fulton. The Oddfellows and Federated Women were there, in addition to the Methodist Church and the Silverado Museum. St. Helena Schools were well presented by Skip Lane, who brought class photos from 1918 on. Vince Amendola, a former teacher from 1949-1956, brought yearbooks and photos. Peggy Meister brought her research on the one room school houses of this area.

Ken Pragg, purveyor of paper artifacts also came to the

museum day with his Napa and Sonoma County goods. These included postcards, stock certificates and other fine paper wares. People who didn't have treasures of their own, and some who did, were delighted to find more treasures amongst his wares.

Oral history intern Pat Alexander and Board member Tricia Westbrook set up a recording booth in the back of the hall and invited attendees to stop by and tell the story of how they happened to come to St. Helena. Twenty-five local citizens ranging in age from 9 to 89 years old lent their voices and personal memories. This is the first in a series of recordings we hope to use as the soundtrack for the inaugural exhibit at our future Museum. Watch for the “Voices of St. Helena” booth at our next event and come tell us your story!

The most unique artifact came from Edge Hill Wine Company. It was a “fire grenade”—a primitive fire extinguisher from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Seen in photo at right.) This type of glass bottle filled with water and soda ash was mounted on a wall rack. In case of fire, the bottle was thrown at the flames, the water and soda ash putting out the fire—in theory. The grenade exhibited was found during excavations for restoration at Edge Hill on Sulphur Springs Road, the site of our April 5 meeting.



A delicious lunch and afternoon tea was prepared by Roberta Oswald and her volunteers. Many members baked tasty goodies for the event. We are becoming renowned for our refreshments!

Due to the overwhelming response, “Museum for a Day” will take place again next year on February 19, 2006. Anyone interested in joining the St. Helena Historical Society is invited to call 963-5244 X 187 (voicemail) or visit our website: [www.shstory.org](http://www.shstory.org).

## PHOTO GALLERY

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

### Officers

President, Mariam Hansen  
 Vice President, Susanne Salvestrin  
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### Directors

Gwen Becker  
 Kim Farmer  
 Mariam Hansen  
 Frank Harrison  
 Larry Hlavsa  
 John Sales  
 Susanne Salvestrin  
 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 [jackiefrank@aol.com](mailto:jackiefrank@aol.com)

Questions? Comments?

Call or email the Newsletter editor,  
 Kim Farmer, at 963-0630,  
[ksfarmer@seedgrain.com](mailto:ksfarmer@seedgrain.com)

### *In Memory of*

Historical Society member Marjorie Markel, born August 9, 1918. She passed away on the evening of March 22, 2005 at her home in St. Helena.



Fulton and Dink Mather at the Fulton Family exhibit



More exhibits at "Museum for a Day"

### *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'd like to:* Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Make a donation to the Society \_\_\_\_\_

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITY BRIEFS

### *Research Project on St. Helena Library*

St. Helena Library director and Historical Society board member, Larry Hlavsa has recently begun working on a history of the St. Helena Library. Remarkably, no such history has ever been written. Larry, whose undergraduate work included a major in history, is enjoying his sojourn back into St. Helena STAR microfilms, original source documents and other research materials.

Larry informs us his research has already found that the library has been a part of the City since 1892 but that its roots actually date from 1884 when a band of local citizens got together and formed a "capital stock" or subscription library. Users bought a share and received borrowing privileges, or could pay 25 cents per month and get the same privileges. Larry's research has also revealed that one St. Helena librarian, Mrs. Fannie R. Anderson, was librarian for 39 years retiring at the age of 84 in 1951. Does anyone remember Fannie? As much as he loves the St. Helena Library, Larry informs us he will "definitely not" be breaking Fannie's longevity record!

Larry expects his research may take a year or more. He hopes to glean information from longtime local residents, from living past librarians and from descendents of the fifteen former City librarians. He hopes to work with the St. Helena Historical Society in getting the information published sometime next year.

### *Edge Hill Visit, April 5, 2005*

The Society held its April meeting at Edge Hill Wine Company, presently owned by Leslie Rudd. Our hosts for the meeting were Colin McPhail and Polly Brown.

Colin began our visit with an introduction and history of the property. The original creator of Edge Hill, General Erasmus Keyes, purchased the land in 1867. He hired James Dowdell, an Irishman, as a ranch foreman and construction manager. The winery is one of the earliest gravity feed types in the valley. In 1872, Keyes sold to General Richard Heath, a hero of the Mexican war and member of the first California legislature. The first harvest yielded 70 tons and 11,000 gallons of wine. When Heath died in 1875, the winery passed to his son and was sold in 1879. The new owner, William Scheffler, developed Edge Hill into a model winery estate. He bought a patent to a new process for making brandy and built the distillery, which is now a visitor center. He developed the winery into one of the largest in the state. In June, 1883, he shipped a record 53,300 gallons of wine. By 1889 phylloxera took its toll and the business began to slump.

Today, the gravity feed winery is being converted from a residence (where Louis Martini's family lived) back to winery use. A steel framework supports the original structure, plus additions of a balcony and expansion of the building into caves which will be dug into the hillside.

At the conclusion of our visit, Colin pulled a small package from his pocket. When opened, it revealed a large bronze medallion with relief pictures on it. It says "Republique Francaise" on one side and "Edge Hill Wine Co." on the other. It was won in 1889 at the Paris Exposition for Edge Hill brandy. Through a convoluted series of events, it was found on EBay.

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### *Society Visits Elmshaven, March 1, 2005*

Our March meeting was held at Elmshaven, home of Ellen G. White, a prophet and prolific writer of church doctrine for the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Our hosts were Robert and Carol Janssen. Carol gave the tour.

Elmshaven was built in 1885 by railroad man Robert Pratt as his country home. His brother William Pratt was one of the founders of St. Helena Sanitarium. In 1900, Pratt sold his home, including furnishings, tools, wagons and animals, to Mrs. White. Recently returned from missionary work in Australia, Mrs. White bought house and all for \$5,000.

The parlor, a small museum of Mrs. White's life, contains glass cases of correspondence and photos. Her portrait hangs above the fireplace. Much of the original furniture is in the living room where Carol told us stories of daily life from the early 1900s. The dining room table is set with china in a "blue willow" pattern similar to that used by Mrs. White. The engraved silver napkin ring was used by her. An old windup telephone hangs on the wall. In the kitchen, a wood burning stove also heated water for the upstairs bathroom. From the scullery, a small staircase leads to Mrs. White's writing room. In a cheerful corner overlooking the garden, she would sit in a comfortable chair with her writing board. The room is lined with bookshelves. Next, we saw the quite modern looking bathroom. In the sewing room, Carol explained that Mrs. White made clothing, rag rugs and other crafts. In the next bedroom hangs the White Family tree. Son Edson White was a missionary in the south in the 1890s. Traveling in a river boat, he held prayer meetings and taught blacks to read. The final room is Mrs. White's bedroom, recreated to look as it was. In the corner hangs a handicraft from Australia: a floral wreath made of bird feathers. Pictures of her sons sit on the small desk.

At the end of the tour, we were all amazed at this beautiful home on the National Register of Historic Places that many never knew was here. It was a step back in time to life as it was in 1915, the year Mrs. White passed away.

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## CALENDAR

### June

**June 2:** NV College Trip to Filoli Mansion and Gardens in Woodside. Call 967-2901 for more info.

**June 7:** General Meeting, 4:00pm. Historic garden tour of Spottswoode Estate led by Sandra Price, local garden historian. 1401 Hudson St., St. Helena. See [www.spottswoode.com](http://www.spottswoode.com).

**June 29:** NV College Trip to Empire Mine in Grass Valley. Call 967-2901 for more info.

### July and August

Because of summer vacations, there will be no general meetings in July or August.

### September

**Sep 6:** General meeting, 4:00pm. Tour and Lecture at Ink House B & B, built in 1884 by Theron Ink. 1575 South St. Helena Hwy at Whitehall Lane. See [www.inkhouse.com](http://www.inkhouse.com).

### October

**Oct 4:** General Meeting, 4:00pm. Illustrated Lecture by Marvin Collins at Seneca Ewer House, now Beaulieu Hospitality House, located next to the winery. Winery tour, also. See [www.bvwines.com](http://www.bvwines.com) and [www.rutherforddust.org](http://www.rutherforddust.org)

### November

**Nov 1:** General Meeting, 4:00pm. 150th anniversary of Masons in St. Helena. Tour of Napa Valley Masonic Lodge #93 & Ritchie Building, 1331 Main Street, St. Helena.

**Nov 5:** Third Annual Cemetery Tour, 1-4pm. Featuring Civil War Veterans. St. Helena Cemetery, 1461 Spring St., St. Helena.

### December

**Dec 6:** Annual Christmas party potluck dinner and lecture, 6:00pm. At Sutter Home Inn, 277 St. Helena Hwy. Learn about Thomann, Sutter and Trinchero families. Call 963-5244 X 187 to reserve a space. See [www.sutterhome.com](http://www.sutterhome.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.**

General Meeting:

**Historic garden tour**

**June 7**

**4:00pm**

**Spottswoode Estate**

**St. Helena**

Join Sandra Price, local garden historian, on a stroll through the sumptuous grounds of Spottswoode. Built by George Schonwald, a German immigrant, it was originally named "Esmeralda" and had a winery next door. His career in hotel management culminated at the Del Monte Hotel in Monterey and he shipped many of the plants and trees to St. Helena from there. 1401 Hudson Street at Adams. Begins at

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