



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

SEPTEMBER 29 • VOLUME 19 • ISSUE 2

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**INTRO: SHHS BOD PRESIDENT BONNIE THOREEN**

I greet you as your newly elected president of the St. Helena Historical Society, taking over from Stephen Taplin. He has been an inspiration to me and to the board with his vision, energy and careful oversight. A fifth generation St. Helenan, Stephen's thoughtful leadership comes from his deep roots in our community.

**We are at an exciting time in our journey** to make the St. Helena Historical Society a vibrant and important part of our community. It's been more than a year since we opened our Heritage Center Museum at the former Catholic School on the corner of Tainter St. and Oak Avenue. We realized a longtime dream of having space to store and exhibit our continually growing collections. We also have administrative space and a meeting room for our popular lectures.

**The Center/Museum is open on the first Saturday of the month**, from noon to 4:00pm. We welcome your visits—bring your family, especially children and out-of-town visitors. We welcome your ideas, critiques, and of course, we welcome your volunteer hours!

**Our goal is to open the Center/Museum more frequently**, and we need your help to make that a reality. Join us to learn more about St. Helena's fascinating history that dates back some 10,000 years, how each group of settlers contributed to the culture we know today.





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**18<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SPIRITS OF ST. HELENA CEMETERY DISCOVERY WALK**

**The St. Helena Historical Society** is once again partnering with the St. Helena High School Drama students to reenact scenes from the lives of early settlers. This year we're showcasing our Italian and Italian-Swiss settlers. Among those we'll be channeling are the Mondavi and Pestoni families. They brought their skills to their new homeland and began growing grapes and making wine.



**Sunday:** Oct. 9

**Tours:** 1:00 and 2:30

**Adults:** \$20; **Students:** \$10

**Tickets sold at the gate:** St. Helena Public Cemetery, 2461 Spring St.

**Info:** [shstory@shstory.org](mailto:shstory@shstory.org)

**HILOS VISIBLES: A NEW EXHIBIT CELEBRATING OUR HISPANIC HERITAGE: OCT. 16**

**Hilos Visibles (Visible Threads)** is a countywide project celebrating Napa Valley's Latino heritage. Members of the Hispanic community are interpreting their culture through the creation of quilt squares, banners and quilts.

The art and fabric designs will be the focus of exhibits at the Napa County Historical Society, starting Oct. 7, and the St. Helena Historical Society's Heritage Center Museum, beginning Oct. 16.



**Hilos Visibles' overarching theme focuses on family, unity, country, ancestors, faith and love**

The art "untangles the invisible threads that tie us all together to make visible the individual stories of our community," said quilt artist Arlene Correa Valencia.

Participants are encouraged to tell their stories through the fabric squares. For many, it will be their immigration stories and what it means to be Hispanic in the Napa Valley.



For St. Helena Historical Society, *Hilos Visible* is the launching pad for their new permanent exhibit on the history and impact of Spanish-speaking people in the St. Helena area. The history dates back to the arrival of the Spanish settlers in the late 1700s and the creation of the missions.

**The Hispanic exhibit will be part of our permanent exhibit**

Many of us know about the braceros, who came here to harvest the crops when the local men went off to fight in WWII, but the Spanish-speaking settlers' footprint goes much deeper. The story isn't complete without including a discussion of the land grants and the arrival of the missions. We hope to provide a deeper perspective," said Historical

Society ex-President Stephen Taplin.

**PIONEER FAMILIES: LECTURE SERIES HIGHLIGHTS**

**The Lyman family, July 13, at the Heritage Center Museum**

Brother and sister Margaret and William Whittingham Lyman (Bill) were our presenters as they traced their family's history. We all know the family donated Lyman Park to the City. But Bill and Margaret shared many interesting anecdotes about their cosmopolitan family.

**Their Uncle Jack was a favorite**



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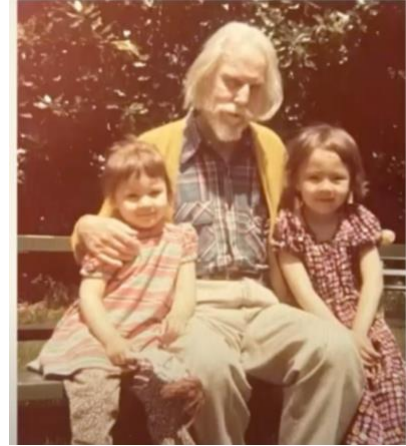
Uncle Jack paid Margaret to type his memoirs when she was in high school. For Bill, Uncle Jack was his mentor from age 12 and on. Uncle Jack graduated from UC Berkeley with degrees in English and Botany. He got a Masters in English, then studied Gaelic and Welsh poetry at Oxford.

He began teaching at UC Berkeley in 1913. An intellectual and a bohemian, he and his friends began protesting WWI, and his friends were being thrown in jail. Two years later they were still in jail--no charges and no progress on their cases. Uncle Jack worked to get them released.

**Uncle Jack married a poet in 1921, and they had a son in 1923.**

He taught at St. Helena High Schools for a while, and he published several of his own poetry books. He was rubbing shoulders with well-known poets of the era, including e.e. cummings, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens.

**Listen to the Lyman Family Lecture on our YouTube channel**



**The Chaix Family, October 14, at the Heritage Center Museum**



Lois Day, a descendant of Jean Victor Chaix, discussed the influence of the Chaix family on the area's developing wine industry. Chaix was a horticulturist from Provence, who left his homeland at 23 to pursue opportunities in Napa Valley.

He and his partner, Jean Adolphe Brun, started out with a tiny cellar in Oakville, then planted a vineyard on Howell Mountain from clippings of nine varietals imported from the Medoc region of Bordeaux.

In 1886, the Nouveau Medoc Winery built a new winery on Howell Mountain, and it became known as the Brun & Chaix Winery, the 13<sup>th</sup> bonded winery in California.

**AURELIO HURTADO: IMMIGRANT, FARMWORKER, ACTIVIST**

**In preparation for our *Hilos Visible* exhibit and in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month, former SHHS President Stephen Taplin interviewed Aurelio Hurtado, a longtime champion of workers rights.**

Aurelio Hurtado grew up in Mexico. His family moved from a beautiful little village to Ciudad Jerez when he was 13. It was

here where he went to school and later graduated from college. His brothers and cousins all began immigrating to the United States and found jobs in Los Angeles. Aurelio wanted to be with his brothers and joined them in Los Angeles.



He had trouble with the smog and in May 1954, he



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joined his brother, who was working for the Mondavi family at Krug Winery in St. Helena.

#### **Aurelio loved the beauty of St. Helena**

The town reminded him of the village in Mexico where he had spent his early years. He began working for Mondavi along with his brother.

While he didn't speak English, he was able to communicate through another worker, Enrique, who spoke Portuguese. He lived on the Krug property in a shack where they could see daylight through the uneven siding. During Napa Valley's cold winter months when the wind whipped through the cracks, they'd take the burlap bags that the wine corks came in and stuff them into the holes in the walls.

**Stephen Taplin:** You had a college education, and you'd been offered a good job with a Mexican electric company, and here you were, living in a shack on a wine estate. Did you think about possible missed opportunities?

**Aurelio:** "Being close to my brothers was very important to me. There were so many people coming to the U.S. in my family. I needed to stay close to them. That transcended any feelings of doubt. I understood that this was the most important thing. I worked for the Mondavi family for almost 13 years. The family was so good to us."

#### **Being with his family transcended discomforts**

Aurelio's brothers from Los Angeles and his cousin Louis all moved to St. Helena and worked at Krug. When Aurelio started out working in the fields, they told him he was going to make \$1/hour. When he got his first check, he thought there was a mistake—he had worked so many hours. But they were taking ten cents/hour out for rent on the drafty shack. His brothers and cousin made more money working in the winery.

**Aurelio:** "My brother introduced me to the man in charge of the crush who was looking for someone to work in the winery. He was concerned that I was too small and skinny. But my brother told him to give me a

chance—I was a hard worker. My cousin brought some rubber boots and told me what to do. I climbed into the tank and went to work. The grapes kept coming in, all day and all night. It was exhausting."

#### **Within days, Aurelio was teaching new hires how to do the job**

"At the end of the season, my boss asked me if I wanted to work in the winery or go back to the fields. I wanted to stay there. That meant cleaning the whole system to get it ready for next year's grapes."

Aurelio worked for the Mondavi family at Krug Winery for 13 years doing just about every job in the winery. He and his brothers rented a house where they all lived together. He had a good job and worked hard. It should have been enough.

#### **An introduction to Cesar Chavez was a life-changing event**

"I was invited to a conference where Cesar Chavez was the speaker—it was three intensive days together. When I heard Cesar, what he was trying to do, I decided that this is what I needed to do. I quit the winery, and that became my life's work--following the ideas of Cesar Chavez.

I listened to stories from my brothers and friends--there was so much discrimination of Hispanic workers. Even though we were treated well by the Mondavi family, I knew that there was a lot that was wrong, and I was not happy. I worked with Cesar to bring the union here."

In 1967, Aurelio helped found the North Bay Human Development Corporation (later expanding and taking the name California Human Development). A year later, Hurtado was offered a job with the corporation as Director of the On the Job Training and Adult Work Experience Programs to serve migrant and seasonal farmworker families. He was instrumental in the founding of Clinic Ole.

"We had to work harder and smarter to make a better life for everyone. I did this for 45 years of my life before retiring in 2013."



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**VOLUNTEER FOCUS: RESEARCH DIRECTOR MARIAM HANSEN**

Mariam was born and raised in St. Helena by German-Armenian immigrants, and she grew up on the corner of Zinfandel Lane and Silverado Trail. She graduated from San Francisco State University with a degree in business.

**She began a career in financial services**

Mariam spoke Spanish, and Wells Fargo Bank's International Division hired her as a credit analyst for the Latin American division. She was soon chosen for Wells Fargo's officer training program and was assigned to the loan syndications department. When that job ended, Mariam took her severance package and took off for Europe.

**Mariam became an uber volunteer**

Mariam married and had two children. She embraced volunteering—in her kids' schools, and later, when the Historical Society was formed, "I was all in the first day—I found my calling. I have been president, program chair and now research director. It's lots of fun!" Mariam is also secretary and historian for the St. Helena Public Cemetery Board of Directors.



As our research director, Mariam spends countless hours researching the history of our town. She's our resident oracle.

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**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](mailto:shstory@shstory.org), 1255 Oak Avenue, St. Helena, CA 94574





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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**October 1:** Festa Italiana: We'll have a table at the festival to help celebrate all things Italian in St. Helena. In Lyman Park.

**October 9:** The Cemetery Tour is back! This year we're channeling our Italian and Italian-Swiss settlers for the annual Spirits of St. Helena Cemetery Discovery Walk

**October 16:** New exhibit--Hilos Visibles--an art and fabric exhibit that's part of a countywide celebration of Latino culture. More info on our website.

**November 2:** Congressman Mike Thompson will be putting political agendas aside to discuss "**Growing up in St. Helena**".

**December:** Research Director Mariam Hansen will be talking about the movies made in St. Helena!



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Nancy Caffo, Secretary	Stephen Taplin	Nancy Caffo, Helen Nelson, Marilyn Coy, Sandra Price, Collections & Acquisitions
John Sales, Treasurer	Pam Wieben	

**MEMBERSHIP IN ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



**Membership renewal letters were mailed in late May.** If you haven't sent in your check yet, please do so now. Use the form we mailed to you, or go to our [website](#). You can download a membership form or pay online. Membership is critical to the Historical Society's success! [Please join us!](#)

**SUPPORT ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Visit the Heritage Center:** 1255 Oak Avenue, St. Helena, CA 94574 • SHHS Mailing Address: PO Box 87, St. Helena, CA 94575 • [shstory@shstory.org](mailto:shstory@shstory.org) • 707.967.5502 • [shstory.org](http://shstory.org) • 501(c) 3 Nonprofit Organization • Tax ID#: 30-0087096

