



# THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Summer 2003



*Interior, St. Helena Star Building, ca 1910*

## *History of a Small-town Newspaper: The St. Helena Star*

*By Kathy Kernberger*

Many St. Helena citizens were surprised recently to learn of the sale of the Star to the Pulitzer Publishing Company, which also owns the Napa Valley Register. In its current location on Main Street since 1900, the St. Helena Star symbolized the stereotype of a small-town newspaper. Since it was founded in September 1874, its main focus has been local news. Who was going where, doing what, what new businesses were moving into what buildings, and whose rooster was waking up what neighbors with his loud crowing. Other papers have come and gone, sometimes in the space of only a few months. The Star survived.

First publisher of the Star was Dewitt C. Lawrence. A. Clock bought the first paper off the press for \$20. Lawrence ran the paper until 1876, when he sold to Charles A. Gardner. The Lawrence family moved to Oakland where Dewitt published the West Oakland Press, and where he went bankrupt in 1880. Some might have remarked that he should have stayed in St. Helena, where he was successful.

Next publisher was Charles A. Gardner. Son of Charles and Annice Gardner, he was born August 22, 1842 in Middleport, Illinois. In 1860, the family moved to California and Charles A. also began to practice law and work for newspapers. These included the Sacramento Union, Democratic Press (Sacramento) and the Anaheim Gazette.

In 1872, he moved to St. Helena and bought a 50-acre vineyard and half interest in the Napa Register. He sold his interest to partner George Francis and bought the Star in February of 1876. With a short break in 1878, when the paper was leased to N.A. Morford, Gardner operated the Star until 1884 when he sold to Willis MacKinder. Gardner and his family next moved to Pomona where he bought and operated another newspaper. By 1891, ownership had passed to Willis' brother, Frank, who constructed the building in which the Star has been housed since June of 1900.

The lot for the building, 34 x 75 feet, was purchased from Miss Calderwell and D.O. Hunt. On February 6, 1900 ground was broken for the foundation according to plans drawn by Napa Architect, W.H. Corlett. He also acted as construction superintendent for the project. Head stonemason for the two-foot thick walls was R.H. Ritchie. Stone for the front of the building came from the Tubbs property on Howell Mountain. That for the back and side walls came from the Jursch Quarry near St. Helena. By the end of the month, the cornerstone was laid. This event was described by the Star as "an event of little monument to the community." Into the tin box for the cornerstone went: the St. Helena Star (Feb. 16, 1900); Napa Daily Register (January 25, 1900); Pope Valley Herald (a defunct paper); a small flag; business cards from many different people; and a list of the men who worked on the building, including W. Kennelly and Frank Guigni. Star foreman and former editor H.E. Prouty contributed the Pope Valley Herald. The box was laid into the cornerstone with MCM (Roman numerals for 1900) cut into the side. The stone was "leveled" and Mrs. F.B. MacKinder struck the stone with a mallet, declaring that it was well and truly laid. Simon Harrison did the interior work (except for painting, plumbing and "tinning"). Rammers & Son did the painting, while J.H. Steves took care of plumbing and "tinning." Millwork of pine was done by Corlett Brothers and plastering by F. Morris.

The two large arched windows were of French plate glass with an open arched entrance between them. Inside to the left was the Star office. Special attention had been given to lighting the area and it was claimed that there was no better lit printing office in the state. To the right, was the real estate/insurance office of W.A. MacKinder. The post office, with F.B. MacKinder as postmaster, was centrally located in the interior of the vestibule. Mailboxes were made of oak and surrounded the general delivery and money order offices.

Today, the newspaper offices occupy the entire building. Sadly, that will not continue to be as the building was not sold with the paper. Local citizens have expressed concerns about the future of the building. When the Star Building was opened in June of 1900, it was described as having "convenience combined with beauty." Certainly, the term "beauty" continues to apply, over a century later.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Welcome to the second issue of the St. Helena Historical Society *Electrolier!* This past quarter was a busy one. A number of new donations were added to our collections (see the list on p.3), the *Hidden Treasures* antiques event was held on May 25th at the Krug Winery, the first exhibit of Society materials was held at the St. Helena Library (eighteen editorial cartoons by Joan Martens) and general membership meetings were held at two local historically significant sites including the Lewelling House and the White Sulphur Springs Resort. Our Collections Committee kept busy and the planning for our November 1st tour of the St. Helena Cemetery continues.

On a down note we are losing our membership chairperson, Arlene Lamb. Thanks Arlene for all your hard work! Arlene and her husband are building a new home in Lake County. We wish them great success in this project and many happy years in their home when it is completed. Anyone who is interested in becoming the new membership chairperson for the Society is encouraged to call me at 967-2805. Please, we need a membership chairperson! Volunteer!

The re-design of the second floor of the St. Helena Public Library continues and is nearing completion. When finished the new space will house archival stacks, the office for the Library's archivist, the St. Helena Historical Society computer (for photo scanning, newsletter preparation, forms generation and more), a conference table and reading space for archives users. A public access PC for viewing the photo collection is also being planned. Please note that the archives are available by appointment only with archivist Chris Kreiden (963-5244 x104).

Our web site can be found at: [www.shstory.org](http://www.shstory.org). Check it out for the latest information on Society activities, events, acquisitions and volunteer opportunities. During the past quarter we put on it a number of photos of recent events and a virtual version of the Joan Martens exhibit which was held at the Library in June, 2003. If you have any suggestions as to what additional information should be on the Web site please send them to me.

Currently we have three volunteers working on our photograph collection. Frank Harrison, Kathy Kernberger and Susanne Salvestrin are all scanning and preparing various photographs of St. Helena and its families. All have been working hard and we hope to start making these photographs available in the near future.

The St. Helena Library is purchasing *PastPerfect* which is a highly regarded museum collection management software package. It will be installed on the archivist's computer and available through the SHHS computer as well.

Finally, we can always use new members! We can always use more donations of money! We can always use more donations of materials! We can always use more volunteers! Thanks!

Larry Hlavsa, President

P.S. October 7th, at 4:30pm our General Membership meeting will be at the Vine & Fig Tree Farm, 2455 Sulphur Springs Ave. Join us at this special meeting place. Watch the Web site for details.

St. Helena Historical Society  
P.O. Box 87  
St. Helena, CA 94574  
707-963-5244 ext. 187  
[www.shstory.org](http://www.shstory.org)

### **Officers**

President, Larry Hlavsa  
Vice President, Mariam Hansen  
Secretary, Gwen Becker  
Treasurer, Kim Farmer

### **Directors**

Gwen Becker  
Kim Farmer  
Mariam Hansen  
Frank Harrison  
Larry Hlavsa  
Elaine Hudson  
Kathy Kernberger  
John Sales  
Susanne Salvestrin

### **Committee Notes:**

The **Collections Committee** meets the last Monday of the month at 4:30 in the library. Current chairman of the committee is Frank Harrison EMAIL: [jack-ielfrank@aol.com](mailto:jack-ielfrank@aol.com)

The **Fundraising Committee** plans and produces events that teach the public about our local history and raise funds for the Society.

On May 25th the Society presented, **Discover Hidden Treasures of the Valley**, an Antiques Appraisal event at Krug Winery. Our thanks to local appraisers, dealer and exhibitors who donated their time: Gary Spratt Americana, Greg Martin Auctions, Patina Estate Jewelry, Albert Dobbs Antiques, Antiques on Second, Halloway House Antiques, Restoration Studio and Nina Wemyss, Cultural Ambassador for Robert Mondavi Winery. Guests enjoyed complimentary wines and cheeses from Charles Krug Wines and Sonoma Cheese Company. Mark your calendars now for the next Antiques Appraisal event, February 22, 2004.

See the back of the Newsletter for details on the **St. Helena Cemetery Tour** planned for November 1. Current committee chair is Mariam Hansen, EMAIL: [wartuhi@attbi.com](mailto:wartuhi@attbi.com)

Questions? Comments?

Call or email the Newsletter editor, Kim Farmer, at 963-0630,

### ***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 would like to:***

Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Make a donation to the Society \_\_\_\_\_

# St. Helena History Crossword Puzzle

## Across

2-Last name of the well known doctor and his wife, for whom the St. Helena Library is officially named.

3-He donated the land for the Baptist Church in 1857.

4-Built in 1857, this was the first church in St. Helena

6-Publishers of the 1878 Illustrations of Napa County California

7-Son of a popular St. Helena minister, he became known for both his surveying skills and his "colorful" language.

9- A seller of general merchandise, he was appointed St. Helena Postmaster in 1864.

12- This association sold Grey-stone Winery to Bisceglia Brothers in 1925.

14-Proprietor of the St. Helena Hotel in 1876.

15-This popular St. Helena gathering spot is located on the site of the old "Turner Hall."

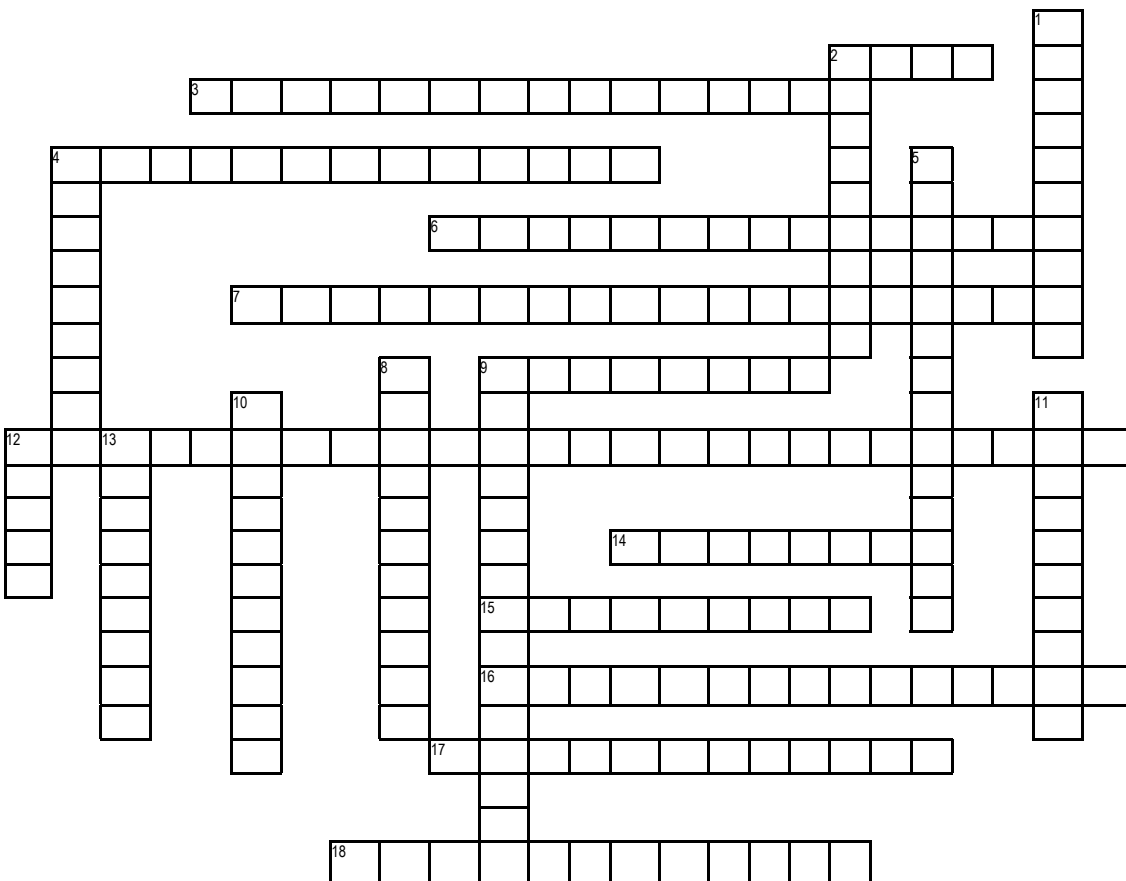
16-Purchased the St. Helena Star in 1884.

17-He owned the "Star of the Pacific Premium Mill" until his death in 1865. A Napa Valley town is named for him.

18-Name of the St. Helena newspaper founded in 1874.

## Down

1-About 1853, this Englishman bought 100 acres from Dr. Bale. This land later became



the west side of St. Helena, running from Sulphur Creek to Madonna Ave.

2-Architect for the 1900 St. Helena Star building.

4-These Brothers bought Grey-stone Winery from the California Wine Association in 1925.

5-In 1925, Walter Metzner was the owner of this well known pharmacy business.

8-This church was built in 1853

on Tucker's farm and named for being the only painted church in the upper valley.

9-First publisher of the St. Helena Star.

10-Original owner of Sutter Home Winery, he died on a trip to his homeland, Switzerland, in 1900.

11-In the 1850's, this man built his house and shoe shop near the NW corner of Spring and Main Streets.

12-Name of the family who donated the land for the "new" St. Helena High School, now Vintage Hall. Their house is now Sunny Acres Bed and Breakfast.

13-The July 2003 meeting of the S. H. Historical Society was held at the historic home of this pioneer family.

(See page 4 for answers to this crossword puzzle created by Kathy Kernberger.)

## COLLECTIONS/ITEMS RECENTLY ACCESSIONED

### DONOR:

### ITEM/COLLECTION:

John York

International Order of the Odd Fellows (IOOF) collection of 22 financial ledgers.

Joan Martens

Eighteen framed original editorial cartoons dated 1989-2003.

Joan Martens

One original unframed cartoon titled "St. Helena Hysterical Society", drawn especially for the Society by Ms. Martens.

Patrick Moore

*Silverado Rough Writers*, various issues 2001-2003. Newsletter of the St. Helena creative writing club.

Ann Wolf

*A History of White Sulphur Springs* (typescript).

Herb & Jennifer Lamb

*Illustrations of Napa County California with Historical Sketch* (1878). NOTE: Donation for scanning.

John Aguila

*Late Harvest—Collectors Historical Edition* (1984).

Kergan Bruck

Family and St. Helena photographs (ca 30 photos).

Kergan Bruck

Rancho Carne Humana Land Grant Plate dated 1867 (copy)

Diane Dillon

Family and St. Helena photographs.

*Thanks to all of our donors!*

# Calendar

## August

**Aug 4:** Board of Directors Meeting, 5:00 pm, Carnegie Building  
**Aug 5:** General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library community room  
**Aug 13:** Fundraiser Meeting, 2:30 pm, Public Cemetery Office  
**Aug 25:** Collections Committee Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room

## September

**Sep 2:** General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room  
**Sep 29:** Collections Committee Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room

## October

**Oct 7:** General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Vine & Fig Tree Farm, 2455 Sulphur Springs Ave. Arrive early to tour grounds.  
**Oct 27:** Collections Committee Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library Community Room

## November

**Nov 1:** St. Helena Cemetery tours, 2 to 5 pm, St. Helena Cemetery  
**Nov 3:** Board of Directors Meeting, 5:00 pm, Carnegie Building  
**Nov 4:** General Meeting, 4:30 pm, Library community room  
Collections Committee Meeting time and date to be announced later

Answers to St. Helena History Crossword Puzzle:

**Across:** **2**-Wood, **3**-HiramLouderbach, **4**-BaptistChurch, **6**-SmithandElliott, **7**-JohnAlstrumMitchell, **12**-CaliforniaWineAssociation, **14**-Antonolla, **15**-LymanPark, **16**-WillisMackinder, **17**-GeorgeCYount, **18**-StHelenaStar

**Down:** **1**-HenryStill, **2**-WHCorlett, **5**-SmithsPharmacy, **8**-WhiteChurch, **9**-DewittCLawrence, **10**-JohnThomann, **12**-Crane, **13**-Lewelling

### *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.**

St. Helena Historical Society  
Presents:  
**Honoring Our Founders:**  
Tours of St. Helena  
Cemetery  
Sunday, November 1  
From 2 to 5pm.  
One hour tours of cemetery  
gravesites, at 2:00, 3:00 and 4:00  
pm, with historical commentary  
on the lives of some of St. Helena's  
Founders. Featuring descendants of some of our  
founders and guides in period costume.  
Come and learn about the lives of Dr. Bale, Dr. Crane, Clark Foss (infamous stagecoach driver), David and Mary Fulton, John Howell, David Hudson, John Kister, Charles Krug, Caroline A. Reed, Augustus Tainter, and John York. Time limits us to these eleven. More will be featured in future tours.

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