



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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18th 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

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



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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

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.

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.

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 loved the beauty of St. Helena

Aurelio joined his brother, who was working for the Mondavi family at Krug Winery in St. Helena. He joined his brother at Krug, living on the 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. That transcended any feelings of doubt. That this was the most important thing. I worked for the Mondavi family for almost 13 years. The family was so good to us."

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.

Even though we were treated well by the Mondavi family, I knew that there was a lot that was wrong,



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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.”

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 hired her as a credit analyst for the Latin American division. She was 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.

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



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.



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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!



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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 • 707.967.5502 • shstory.org • 501(c) 3 Nonprofit Organization • Tax ID#: 30-0087096

