



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

JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

CONTENTS

- **Introduction:** Board of Directors (BOD) President Bonnie Thoreen
- **A Generous Donation**
- **Program Highlights**
 - **July 26: The McCormicks:** Roots to Reinvention
 - **The Judgment of Paris** and Napa Valley Wines
 - **Pioneer Women** of Diversity and Influence
 - **A City of Immigrants:** We teamed with Sheli Smith, Ph.D., at the Napa Valley Historical Society, to apply for a grant from the Arts Council Napa Valley. We received funding for a new exhibit that will premier in October, **City of Immigrants.**

INTRO: SHHS BOD PRESIDENT BONNIE THOREEN

Greetings!

Summer in the Upper Napa Valley. Cool evenings, warm days, plenty of sunshine and beauty all around. With this season comes visitors—either tourists or houseguests. Many of these visitors to our wine country destination also want something more than winetasting and road tripping, especially if there are children involved.

Consider exploring the history of the St. Helena area: Visit the Heritage Center Museum at 1255 Oak Avenue (the former Catholic School). We're only open the first Saturday of the month, from noon to 4:00.

However, if I am available, I will happily meet you for a private viewing. We are committed to making our museum collection available to our community, and we're looking for alternate ways to bring history alive and share our town's fascinating past. We also welcome volunteers—contact us at 707-738-6535 or shstory@shstory.org for a tour or to inquire about volunteering.

We hope to see you soon.

Bonnie





JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

THE McCORMICKS—ROOTS AND REINVENTION

July 26 @ 4pm | Featuring Betty McCormick Malmgren

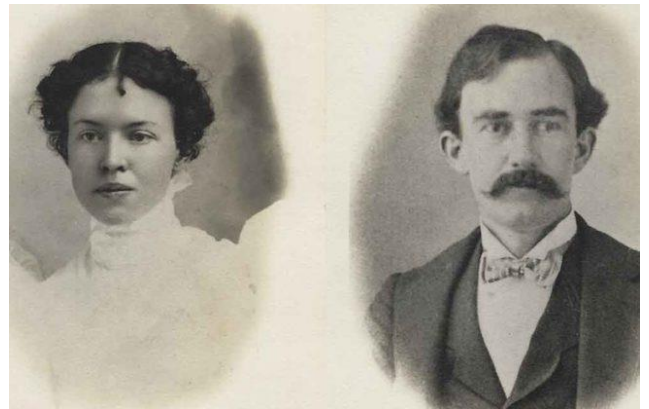
The Historical Society continues its discussion of the pioneer families of St. Helena

While the McCormick family history goes back many generations, Malmgren will focus on her grandfather, Rodney McCormick, who authored stories on Napa Valley history.

He died in 1952 when she was a toddler. His parents William Newton and Nancy Jane (York) McCormick were among those who played a role in the history of St. Helena as did his grandparents, William Jordan and Margaret (Terrell) McCormick and John and Lucinda (Hudson) York.

Rodney was born in St. Helena on the 4th of July in

1871. He was remarkable for his ability to keep reinventing himself. From a drayage business to owning a general store, from farming to investing in Sierra Foothills gold mines, he evolved according to economics and the changing needs of his community.

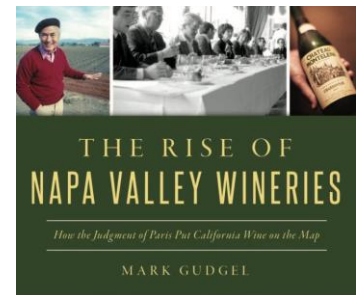


Rodney McCormick and wife Emma

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS AND NAPA VALLEY WINES

On May 23, Dr. Mark Gudgel talked about the Judgment of Paris, the event that changed forever the perception of Napa Valley wines.

Gudgel's book, *The Rise of Napa Valley Wineries: How the Judgment of Paris put California Wine on the Map*, tells the story of Napa Valley's wines besting those of France in a blind wine-tasting event. Since then, the growth of the Napa Valley wine region has been explosive and is now one of the greatest wine-producing regions in the world.



GEAT NEWS for all who have struggled to hear our speakers . . .

We have purchased a new lectern and microphone. Look forward to hearing all of our great programs!



JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

NAPA VALLEY'S PIONEER WOMEN OF DIVERSITY AND INFLUENCE

On March 16, local historian Rebecca Yerger discussed some of the remarkable pioneer women of St. Helena, beginning with the Wappos, that date back ten thousand years.

- **Laura Somersall**, a famous Wappo-Pomo basket maker, teacher, lecturer and linguist.
- **Eva Jennings**, an African American who was St. Helena's 1975 Citizen of the Year.
- **Emma Eels**, another of these remarkable women, was one of the owners of Callustro Corporation. Callustro manufactured household cleaning products made from a refined, sand-based native stone.



THANKS TO A GENEROUS DONOR

In honor of Fulton Mather and his family's legacy in St. Helena, the 1011 Foundation recently made a generous donation to the Historical Society.

David Fulton died in 1871, three years before the St. Helena Star could chronicle his achievements. His winery was leased to others and ceased production in 1887. It collapsed in a severe storm in 1973. Fulton Mather recreated history when he rebuilt the winery, which was built in 1861 as the first winery within the city limits. In 2003 the structure was rebuilt on the original footprint.

The St. Helena Historical Society honored the 150 years of the family vineyard in 2010.

A plaque was awarded marking the establishing of the vineyards in 1860. Fulton relished being a vintner. He joined Appellation St. Helena as a board member and conducted research on early St. Helena wineries, often speaking to Mariam Hansen about his efforts.





JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

AN UPDATE ON ST. HELENA'S CHINESE MEMORIAL

Many will remember January's excellent program when John McCormick talked about the Chinese workforce that helped build St. Helena. There was a flurry of interest, a committee was formed, we applied for a City nonprofit grant, and it was funded. This is an update.

The St. Helena Chinese Monument Committee was formed to place a gravestone in St. Helena Cemetery for fifty Chinese persons who were buried there in unmarked graves in the 1800s. From the 1870s to the early 1900s, hundreds of Chinese people lived and worked in the St. Helena area. They were a significant labor force for vineyards, farms, mines, roadbuilding and hop fields. There was a sizable anti-Chinese movement in California and here, so the workers began moving away.

The City of St. Helena has granted the St. Helena Public Cemetery Association the funding needed to construct the monument. Soon the granite will be ordered from India and Napa Marble & Granite Works will inscribe the names. For more information contact Mariam Hansen at research@shstory.org

JOSS HOUSE
ST. HELENA CHINESE MEMORIAL
 From 1870-1900 Chinese men were the primary labor force in Napa Valley Vineyards.
 We remember those who died by death year.

Wan Sing 1876	Ah Riu 1891	Wong Sing Fu 1911
Mock Yan 1879	Ah Sien 1891	Leon She Yuck 1911
Unknown Wmn 1883	Gee Me Wing 1891	Lin Ten 1912
Ar Sei 1884	Lou Foong 1892	Wing S Sin 1912
Ar Korseau 1884	Mak Bean 1893	Wong She Wong 1914
Unknown 1885	Lee Han 1894	Louie J Chen 1918
Unknown 1885	Lee Jim 1894	Ah Gin Bing 1919
Hog hi 1886	Won You 1896	Don Wing 1920
Ah Low 1886	Lou Hung 1896	Bing Gee 1923
Lem Hung 1887	Fong Ken 1897	Don Ock 1925
Ah Quang 1888	Lam Nong Ghen 1897	Chin Chung Teo 1927
Ah Luong 1887	Ah Sing 1898	Wong Hon 1928
Yung Hong Sing 1888	Wing No Jim 1903	Jack Wong 1929
Sing Lee 1890	Wong Tau 1905	Wong Chung 1929
Ah Low 1890	Woo Chun 1905	Ah Gough 1933
		Chan Chow 1933

Erected February 2024 by
 City of St. Helena
 St. Helena Cemetery Association

A VERY HISTORIC BLOCK AT MAIN AND ADAMS STREETS

By Mariam Hansen

The northwest corner of Main Street and Adams, where Silverado Credit Union is now, has a fascinating history. The block has been the home of city government, houses of worship and the site of numerous restaurants and saloons.

There were former churches . . .

At Oak and Tainter Streets was a structure said to be the home of Thomas Sheehan, and it was later converted to the first Catholic Church. When the second Catholic Church was built in 1878 this building was moved to the corner of Spring and Oak. It then served as the Episcopal Chapel until their stone structure was erected in 1884.



Main Street at Adams, northwest corner.



JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

Then a tailor shop

The structure was then purchased by Mrs. Taylor, who had it moved to the northwest corner of Main and Adams Streets. It was renovated into a tailor shop with living space in the rear.

Later Miss Mary Monroe, an African American former slave, and a splendid cook, operated it as a restaurant called "The Home Restaurant". She was very hospitable and would feed the incoming preachers until they got settled. She closed in early 1895. After that C.F. Miller opened a bar/restaurant. John Peterson conducted a restaurant there until 1893.

Then came the George Rivers' Saloon

The Rivers Saloon, was at the location for many years until Rivers retired in 1945. The next owner was H.J. Longstreet. In February 1955 the old building was called "Hank's Place", a restaurant and bar operated by Elmo and Catherine "Katy" Micheli and Earl and Helen (Bruni) English. Later they moved to the Hunt Building and opened the Valley Café.

In 1876 city council meetings were held in Judge Haskins' office above the National Hotel. In 1882 the town bought a lot at Tainter and Oak Avenue from Thomas Sheehan. The new city hall was completed in early 1883 for \$800. The lower floor was for the firemen and the upper floor for city council meetings and justice court. The fire bell was installed in a tower built on the side of the hall.

The St. Helena Vintners Association purchased a lot on Church Street in 1880 and in July completed the Winegrowers Hall. Winemen held frequent meetings to discuss various matters related to viticulture, winemaking and marketing. The upper floor was rented to the St. Helena Grange.

The Winegrower's Hall moved to Main and Adams

In 1891 the town bought the Winegrower's Hall and moved it to the east side of Main Street north of Adams (now a parking lot). The front room upstairs in the new (to the town) city hall was outfitted as the public library. The old town hall was sold to Abraham Goodman in 1891 for \$215, who moved it from Oak and Tainter to Main and Adams next to the new town hall. The site had been a cooperage shop. The old hall was converted to a photography studio.

In 1955 St. Helena built a new city hall on the southeast corner of Main and Pine. Because a bond election failed, they used money from the general fund and water fund to build the cheapest fire-proof structure possible, made of block.

Salvaging artifacts from earlier times

The city fathers made sure that the city hall contained two artifacts harking back to St. Helena's earlier days. The fire bell was carefully moved to a place of honor (later moved in front of the current firehouse).

Another old timer, the pendulum clock which has ticked off the minutes of city council meetings for decades, was carefully refinished. In 1955 it was mounted on the wall of the new council chamber, ready to take up its duties in plusher surroundings. [Editor note: this clock now lies abandoned in our former city hall]



JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

VOLUNTEER FOCUS: NICK COY

Nick Coy's fascination with old cars began with his first acquisition, a Model A, when he was just 15. He now owns eight antique cars and an antique tractor. Nick is the one we turn to when an item needs to be tweaked for display. When we need to move something, it's Nick who fires up our 1927 Chevy flatbed truck and helps us load and unload a wide variety of artifacts.

Nick moved to St. Helena in 1976

He married Marilyn, who is part of the museum's Collections team. They share a love of historical items. Not surprising for an automobile buff, Nick owned a local auto repair shop for many years. He also worked at Pitney Bowes and several wineries, including Martini and St. Supery. Nick retired in 2006. What does he do now? Ask anyone who has owned antique vehicles and they'll confirm that he spends a lot of time chasing parts and working on his cars!



NEW IN OUR COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT



Memorabilia from Napa Valley Wine Auction, from attendee John S. Burns. Donated July 7.



JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

WE'RE TAKING IT TO THE STREETS!



1913 Vintage Festival Parade line Up at St. Helena Depot

This photo is from the 1913 St. Helena Vintage Festival Parade. The second Vintage Festival took place over four days in September 1913. The parts of the parade on Admission Day are lined up in front of the train depot for a photo.

From left to right: St. Helena Grammar School "Fairyland" boat under sail, Native Sons pulled a wagon with the Native Daughters dressed up as Roman goddesses, a float representing the Spanish missionaries who planted the first wine grapes, by Loeber as "St. Helena" surrounded by gifts from the great wine countries and the Redmen on horseback. (Courtesy of the Molinari family)

We've launched a new initiative to make St. Helena's history more accessible—we want to create pop-up exhibits throughout our community. We just completed our first project—a wine-related group of photos, artifacts and storyboards at Gary's Wine and Marketplace. We included a city map with park locations for visitors who may be picking up food and wine and looking for a place to have a picnic.

Contact us at shstory@shstory.org if you are a business or winery and would like to host a SHHS historic exhibit or have an idea for an exhibit or display.



- **July 26:** Pioneer Families: The McCormicks—Roots to Reinvention
- **September 24:** Spirits of St. Helena Discovery Cemetery Walk. We'll be channeling our Irish settlers this year. Think names like Fealy, Greer and .
- **October 21: Harvest Festival:** We'll be there with our booth. We'll also be at the Heritage Center. Come and see what's new at 1255 Oak Ave.
- **October: City of Immigrants.** Our new exhibit premieres. A look at the immigrants who arrived in the Napa Valley. Why they fled their countries of origin and what they brought to their new homeland.



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

JULY, 2023 • VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 3

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



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL



It's membership renewal season. We make it easy to renew online via our secure website, shstory.org/joinus.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS	VOLUNTEER STAFF
Bonnie Thoreen, President	Kathleen Carrick	Mariam Hansen, Research Director
Kathleen Coelingh, VP	Helen Nelson	Kim Farmer, Membership
Nancy Caffo, Secretary	Stephen Taplin	Nancy Caffo, Helen Nelson, Marilyn Coy, Sandra Price, Collections & Acquisitions
John Sales, Treasurer	Pam Wieben	

WE NEED A NEW COMPUTER FOR THE SHHS OFFICE



Does anyone have a computer that they're not using and would like to donate? Laptop or desktop, Mac or PC. Contact us at shstory@shstory.org. Thank you!

JOIN ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



On our [website](https://shstory.org) you can download a membership form or pay online. Membership is critical to the Historical Society's success! [Please join us!](https://shstory.org)

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 94574 • shstory@shstory.org • 707.967.5502 • shstory.org • 501(c) 3 Nonprofit Organization • Tax ID#: 30-0087096

