

THE LATEST NEWS OF 1889

By Leo Martin for the St. Helena Star/Edited by Mariam Hansen, St. Helena Historical Society

The New Year's Ball was given by the Turners

[St. Helena Turnverein—a German social club] in their hall [on the site of today's Lyman Park]. The festivities started with a concert number by the orchestra, followed by gymnastic exercises on the parallel bars by five young men.

There was dancing until three o'clock the next morning. Interrupted by an intermission at midnight, when there was a tableau to usher in the New Year. Gifts were distributed from the Christmas tree and little Mamie Warren danced the Highland Fling. The old town cannon, which stood near the town hall [Oak and Tainter] was hauled out by the boys to be used in welcoming the New Year. It was loaded to the muzzle, so the discharge was so strong that the cannon carriage was badly demolished.

A nearly total eclipse of the sun took place shortly after noon on New Year's Day

The sky was clear and conditions were favorable for witnessing the rare event.

Jacob Merk, for nine years in the tailoring business here, sold out to Emil Wells of San Francisco.

H.R. Bussenius & Son moved their drug store from the corner of Main Street and Hunt Avenue to a room in the Windsor Hotel [Hotel St. Helena today] building next to Telegraph Alley. Dr. Henry Pond's office was in the rear, reached also from the alley.

Edwin Angwin built a three-story hotel on his Howell Mountain Resort [sold to the Seventh Day Adventist Church in 1909—today Pacific Union College].

Diphtheria was prevalent. Included among the victims were four of the five children of a prominent physician.

The new Southern Pacific depot, larger and with a longer freight shed, was built three hundred yards north on Railroad Avenue. The old depot at Railroad and Hunt was reconstructed at Oakville depot.

Six go-as-you-please contests were in vogue. On the seven-lap track in Mechanic's Pavilion in San Francisco, Hart covered 525 miles. Jim Davis of St. Helena made 360 miles.

On February 15th the Star published an eight-page number with a review of events of the previous three years, and a write up of the town, business establishments, etc.

A 50,000 gallon reservoir was constructed in Lyman Creek for Bourn & Wise to supply water to the new Greystone Winery [today Culinary Institute of America] and pipes were laid to conduct the water.

Rollo Wheeler was kicked by a horse he was currying on March 1

He died shortly afterwards without regaining consciousness. The tragedy occurred on the 13th anniversary of his marriage to Miss Susan Chiles. Besides the widow, he left two young sons. Mr. Wheeler was a native of Vermont, aged 33 years. The Star stated the funeral procession was the longest ever seen in St. Helena with 170 carriages in line.

Power to the press!

The Star installed a four horsepower steam engine to furnish power for its presses. Steam was furnished from Duckworth & Genung's Foundry [then located on Railroad Avenue

Otto Jursch, for three years with Wells Fargo & Company, accepted a position with Bell Brothers.

Agitation started for the nine-hour [work] day and a reduction of working time to a 54 hour week.

On April 1st Fred Caricof and Mrs. Alice Carey were married at the home of the bride.

At the town election in April, after much discussion pro and con, the new charter—the fifth time the question was submitted—carried by 55 votes. Trustees and other town officials were elected, but under the new charter a new election had to be held on May 13.

A foot race took place between Sam Clark and Frank Pellet for a stake of one dollar. “Sam started at a terrific speed and would have won if he had been able to hold the pace, but the early spurt was his undoing.”

A number of young men rode their bicycles all the way from Napa. All but one had the new style “safety” bicycle. On the way two “petered out” and had to be towed in behind a cart. All enjoyed the banquet prepared for them at the Windsor Hotel [Hotel St. Helena today] with compliments of A.L. James of Napa, agent for the Swift safety bicycle [new design similar to today’s bicycle styles].

In April a 24 hour go-as-you-please contest was held in the skating rink on Adams [between Main and Oak]. There were nine entries: Charles Blom, John Whitton, Jim Davis (professional), Louis Hastie, William Serguson, Ed Veitch, Bismarck Bruck, H. Powers, Rufus March. The track was 32 laps to the mile. The contest ended at the end of 23 hours and 40 minutes when Jim Davis finished his 100th mile. Next finishers were Blom, Powers, Veitch, Whitton, Hastie, and Serguson. March had to work all day, but ran 2.5 hours in the evening. Davis won \$44; Blom \$20; Powers \$9; and Veitch \$4.

Tiburcio Parrott [builder of Miravalle, now the Spring Mountain Winery estate], who maintained extensive gardens, was awarded first prize for cut flowers at a flower show in San Francisco.

Charles R. Vann was the orator at a May Day barbecue and picnic in Pope Valley.

Members of the Americus Hose Company, making up a team to race at a tournament at Santa Rosa, were Rufus March, Wiley W. Coffield, Angus McMillan, Charles Swartout, Louis Pellet, George Fountain, Jake Lockbaum, John Tainter, Joe Cox, William Kohler, L. Duckworth, Louis Paulson, Al Bell (foreman), and Frank Burnett (trainer).

Dr. M.F. McTaggart filled up a sanitarium in the Kibbler Building [now home to Wydown Hotel].

David Fried and son of San Francisco took over the management of the Commercial (formerly the Palace) Hotel.

Jim Davis, a local athlete, defeated Hart (winner of the six day race in San Francisco) in a heel and toe contest.

Louis Pellet has adopted the little boy Louie who has resided with the family of W. H. Whitmore. Insurance solicitor Whitmore, who worked for Smith and Johnson, had been found to be withholding premiums collected and was notified to make up the shortage. He skipped out to San Francisco and his family in a destitute state.

The Arion Singing Society of San Francisco gave an entertainment in Turner Hall [the German social club building formerly on the site of Lyman Park]. The program was of the highest class and was the best attended affair ever given here.

Town officers elected in May under the new charter were: Dr. Henry Pond, Henry Pellet, Owen Wade, Marcus Inman, and Frank Kraft as trustees [city council]; J.G. Johnson, treasurer; A. B. Swartout, marshal; James V. Haire, clerk.

Sells Brothers and Barrett’s united circus performed in St. Helena but “on account of the hard times the attendance was small.”

At a meeting of the winegrowers a method of aging wine by electricity was explained. It was a process through which wine aged for thirty days was claimed to be purer, cleaner, and better than that stored for three years. The cost was 3 cents a gallon, against ten cents under the storage system.

G. Rossi of Napa opened a grocery store next to Tonolla's furniture store.

The terrible flood at Johnstown, Pennsylvania on May 31 was reported. Loss of life was 5,000 and of property was \$40 million.

E. Saunders advertised bathing suits in the Mother Hubbard style, or in the "abbreviated" (for those days) Saratoga style.

The Turn Verein [German club] sponsored the Fourth of July celebration which was held in Crane Park [on El Bonita Avenue-not today's Crane Park]. A feature of the day was the raising of the new town flag on a 75 foot pole at the corner of Hunt Avenue and Main Street.

A shooting affray in Chinatown [at West Charter Oak and Main Street] over a gambling debt resulted in injuries to two men. The gunman escaped.

Joseph R. Kettlewell and Son sued the Water Company for \$10,000 damages, claiming their fire loss was greatly increased by the action of the company in having the water turned off. The jury awarded the firm \$500.

The St. Helena Electric Light and Power Company was organized May 13 with I.J. Newkirk, D.B. Carver, L. Duckworth, L.H. Trainor, H. M. Pond, William Rennie and George A. Riggins as directors. Dr. Pond was president; Riggins, vice president; Carver, treasurer; W.A. Mackinder, secretary; and L. Duckworth, superintendent. A plant was installed in Duckworth & Genung's foundry [on Railroad—today Terra Restaurant]. The lights were turned on August 1, when the [community] band paraded the streets in celebration. Regular service began September 1, the power being on from a half hour after sunset to half hour before sunrise. Street lamps were of the carbon pencil type.

Miss Lillie Bussenius had a narrow escape while bathing in Napa River. She suddenly went down in water over her head and but for the timely assistance of nearby friends, might have drowned.

Mellie Kemper, a young man of 19 years, on duty at the railroad depot in Oakville, was stabbed in the abdomen and severely wounded by David Doak, who wielded a pocket knife.

Hauser Brothers leased the St. Helena Hotel [not today's Hotel St. Helena] from Jacob Graf, owner of the property.

The town trustees started a campaign to round up dogs running the streets without tags. Small boys were out with lassos. They were compensated for every dog they turned over to the town marshal.

Two men died on Dr. Crane's place [397 Main] below town on September 3

Will McPike went down a ladder into a well for an inspection. Martin Hickey came along shortly afterwards. Not receiving a response to his call, he became alarmed. Without stopping to consider the cause, he immediately went down the ladder to learn what might be the difficulty.

An Italian who was standing nearby heard a splash in the water and called for help. Lou Davis responded at once and, fastening one end of a rope around his body, he handed the other end to men standing nearby, and started down to rescue the two men. With difficulty he got hold of Hickey's lifeless body and with the aid of the rope reached the top, almost unconscious. Only by holding his breath had he been able to survive the dangerous effects of the poisonous gas with which the well was filled. Will McPike, a son of pioneer John McPike [and Mary Crane McPike] was 23 and Martin Hickey was 33.

John T. York went to San Francisco to study law in the office of A.M. Armstrong, formerly principal of the local public school.

Officer Frank Sciaroni had so much trouble taking a drunk to the local bastille that he had to tie the fellow to the rear of a wagon and drag him.

An early Sunday morning fire in the center of the business district burned out several business establishments on the site now occupied by the Richie Block. The buildings belonged to George H. Beach. Dr. Davis' building to the northwest was damaged. Those burned out were: Chales M. Logan's newspaper, the Times, and job printing plant; Misses Barry and Campbell, milliners; W.A.C. Smith, banker and insurance; I.H. Herold, jeweler; Otto Behrns, grocer; Mrs. Sallie Hughes, dressmaker and Louis Conrad, photographer.

August Rosenbaum, a young man of 23 years, in a fit of temporary insanity, wandered off into the eastern hills and died of exhaustion.

Silas M. Adsit, a native of New York and a resident of St. Helena since 1872, died. He built a residence on Main street and engaged in the furniture business. Later he moved his house back to face Oak Avenue and built store buildings on the Main Street frontage.

On October 9 George Herdle and Miss Clara White were married at the residence of the bride's grandmother, Mrs. Mary Howell.

It was reported that Clarence Greer, who was gravely injured by the discharge of his shot gun while cleaning it, was not expected to live.

John Money purchased the skating rink property [on Adams between Main & Oak] and fitted it up for a planing mill.

Frank B. Mackinder, one of the editors of the Star, and Miss Lucy Martin of Carmi, Illinois, were married at the home of John C. Mixon, uncle of the bride.

Olissa Canetta was shot and killed

She was shot by John Zambadini while the two were hunting in the hills near the Lyman property near Bale Mill. As Canetta failed to return home, search parties went out and found his body. At first Zambadini claimed he had left Canetta before the shooting. He said he told Canetta he was hungry and was going home. When placed in jail, he became badly scared and confessed he had shot Canetta by accident. He claimed Canetta stepped in front of his gun as he fired at a rabbit. He was so panicky over what had happened that he was afraid to come to town to report the matter. Zambadini was acquitted by a jury.

A building next to the Odd Fellows Hall was fitted out as a clubroom for the firemen and as quarters for their two hose carts.

Prices of wine and brandy were on the upward trend and prospects were more hopeful than during the past two years.

The Star complained that the town hall was a disgrace. The editor wrote that when he attended meetings of the town trustees [council] it was almost impossible to find a place to sit without having the rain dropping in on him. At a trial largely attended the old building rocked and creaked when the crowd moved about.

On December 11 Herman H. Schram, son of Jacob [and Anna] Schram of the famous Schramsberg Winery, and Miss Lillie Bussenius, daughter of the druggist H.R. Bussenius were married.

