



THE ELECTROLIER

Shining light on St. Helena History

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Spring 2010, Vol.8 No.2

Lyman Park

By Mariam Hansen

The St. Helena Turnverein built a much needed country theater on the site which is now Lyman Park in 1885. Under the ownership of a joint stock company, "Turner" Hall became the scene of many cheerful and festive affairs in this community. It had a stage, backdrops, equipment for theatrical performances and an exercise gym. There were at one time over 100 members. In the 1890s, the German population dwindled and the Turnverein went out of existence. The property passed to Fritz Beringer and W.W.Lyman, and eventually to the latter. The building became rundown and unusable.

In 1923, the St. Helena Concert Band searched for a location for their concerts. The Women's Club donated funds to build a band stand on May 11. A large delegation attended the city council meeting of June 29 to consider the St. Helena Turnverein property for a park. Park Commis-

sioner Bismarck Bruck said the land was worth \$5,000. Mrs. Sarah Lyman volunteered to donate her portion of the land if the park was named in honor of her husband, Col William Whittingham Lyman. The remaining portion was owned by the heirs of Theodore Lyman, killed during World War I, who requested payment for their share. Bruck said he would take charge of the property and raise funds to "park it" and turn it over to the town complete. The city council approved this arrangement.

In July 1923 the St. Helena Concert Band obtained

permission to give an open air dance on the remaining floor of the hall. Building contractor John C. Money was in the process of dismantling the building and using the lumber for other projects. He gave permission for the dance on a floor that was at one time the best in the county. A large crowd attended and refreshments sold to benefit the band.

All this took time, so it wasn't until Feb 1924 that the council closed escrow on the property. Harry Prouty, band manager, suggested building the new bandstand in Lyman Park. The land had still not been cleared by March, contractor Money not being able to find a drayman (debris hauler). The council asked him to see to it, but by May 30 the job was not done. The Women's Club

was tired of waiting. The ladies asked park commissioner Bruck to approve the band stand, for which most of the monies were in hand. He did so, according to plans by Harry Rutherford at a cost of \$600, and completion was to be by the end of June. The stand will be an octagon, nine feet from floor to ceiling and 24 feet



An unusual snowstorm, January 15, 1935. Photo courtesy of Harrison Family Trust

across, totaling 400 square feet. The base will be of stucco and the roof to be shingled. At the band practice of June 23 it was announced that the bandstand was complete.

On July 18, 1924 a large crowd enjoyed the first band concert by the St. Helena Concert Band and the Sanitarium Band of St. Helena Hospital. The band stand was brilliantly lit up. The next month there was another concert.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Since the first of this year, the Board of Directors has been involved in a planning process that we've never attempted before. Under the able leadership of Tricia Westbrook, we are formulating our first annual plan and an associated budget. We have had strategic planning sessions in the past, but nothing nearly as extensive as what we are currently undergoing. In our first eight years we tended to be a reactive organization, responding to issues and opportunities as they arose without any true game plan. I think we accomplished a lot in those years and raised our profile substantially during that time. I attribute our successes to a very involved and enthusiastic Board, as well as an able and willing corps of volunteers.

This past year stretched our capabilities almost to the breaking point in terms of too much to do and not enough time. Due in large part to the hours required of Mariam, Susanne and Kim in authoring the St. Helena history book, the entire Board felt the pressure of trying to go in too many directions at once.

We are at the tail end of the annual plan and budget process and hope to approve both at our June Board meeting. We have reviewed each aspect of our activities – research, programs, collection, public relations, oral history, membership, fund raising, etc. I think we've done a pretty good job of prioritizing what's important to us and not trying to take on more than we can competently handle.

Our new annual plan will envision an ambitious step forward in the scope of our activities and the size of our budget. In order to get where we'd like to go we will need three things – space, an expanded volunteer staff, and money.

While we love our current location at the Library, we have completely outgrown our little second floor corner space. We need more space to spread out and to allow more than one person at a time to access equipment. There are a number of things not being done because of the limited space. We have been looking for additional space for the last year and have a couple possibilities we hope will work out. Please let us know if you have any ideas about expansion possibilities.

We have not always done a good job of recruiting and utilizing volunteers from our membership. We hope to become better in these areas and will need to in order to reach our goals. Stay tuned.

We will need to raise significant sums of money to make our plans work. We have discussed various methods of doing so, including applying for public and private grants, seeking sponsors for specific programs, and seeking restricted funds for particular projects. We are a pretty conservative bunch and will not undertake anything that we don't have the money for.

Perhaps most important in this whole process is the implementation of the annual plan specifics. To get us started on the right path and to help us make the necessary shifts in course, we are negotiating a three month consulting contract with Tricia. This is her area of expertise, she knows all the players, and I know she'll get us off to a great start.

*Skip Lane,
President*

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Donn Black, VP, Legal
Susanne Salvestrin, Secretary
John Sales, Treasurer
Kim Farmer
Mariam Hansen
Frank Harrison
Helen Heibel Nelson

Committee Notes:

The *Collections Committee* coordinates and manages the acquisition of new materials. It generally meets on the last Tuesday of the month at 10am in the library meeting room. Current chair of the committee is Kim Farmer. Email her at ksfarmer@seedgrain.com.

The *Program Committee* plans and presents programs and events to teach the public about our local history. If you would like to volunteer or want more information, please call Mariam Hansen, 963-5748.

Questions? Comments?

Call or email the Newsletter editor,
Kim Farmer, at 963-0630,
ksfarmer@seedgrain.com

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

(Continued from page 1)

A large crowd was present, with drivers coming from Napa and Calistoga for the event. The band sponsored a street dance on August 23 to raise \$200 for finishing touches to the band stand. The newspaper crowed that St. Helena had “one of the best amateur bands in the state and they will play at the state fair.” Park commissioner Bruck oversaw the placement of a marker in the southwest corner with the name “Lyman Park” in June 1926. Contractor Harry Thorsen brought a boulder weighing several tons to the spot and marked it with a bronze plaque, which is still there.

That year the United States celebrated the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1926. St. Helena joined in with a band concert in Lyman Park. Mayor Harry Chinn gave a speech. Musical numbers were followed by prayer, scripture readings and addresses by pastors of several churches. The event was planned by the American Legion, fraternal clubs and the churches.

In 1981 the band stand needed repairs. John Hughes Construction poured new footers for the girder supports in the foundation. Termite damaged wood was removed. Floor joists were replaced and the skirt around the base was rebuilt. The work crew was John Hughes, Jim Van Ness and Margaret Bosworth.

The marble horse fountain was located at Adams and Oak Streets in 1909. Later it was re-located to the train depot. Finally the fountain was moved to Lyman Park. It was designed so that as the water rose in the big basin it reached overflow pipes, which drained through the pedestal to small bowls in the base for dogs.

The band stand was again used in 1974 by the U.S. Navy Band from Treasure Island. The concert was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, which continues the tradition with the *Musical Picnics in the Park* annual summer concerts so enjoyed by the community. The first concert will be on June 24 from 6:00 to 8:00pm, featuring Brass-hopper. They are a young 7 piece New Orleans style brass band. Bring your dinner and come join in the fun!



On August 15, 1924, the St. Helena Concert Band gave a fine concert in Lyman Park. There was a very large crowd present, many automobile parties coming from Napa, Calistoga and surrounding areas. The following pieces were presented: "America", March by S. Hall, March "Fete Triumphal" by W.Skaggs, Valse "Down by the Meadow brook" by Wendling. March "Spirit of Minstrelsy" by King, Sacred March "Evangel" by Miller, Serenade "Cupid's Charms" by Miller. Many more selections were played. During intermission Bismarck Bruck announced that the band will give a street dance on August 23 and urged everyone to come. Proceeds will pay the remainder owing on the bandstand. He said that concerts are all free and St. Helena can boast one of the best bands in the state. "The people should do all they can to boost and help our fine band," he said. (Photo courtesy of Harrison Family Trust.)



On June 8, 2010, Historical Society members and guests visited Rossi family ranch. Frank Leeds, vineyard manager and long-time family friend, led the tour of this historic farm where Rachel Rossi Winery was established and bonded in 1907.

CALENDAR

Call our voicemail to reserve a space: 707-967-5502 or email shstory@shpl.org

June

June 15: Movies Made in Napa Valley: *A Walk in the Clouds*, Library 7pm

June 17: Board of Directors meeting 9:30am, Library Meeting Room. (Open to members.)

June 18: Book talk and signing at Rianda House, 1:00 to 2:30 pm.

June 22: Movies Made in Napa Valley: *Jack*, Library, 7pm.

June 29: Movies Made in Napa Valley: *Bottle Shock*, Library 7pm

July

July 1-4: Napa County Fair Grounds, Calistoga, exhibit on St. Helena.

July 15: Board of Directors meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room. (Open to members.)

August

Aug 21: 150th Anniversary of David Fulton Winery. Details TBA

Aug 19: Board of Directors meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room. (Open to members.)

September

Sep 16: Board of Directors meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room. (Open to members.)

Sep 25: Spirits of St. Helena Cemetery Discovery Walk, Details TBA

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
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