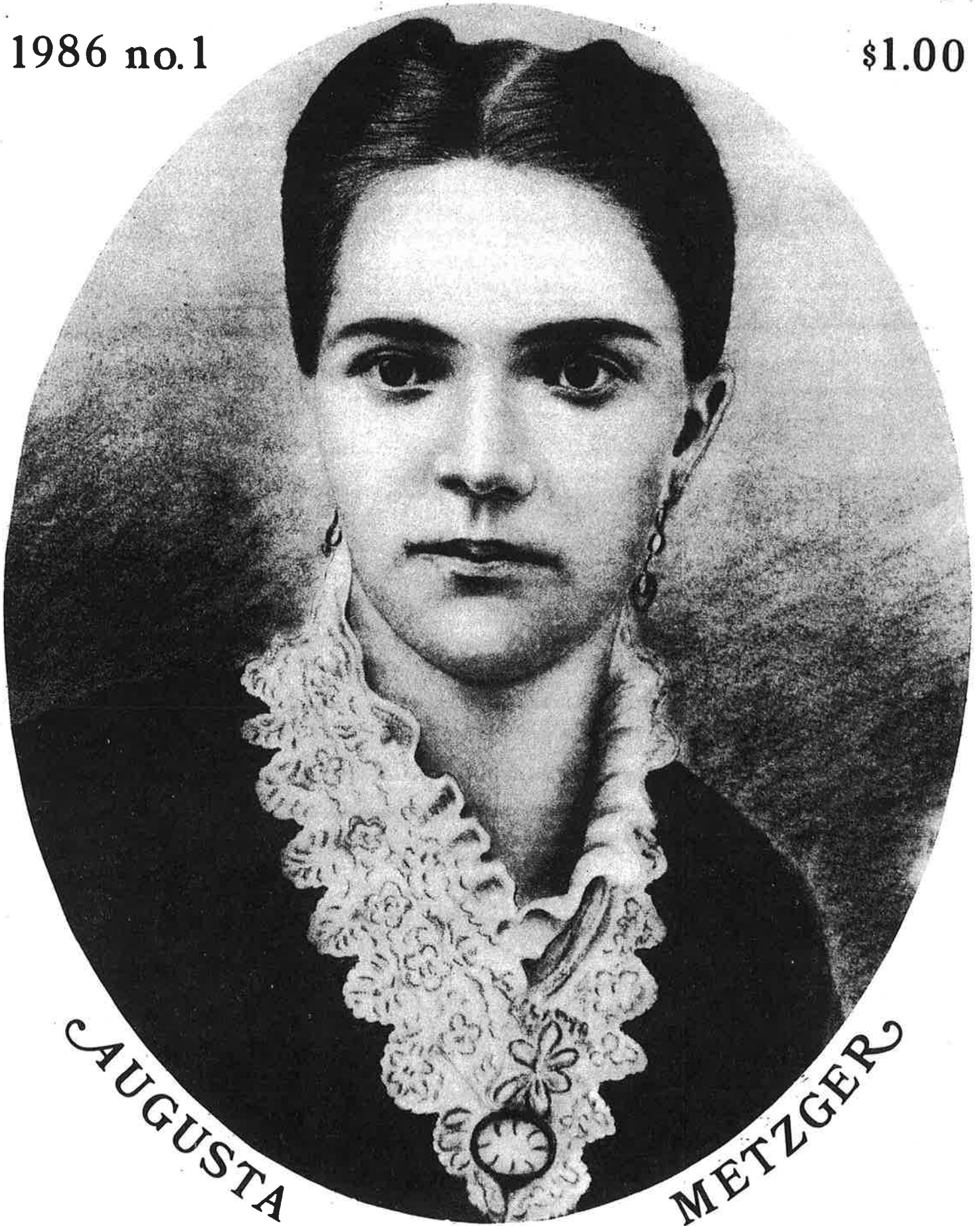


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AUGUSTA

METZGER

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COVER: DRAWING OF AUGUSTA AMELIA FRITZ, AGE 29, SHORTLY BEFORE HER MARRIAGE TO WILLIAM METZGER.
 Courtesy of Barbara Konicek.

Augusta Metzger & her "Heritage Park"

By DENNIS E. HARRIS, Ph.D.

In the fall of 1900, the Santa Rosa Republican reported that the "Runyon property on B street, with its magnificent residence and grounds has been sold by the heirs of the Runyon estate." The newspaper referred to the residence as a "historic landmark" and "one of the first elegant residences erected in this city." This magnificent two-story Italian Renaissance residence was most likely built by A. P. Petit, one of Santa Rosa's two pioneer architects and builders, at a cost of ten to fifteen thousand dollars (the windows and shutters alone are said to have cost \$1,600).

The first owner, Armstead Runyon, a man of much talent, ambition, and success, arrived in California in 1849. He settled on his farm near Courtland, where he established the first orchard in the Sacramento Valley. In 1871, "largely for the purpose of educating [his] children," Runyon moved to Santa Rosa. In 1876 he died from injuries sustained in a buggy accident. His widow remained in the home until her death in 1896. Two years later, her sons Charles and Albert (A. J.) Runyon acquired sole title to the B Street house.

They converted it into apartments which were managed by a Mrs. Whitely until 1903.

Also living in the B Street residence at the time of Armstead Runyon's death were three of his younger children, and the children's governess, Miss Augusta Amelia Fritz. Miss Fritz, the daughter of a prominent Lutheran family, had emigrated from Germany in 1868, after her mother's death. In 1875 she came to California, following a younger sister who had come to Petaluma, and was hired to supervise the Runyon children. She remained with the family until the summer of 1877, when she married William Metzger. However, her friendship with the family continued from then on, a friendship which would result in her purchase of the B Street residence in 1900.

William Metzger was a Prussian immigrant who had arrived in Santa Rosa in 1869 with his brothers, having worked in the mines near Yreka. By 1871 Metzger had purchased lots at the corner of 5th and Davis Streets; later four houses there would serve as the nucleus of the extensive Metzger rental properties. One of them, the Carpenter Gothic house, which was later moved to 546 A Street, may have been William Metzger's first Santa Rosa home. In 1872, Metzger established the Santa Rosa Brewery, the first in town, at 2nd and Wilson Streets. He lived on the 2nd Street property, in a small, L-shaped Homestead style house.

Besides establishing the brewery, Metzger also began to establish a family. In April of 1877, the forty-three year old Metzger married Augusta Fritz, the Runyons' thirty year old governess. Augusta gave birth to all four of the couple's daughters while they lived on the Brewery Lot. In 1885, William sold his interest in the brewery to a partner, who quickly went bankrupt, and the business was acquired by Grace Brothers, Santa Rosa's most famous brewery. Meanwhile Metzger began his second industry in Santa Rosa, Metzger's Winery, at the corner of 9th and Morgan. In 1887, the family moved to "Arcadia Park," as the winery property was known, where a new Eastlake-style home at 216 10th Street became their residence. The Metzgers continued to live there until 1903, even after they purchased the Runyon property on B Street.

That property was sold to Augusta

alone, and not to the Metzger couple, although it was reportedly purchased for her by her husband as a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary present. However, there was also some sentiment involved in the sale on the part of A.J. Runyon. He had asked \$10,000 for the property but sold it to his former governess for \$7,000 - several thousand less than he had been offered by another party. There may have been another consideration. There was no doubt that Augusta would treat the home with the respect and care it deserved, for, as the newspaper stated, "it may be safely predicted that when the family moves into their new home, Mrs. Metzger will soon convert the already beautiful grounds into beauty rivalling any in this city." The same year, 1900, the house received regional recognition, when the San Francisco Call described the "historic" residence as the "most beautiful" residence north of the bay.

However, there is another, less artistic and sentimental explanation for Augusta's purchase. William had been injured in a fall at the winery and was in ill health. "Arcadia Park," its "handsome residence" on Tenth Street, and the winery were for sale "at a sacrifice," offering "a rare opportunity for capitalists seeking investments in Santa Rosa real estate." As early as 1892, William had begun the process of transferring title of his property to Augusta. With William no longer able to operate the winery, Augusta may have been seeking investment opportunities.

The Runyons offered her the opportunity of adding Mrs. Whitely's apartments on B Street to her two rental houses at Arcadia Park and the four houses on 4th and 5th Streets. Mrs. Metzger's actions the following spring support this explanation. She moved the stable from its original site and altered it to add two additional rental units to the house. A one-story north extension was attached to the converted stable so that Mrs. Whitely could offer board as well as room.

In 1901, Augusta also bought a magnificent Italian Renaissance building at 3rd and B Streets for one dollar and moved it to 537 B, next to Runyon's former home. Originally the home of Dr. A. F. Boyce, it had been converted to a private hospital, the Jenner Sanitorium. Threatened with demolition to make room

for the commercial expansion of the central business district, the house was moved five blocks north. Although the interior was altered to provide rental income from four apartments, the architectural integrity of the historic Boyce House was not damaged, and for the past eighty-five years it has continued to provide income for the Metzger family.



BOYCE HOUSE. SCHS Photo Collection.

But investment potential was not the only use Augusta saw for the property. When Santa Rosa's librarian called upon the city to follow the lead of Petalumea and obtain a grant from Andrew Carnegie to build a new library, Mrs. Metzger offered a site on her B Street property. Fortunately for the historic houses which were later moved onto the land, the site was too distant from the center of town and the city's new library was built on E Street, between 4th and 5th.

In 1902, the Metzgers discharged Mrs. Whitely and finally moved into their new home at 535 B Street. Augusta assumed responsibility for the rentals, which included two rooms on the south side of the first floor, and the two rooms facing B Street on the second floor, as well as the apartments in the rear. The dining room and kitchen attached to the stable in 1901 were converted into rentals as well, eliminating the availability of board for her tenants.

It was here, at the new home, that William Metzger died less than a year later. The Press Democrat published two long articles on the death of the "pioneer winemaker" who had established the Santa Rosa Brewery "upon his arrival in Santa

Rosa," "started the Metzger winery," and "managed to accumulate a considerable fortune" through his honesty, hard work and thrift. A "large gathering," which included members of the Knights of Honor in full regalia, representatives from William's two additional fraternal organizations, and prominent members of the community attended the funeral at his home prior to his burial at Santa Rosa's historic Rural Cemetery.

In 1906, Augusta Metzger again turned her attention to the expansion of her business. That spring, she purchased the ornate Eastlake mansion of T. J. Ludwig, also known as the Bryan House. Ludwig and Petit had been the city's most important pioneer architects and builders, and Ludwig is credited with construction of many of the historic houses and commercial buildings in Santa Rosa. Unfortunately, his home, at the corner of B and 5th, was in the path of the city's commercial expansion. But no sooner had the house been moved to Mrs. Metzger's property, at 429 8th Street, than it was severely damaged by the disastrous 1906 earthquake.



LUDWIG HOUSE, AFTER THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE (ABOVE) AND FOLLOWING RECONSTRUCTION (BELOW). SCHS Photo Collection.



Not yet secured to its new foundation, the Ludwig House slipped off its foundation, sliding toward 8th Street. In the extensive restoration which followed, the double-curved entrance stairs were replaced by a less ornate straight stairway, the foundation was raised with narrow clapboard used as siding below the beltcourse, and the pre-earthquake truncated hip roof of the 1 1/2 story building was replaced by a complex series of gables which both increased interior space to a full two stories and strengthened the Stick Style influence which had characterized the house before. With the rehabilitation complete, the Ludwig House provided several more rental units for Mrs. Metzger. It continued as a multi-family residence until a fire in 1983, possibly started by an arsonist, did extensive damage to the roof and second story. The building was condemned.

Mrs. Metzger acquired another building as a result of the earthquake. The Quinn House was being moved down 4th Street the morning the quake struck. The two-story Stick Style home was severely damaged, but Augusta bought the building, moved it to 403 8th Street, and rehabilitated as a one-story building. As a multi-family residence, it added more rental units until it was demolished in the late 1960s.

The earthquake also brought the Metzgers some temporary guests. Augusta opened the grounds to those left homeless by the disaster, an act of generosity which led to the mistaken belief that she had first opened her home to strangers in 1906 and then turned to the apartment business. But, during hard times, hobos knew they could go to the kitchen door and receive a decent meal. These humane acts, along with her reputation for fine parties and a "steady stream of visitors," her paintings, and her preservationist ethic have become part of the legend of the Metzger House, along with the stories of the ghost of Armstead Runyon haunting an upstairs bedroom. Augusta was an avid collector of fine art, furniture and china. Her wealth enabled her to have Santa Rosa's first phonograph as well as the first automobile in town.

Within the next two years, Augusta Metzger moved another house onto the property. Still the owner of the property between 4th and 5th Streets, she decided to move the Carpenter Gothic house, which



CARPENTER GOTHIC HOUSE. SCHS Photo Collection.

William Metzger had purchased in 1871, from the corner of 5th and Davis to 546 A Street, so she could build a six-unit apartment on the valuable downtown land. Apparently unaltered from its original condition, this Carpenter Gothic house is in fair condition and has been continuously rented for more than a hundred years. A developer's plans in 1981 would have resulted in its demolition; however, moving it to DeTurk Street has been proposed instead. By 1908, Augusta had also torn down the original tankhouse, providing a courtyard area on the north side of the Metzger House for the family's enjoyment. The well itself remains and has been used for irrigation purposes since 1902.

One of the many legends surrounding the Metzger property is the story that Augusta bought these houses for her four daughter, each of whom would thereby receive a home as a wedding gift. But Mrs. Metzger moved five houses onto the land and immediately converted each to apartments. The last of these was the Carithers House. Originally located on B Street, near the Ludwig House, this circa 1880 Stick Style two-story building was built for a prominent Santa Rosa merchant family. It, too, would have been lost to downtown commercial expansion if it had not been for Mrs. Metzger. It is the last of five homes which Augusta Metzger had preserved before 1910, all of which were later deemed apparently eligible for individual listing in the National Register. The Carithers House, located at 421 8th Street, was still rented as apartments in 1984, although condemnation proceedings had been initiated.

It was, of course, the "adaptive reuse" of these fine old homes that made their preservation possible. Augusta Metzger

appreciated the architectural value of these buildings; indeed, this is what led her to purchase the first of the buildings. The Boyce House was beautiful, its style fit that of her own Metzger House, and its demolition would have been a tragic loss of a significant piece of the city's architectural heritage. In their turn, the Ludwig, Quinn, Carpenter Gothic, and Carithers houses each met the dual standard of architectural quality and sound financial investment.



QUINN HOUSE. SCHS Photo Collection.

By 1910, Augusta Metzger was unquestionably a successful "capitalist" with her "apartment house" business (the answers she gave to the census taker that year). She was listed in the Northwestern Pacific Railroad's Vacation 1909 guide to travel, which included a photograph of the "Metzger," and she advertised in the county business directories. Indeed, her preservation activities had even gained her a bit of international recognition. A letter written by her from Germany in 1908 contains the following passage:

Now comes some news to beat the band....Herr Zeiger asked me in a very interesting way if it was so that they moove [sic] houses in America. Well, I said yes. So he said that there was a large pease [sic] in one of the big newspapers here in Germany when they had an awful time about moving a large house. He said it was in California about two years or so ago. He knew the whole story...I was greatly surprised but he was more surprised when I told him that it was our house and everything was just as he read about it.

Two additional residences were added to

the Metzger property in the 1920s. Augusta's youngest daughter, Amelia, married a construction engineer and highway builder, Harry C. Jones, in 1910. In 1926, the couple had some money to invest. One wanted to put it in the Bank of Italy; the other insisted that land was a more secure investment. Land won, and in 1926 Bob Whiting built the Tudor Revival cottage at 534 A Street. Shortly thereafter, a second cottage, this one Colonial Revival, was also built on the property, at 542 A Street. These two buildings are now considered contributors to the proposed St. Rose Historic District; unfortunately, they are also scheduled for demolition under current development plans.



AUGUSTA METZGER, c. 1887. Courtesy of Barbara Konicek.

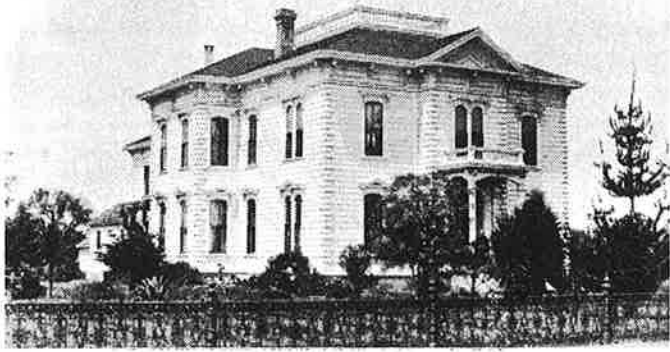
In January of 1941, "one of Santa Rosa's most widely known and respected pioneer women" died at her home on B Street and was buried beside her husband in the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery. The ninety-four year old mistress of her own private heritage park left a large circle of friends (including the Haitian Consul in San Francisco and that city's City Attorney). Her estate, which included the

B Street property and Arcadia Park - although the winery was gone from the latter, the 10th Street home was still there, was left to her four daughters "share and share alike."

Rose, Henrietta, and Bertha continued to live in the Metzger House. In 1945, Amelia moved to one of the 1920s cottages and the 10th Street home was eventually demolished when the property was condemned for construction of Highway 101. In the late '40s, the Metzger "girls," along with members of such prominent families as the Hoags, Hutchinsons, Hedgpeths, Coopers, Glenns and Stahls, led the second battle to establish a Sonoma County Historical Museum in Santa Rosa. (The third battle was successful. The new museum, in the 1909 Federal Post Office, relocated on 7th Street, opened in 1985). Bertha was also noted for the Christmas toy village she set up each year in the Metzger House for the family and guests from the community.

But these were also the years when the Metzger daughters could not escape advancing age. Henrietta died in 1969, at the age of eighty-nine. In 1978, Rosa passed away at age ninety-eight. It is somewhat ironic that this was a year after the first historic resource survey conducted in Sonoma County recognized both the significance of the Metzger's architectural treasure and the threats to those buildings. It was also the year the sale of a portion of the property and the creation of a new lot line resulted in the most serious and immediate threat to the Metzger House itself. Bertha Metzger died, at ninety-nine years of age, in 1982, the year the Sonoma County Historical Society published Santa Rosa's Architectural Heritage. Of the four daughters, only Amelia remains alive today at the age of one hundred. A very witty and intelligent woman with an excellent memory, she lives next door to the Metzger House, in a ground-floor apartment in the Boyce House.

But the most recent contribution of the Metzger family to the architectural heritage of Santa Rosa came in 1984, when the family accepted the proposal of the Santa Rosa Symphony League that the Metzger House become its second "Designers' Showcase." (Its first was the William Hood House, a state landmark.) It gave the league an opportunity to "present one of Santa Rosa's oldest and most



METZGER HOUSE, c. 1875. Metzger Family Collection.

distinguished residences" to the public. Amelia's daughter Barbara Jones Konicek, the only granddaughter of William and Augusta Metzger, and her husband Thomas Konicek invested over \$130,000 in the rehabilitation and restoration of the dwelling and grounds. At least \$40,000 was raised by the league during the period the house was open to the public. And, most importantly, the Metzger House underwent necessary repairs so that it can continue to be an excellent example of the city's architectural heritage for some time to come.



At our annual banquet in January of 1985, the Society presented its Brainerd Jones Preservation Award to Barbara Konicek for restoring her family's home, the Metzger House.

President's Report

Congratulations, again, to our award winners at the 1986 banquet. The Board's decision to recognize the authors of Santa Rosa: A Nineteenth Century Town was undoubtedly the easiest decision any of us have had to make, even though two other books were published last year dealing with the history of our county - Historic

Healdsburg Homes, and Cloverdale: Then and Now. I was delighted that we were able to make an award for educational achievement; Penngrove's teachers and their student-scholars did a fine job, one I hope is emulated elsewhere in the county. I was also pleased to recognize Burl and Buddy Howell, along with the City of Santa Rosa's Redevelopment Agency, for their contributions to making the dream of a Sonoma County Museum become a reality, especially since I've been somewhat critical of the City's leadership in the past.

Several of you have mentioned the recent interview on Channel 50, in which the City was attacked for its failure to develop a historic preservation plan and a landmarks policy. The City conducted its historic resource inventory ten years ago, and it's done nothing to implement the recommendations made then. I urge all SCHS members who live in Santa Rosa to encourage your city council to adopt a historic preservation plan and a landmarks policy, following the lead of the county and Healdsburg and Sonoma.

Four of our members - Melissa Holtz, Sheila Bell, Susan Silverek, and Tish Levee - have nearly completed the Society's long awaited brochure. SCHS members' dues are our primary means of promoting history in Sonoma County, and with over 320,000 residents in the county, we should have far more than our current 450 members. A copy of the new brochure will be sent with the next Journal. If we each use it to recruit one new member, our membership and the resources we have to promote Sonoma County history will double. (Speaking of membership, have you renewed yours? If not, there is a renewal form on the last page of The Journal).

Since most of our members are also members of the Historical Museum Foundation of Sonoma County, you have undoubtedly already read of the impending financial crisis in the county. The Board of Supervisors is looking for new sources of general revenue funds. The county's bed tax has traditionally gone to activities which advertise the county and encourage tourism. It is the only source of county funds available for history. The entire budget of the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission, which has benefitted the Hood House, the Luther Burbank Home,