

Upcoming Member Event

**Annual Members' Meeting
October 12, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
Pacific Coast Air Museum**

**Email info@historicalsocietysantarosa.org to
reserve your space today!**

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A Brief History of the Santa Rosa Army Airfield

by Denise Hill

Military Use

In 1848, Levi Slusser arrived in the area and built a home in the Russian River township. Much of Slusser's land was later used as Santa Rosa Army Airfield during World War II. That former airfield is today known as the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport, located seven miles northwest of downtown Santa Rosa.

In the 1930s, a small municipal airfield owned by Richfield Oil Corporation next to the Redwood Highway existed about six miles southeast of the present airport.

In 1939, Sonoma County purchased 339 acres of land and began constructing a runway using grant funds from the Civil Aeronautics Authority (predecessor to the Federal Aviation Administration). The U.S. Army took over in 1942 and added 826 acres, extended the original runway, built a second runway, added taxiways, apron areas, and other facilities. Two of the hangars constructed by the Army remain in use today. Opened in June 1942 and known as Santa Rosa Army Airfield, the airfield was assigned to the Fourth Air Force as a group and replacement training airfield. Known units assigned to Santa Rosa were:

- 354th Fighter Group, March-June 1943
- 357th Fighter Group, June-August 1943
- 363d Fighter Group, August-October 1943
- 367th Fighter Group, October-December 1943

The 478th Fighter Group was permanently assigned to Santa Rosa in December 1943 and began training replacement pilots, who were sent to combat units overseas after graduation. At its peak, some 300 to 500 aircraft and 10,000 personnel were based on the army field. In January 1946 the airfield was deactivated and turned over to the War Assets Administration for eventual conversion to a civil airport. The County resumed operation of the airport in July of that year.



Small aircraft parked at Sonoma County Airport, 1973
Courtesy Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection

Santa Rosa Airpark

At some point between 1937-1948, the Santa Rosa Airpark was established, replacing the Santa Rosa Municipal Airport directly across the road to the north. It had a 2,200-foot unpaved runway, which was eventually paved. By 1960, the Santa Rosa Coddington Airport had been built off Piner Road at Airway Drive, at which point the Santa Rosa Airpark had presumably been closed. The Coddington Airport was never popular with nearby neighborhood residents.

Complaints about noise and low flying planes was constant. The airport closed in 1972 with only minor aviation use after that year.

Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport (STS)

Throughout its history, the Sonoma County Airport has operated primarily as a general aviation facility serving private/recreational airplanes, and business/corporate aircraft. It also operated as a commercial service airport offering mostly commuter airline service to San Francisco and Los Angeles. In 1947, Southwest Airways operated a DC-3 out of

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Message from the Board

There are two free events focused on local history coming up this fall that you won't want to miss. The first is the Historical Society of Santa Rosa's Annual Members' Meeting. It will be held October 12, 2024 at the Pacific Coast Air Museum from 10 a.m. to noon. Gary Greenough, a founding member of the PCAM and its Public Information Officer, will engage us in learning about the creation, history, and mission of the museum, which is celebrating its 35th year in 2024. If you haven't already reserved a seat, email: info@historicalsocietysantarosa.org today!

The second event is Finding History Day. See page 7 of this newsletter for all the details.

The Board wishes to acknowledge the passing of former HSSR Board President Mike Grace. He was the force behind fundraising to produce the documentary *Santa Rosa: The Chosen Spot of All the Earth* in 2016, and in recruiting fellow Santa Rosa High School graduate Don Cambou to write and direct the movie. The HSSR is grateful to Grace's commitment to the Santa Rosa community and its history.

100 Years Ago



The Cordingley and Babcock Hudson Motorcar Dealership and the Dodge Brothers Service Station were located at 10 Main Street in Santa Rosa. This 1924 photograph shows a row of cars displayed for sale in front of the store.

Courtesy Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection



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Want to Contribute Content for the HSSR Newsletter?
 The HSSR seeks Santa Rosa-centric memoirs and research-based articles for the newsletter. For more information, contact us at Newsletter@HistoricalSocietySantaRosa.org

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 Judy DeMeo**

**Our events and programs are made possible
 through membership renewals and the generosity
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 history**

**Welcome New
 HSSR Members**

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Luther Burbank Press Employed Young Women

by Lisa Kranz

An intriguing photographic find on eBay has led to the Luther Burbank Press, its headquarters in Santa Rosa, and a young Press employee named Mina Blanc Orth. The photo shows rows of young women, mostly seated at small wooden desks topped with typewriters. There are two long rows of boxes (perhaps of envelopes?) pictured in front of the women.

The Luther Burbank Press was organized by John Whitson and Robert John in early 1912. They acquired an ongoing project of a Minneapolis publisher, the Cree Publishing Company, which had earlier commenced development of a set of books about Burbank and his horticultural creations. They organized an association called the Luther Burbank Society and offered membership in the society through the sale of advance subscriptions for the to-be-published volumes. Invitations to join the Luther Burbank Society were designed and names of thousands of people nationwide were compiled to receive them, including botanists, horticulturists, teachers, journalists, librarians, and Burbank friends and admirers.

According to the Press Democrat on October 6, 1912, "... these letters are being sent out to the leading men and women of this land apprising them of the wondrous nature of this great work on Burbank and his creations. In passing it might be mentioned that the volumes are profusely illustrated with colored pictures of the Burbank productions..."

A mailing in fall 1912 included 170,000 letters. Subsequent mailings were projected to be even larger. A mailing of such magnitude was unheard of in a small town like Santa Rosa. The stamps for the mailing, which cost 4 cents at the time, cost nearly \$7,000, and represented an enormous increase in business for the local post office.

To accomplish such a herculean task, many hands were needed to prepare and mail the invitations. The Luther Burbank Press offered free typewriting instruction to girls

of 16 years or older with the promise of a future salaried position. It was these employees who managed the mailing project. To apply, a young woman with "personal neatness" and a "knowledge of spelling" need only knock on the door of the "Old Burbank Homestead" (the Burbank home still located at the Burbank Home & Gardens today) and ask for Mrs. Schoenwerk.



Offices of the Luther Burbank Press, Santa Rosa, 1912
Courtesy Luther Burbank Home & Gardens

The typing school itself and the Luther Burbank Press were located in the former Odd Fellows' building downtown at Third Street and Exchange Avenue. About 70 young women worked in what was previously used as the building's lodge hall. This work included typing, compiling lists of names and addresses, and alphabetizing name cards into cabinets, with a cabinet designated for each one of the States.

Another room off the main hall housed the school room where students learned typewriting. Folios with "names and addresses – over a million and a half of names" according to the Press Democrat, occupied another room, and these records were edited as replies from subscribers were received.

Mina Blanc is pictured working in the main room in 1912. On the back of the photograph, she handwrote a description of her location in the room: "I am the 2nd girl on the right of 3 rows of tables." It is hard to be sure exactly where Ms. Blanc is given the number of desks and people in the room. The details of Ms. Blanc's employment with the Burbank Press and how she came to live and work in Santa Rosa are unknown.

Mina Blanc was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1889. Her father moved the family to Julian, California in the mountains in San Diego County sometime before 1900, and he was engaged in a lumber mill, worked as a carpenter, operated a store, and was the first resident preacher in the town. When Ms. Blanc signed her marriage certificate in Seattle in 1914, her residence was listed as Julian.

Her husband, Harold W. Orth, had arrived in Seattle in 1914

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The Redemption of Santa Rosa Creek, Part 2

by Jeff Elliott

Editor's note: This two-part article is from Jeff Elliott's blog SantaRosaHistory.com. Part 1 appeared in HSSR's Summer 2024 newsletter and can be found on the HSSR website.

The deadline for the city to fix everything was Jan. 1, 1925 – about thirteen months away. The city moved quickly to schedule a special election for February 1924, asking voters to approve \$165,000 in bonds to build a new sewer plant. It passed easily, with about 83% approval.

Director Gillespie followed that immediately with a letter to City Council. His message: The state doesn't trust you to do the right thing.

"I am convinced that the seriousness of the sewer farm conditions is not generally realized in Santa Rosa," he wrote. "...We must compel your attention to your own shortcomings in this particular, and look to you for an energetic and business-like solution of the utterly intolerable conditions which have been perpetrated too long." He closed with another swipe that "the city pollutes Santa Rosa creek to an extent beyond any that exists anywhere in California."

And surprise, surprise, surprise: Gillespie was right. We did screw it up.

Right after the sewage plant bonds were sold there was a big turnover in Santa Rosa's government. Three new councilmen were elected (one of them also being named as the new mayor) and the city manager and city attorney resigned. Ideas which were considered and rejected a year earlier – such as "sewering to the sea" – were reconsidered. Doubts were raised over whether an entirely new plant was needed or the existing one just could be improved.

What the city then did could be considered underhanded: They sent the Board of Health plans for a modern sewage plant the city never intended to build. Instead, they just added a couple of new wooden septic tanks and six more ponds to increase capacity.

Gillespie was spitting mad. He condemned "the inadequacy and futility of the makeshift efforts you have been attempting at the sewer farm this past summer" and continued:

...Your accomplishments and prospects of abating this nuisance are wholly unsatisfactory to us and an imposition

upon the right of others in that vicinity. We expect you to forthwith carry through the program for building a real sewage plant as proposed by those in authority in Santa Rosa last spring and for which bonds were duly voted.

Clearly the city was playing a game of chicken with the state, betting that Gillespie would back off as long as they showed progress was being made. The sewer farm began chlorinating wastewater before it was discharged.

The Levin Tannery stopped dumping into the creek – it's unknown what they began doing with their toxic waste, or why they couldn't have started doing that decades earlier – and the cannery installed a grinder to chop up peelings enough to wash them down the drain.



Modern-day Santa Rosa Creek
near Santa Rosa Avenue
Photo by Lisa Kranz, September 2024

The showdown came after the January 1925 deadline. The state sent a chemist to take a sample from the creek while two local chemists did the same. The state report found the water still highly dangerous; the Santa Rosa boys pronounced the samples free from contamination.

The Peterson family wrote to Gillespie asking if the water flowing through their property was now safe. He replied that "...Santa Rosa Creek is considerably polluted by this sewage. It is dangerous above the farm, fully 100 times more dangerous below and about 50 times more dangerous at your place, than above the farm."

As for the Peterson lawsuit, it was decided in February 1924, about the same time that voters approved the sewer farm bond. He won the decision,

but Judge Preston from Mendocino County dismissed damages related to the medical care for Elmer's two daughters because the municipal corporation was not responsible since there was no "willful violation." (I'll pause here for Gentle Reader to scream in outrage.) But hey, the judge said Elmer could still sue city employees personally for negligence. He refiled his case to get a jury trial, but died of a heart attack before it came to court.

Santa Rosa's wastewater finally met the state's minimum standards, although it took until September 1926. But although the worst was over, the creek was still far from recovery. During the dry months Santa Rosa Creek near downtown was considered a fire hazard because of all the everyday rubbish still being dumped into the creek bed and

Continued on page 7

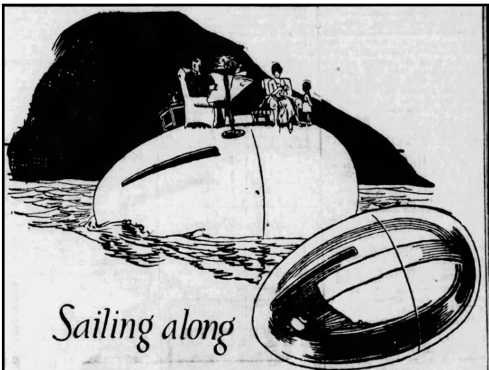
Thrift Movement Promoted in Santa Rosa

by Karen Stone

In the 1910s and 1920s, a nationwide thrift movement promoted this ethic in the United States. Brochures were created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Treasury to promote saving, self-reliance, and responsibility. Teaching thrift to children was especially prevalent in the 1920s, and schools utilized textbooks designed to encourage practicing frugality. A National Thrift Week was celebrated annually during this period, kicked off each January 17, the birthday of Benjamin Franklin, who encouraged people to live lives of thrift. In Poor Richard's Almanac, Franklin

wrote, "The Art of getting Riches consists very much in Thrift."

This movement was popular in large cities to smaller towns. In Santa Rosa, beginning in 1923, Exchange Bank partnered with the Press Democrat in a local thrift campaign. A nickel-plated, egg-shaped bank with a lock was provided to each participant, and the Press Democrat added 50 cents to a dollar to encourage developing a financial reserve or "Nest Egg."



Improvident folks that venture along on a precarious hand-to-mouth plan are imperiled by every chance squall and storm.

The family with a Nest Egg, a financial reserve, sails on an even keel toward financial independence and all the good things that this happy condition brings with it.

The happiness and well-being of your family depend upon YOU—are you doing what you should to safeguard it?

You are NOT unless you are systematically saving money.

—A Dollar FREE

—A Nest Egg Bank

- ✓ The free dollar is yours if your account remains active for six months.
- ✓ The Nest Egg Bank is attractively finished in bright nickel or brass, has a strong lock and a "borrow-proof" slot.
- ✓ It will help you save the odd change which now just "goes"—you don't know where.
- ✓ The Nest Egg will be a big assistance in the quick accumulation of a substantial bank account.

Exchange Bank
Santa Rosa, Calif.

4% on Your Savings
Compounded Semi-Annually

This Coupon is good for 50¢ and a Nest Egg Bank.

Sign this coupon and bring it to the Exchange Bank, Deposit \$1 or more, and you will be furnished a Nest Egg Coin Bank and your pass-book credited with another dollar, provided your account remains active for six months.

Name

Address

The nickel-plated banks measured about 3" x 7" and included a strong lock and a "borrow-proof" slot. The photo at right shows the slot.

The photo below shows the bottom of the egg which reads "Exchange Bank Santa Rosa, Calif" in the outer circle and "A Real Home Bank" on the inner circle.

The photos are courtesy of Leslie Musante Curry, and the egg belonged to her step-father, Alan Dickinson. He was born at Santa Rosa General Hospital in 1932 and was given the bank in school.



Note the egg-shaped bank featured in this Press Democrat Advertisement April 5, 1925

Santa Rosa Army Airfield, continued from page 1

Sonoma County Airport as the first scheduled commercial flight. In later years, this airline operated Martin 202s and Martin 404s and occasionally the Fairchild F-27 flew service from the airport.

In 1964, the Sonoma Air Attack Base of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (known as CDF and now Cal Fire) was established at the northeast corner of the current airport property.

In May 1967, the community held an Airport Appreciation Day at Sonoma County Airport. Air passenger demand levels remained consistently high throughout the period, with service by United Express to San Francisco International and Los Angeles International Airports as its mainstay.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the “Nob Hill” T-hangars, fire station, an instrument landing system, and non-aviation commercial facilities were added to the airport. Other improvements that occurred during this time period include additional T-hangars, portable hangars, executive hangars, apron expansion, and on-airport access roads and fencing.

There was a peak period for air passenger activity at STS between 1989 and 1991. During this period, the airport was served by both United Express, with jet service to Los Angeles International Airport, and by American Eagle with prop-jet (turboprop) service to San Jose International Airport. United Express curtailed its service to Los Angeles at the end of 1991 and American Eagle discontinued its San Jose connection at the end of 1993. From 1991 to 1998 passenger enplanements declined,

going from 58,074 passengers in 1991 to 17,762 in 1998. In 1999 and 2000 the number of passenger enplanements began to climb again, going from 27,335 in 1999 to 32,177 in 2000. United Express discontinued its air carrier service in October 2001.

In 1990, a small group of plane owners and volunteers was formed. In its earliest days, the group displayed just the aircraft that were privately owned by individual members. Soon, friends, family,

and strangers began donating aviation equipment, memorabilia, and even entire aircraft to the fledgling organization. In 1993, they opened the Pacific Coast Air Museum in an old parachute rigging shack on airfield property to display aviation artifacts. Donated aircraft can be viewed nearby. Their annual *Wings Over Wine Country* event draws up to 20,000 visitors each year.

In March 2000, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors voted to change the Sonoma County Airport’s name to Charles M. Schulz – Sonoma County Airport. The name change was in honor of the famous “Peanuts” comic strip cartoonist who lived for many years in Sonoma County, leaving a lasting legacy with his beloved characters, including Snoopy the Flying Ace.



Logo of the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport

Photo by Lisa Kranz, September 2024

From October 2001 until March 2007, the Airport did not have any regularly scheduled air carrier or commuter airline service. During this period, significant numbers of passengers either used the airport bus service or drove to San Francisco and Oakland International Airports.

On March 20, 2007, air service resumed when Horizon Air began non-stop scheduled service from Sonoma County Airport to Los Angeles and Seattle. Flights were operated with 74-seat, Q400 twin-engine turboprop aircraft. On October 28, 2007, a new daily flight to Portland, Oregon began. On April 24, 2008 a daily non-stop flight to Las Vegas was added to the schedule. In 2010, Horizon Air was rebranded as Alaska Airlines. On June 4, 2012, non-stop service to San Diego began and air service to Las Vegas ceased.

Airport trips have increased substantially in ensuing years. In 2023, the airport serviced 641,178 passengers. Currently, the airport offers nonstop flights on the following airlines:

Alaska Airlines:

Burbank, Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego in California, along with Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington.

American Airlines:

Phoenix, Arizona and Dallas, Texas

Avelo Airlines:

Burbank and Palm Springs in California along with Las Vegas, Nevada and Bend/Redmond, Oregon



Snoopy the Flying Ace at the Sonoma County Airport Terminal

Photo by Lisa Kranz, September 2024

Luther Burbank Press, continued from page 3

and registered for the draft in 1918. On his draft registration card his occupation is listed as "Wholesale Paper." Could he have sold paper to the Luther Burbank Press in Santa Rosa and met his future wife when she was employed there? However they met, Harold and Mina lived in Seattle for the remainder of their lives and they raised four children. They are buried at the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Seattle.

Luther Burbank: His Methods and Discoveries and Their Practical Application, the compilation produced under the editorial direction of Whitson and John, was finally published in 1914. Members of the Luther Burbank Society received their handsome, leather-bound, 12-volume set of books, which were illustrated with hundreds of color photographs of Burbank plants, photographs which were "produced by a new process devised and perfected for use in these volumes." The higher-end editions were even signed by Mr. Burbank. Ultimately, expenses for the endeavor had been high, and the Luther Burbank Press went out of business in 1916.

The University of Wisconsin website includes a digital edition of the volumes at: <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/KOMPNBGFI4ZBS8N>

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We will furnish typewriters as well as all materials, and provide a competent instructor--instruction hours 9 a. m. to 12 m. and 1 p. m. to 5 p. m. at our own offices.
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There are no conditions--no money is required. Everything will be furnished absolutely free.
 *** **

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 *** **

A knowledge of spelling--and accuracy, industry, willingness to work and personal neatness are essential.
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Apply immediately to
Luther Burbank Press
 Old Luther Burbank Homestead,
 Santa Rosa Ave. and Tupper St.
 Ask for Miss Schoenwerk

Press Democrat Advertisement
August 1, 1912

Santa Rosa Creek, continued from page 4

upon its banks. (The fire dept. was called to put out such a fire in the summer of 1924.)

Also, the sheriff's department apparently believed it was exempt from state pollution laws. That was the era of Prohibition and the cops were seizing enormous quantities of hootch, which they poured directly into the creek downstream from the sewer farm. In November 1926 alone, they dumped 1,730 gallons, mostly hard liquor including over a thousand gallons of jackass brandy. There were also 600 bottles of beer and the county detective and deputies "practiced up on their shooting until broken glass,

foam and odor was all that remained."

Despite its name, the "Luther Burbank Creation Garden" had very little to do with Burbank, aside from a promise he would contribute some plants. It was really the latest installment in the perennial melodrama (<http://santarosahistory.com/wordpress/?p=15>) over Santa Rosa's efforts to create its first public park, this time with the good juju of Burbank's famous name and intentions that it would someday include a community auditorium, another benefit the town lacked. Nothing much came of it (although they passed the hat at events for years, seeking donations) and the property was sold in 1930 to become the basis of the new Junior College campus.

Attend Finding History Day!

Sonoma County Finding History Day, sponsored by the Sonoma County Historical Society, is planned for Saturday, November 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Santa Rosa Veterans' Memorial Building at 1351 Maple Avenue.

The event will feature more than 30 local historical and cultural organizations, including the Historical Society of Santa Rosa. All participating organizations will be happy to share information and answer questions.

This event offers a great opportunity to meet, mingle, and learn with others interested in local history. See you there!

A Celebration of Sonoma County's Unique Past
 Una Celebración del Pasado Único del Condado de Sonoma

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Historical Society of Santa Rosa *Membership Application*

The Historical Society of Santa Rosa intends to build a strong and diverse organization of individuals, families, and groups to investigate, record, and relate the history of the city of Santa Rosa. Membership includes subscription to the newsletter and priority invitations to HSSR-sponsored events.

Memberships make wonderful gifts! Share the benefits of membership with your family and friends. Dues are paid annually, and membership is valid for one year.

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