

## Upcoming Event

January 13, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

Virtual presentation:

Laguna de Santa Rosa, Past & Present

See HSSR website for details

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## Prohibition and the Girolo Family

by Denise Hill

The 1920s was a decade of change, when many Americans owned cars, radios, and telephones for the first time. With cars came the need for good roads. The radio brought the world closer to home. The telephone connected families and friends. Prosperity was on the rise in cities and towns, and social change flavored the air. Some rural farmers were leaving their farms in order to receive a regular paycheck in the factories. Unions were on the rise. Women shortened, or “bobbed,” their hair, flappers danced and wore short fancy dresses, and men shaved off their beards. Known for a decade of excesses as captured in the book the “Great Gatsby,” it was also the decade of Prohibition. In 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed, creating the era of Prohibition.

In 1920, Santa Rosa was still a small town by any measure, with a population of just 8,750, but with at least 33 saloons – most along Fourth Street. One of those saloon owners was Peter (Pietro) Girolo. He co-owned and operated the U.S. Bar with Ambrose Perotta at 123 Fourth Street. Peter and his wife Josephine (Guisseppina) had both emigrated from Italy and lived on West Seventh Street in what is now the West End Preservation District. The West End neighborhood (west of the railroad tracks downtown) was home to approximately 90% of the Italian immigrants who lived in Santa Rosa. Many of the homes in the area were built with cellars, presumably as a place to make and store homemade wine as per their culture.

Even with Prohibition in effect, home wine making was legal. This was because it wasn't illegal to drink alcohol during Prohibition. The Eighteenth Amendment only forbade the “manufacture, sale and transportation



Pietro and Guisseppina Girolo and family in 1907. Sharon Ridely-Smith Collection

of intoxicating liquors”—not their consumption. So, while making wine (as long as it was under 200 gallons per year) was permissible, selling it was not. Of course, selling hard liquor was also illegal. That's why around 1920 a lot of bars and saloons suddenly became “soda shops.” This was the case with Peter's bar – the 1920 census lists him as the proprietor of a soft drink stand.

Plenty of other residents were making home-made wine and running “soda shops” that were once saloons, but Peter and Josephine Girolo may be the only couple in small-town Santa Rosa to both end up arrested as a result of Prohibition laws.

Peter Girolo was arrested first for having jackass liquor on the premises of his soda shop. (“Jackass” liquor was an Italian variation of corn moonshine. It came to be called “jackass” because of the mules and donkeys that the bootleggers used to haul sugar and mash to their hidden stills).

### UNITED STATES BAR IS RAIDED BY POLICEMEN Perrota and Girolo to Be Put on Trial Today on Charge of Violating Local Prohibition Ordinance *Press Democrat, May 4, 1921*

With the raid of the United States Bar, on lower Fourth Street Tuesday afternoon, the source of booze supply in Santa Rosa has been cut down. A one-quart bottle of “jackass” liquor was found in the place according to police. The raid was made following an extensive investigation of the place. Suspicion was fastened upon A. Perrota and P. Girolo, the owners. A search uncovered a quart bottle of alleged illicit liquor. Perrota and Girolo will be arraigned today on charges of having violated the city ordinance in regard to the sale, distribution or possession of liquors. It is rumored that further evidence than the liquor will be produced by the police at the trial of the two men. The police were unaided in the raid it is said. A search warrant was obtained to permit the searching of the premises. A complaint will be filed against the men this morning, Chief Matthews said.

*Continued on page 7*

## President's Message

Hello everyone! I hope this message finds you doing well in these uncertain times. For me personally, history, although it comes with many bitter lessons, provides some level of relief and strength that better times will come.

Our past is by no means completely linear and set to follow a pre-arranged sequence, but notions of learning from past mistakes (or successes) are a hallmark of humankind. Certainly not all that is in our future will be all wonderful, but the resiliency shown by those who came before us, and in the children of today, gives me hope.

In this issue of our newsletter, stories center on the 1920s and offer a small window into life and events in Santa Rosa about 100 years ago. Foundations laid in that time are still strong and visible in our community today.

With this in mind, I hope you'll find these stories interesting and enlightening of Santa Rosa's past. What we learn from past times that will aid us today...we will have to wait to see.

Are you interested in joining the Historical Society of Santa Rosa Board? This opportunity awaits you! If you are captivated by and curious about Santa Rosa history, this may be the board for you.

The mission of the HSSR is to promote the knowledge of Santa Rosa's rich and diverse history in its many aspects and to encourage efforts to preserve evidence of the City's past, both its oral and written records, structures, sites, and landscapes, thus furthering awareness that our history is a seamless web of connections between past and present.

The Board meets monthly (virtually for now) and is focused on presenting more virtual events in 2021. If you haven't viewed our last event with local cemeterian Jeremy Nichols, please visit the HSSR YouTube Channel on our website.

If your interest is piqued about HSSR Board membership, or in assisting in other ways, please contact me at (707) 332-1117 or at [info@historicalsocietysantarosa.org](mailto:info@historicalsocietysantarosa.org).

Bryan Much  
President of the HSSR

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[HistoricalSocietySantaRosa.org](http://HistoricalSocietySantaRosa.org)

### The HSSR Acknowledges Its Members and Donors

Our events and programs are made possible through membership renewals and the generosity of our members and community partners



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### Welcome New HSSR Members

Dorothy Battenfeld  
Karen Daw  
Sylvia Eilers  
Robert Jenkins  
Jayme Lucas  
Yvonne Martin  
Russ & Anne Peterson

### 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](mailto:Newsletter@HistoricalSocietySantaRosa.org)

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## **BOARD OF HEALTH PUTS LID ON ALL GATHERING IN SANTA ROSA Precautionary Measures Went Into Effect Here at Midnight Under Orders of Authorities; Schools, Theaters, Dances, Crowds, Are Put Under the Ban Until Further Notice**

*Editor's note: The following article appeared in the Press Democrat on February 10, 1920. The influenza ban, one of several since 1918, was lifted in Santa Rosa at midnight on March 1, 1920.*

At midnight Monday a close lid was clamped on Santa Rosa by the health authorities to prevent any possibility of an epidemic of influenza in this city. The action was taken not because of any alarming increase in cases but because the surrounding country is in the grip of epidemic conditions, and no precaution can be neglected to prevent a return of such conditions as prevailed more than a year ago.

Summarized, here are the restrictions of the board of health:

1. All schools closed with exception of the convent.
2. No dances, public or private.
3. Theaters closed.
4. No lodge gatherings.
5. Restaurants, candy stores and ice cream parlors must be aired for one hour after the serving of meals.
6. Pool rooms must not allow playing and front and back doors must be left open for airing and to prevent gathering of crowds.
7. Special policemen appointed to inspect eating houses, hotels, pool rooms, etc. to see that restrictions are strictly obeyed.
8. All clubs to be closed, including club privileges at Coffee Club.
9. Library closed for reading purposes, but open for exchange of books with no lingering or loitering.
10. The wearing of masks is urged for protection, provided they are properly made and worn when in close proximity to others.

The meeting of the Santa Rosa Board of Health at which these precautionary measures were adopted was held Monday afternoon at the city hall, and opinion among the members was undivided on the advisability of establishing restrictions before it was too late for restrictions to be of value.

J.W. Moorehouse has been appointed as special policeman to visit all places coming under the ban, and will see that restrictions are obeyed. It is not known now how long it will be necessary to maintain the ban, but it is believed that strict compliance with its features will result in its being lifted soon.

The American Legion Benefit performance at the Cline Theater Monday night was the last public gathering unaffected by the ban, and the attendance was smaller than expected, when it is considered that enough seats were sold to have filled the first floor of the theater.

In further explaining the health measures Dr. Jackson Temple, city health officer, called attention to the advisability of people remaining apart from each other as much as possible. When two people meet it is better to stand further apart and raise the voice, than to come too close and run the danger of contagion, it is asserted.

Day scholars only are to be excluded from the convent, the boarding scholars already being segregated. The Coffee Club will be kept open for restaurant purposes, but club privileges are withdrawn. Lodge meetings are prohibited, as well as other public gatherings, but officers of such organizations may meet observing proper precautions, to transact important business. The Red Cross Chapter is all ready for an emergency "flu" hospital at the General Hospital, where the management has provided a ward entirely separate from the remainder of the hospital, so that there can be no danger to other patients.

A report from Petaluma Monday night asserted that Petaluma was closed up under orders similar to those now in effect here.



Ed Heald wearing mask in Petaluma, 1918  
*Sonoma County Library Digital Collections*

# Rosenberg Office Building

## Tallest Building Between San Francisco and Portland When Built in 1921

by Lisa Kranz

"Nearly Million Dollars in Building Permits are Issued Here During 1921," a January 1, 1922 Press Democrat headline boasted. The 12 months of 1921 included building permits valued at \$804,691, the largest valuation since 1906-07, when a devastated Santa Rosa was rebuilding from the 1906 earthquake. The most notable of the new buildings was the Rosenberg Office Building, a structure planned at the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Mendocino Avenue. It was valued at \$134,000.

The sale of this corner had been completed in January 1921, and plans for the site were not immediately disclosed. The corner contained several uses, including a Standard Oil Company filling station, the Spear Motor Company, the Kurlander Cigar Store and the Jewell and Steiner real estate office. The property was "L" shaped, spanning 80 feet on Fourth Street and 120 feet on Mendocino Avenue.

Max Rosenberg and his son Fred purchased this prominent corner across from the Courthouse. Max Rosenberg was a successful businessman and civic leader who had come to Santa Rosa in 1896 and opened the Red Front Store on Fourth Street. He renamed the store the Rosenberg Department Store in 1908, after rebuilding following the 1906 earthquake. Fred Rosenberg assisted his father with the business, and he assumed its management when Max retired in the mid-1920s.

The Rosenbergs secured possession of the site in April 1921, and began developing plans for the "biggest and best" building in Santa Rosa, announcing early on that the building would likely be four to five stories. There was speculation about whether it would house a hotel, a theater, or offices. Ultimately, the Rosenbergs were convinced of the need for offices, and they hired San Francisco architect Sylvain Schnaittacher to design a five story, Romanesque office building with retail uses on the ground floor.

Work began in earnest in August 1921, when excavation for the foundation began. A steel frame rose, and the building was enclosed with reinforced concrete walls in early 1922. Brickwork then commenced, and more than

148,000 bricks were installed in 18 days. The Press Democrat reported on each milestone in the building's development: a wiring contract representing the biggest in years; \$23,600 in plaster work to be completed in 73 days; new phone cable being laid by an automatic cable-laying truck sent from San Francisco; hard wood floors and battleship linoleum (heavy duty for high-traffic areas) being laid; windows being installed; iron work being painted champagne color to match the brick walls; and marble baseboard being installed on the frontage.

The construction effort was not without several workplace calamities. Serious injury befell a worker who tumbled three stories down an elevator shaft. Another fell through the ceiling from the fourth to the third floor. Both recovered. More than one explosion was reported, one due to the accumulation of gas. Horribly, a fire on Fifth Street in July 1922 destroyed eight nearby buildings, including a garage, a candy factory, a battery shop, and Corrick's stationery store. It was reported that the roof of the one story portion of the Rosenberg building caught fire, but it was quickly extinguished. The fire caused some of the windows to fall out of the east side of the Rosenberg building, which were duly replaced.

As construction continued, the large building was being leased, and was almost full. Ground floor

businesses began to receive lighting and other furnishings during the summer of 1922 and began to occupy the modern space. These enterprises included, on Fourth Street, Woolworth's, the Rutherford Drug Store, and Blum's Ladies' Fashions; and fronting Mendocino Avenue, Healy's Shoe Store, Stein's Stationery, and Nagle's Sports Shop. Doctors, dentists, attorneys, an insurance broker, a ladies' tailor, a barber, and a Christian Scientist practitioner occupied the upper floors. Fred Rosenberg announced that by September 1, 1922, the building would be ready for occupancy and completely furnished.

When it was completed, the Rosenberg Office Building was the tallest building



Rosenberg Office Building, 1925  
*Sonoma County Library Digital Collections*

*Continued on page 6*

# History of a Downtown Neighborhood from the 1920s

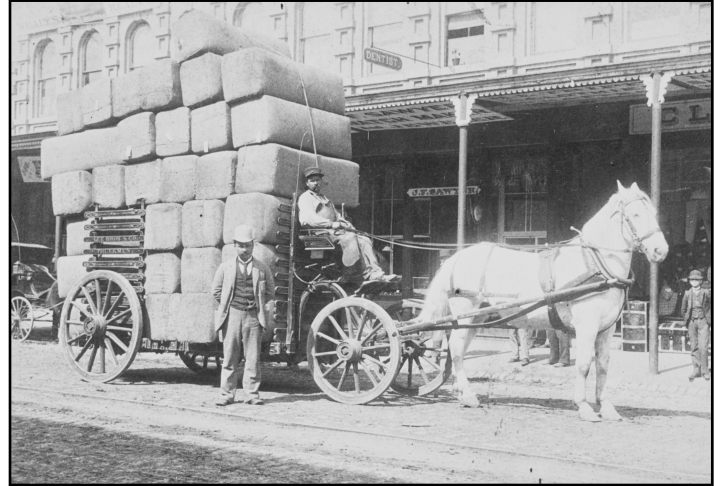
by Denise Hill

Just north of downtown Santa Rosa is the St. Rose Preservation District with its mix of homes built from the late 1800s through the 1940s. If you walk the neighborhood, you'll notice that the area from Tenth Street to Lincoln Street has predominately bungalows, along with a few Tudor and Provincial homes – styles popular in the 1920s and 1930s. How is it that a neighborhood so close to Santa Rosa's downtown – the center of all business activity from as far back as the 1850s - remained open land until the 1920s?

The answer lies within the story of the Klute and Cooper families. In 1855, Lewis Sargent Cooper, a farmer, met and married Charlotte Ann Fisher in Lane, Oregon. Within five years they had four children – Sarah, Emma, and twins Mary and Marion.

By 1866, the family had moved to Santa Rosa. The 1880 census lists the family as living at 50 Sixth Street with two more children, Bertie and Etta, both of whom were born in Santa Rosa. In 1884, Marion Cooper is listed as an “educator” in the local newspaper. However, a year later at the young age of 24, Marion bought a 1/3 interest in the thriving and well-respected Lee Bros. & Co's drayage (trucking) business. Lee Bros. used numerous wagons, trucks, and drays to move baggage, fruit, and other goods, along with providing a storage service for those moving into the area who would have their household items shipped in advance of their arrival.

Six years later, Marion married Orilla Klute, the daughter of Henry Klute, a carpenter. Henry Klute had amassed numerous land holdings just north of downtown Santa Rosa. In fact, in 1871, Henry Klute sold 8 acres to the Christian Church so they could build a Christian college in the same area that the St. Rose Church occupies now.



Lee Bros. & Company wagon hauling hops, 1890  
*Sonoma County Library Digital Collections*

By marrying into the Klute family, Marion Cooper acquired some of that property just north of the Christian college site where he could pasture the horses used by Lee Bros. proximate to the business, which was located on Wilson Street.

This is also where Marion and Orilla had their home which was located at the corner of Tenth and B Streets.

**Choose a Lot in  
The Cooper Tract**

You can buy one of the large lots in the Cooper tract today for \$650. Come any time today and look them over. There is a building restriction on the lots. They will be worth twice the sale price soon. Just like the building restriction made the Spring Street lots so valuable. But these lots are just twice as close in. 5 blocks north of the court house. 4 blocks from the high school. Take advantage of this bargain sale on Santa Rosa's best lots. Come today and choose your lot. Sale conducted by C. N. Carrington. alt

Press Democrat, August 21, 1921

In 1898, the Cooper-Klute family tried to sell all the property they owned near their home through an ad in a San Francisco newspaper, but apparently got no buyers. Eight years later the Klute Addition - with 36 lots encompassing Washington, Lincoln, Tenth, Klute, and B Streets - was recorded in the County Recorder's Office just one week before the 1906 earthquake. Maybe the total destruction of the downtown area by the earthquake scared folks off from purchasing residential lots nearby, but the lots didn't sell. It was another 15 years before what was now called the Cooper Tract - the “last remaining large unimproved tract within 5 blocks of the main business district” was officially put on the market again.

This doesn't mean the Cooper property went unused. Large open tracts of land were a rarity some 35 years after Santa Rosa was established; it came in handy when property was needed for local and traveling carnivals such as one in 1903 mentioned in the book *Rose Carnivals of Santa Rosa in Review, 1894-1932* by Lillian Burger Slater. Tents were set up on Tenth and Lincoln Streets extending to Washington for the Eagles Carnival, a street carnival including a queen and her

court. The queen, Lorraine Bradlee, had eight attendants, one of whom bore the crown on a silk cushion for the coronation procession.

This time when the lots in the Cooper Tract were made available, the majority sold (most between 1922 and 1929). Those purchasing lots were mostly blue-collar workers. They built homes for their families that

*Continued on page 6*

***Rosenberg, continued from page 4***

between San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. The structure featured the first elevators in Santa Rosa. The elevators were a big attraction, open to the public, and staffed by an elevator operator until 9 p.m.

Businesses opened, operated and came and went for decades. Fire and earthquake safety became significant concerns in the early 1980s. Building occupancy declined, and new occupants were not allowed since the building did not meet earthquake standards.

A local developer purchased the property in 1984 and planned a renovation. By 1988, the building was vacant. In 1989, a Utah-based development firm purchased the property to transform the building into affordable, senior housing units. Financial woes plagued the renovation, and it stalled for a time, but eventually was completed, with residents moving in to the refurbished building with 77 small, affordable units, in 1992. The building includes these units today, along with several retail businesses on the ground floor.



The Rosenberg Office Building, 1924  
*Sonoma County Library Digital Collections*

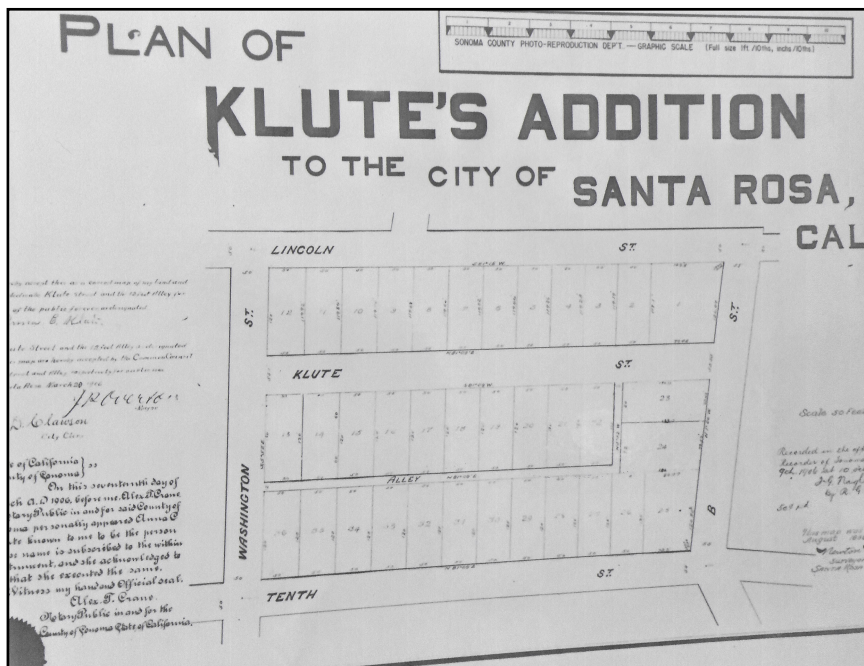
As it nears its one-hundredth birthday, the Rosenberg building remains one of Santa Rosa's historic architectural gems.

***Downtown neighborhood, continued from page 5***

reflected the popular style of the time, which was the bungalow. Bungalows were less “fussy” than Victorian-style homes and offered low cost, simple living quarters with an artistic touch for many Americans living on modest means. With its special features - style, convenience, simplicity, sound construction, and excellent plumbing - the bungalow filled more than the need for shelter. It provided affordable fulfillment of the American dream. Bungalow styles varied and included California,

Arts & Crafts (Craftsman), Mission, and Prairie, but they were all low profile with prominent horizontal accents and typically no more than one to one and one-half stories.

As a result, bungalows are the predominant style along Lincoln Street and are also along Tenth, B, and Washington Streets. Walk down Lincoln Street and you'll enjoy a classic 1920s bungalow streetscape as enjoyable now as it was 100 years ago!



Map for Klute development, 1906 *Hill-Lilienthal Collection*



Bungalows in Klute's Addition today

### *Prohibition, continued from page 1*

Less than six months later, Josephine was arrested for allegedly selling a glass of wine to a guest at her house. Her case was turned over to federal authorities for prosecution, and she was released on \$500 bond.

Neither Peter nor Josephine spent any time in jail or paid any fines. Peter was not charged (although his partner Ambrose was), and the charges against Josephine were dropped when the witness in her case stated that “he thought he saw Mrs. Rutherford give Mrs. Girolo a \$5 bill, but was not certain.”

Just a year later, Peter was arrested again for selling liquor at his establishment. This time there was a brawl with federal Prohibition officers during the arrest, and news reports that Girolo and another man were “somewhat bruised and cut before they were finally taken to the sheriff’s office.” But both the County Sheriff’s Office and the Santa Rosa Police refused to jail him and others, finding they were arrested without warrants. It seems like our small community was protecting its own.

No records could be located that provide the result of

Peter Girolo’s second arrest. Maybe he just paid a fine or maybe he avoided prosecution entirely (again). Either way, after 1922, both Peter and Josephine Girolo seemed to lead a much quieter life free of run-ins with federal agents or other members of the law enforcement community.



U.S. Bar owned by Girolo and Perotta, 123 Fourth Street  
*Sharon Ridley-Smith Collection*

In 1930, the “soda” shop became a cigar shop, and Peter appears to have moved on, with city directories showing him working for the city Water Department. The family lived in a bungalow located at 519 Davis Street that they had built in 1921 and were active members of the St. Rose Catholic Church. Their children were in their late teens to early twenties with two older boys headed into military service.

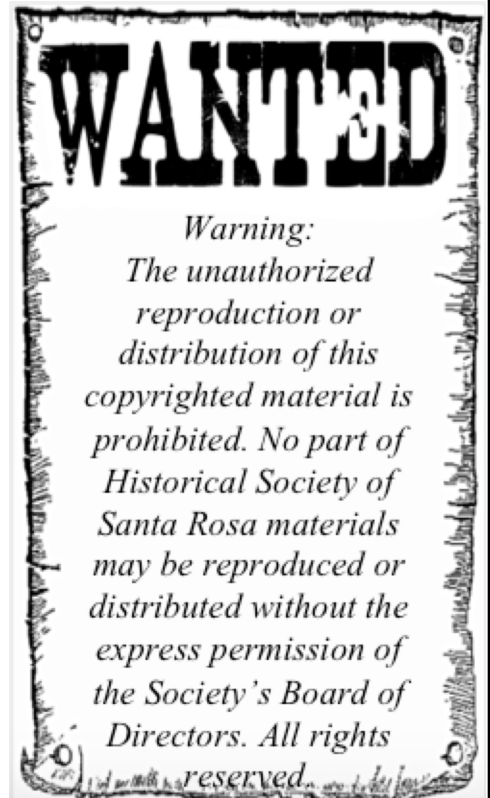
In 1933, the Eighteenth Amendment was abolished, becoming the only Constitutional amendment to be repealed.

Peter and Josephine began investing in rental properties and seemed to do quite well with photos from that time showing Peter driving a Packard. Their quiet life continued until their deaths. Peter died in 1950 and Josephine in 1970.



“The Sun Worshippers” pageant was staged May 1, 1920 in honor of Santa Rosa horticulturist Luther Burbank’s 71st birthday and held on the lawn at Santa Rosa High School. An estimated 3,000 people attended the pageant, which had been postponed from Burbank’s March 7 birthday due to the influenza ban. While the ban had been lifted on March 1, planners had already rescheduled the event. (See related story on page 3). Pictured is Madam Francesca Zarad, distinguished soprano of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, who opened and closed the pageant with song.

*Luther Burbank Home and Gardens Collection*





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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.

☐

\$25 Individual membership

☐

\$40 Household membership

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