



Member Event - Night at the Museum

Join us at the Museum of Sonoma County,
427 Seventh Street, to see *It's in the Mail*,
the new exhibit on local postal history
May 14, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

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Elizabeth Waters Burbank: Dedicated to Santa Rosa

by Lisa Kranz

Elizabeth Waters Burbank may be best known for her marriage to Luther Burbank, the famed horticulturist who lived and worked in Santa Rosa from 1875 to 1926. But she should also be remembered as a professional woman who was very active in civic affairs and who also worked to ensure her husband's legacy was lasting.

Elizabeth Burbank was born Bessie M. Waters on December 23, 1887 in Hastings, Michigan to parents Riley Waters, an iron moulder, and Josephine Waters, a housewife. She was the second of five children, and not much is known about her early life. She is believed to have attended Olivet College, a private, co-ed Christian university in Olivet, Michigan. She worked for several years in the editorial department of an eastern publishing company as a proofreader and editor of manuscripts.

She left for California around 1912 and lived with her younger sister, Margaret Chryst, in Berkeley. She accompanied her brother-in-law on a business visit to Santa Rosa where she met Luther Burbank. She first worked as a researcher for the Burbank Press in late 1914, editing field notes for the 12-volume set of books, Luther Burbank – His Methods and Discoveries and Their Practical Application. Sometime later, she began working as Luther Burbank's secretary, and on December 21, 1916, the two married in San Francisco.

Until his death in 1926, Luther and Elizabeth, who was known as Betty, lived in a home Burbank built in 1906 directly across Tupper Street (demolished in 1964) from the existing Burbank home of today. The couple had no

children, but Mrs. Burbank's niece, Betty Jane Waters, lived with them for several years starting in 1924. They adopted and adored Bonita, a terrier of mixed heritage.



Elizabeth Waters Burbank circa 1916
Courtesy Luther Burbank Home & Gardens Collection

During their 10 years of marriage, Elizabeth supported her husband's business interests. She chronicled his plant developments and is believed to have had a hand in working with the Collier's Publishing House to republish the 12-volume set as an 8-volume set. She kept his business affairs in order and was a hostess to the hundreds of visitors who came to visit the man whose horticultural work was known world-wide.

Mrs. Burbank's work with Luther Burbank is best described by him. When asked to comment upon "how my wife has helped me" he said, "words are futile in dealing with the vital things of heart and life. She has been an ever-present helper on the numerous books which I have published and with constant encouragement, in ambitions,

love, happiness...she is my friend, companion, pal and helper; my philosopher, adviser, stabilizer, confidant, counselor and happy running mate."

After Burbank's death in April 1926, Elizabeth renovated and then moved into the cottage (today's only existing Burbank home). She was sought after as an expert of Burbank's horticultural research, and she strived to continue his work in several key ways:

-In 1927 she contracted with Stark Brothers Nursery, granting them exclusive license to propagate, publicize, and

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Message from the Board

While we acknowledge National Women's History Month annually in March, it's always the right time to celebrate the impact and achievement of women. In this edition, you'll learn about Elizabeth Waters Burbank, who advocated for plant patents, preserved the Luther Burbank Home and Gardens in Santa Rosa and helped found the Sonoma County Humane Society. You'll also read about the founding of the National Women's History Alliance right here in Santa Rosa in 1980. For more on the origins of this organization, check out HSSR's YouTube Channel to view a recent webinar.

May in Santa Rosa means it's time for the Rose Parade! Before heading to this year's parade and festival downtown, take a trip down memory lane and enjoy the vintage postcard images of Rose Parades from long ago you'll find in this edition. The Luther Burbank Rose Parade and Festival will be held Saturday, May 17, 2025 starting at 10 a.m. in downtown Santa Rosa, with the festival immediately following. This year's theme is Growing Together, a celebration of Sonoma County Agriculture. Come see us in the parade and at our table at the festival!

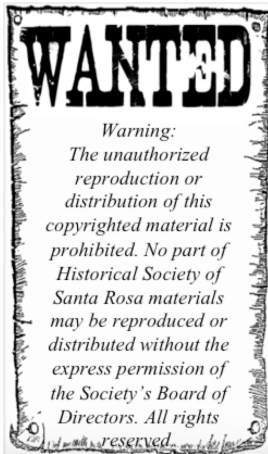
One Hundred Years Ago



This image shows Santa Rosa's Fourth Street in 1925, looking east from B Street. Santa Rosa Hotel is at right, with the entrance to the White House Department Store at left.

Courtesy Sonoma County Historical Society Collection

*Answer to Winter 2025 "Where in Santa Rosa?"
Coddington Mall, 1971*



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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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Santa Rosa's Rose Parade - A Local Tradition

Santa Rosa's Rose Parade has been a springtime tradition in Santa Rosa most years for more than 130 years. For a history of the Rose Parade, see the HSSR Spring 2023 newsletter online. The postcard images on this page illustrate the pageantry of some of the earlier parades.



At left, Japanese Float, 1912
Courtesy Sonoma Co. Library Collection



Above,
 Juvenile Queen Float, 1911
Hill-Lilienthal Collection



Nancy Miller, 1908 Rose Parade Queen
Courtesy Hill-Lilienthal Collection



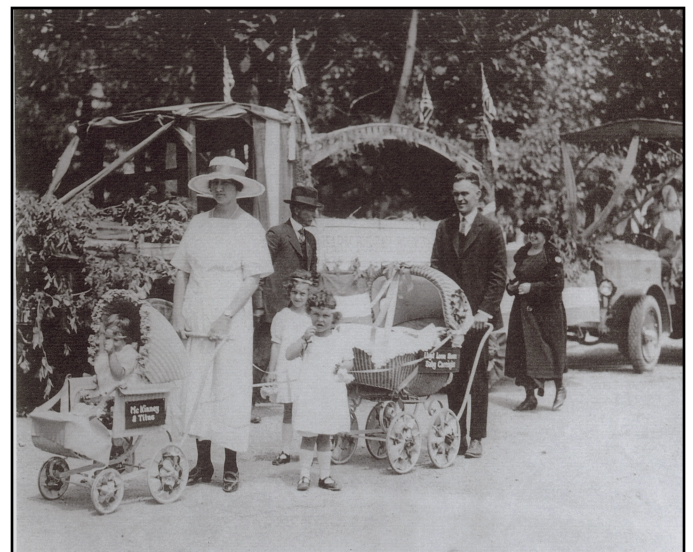
Decorated Fire Wagon, 1955 Parade
Courtesy Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection



Courtesy Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection



Float of lilies, undated
Courtesy Hill-Lilienthal Collection



Ransdell Family, 1923, Courtesy Sonoma Co. Library Collection

John S. Taylor's Trip to the Gold Country

by John Shackelford Taylor

As told in HSSR's Winter 2025 newsletter, John S. Taylor came from Missouri to California in 1848 to mine gold. He moved to Santa Rosa in 1853, purchasing land near Kawana Springs Road, where he founded the White Sulphur Springs Resort. The following is an excerpt from his journal on a nostalgic trip back to the Gold Country in 1895, when he was 67.

August 19

Left White Sulphur Springs Monday morning, Aug. 19, 1895 on 6:55 train S.P. (*Southern Pacific*) route. Made first change at Napa junction. Half-hour wait for train to Suisun which place we reach at 8 oc [sic]. Lay over 1-1/2 hours. A run of about 2 hours brings us to Sac. where we lunch then make a tour of the city. Visit the Capitol. Spend a half hour with Mrs. Colgan whom we find very sick. After a wait of about four hours, we resume our journey of the beautiful Sac. Valley. Cross Bear River at Wheatland where the vegetable growth is wonderful in the rich alluvial soil. A short run brings us (after crossing the Yuba River) to the City of Marysville. Wait 20 minutes then we are off for the famous mining region of Oroville which place we



John S. Taylor in Freemason's Uniform, undated photo
Courtesy Hill-Lilienthal Collection

reach at seven. Find the thermometer a way up in the nintys [sic] with a prospect of 100 and a dread of suffocation from the extreme heat. Stop at the U.S. Hotel where we find fairly good accommodations though the [heat?] is very great at night preventing good rest at night. Here we meet two Santa Rosans who are in business at this place – Henry Wise and Mrs. Mc G[illegible] Bennett.

August 20

Hire two-seated surry [sic] with good mountain team and start out on our exploring trip. Find Oroville quite a thriving place of about 2,000 population. Merchandising with the miners and livery and hotel for tourists being the business of the place. Visited the Golden Feather gravel mine where the Feather River has been flumed and the mining is done in the bottom of a stream. A gigantic piece of engineering, the wall down which turns the stream using 50,000 barrels of cement in construction. Mine said to be

very rich. Got some fine specimens from the Banner quartz mine two miles farther up the river. Saw the hoisting machinery and crusher in operation. Power electricity. The Butterfly Mine is also in the vicinity of Oroville. Back to the hotel for lunch. Afternoon spent on the banks of the river to pass away the time which hangs heavy until we can arrange for camping. Spend another warm night at hotel.

August 21

After early breakfast, leave Oroville for Bidwell's Bar* by private conveyance with camping outfit. Reach the old historical, but now almost deserted, mining town. After a rough drive of about 2 hours, we find a living relic of the exciting times of '49 still full of reminiscences of the past – an old man 80 odd years of age who still clings to the old place. He is a kindly old man and the luscious, sweet oranges bestowed upon us testify to his generous spirit. They were grown upon a beautiful tree planted at the Bar in the early '50s. Here is still the stone jail with its grated barred windows and near other unoccupied old buildings remind one of Goldsmiths deserted village. Finding no place in the immediate vicinity to strike camp, we retrace our route for about a mile where under the spreading branches of a large Sycamore on the bank of a stream called Bidwell's Run we stretch our tent and begin our actual camp life. We call our camp Sycamore which name we have blazoned on the large tree over-shadowing us in charcoal. Our cookstove is two huge rocks with furnace for fire between. On this we put coffee pot and frying pan and live in true miners' style. We have prospected only a very little for gold, but the fact that miners a hundred yards above and below our camp are taking out gold every day proves we are in a gold region. John S. and [illegible] have gone to one of the miner's camps. Fruit



Bidwell's Bar, 1854 Sketch
Courtesy California State Library

Continued on page 7

History of the National Women's History Alliance

by Molly Murphy MacGregor and Robert P.J. Cooney, Jr.

Before 1980, very few women's history resources existed in elementary and secondary classrooms. Establishing a "Women's History Week" around March 8 (International Women's Day) was an effective way to encourage teachers to discuss women and to foster a multicultural perspective, which was always a deliberate priority. The idea came from the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women. During 1978 and 1979, Women's History Week was celebrated in local schools and the larger community, culminating in hometown parades.

Because of the success of the first two Women's History Weeks, Molly Murphy MacGregor, a Santa Rosa teacher and activist, took the idea to a Women's History Institute in the summer of 1979. There, enthusiastic participants passed a resolution for a National Women's History Week and activated their extensive networks to support the idea. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a Presidential Message calling on the American people to pause and remember the extraordinary accomplishments of American women during the week of March 2-8, 1980. From 1981 to 1986, each Congress passed a National Women's History Week Resolution.



Banner announcing Women's History Week, circa late 1970s
Courtesy Sonoma State University Collection

In 1980, the National Women's History Project (NWHP) was founded in Santa Rosa by Maria Cuevas, Paula Hammett, Molly Murphy MacGregor, Bette Morgan and Mary Ruthsdotter. That same year, the NWHP received a Women's Education Equity Act Grant to design a teacher training resource. To augment this resource, all books related to women's history were reviewed and the best selected for what became the Women's History Resource Catalog. Over time, a single-page flyer became an annual 32-page Resource Catalog with a distribution of 100,000.

When the NWHP began, the Internet as it is now did not exist. In those early years, the NWHP served as the "Google" of the multicultural women's history movement. In 1984, the NWHP launched the Women's History Network to link educators, librarians, workplace organizers and individuals interested in women's history. Mary Ruthsdotter edited the quarterly Network News, which was published until 2000.

The work of the NWHP was sustained by donations, grants and Resource Catalog sales. During those years, the NWHP developed dozens of curriculum resources and

produced Women in American Life, a five-part series on the multicultural history of women in United States. The NWHP also won a grant to produce Spanish and English versions of ¡Adelante Mujeres!, a groundbreaking overview of the history of Mexican American women. The NWHP organized teacher training sessions throughout the country and annual four-day "A Woman's Place is . . . in the Curriculum" programs in California.

To make March "National Women's History Month," the NWHP successfully lobbied Congress to officially expand Women's History Week in 1987. Each year, the NWHP named Honorees and chose an inclusive theme that was adopted by groups across the country. Highlights of the following years include the campaign honoring the 75th anniversary of Women's Suffrage in 1995 and the 1998 celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the first women's rights conference. In 2000, the NWHP's 20th Anniversary, the organization was honored by The President's Commission on American History at an extraordinary celebration in Statuary Hall in the US Capitol Building.

However, the year 2000 held many unexpected challenges. School budgets had been reduced and Amazon's sales had greatly impacted Resource Catalog sales. The resulting decline in revenue coincided with the urgent need to upgrade all computers and the mail-order system to be Y-2K compliant at the turn of the century. Then, a glitch was discovered in the new mail-order system that had been erroneously recording double amounts for sales and subsequent non-returnable reorders. The ultimate result was that the NWHP owed the bank and vendors over \$500,000.

Paying off this debt included dramatically downsizing staff and office and seeking the support and generosity of countless people to whom the NWHP will always be grateful. It took 13 years and the story of this recovery is as remarkable as the evolution from a grassroots organization to a national institution. Beginning in 2010, instead of a Women's History Resource Catalog the NWHP published Women's History Gazettes which recognized each year's theme and Honorees. In 2021, the NWHP began publishing a glossy magazine, Women's History. All these publications and more are available on the NWHA website, nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org.

The NWHP became the National Women's History Alliance (NWA) in 2017 with an expanded mission to help link

Continued on page 7

sell the plants growing on Burbank's Sebastopol and Santa Rosa properties.

-When she ended her agreement with Stark Brothers in 1935, she deeded the Santa Rosa property to Santa Rosa Junior College for horticultural education purposes, maintaining ownership of the land where the cottage, greenhouse, and carriage house stand.

-She endowed two scholarships at Santa Rosa Junior College that have assisted countless students and that continue today: The Elizabeth Burbank Memorial Transferring Scholarship and the Luther Burbank Botany Scholarship.

-Elizabeth joined a movement to encourage Congress to issue plant patents, and after the Plant Patent Act became law in 1930, she applied for and received 16 plant patents for Burbank plants.

Elizabeth worked tirelessly in several ways to ensure Luther Burbank's legacy was enduring. In the early 1930s, she made at least one lecture tour of the West and Southwest, giving talks on her husband's life and projects. She gave countless speeches over her lifetime about Luther Burbank's work. She went on the radio in 1932, presenting *Gardens Walks with Mrs. Luther Burbank*, a 15-minute radio broadcast where she spoke mostly of her husband's work. The show was recorded at the National Broadcasting Studios in San Francisco.

At the request of Henry Ford, Elizabeth sent Luther Burbank's garden tools, desk, books, and the Information Bureau building, a structure which had stood at Santa Rosa Avenue and Tupper Street, where they remain part of Ford's Greenfield Village Museum.

She also served on the Burbank

Commission which was tasked with design and development of a Burbank Memorial Garden adjacent to the Burbank home in 1955. Mrs. Burbank deeded the home and its contents to the City of Santa Rosa in 1955, and the Garden was dedicated in 1960. It is thanks to Elizabeth Waters Burbank that National Register of Historic Places Luther Burbank Home & Gardens is preserved and open for public enjoyment today.

In addition to preserving and promoting her husband's legacy, Elizabeth was community-minded, and she was very active in the civic affairs of Santa Rosa. One of her most significant and lasting contributions to the community was the

establishment of the Humane Society of Sonoma County, which incorporated in 1931. She, Ruth Finley, and Mary Leddy established the organization, and Elizabeth served as the Chair of its Board for 25 years. The founders raised funds for the Society's needs and paid staff salaries for many years.

She was a businesswoman who subscribed to the Wall Street Journal and was an astute investor with a varied stock portfolio. In her free time, she enjoyed visiting antique shops in search of treasures and traveling to San Francisco to shop. She had flair and taught young people in her life proper etiquette.

Mrs. Burbank died on June 19, 1977 at age 89. Her ashes were placed in the front yard, where her husband was buried under a Cedar of Lebanon tree which is no longer standing. More than 900,000 obituaries appeared in newspapers across the country.

To learn more, the Luther Burbank Home & Gardens Museum is currently featuring an exhibit about Elizabeth Waters Burbank. The museum is located in the Carriage House at Luther Burbank Home & Gardens at the corner of Sonoma and Santa Rosa Avenues, and the exhibit will continue through the end of the year.



Postcard image of Elizabeth and Luther Burbank flanking their dog Bonita, on the porch of Tupper Street Home, 1926
Courtesy Luther Burbank Home & Gardens Collection



Elizabeth Burbank with a girl at the dedication of the Luther Burbank Memorial Highway in 1936
Courtesy Redwood Empire Association and Luther Burbank Home & Gardens

John S. Taylor, continued from page 4

peddlers pass and I buy a box of grapes and some sweet potatoes. Mr. Prior, the above mentioned [illegible] makes us a call. John returns from his visit with both hands clasped over a piece of gold the size of a cucumber seed which the miners allowed him to wash out in their rocker. He is very proud as he is the first of us to find gold. We get plenty of fruit as it grows all around us. Peaches, pears, oranges, grapes, etc. John S. hires horse and buggy and takes trip down to the Bar while we prospect a little for gold. He returns. We have dinner comprised of Sweet Potatoes, sardines, and eggs. Desert [sic], coffee, fruit, and gingerbread. By the bye, I must tell the joke on John S. on his trip to the Bar. Today he carried his gun which was empty and forgot to take his cartridges. He saw some quail, drew a bead, and pulled the trigger – snap, snap. Then climbed halfway to the top of the mountain to find the quail. I imagine the Bar often leaves a man in that condition.

August 22

Got up early this morning as John S. had hired the horse and buggy which belongs to Mrs. Fotman (?) at the Bar to take a trip of 8 or 9 miles to Old Hatchery where he used to mine.

**Now a state historic landmark, Bidwell's Bar was a gold mining camp in Butte County which lay at the end of the California Trail. Located 6 miles east-northeast of Oroville, it was founded by John Bidwell, who discovered gold near the Middle Fork of the Feather River on July 4, 1848. By 1853, the camp had attracted enough miners to warrant a post office, and the town's population swelled to 2,000, becoming prominent enough to become the county seat. However, by 1856 the gold had disappeared and Bidwell's Bar became another ghost town. The last remnants of the town were submerged with the creation of Lake Oroville in 1968. Source: Wikipedia*

National Women's History Alliance, continued from page 5

women's history advocates at the local, state, and federal levels and to significantly expand each group's circle of influence. At the same time, the NWHa began a campaign for a national celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage. The organization remains based in Santa Rosa.

Although thousands of celebrations planned for 2020 Suffrage Centennial were made impossible by Covid, the planning for the anniversary mobilized the nation and launched a larger women's history movement resulting in hundreds of new organizations, websites, and events throughout the year. The work of the NWHa continues today along with the collective effort of the hundreds of thousands who are following the NWHa's mission of "writing women back into history."

Memorial Day Observed in Santa Rosa

from the Santa Rosa Republican, May 27, 1922

Editor's note: The original article has been edited to fit this space. Veterans' Park was located at the corner of McDonald Avenue and Park Street, where today stands a Presbyterian church.

Members of Ellsworth Post, Grand Army of the Republic, will attend Memorial Day services at the Fourth Street Methodist church tomorrow morning. They are scheduled to assemble at G.A.R headquarters in the courthouse at 10:15 o'clock Sunday morning and go in a body to the church.

Judge Rolfe L. Thompson will be the orator of the day, while Mayor Lawrence A. Pressley will be president of the day, and Captain Chas. H. Holmes will be marshal of the occasion in charge of the parade of the veterans and others to the park.

As has been the custom since the veterans first acquired the park on McDonald avenue known as the "Veterans' Park," the exercises will be held there in the open air. There the orator will give his address, then the musical numbers will be rendered. Miss Grace Elmore will be the accompanist for the musical numbers.

Formation of Parade

Ellsworth Post, Grand Army of the Republic, and the

Ellsworth Circle and Women's Relief Corps will gather at their headquarters at the courthouse at 1 o'clock on the afternoon of May 30, and the parade is scheduled to start at 1:30 in the afternoon.

All Civil war veterans of the county are invited to march with the "boys" of the post on this occasion, whether they wore the blue or the gray, or whether or not they are members of the Grand Army.

Exercises at the Park

The program of exercises at the park have been arranged as follows: Singing of "America" by the audience; invocation; calling of the roll and reading of Logan's general orders; opening remarks; patriotic songs, by pupils of the Burbank School; reading of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address; rendition of the American Creed; vocal solo; oration; closing song, "Star Spangled Banner."

Adjourn to Cemetery

At the close of the exercises, all will adjourn to the cemetery, a line of march being formed by the grand marshal for the purpose, and at the Soldiers' Plot the ritualistic ceremonies by the officers of the Ellsworth post. At this plot the usual salute will be fired, and taps will be sounded by Captain Junius Gale.



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Historical Society of Santa Rosa

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