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Historical Society of Santa Rosa



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The History of Ice Skating Rinks in Santa Rosa

by Denise Hill

The Ice Palace (1939 - 1942)

Santa Rosa's first official ice skating rink was commissioned by famed beer manufacturer Grace Bros. to be built in their old brewery near Santa Rosa Creek and opened in 1939. The rink was designed by Bert Hildebrand who had a lumber yard on Third and Railroad Streets

(which he sold to Mead Clark in 1912) and was a local builder. The 160 x 300 foot building had a regulation sized ice arena and seating for 3,000 spectators with seating capacity

increasing to 6,000 spectators when a wooden floor was put down over the ice for other events. A huge concrete basin surrounded by a foot high curb was the base for the rink's floor through which ten miles of pipe delivered refrigerant to keep the ice frozen. Shredded redwood bark was used as insulation. The Palace opened with great fanfare and the crowd (estimated to be in the thousands) enjoyed performances by top skaters and even a demonstration of skating on stilts by expert "skate comedian" Bob Kidwell.

Over 3,000 residents (close to 25% of the city's 12,500 population at the time) visited the new ice rink within days of its opening, and Santa Rosans were introduced to their first ice hockey game ever played in the city. The demand was so high, that a week after opening, the Ice Palace started charging a spectator fee in an attempt to reduce the overwhelming attendance. Joe Grace partnered with a U.C. Berkeley ice hockey coach and brought in a string of Canadian hockey players and created a team called the Polar Bears, and residents immediately became die-hard fans with over 2,500 showing up for each game. Unfortunately, with the onset of World War II, the Canadians on the hockey team returned to Canada, and the

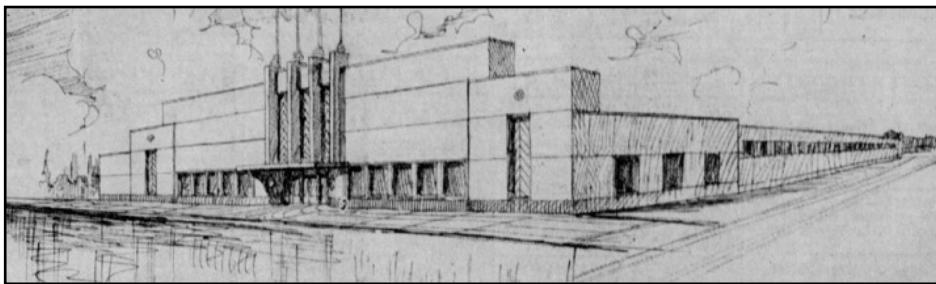
Ice Palace only lasted a few years, closing in 1942.

Santa Rosa Ice Arena (1961-1967)

The Santa Rosa Ice Arena was opened on Summerfield Road (where the Summerfield Movie Theater is now) in

November 1961 by brothers Meryl and Lloyd "Skippy" Baxter. Meryl started ice skating at age 11, and he later became a competitive and professional ice skater who won the California State

and Pacific Coast Championships and was runner-up in the National Championships. He began his career with Sonja Henie's ice show at Rockefeller Center in New York City in 1939. (Coincidentally, that same year he had been part of



Press Democrat rendering of Grace Bros. Ice Palace, Second and Wilson Streets



Meryl Baxter and Lloyd "Skippy" Baxter opened the Santa Rosa Ice Palace in 1961

Continued on page 6

Message from the Board

Welcome to 2023! The Historical Society of Santa Rosa is planning a full slate of events focused on aspects of local history during the year, from webinars to in-person events. These are starting in January and are planned bi-monthly, typically on the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. All past webinars are posted on the HSSR YouTube Channel. We are interested in hearing what topics interest you and what kinds of historic programs you'd like to see in the future. We look forward to meeting you at upcoming events and hearing from you there. Email us at info@historicalsocietysantarosa.org.

As the year begins, we want to thank you, our members and donors, for your continued support. Without it, we could not sponsor events and publish this newsletter. Wishing you a historically happy new year.

The HSSR Board of Directors

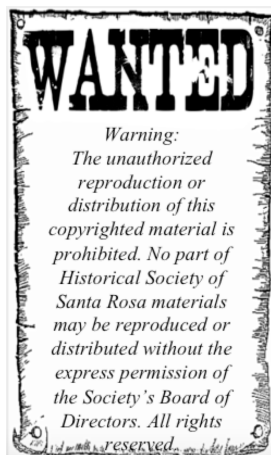
Where in Santa Rosa?



Do you recognize this Santa Rosa location? If so, send an email to newsletter@historicalsocietysantarosa.org identifying it. The first five correct answers will win a copy of *Santa Rosa: The Chosen Spot of all the Earth* DVD. The location will be revealed in the Spring 2023 newsletter.

Photo courtesy Sonoma County Library Photograph Collection

Answer to Fall 2022 "Where in Santa Rosa?": Nehi Bottling Plant at College and Cleveland Avenues, circa 1940s.



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Harry and Dee Richardson

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Janice Marzlin
Nila Treston
Kristan Zwerling

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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Sleuthing Solves Mysteries at Rural Cemetery

by Michael Von der Porten

Occasionally, we are lucky enough to solve not just one puzzle, but two!

I knew that my great-grandaunt, Addie M. Corrick (1890-1916) and my great-great-grandfather, Adam Long Corrick (1830-1919) had been buried in Santa Rosa's Fulkerson Cemetery, then moved to the Santa Rosa Odd Fellows Lawn Cemetery before the death of my great-great grandmother, Margaret Jenkins Corrick (1951-1932).

I had been unable to determine where in Fulkerson the two had been interred.

Then, in reviewing Adam's probate documents, there it was, "The northeast half of Lot 66, 'Map of Fulkerson Cemetery' recorded May 15, 1878..." This property was transferred during the probate process.

Where is this "northeast half"?

The Fulkerson Cemetery is the "left" strip of the now Rural Cemetery as viewed from Franklin Avenue.

The highest point of Fulkerson Cemetery holds the large Fulkerson family mausoleum. Maps place Lot 66 as just down from the Fulkerson "vault," toward Franklin Avenue.

Finding several cemetery monuments and matching them to known lot numbers, I could narrow down the location of Lot 66, the former burial site of my relatives.

One key grave baffled me. It was a single grave, well marked with cement corner posts, pipes and, at the head end, chain. But no grave stone was visible.

Digging around, I was surprised to find "Paine" etched on one of the corner posts! That name didn't appear in online resources.



Grave of Mary G. Paine at Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery
Photo by Michael Von der Porten

A quick check with Sandy Frary, Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery Archivist, found that Mary G. Paine was known to be in Fulkerson, but in an unknown location. Mary had died January 31, 1898. Mary had been found!

Mary was born Mary Georgianna Nutter in New Hampshire in 1853. She married Charles Martin Paine of Vermont at Indian Springs, Nevada County, California in 1880. They had three daughters: Mary in 1885, Daisy in 1886, and Grace in 1894. In 1896, they came to Santa Rosa. Mary died here in 1898. Her husband remarried in 1900 and the couple had a daughter in Fresno in 1903. By 1910, the family was in Texas. Mary and Grace went to Texas and Daisy went to Vermont, so Mary remains here alone.

Colli Farmed Prunes on Carrillo Adobe Site

by Karen Stone

In May 1950, the Catholic Church purchased a parcel of land in east Santa Rosa from the Hahman estate, with the intention of building a church to serve the growing population of Santa Rosa. The 17-acre parcel included the "Hahman" Adobe (the Carrillo Adobe) and a 9-acre prune orchard.

From 1930 to 1950, John Colli leased the 9-acre prune orchard from the Hahman estate. He called the property "the best prune-growing location in the valley." He used the old adobe, a building with a rich historical past, as a prune storage shed and living quarters for employed prune pickers. (See the Fall 2017 HSSR newsletter for more on the Carrillo Adobe.)

John Colli was born in Santa Barbara County in 1914 and moved to Santa Rosa with his parents about 1930. In 1937, he married Rose Cavallero. John and Rose lived at 680 Sebastopol Road. John was a maintenance mechanic for Sunsweet Dryers in Healdsburg.

The Catholic Church delayed breaking ground for the new church until Colli could harvest his last crop of prunes. Groundbreaking for St. Eugene's Cathedral occurred in December 1950, and the building was completed in 1951.



John Colli is pictured examining prunes inside the Carrillo Adobe. Adobe brick walls can be seen above the board bin siding.

Press Democrat, September 4, 1949

Residents Strive to Improve Post-War City

by Lisa Kranz

The People Design the City was a 1947 pamphlet focused on city improvements in Santa Rosa, published by the California State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission. The State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission had been established in August 1943 by the California Legislature to prevent postwar problems of reconversion as had occurred following the end of World War I. The Legislature directed the commission to study California's natural and economic resources for the purpose of creating and implementing plans allowing for a smooth readjustment of workers, industry, and commerce at the conclusion of World War II.

The People Design the City's premise was that Santa Rosa had problems, big problems, but that its residents worked with city government officials to solve them, providing a case study transferable to other California communities. The following summarizes the findings of *The People Design the City*.

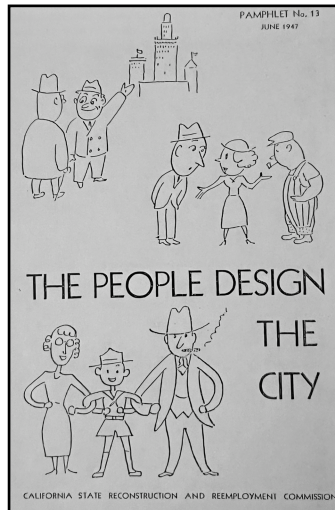
The pamphlet notes that after the war, there were many things wrong in Santa Rosa, which had a population of about 20,000 at the time. What was wrong?

- You couldn't find a place to park
- Traffic crawled, because every street except one had a dead end
- The water supply was so low in summer that water had to be rationed, and fire protection became a joke
- There were plenty of parks in one end of Santa Rosa, but none in the other
- There wasn't a single traffic light in Santa Rosa, but it was jammed with cars of shoppers all day long
- Many people were settling in Santa Rosa, and they needed employment
- There was no separation of land uses
- The sewer system had become inadequate
- There was no hospital
- A new city hall was needed, with some departments holding forth in a "tin shack" that had once been a filling station office

Residents got together to address what they wanted and what was needed, and one of those things was local government that was effective in serving community needs. Santa Rosa's population had grown by about 8,000 people between 1940 and 1946, and roads, infrastructure, and buildings had deteriorated during the war, due to a lack of workforce and materials. City revenues had not kept pace with costs. The city council asked 10 Santa Rosans to serve as a citizens' advisory finance committee to forge a path forward.

The group started with listing what Santa Rosa needed, and that list included better and connected streets, adequate water

supply and sewage disposal, expanded library services, more and better parks, including development of Santa Rosa Creek as a recreational area, recreation facilities, and annexation of urbanized areas outside the city. When the cost of these items was tallied, it was \$200,000 more annually than present revenues.



The committee researched all sources of local revenue and recommended that the property tax rate be kept at its legal maximum, but that a business license tax be adopted and that a temporary one percent tax be imposed on retail sales. The citizens' committee then began meeting with local merchants and business people, went on radio shows and were interviewed by newspaper reporters to outline and promote the taxes and how the city's welfare depended upon them. The pamphlet notes that committee members presented their arguments at a "dramatic, stormy" city council meeting, but that the council adopted the committee recommendations, and the taxes went into effect.

The citizens' finance committee continued to meet to oversee expenditure of tax money and to develop a six-year capital improvement plan. Another committee was established to plan for Santa Rosa's physical future. The city reorganized its planning commission to include seven citizen volunteers to help determine what kind of city Santa Rosa should be. A suggestion could be found in the city's new slogan, "The City Designed for Living," which was a result of a contest sponsored jointly by the city and the chamber of commerce.

The city adopted a new zoning ordinance, expanding the number of zones from four to nine, along with a master street plan. An off-street parking lot was built. A full-time recreation director was hired to serve all summer. The city purchased a private water company to consolidate services, and a bond measure was passed by voters to pay for improvements. Trees were planted throughout the city. A bond measure was passed to improve sewer lines and develop a disposal plant. A campaign was ongoing to raise funds to supplement a 1945 bond measure for a prospective Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital. Antiquated police radios were replaced with three-way radios for police and fire departments.

According to the pamphlet, the business license tax and sales tax were amended several times to address demonstrated inequities and valid objections so the city's revenue system would be "easy to live with." The report notes that these improvements were just the beginning, acknowledging the many years such improvements take to build. It concludes with, "Santa Rosa has learned that you never stop planning and carrying out your plans."

Sonoma Valley Brewing Corporation a Proposed Post-Prohibition Beer Company

by John Burton

On September 21, 1933, the Santa Rosa Republican reported that a dinner was held feting guests and sales staff of the Sonoma Valley Brewing Corporation. The gathering followed a meeting conducted by Dr. Maximillian Buchner, brew master and vice president of the corporation, to address distribution of securities of the corporation and plans for the brewery. Harold Bolla, the sales manager and future board member, was in attendance, along with Michael Hanrahan, Edith Humphreys, and Frank Doyle, president of Exchange Bank.

In 1934, federal records indicate that the Sonoma County Brewing Corporation had been issued a brewer's permit, but major beer production did not immediately follow. The \$150,000 project was planned to be located at 7 College Avenue adjacent to the Northwest Pacific Railroad, where the old pickle plant had been.

About 10 gallons of beer was produced for an open house hosted by Frank Doyle at his home on August 18, 1934. The main intent of the open house was to sell stock and raise funds for the corporation. At the event, it was claimed that steam beer had been produced and had already been shipped to the Sacramento Valley and several points in Northern California. It was also claimed that the beer had been brewed by brew master Buchner, whose formula had been used by his family for four generations. Both Buchner and his father had been brew masters at the old Albany brewery in San Francisco prior to Prohibition.

The president of the board, Michael J. Hanrahan, was introduced at the open house, along with other board members: vice president and brew master Buchner, secretary Edith A. Humphreys, treasurer Frank Doyle, C.J. Tauzer of the law firm Geary, Geary & Tauzer, and Walter G. Chanslor of the Chanslor and Lyon Stores, Inc.

The brewery was to be the most modern of the day, and drawings of the elegant building appeared in the newspaper. The building, on which construction started in early 1934, was to include offices, a sample room, and equipment to produce 300 barrels of steam beer a day.

According to Hanrahan and Buchner, distributors from San Francisco and San Jose had requested options of distributorship, and a reputable representative had been acquired for the export trade to Hawaii, the Philippines, and other South Sea islands.

Initial salaries for directors were established at \$150 per month, but in early 1935 it was reported that the directors had voted to increase Hanrahan's monthly pay to \$500. At this time, the brewery was not in full production, but produced about 28 barrels every two days.

The increase in salary was brought to attention by Clarendon W. Anderson, an attorney for stockholders who were

seeking removal of Hanrahan, Mrs. Humphreys, and Harold Bolla from the board of directors. Ten stockholders brought action, filing a lawsuit seeking removal of the three board members due to their abuse of their administrative power.

During the legal proceedings, Buchner admitted that he had purchased lumber and other items for his Russian River summer home and charged them to the brewing corporation, with

material delivered to his cottage. Buchner tried to place the blame on Hanrahan during the hearing. He also stated that the production of 10 barrels of beer a day would cover operating expenses.

Ultimately, president Michael J. Hanrahan and secretary Edith Humphreys were found guilty of gross abuse of authority and discretion of spending brewery funds, with the penalty being removed from the board of the Sonoma Valley Brewery. It was determined that Bolla was a stock salesperson, not yet a member of the board, at the time of the mismanagement and reckless spending of brewery funds, and he remained on the board. Superior Court Judge Hilliard Comstock advised Bolla it was his moral responsibility to appoint four new directors from the current list of preferred stockholders. In a later lawsuit, Bolla, no longer on the board, tried to regain commissions on stock sales he claimed was due him.

According to Don Bull's American Breweries, the Sonoma Valley Brewing Corporation never went into production.

Sonoma County's New Home-Owned Industry

The Sonoma Valley Brewing Corporation's \$150,000 home to be erected at College Avenue and N. W. P. Railroad

OFFICERS

Michael J. Hanrahan, Pres.
Dr. Maximilian A. Buchner, Vice-President
E. A. Humphreys, Secretary
F. Doyle, Treasurer
Harry J. Jans

DIRECTORS

Michael J. Hanrahan
Dr. Maximilian A. Buchner
E. A. Humphreys
C. J. Tauzer
Walter G. Chanslor

Sonoma Valley Brewing Corporation
217 Exchange Bank Building Santa Rosa, California Phone 1365

Ad for Sonoma Valley Brewing Company soliciting investors
Santa Rosa Republican, December 5, 1933

the cast of the ice show for the opening of Santa Rosa's Ice Palace.) He later traveled around the world with his daring, slapstick comedy skating act "The Three Rookies" until 1953.

As talented as Meryl was, his brother Skippy was a legend in ice skating. Having endured an accident with a tractor which almost resulted in a leg amputation, he began skating at the urging of his mother to strengthen his leg and avoid amputation. He started his skating career as a youth speed skater, winning the novice division of the state Outdoor Speed Skating Championship in Yosemite in 1932. He switched to figure skating and qualified to compete in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in 1940 where he won two medals: a bronze in men's singles and a silver in pair skating. However, World War II prevented him from an opportunity to skate in the Olympics. From there he went on to skate professionally with the Ice Capades, also working with Sonja Henie in her shows. He was one of the few skaters who had mastered a back flip, which he performed up until his 70s. He was also an inductee into the U.S. Figure Skating Hall of Fame, the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame, and the Professional Skaters Association Coaches Hall of Fame.

While the Santa Rosa Ice Arena was home to many figure skaters, it also served hockey players. A call for boys to play on a youth hockey team a few months after the arena opened drew over 60 at the tryouts. Charles Schulz would take his family for skating lessons at the Santa Rosa Ice Arena, and it was there that Charles and Skippy Baxter formed a close friendship. The Santa Rosa ice arena remained popular until a structural problem with the roof forced the Baxter brothers to shut it down in 1968.

Redwood Empire Ice Arena - Snoopy's Home Ice (1969)

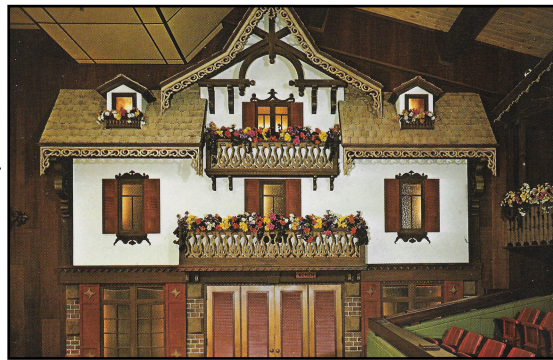
With the only ice arena in the area closed, Charles Schulz of Peanuts fame announced he would build an ice arena for the

community. The arena was built around the idea that the public wanted comfort and luxury as well as recreation. This goal was achieved by installing warm air outlets over the seating, soft water treatment to create Olympic quality ice, a plush club lounge, and lighting the arena with warm colors. In

an effort to establish an authentic Swiss atmosphere, local photographer Don Meacham was sent to Switzerland, and the photos he brought back were used as guidelines to create an authentic Swiss village vibe. Eight facades of Swiss homes adorned the walls and four 38-foot murals by Don Meacham's wife Helen and artist Mrs. Jo Zettle and nine artificial trees were installed by Gene Warren who did the special effects for the movie "Planet of the Apes." Two of the trees are 20 feet tall and have 8,000 real leaves attached. Total cost to build the arena was \$1.5 million (the equivalent of over \$12 million today). The 45,000 square foot Redwood Empire Ice Arena, better known today as Snoopy's Home Ice, opened in April of 1969 on West Steele Lane.



Postcard showing exterior of Redwood Empire Ice Arena
Courtesy Hill-Lilienthal Collection



Interior of Redwood Empire Ice Arena
showing Swiss House Facade
Courtesy Hill-Lilienthal Collection

No doubt, local skaters were some of the most excited about the grand opening. Serious figure skaters had been driving to Corte Madera or Berkeley to practice during the three years Santa Rosa had no ice arena. The Junior Ice Hockey program had also been challenged by the absence of a local rink, with only two teams remaining. All boys aged twelve and up were being encouraged to sign up for lessons starting as soon as the new rink opened. Hockey from youth teams to a senior team have remained popular.

The new rink was managed by some familiar names. Skippy Baxter remembered Schulz phoning one day and saying, "Skippy, if I build a new rink, will you and your brother run it?" "Without hesitation," Baxter said in a 2009 interview with The Press Democrat, "I said 'yes.'"

Meryl Baxter was the new rink's manager and Skippy Baxter the director of instruction. Skippy taught at the Redwood Empire Ice Arena for 40 years (finally retiring at the age of 89) and could name Olympians Charlie Tickner, Scott Hamilton, and Robin Cousins among his students. Meryl

Continued on page 7

Two Local Streets Named for Piezzi Family

by Denise Hill

A recently acquired press photo of a 50-year wedding anniversary triggered a search to find out more about the Piezzi family – the namesake for Piezzi Road and Piezzi Lane in Santa Rosa.

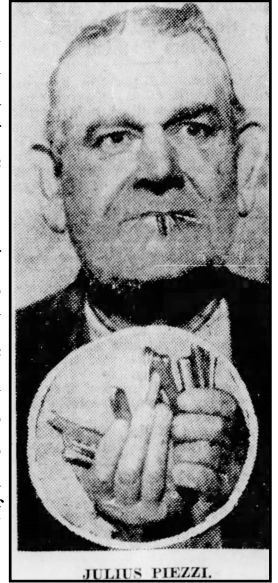


Joseph Victor and Luella Piezzi in 1927 with their wedding attendants Elizabeth Scheuren and John Cerini at their 50th Wedding Anniversary celebration (left) and on their wedding day in 1877 (right). The 50th Wedding Anniversary image was printed in newspapers throughout the U.S. highlighting the novelty of original wedding attendants participating in the celebration.

Joseph Victor Piezzi was born in Switzerland and emigrated to the United States a year after his father died in 1869, when he was just 16 years old. He arrived by ship first in San Francisco and then took a boat to Petaluma and then boarded

a stage coach going to the town of Bodega, where he had found work on a dairy. At the age of 24 he married his wife, Luella (Wiley). Luella had grown up in Green Valley (west of Graton) and the marriage took place on “one of the best” properties in the area - the Wiley Ranch where she was born. Eventually, Joseph obtained land in the Hall District in what was then known as the Laguna area, west of Santa Rosa, where he became a pioneer dairyman and viticulturist in the area.

Victor lived with Luella on her family ranch for the last 59 years of his life still overseeing the dairy at the age 74. During that time, he operated his dairy along with belonging to numerous clubs including the Royal Arch Masons and the Knights of Pythias and over 50 years with the Lodge of Odd Fellows.



*Julius Piezzi
Sacramento Bee
March 1936*

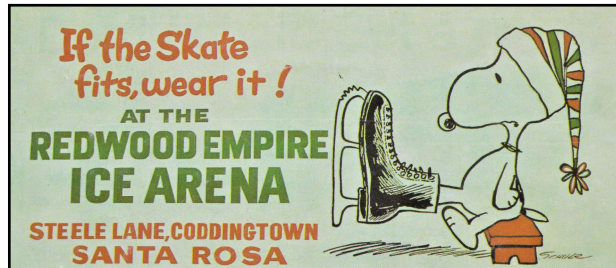
Interestingly, it wasn't just Joseph and Luella who made it into the newspapers. Their son, Julius, was also featured in newspapers for his strange habit of carrying 13 pocket knives in his clothing and 5 to 35 pins in his mouth both when awake and when sleeping. “About the pins,” Piezzi explained, “when I was a young man in Sonoma County, I had a bothersome tooth. For some reason I put a pin in my mouth and the trouble stopped. Since then, I have carried pins in my mouth night and day.”

Ice Skating, continued from page 6

choreographed a segment for the 1969 animated film A Boy Named Charlie Brown, in which Snoopy skates.

Every year from 1979-2003, Charles Schulz hosted an ice show during the holidays, bringing in great skaters to perform, including Peggy Fleming, Scott Hamilton, Robin Cousins, and Dorothy Hamill. The arena also hosted the Snoopy's Senior World Hockey Tournament and is the home of the Santa Rosa Growlers, a Senior A team in the Mountain West Hockey League. The youth hockey team, known as the Santa Rosa Flyers (now both boys and girls), and the Santa Rosa

Junior College team, the Polar Bears, continue to use the arena today.



When it opened, Skippy Baxter, who had seen many ice rinks and arenas throughout his forty years in the skating business, called the new ice complex “the finest ice rink in the world.” That assessment appears to have held up over the last 53 years, as it was just recognized as the number one ice arena in the U.S. and Canada by Yelp reviewers in November of this year.



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Historical Society of Santa Rosa

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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.

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