

The History of St. Helena Hospital

Chapter III - The Rural Health Retreat Opens Its Doors

"The Rural Health Retreat Association filed articles (sic) of incorporation in the office of the County Clerk, County of Napa State of California Jan 22nd, 1878, and a certified copy thereof in the office of the Secretary of State in Sacramento January 23, 1878." Thus begin the minutes, hand-written by Merritt G. Kellogg, of the first meeting of the board of trustees held February 15, 1878. The notes continue as follows: "A meeting of the trustees of the Rural Health Retreat Association was held at Crystal Springs, Napa Co, Cal, for the purpose of organizing the board and for the transaction of such business as might come before the board. Members of the board were all present to wit: W.A. Pratt, A.B. Atwood, M.G. Kellogg, John Mavity, Jas Creamer."

At this same meeting the following resolution was adopted: "Resolved that we proceed forthwith to erect a two story frame building 28 ft by 72 ft, also a barn 18 x 22 ft all in accordance with plans furnished by M.G. Kellogg.

"Resolved that M.G. Kellogg act as superintendent of the buildings and that he proceed at once to procure materials and erect said buildings." Apparently Kellogg had other talents than that of healing!

Dr. Kellogg, with the help of the other members of the board, began construction. A bill for lumber amounting to \$1,108.67 was presented for approval at the May 6 meeting of the board of trustees, along with a bill for water pipe and fixings in the amount of \$69.16. According to the bills submitted at future meetings, the total cost of construction of the facility came to \$3,220.68.

When it came time haul the lumber, which was purchased in San Francisco and shipped to St. Helena, it was found that the team of horses so generously lent by Mr. Pratt were inadequate for the task, and another team would be needed. Dr. Kellogg contacted a man in Santa Rosa, Mr. John Morrison, who had a young team of horses suited to the task. Morrison exchanged the horses and a saddle for a \$200 interest in the institution.

On the ground floor of the two-story frame structure were the parlor, business office, doctor's office, one bedroom, dining room, treatment room, kitchen, pantry and store combined, and on the second floor were twelve bedrooms. The dimensions and pitch of the stairway were sent to a stair builder in San Francisco, and the stairway was sent back in pieces. After the stairs had been placed and the floor laid by Dr. Kellogg and the workers, two men were secured from St. Helena to help finish the building and to do the lathing. Mr. Pratt did the plastering and the building of the chimneys, and Mr. Atwood did the painting. The building was completed about the last of May, and on the first of June the following notice was printed in the San Francisco *Call*:

THE RURAL HEALTH RETREAT
CRYSTAL SPRINGS

St. Helena, Napa County, California

"A pleasant summer resort. An institution where invalids are cared for hygienically. A medical and surgical sanitarium where those who have tried the drug system of medication without benefit are cured by nature's own remedies. All the various forms of water, vapors, hot air, medicated and electric baths. Swedish movements, proper exercise, and rest. Pure soft water and a wholesome diet. Agreeable mental influences, delightful climate, beautiful scenery, and pleasant surroundings. Medication such as each individual case may demand. Free carriages to and from the cars. . ."

Five days after the notice in the San Francisco *Call* appeared, so many letters of inquiry came that the

advertisement was withdrawn from the paper. Letters had been received that fourteen guests and patients would arrive on Tuesday or Wednesday. Preparations went forward at a rapid rate, to have the house furnished and ready for occupancy, the furniture and carpets having been purchased in Napa; and on the 7th of June, 1878, fourteen guests were met at the station in St. Helena, with Mr. Pratt's team of horses and three-seated spring wagon as their conveyance to the Rural Health Retreat.

This was big news in St. Helena, and that summer the *St. Helena Star* published the following article:

"Those who want to see what magnificent views our lofty mountain sides afford, and what improvement their many beauties are attracting, should visit the new health resort established by Dr. M.G. Kellogg, and Mr. A.B. Atwood, at Crystal Springs, near W.A. Pratt's place, a little above town, on the eastern side of the valley. Here on the mountain sides are springs of pure cold water, and this fact, together with the magnificent view afforded by the elevation, seems to have inspired Dr. Kellogg with the idea of locating here a health resort. He accordingly set to work this spring in company with Mr. A.B. Atwood of this place, selected a spot 250 feet above Pratt's, and 350 above St. Helena, graded a road to it, graded off a level spot big enough to set a house on, and built thereon a building 72x28 feet, and two stories high, with water pipes from the neighboring springs bringing water to all parts of the premises and with head enough to throw it a hundred feet over the house. The building is neatly furnished, and prepared for the reception of visitors. Some are already there, and nearly enough others engaged to fill it up. The ascent over the present steep road is very difficult; but, once there, the view is imposing and the location pleasant. The house will accommodate about twenty guests, and as many more as choose to camp around it. It is kept by Messrs. Kellogg and Atwood, and has a very neat and inviting appearance. With its fine scenery, pure air and water, and competent medical treatment, it can hardly fail to benefit health, and must become a favorite with those who desire relaxation from business, the inspiration of magnificent scenery, or the gentle soothing of nature's calm retreats."

At the end of five months the patronage so taxed the accommodation that tents were erected for the use of the workers. The first summer's patronage met all running expenses, and in the fall, when the institution was closed for the winter months, a net gain of \$500 had been realized, and a large amount of charity work had been done. The winter months were occupied by Dr. Kellogg and his helpers in excavating into the hillside at the back of the building. This was done in order to construct an addition to the first building. When this was completed, the first floor was used as a dining room and business offices, and the second floor for treatment rooms. The Retreat was well patronized during the summer of 1879, but in the fall of that year Dr. Kellogg left the facility.

Dr. E.J. Waggoner, assisted by Dr. H.H. Chase, very successfully carried on the work during the next year or two, followed in later years by the first woman medical director, Dr. Chamberlain. In 1885 Dr. J.S. Gibbs came from Battle Creek Sanitarium to serve as medical director, and J.D. Rice was appointed as business manager. During Rice's administration (1885-1888) many improvements were made. The main building was enlarged to five stories and an elevator and steam heat were installed. A two-story laundry was built and equipped and a barn was built to house poultry and cows. A new boiler for the engine house was purchased from the Keystone Boiler Works in San Francisco, at a cost of \$820. A portable reel oven and a cracker machine were installed in the bakery. The fame of the institution spread and patients came from near and far! The Rural Health Retreat had become a growing and thriving institution.