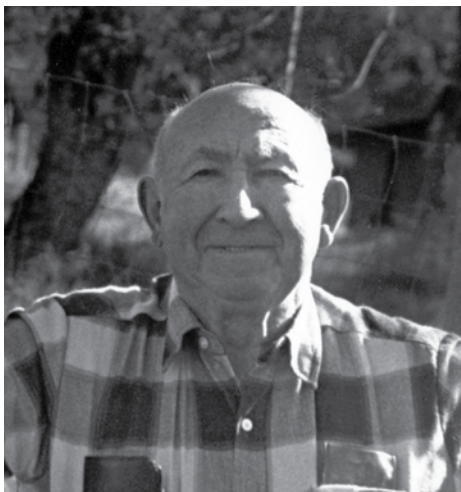


# Tales of Glen Ellen

The Glen Ellen Historical Society, Glen Ellen, California

Winter Issue 2013-14



Photograph by Ron Zak, courtesy of Bartholomew Park Winery

## Joe Miami— Rootstock Whisperer

**A**FTER PROHIBITION ENDED in 1933, winemaking was finally allowed to become a respected public industry once again. The wines of California quickly resumed dominating the American market, rebounding from calamity just as they had from the phylloxera epidemic of the previous century.

It wasn't until after WWII, when our soldiers had returned from Europe where they had tasted better wines, that the generic jug wines of California began to lose their appeal. The younger generation of vineyardists and winemakers recognized this, and began looking for ways to shift their focus from quantity to quality.

Joe Miami was chief among those that shepherded the great transition from jug wines to the great variety of varietals from specific vineyards, and certain vintages.

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DON'T MISS OUR NEXT PRESENTATION:

## Charles Mikulik on Not Losing the Real Glen Ellen

2:00 pm Saturday, February 22nd  
at Mayflower Hall on O'Donnell Lane

Admission is free,  
though donations and membership in  
our organization are encouraged.

## SDC AT HISTORIC CROSSROADS

**E**ARLY LAST MONTH, the task force that had convened to consider the future of the State Developmental Centers held its final meeting in Sacramento, and the California Health and Human Services Agency is now reaching a decision about the future of the

## COME TO OUR ANNUAL RETREAT

**I**N JUST A FEW WEEKS, on Saturday, January 18th, our annual membership retreat will take a long look at our plans for the current year. Although board members will be the only ones voting on decisions, if you are interested in Glen Ellen's heritage and legacy you are encouraged to take part in the conversation.

The day-long event begins at ten, and will last late into the afternoon at Mayflower Hall, next to the Community Church, at 5311 O'Donnell

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five centers— including our own Sonoma Developmental Center. What they decide to do will have a great impact on Glen Ellen and, being as concerned for the future of our legacy as well as its past, the GEHS is very interested.

From its very beginning in 1883, when Julia Judah and Frances Bentley first formed the California Association for the Care and Training of Feeble Minded Children, a home was intended "to provide and maintain a school and asylum for the feeble-minded."

Today these terms may sound quaint, and even politically inappropriate, but

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The largest crowd ever came to the old grist mill to hear their songs and stories that day.

## THOSE DEFINITELY WERE THE DAZE!

**L**AST MONTH, for the twelfth in our ongoing Saturday afternoon series of free community presentations on local history, we took the town back a half century to recapture the stories and sounds of the turnaround time of the Sixties and Seventies.

A couple of hundred people came to hear Tommy Thomsen moderate a boisterous crowd, including Judy Williams, Timothy Dixon, Steve Kahn, Hugh Shacklett, "Diamond" Jim Corbett, Michael "Beargrease" Hansen, Steve Barbose, Jeff Falconer, Nina Gerber, David Aguilar, Misty Browning, and many others in a rambling and far-ranging conversation— followed by live music from those who were there and were able to return.

Those who were there still talk about that afternoon. Those who were not can still get the double DVD set, and listen on in.

## Joe Miami— *Rootstock Whisperer*

During the early 'Fifties he managed vineyards in the Mayacamas range, between the valleys of Sonoma and Napa. Joe understood what takes place in the vineyard, and knew even then that fine wine originates there— before the fruit is crushed and transformed by the alchemy of fermentation, and long before the cellar is reached for the blending and aging of what we will eventually enjoy.

Joe was built solid, and emanated cleanliness, integrity, and enthusiasm. He was comfortable in his skin, did what there was to be done, and said only what needed to be said. He was a man of the earth who labored quietly in the vineyards of our valley, guiding younger minds. His skill was matched by his temper and— suffering no fools— he taught far more than grafting and pruning.

One of our seasoned winemakers remembers trying, day after day, to be in the vineyard before Joe had arrived. Finally he realized he would have to go there the night before, and spend the night sleeping in the cab of his pickup. He was awakened by a sharp knock on the window near his ear, and Joe calling out “why do you sleep? —it’s time to get to work!”

We’re putting together the story of Joe Miami now, and plan a presentation on him next year as characteristic of the people that may be easily overlooked but can never be forgotten, when writing the history of winemaking in the Valley of the Moon. If you have a Joe Miami story, please let us know.

### **DUES NOW DUE!**

It’s time to renew your annual membership in the Glen Ellen Historical Society. Make your check out to GEHS in the amount of \$25 (\$15 for seniors and other special cases), and send it to us at PO Box 35, Glen Ellen CA 95442.

## SDC AT HISTORIC CROSSROADS

they are strikingly appropriate given their concern for people born with severe disabilities. An asylum is a shelter, and the word “feeble” was an idiom of the day equivalent to today’s term “disabled”. As the single largest employer in the area for well over a century, the Sonoma Developmental Center has helped to make Glen Ellen known as a consciously caring and socially responsible place.

Today a tendency towards voyeurism and nostalgia has distorted, dramatized, even sensationalized the custodial care that has been provided at SDC over the past 122 years.

At the same time the fear of conspiracies is promoting a suspicion of administrators and developers alike, who have begun discussing what is to be done with the Eldridge property. It will be better to take part in that conversation, rather than criticize it.

The Glen Ellen Historical Society is now planning a presentation for later in the year on the history of SDC, with our characteristically unbiased yet passionate portrayal of what has taken place, and what must not be overlooked and forgotten— especially while its future is under increasing consideration.

## JLV PROJECT IS NOW ONLINE!

WORK IS NOW COMPLETE ON the gallery of historic photographs in the corridor of the main building at Jack London Village. A newly designed self-guided tour of the several artifacts found throughout the historic enclave is also now on display.

Small narrative plaques have been installed, with QR codes that allow smart phones and similar devices to access more detailed audiovisual interpretations from the internet. Similar plaques are planned to be placed at historically significant locations throughout the area.

This project was funded by a generous grant from the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission.

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## ON NOT LOSING THE REAL GLEN ELLEN

OUR NEXT PUBLIC presentation at Mayflower Hall will be at 2 pm on February 22nd. It is titled “Let’s Not Lose the Real Glen Ellen”— and it’s an important one if you want to understand the machinations that go into deciding who we’ve been, and who we will become.

Charles Mikulik, a graduate student in the Cultural Resource Management program at Sonoma State University, and a member of our board of directors, will speak about the development of the Glen Ellen Cultural Heritage District by the PRMD (Permit and Resource Management Department) of Sonoma County.

Charles’ fascinating insights into the academic and political forces that influence the very definition of our community are instructive and should be heard, now, before decisions are made that will change things forever.

## Come to Our Annual Retreat

Lane. New members of the board will be chosen from among the general membership, and specific projects will be explored at length.

Among them will be the past and future of SDC, the ongoing rehabilitation of Jack London Village, topics for our quarterly public presentations (including Charlie Mikulik’s talk, and the histories of Dunbar School and Sonoma Valley cuisine), a membership drive and a fund drive (including pursuit of grants and corporate sponsorships), and our DVD series and publishing ventures. Come share your ideas and interests, and help us shape our future.