



DOCENT GUIDE

BUILDING THE AMERICAN DREAM: SONOMA COUNTY AFTER THE WAR

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Building the American Dream:

Sonoma County after the War

The foundations of today's Sonoma County were laid, literally and figuratively, in the period after World War II. Even though it was at the fringes of Bay Area wartime industry, the war directly added thousands of soldiers and sailors to Sonoma County. After the war, cheap land, a lack of regulation, and the GI Bill afforded unprecedented opportunities to entrepreneurs. Developers and their financial backers altered the political power structure and what had been farm country gave way, over time, to a diverse modern landscape of cities and suburbs.

Postwar affluence redefined the American Dream. Gone was the poverty borne of the Great Depression, and the years of wartime sacrifice —and at the center of it all was the private home. Homes required raw materials, builders, mortgage lenders, appliance salesmen and of course a car for every driveway. The home became the linchpin of a conscious, national strategy to not only provide dwellings to a growing population, but the mechanism to stimulate the national economy and to keep it going. Nowhere in the Bay Area, and perhaps the entire state, is the postwar building boom seen more concisely than in the stories of Hugh Coddling as developer and Henry Trione as financier, both crucial to the growth and transformation of the community.

The impact of the postwar period on Sonoma County, and Santa Rosa in particular, cannot be overstated. From its agrarian roots, the county emerged into a modern suburban landscape. With its growing population cars proliferated, housing and shopping centers grew, drive-ins, rock and roll and, yes, even poodle skirts became part of the scene. There was a growing sense of diversity on all fronts. The world would never be the same.

The War

The war had produced enormous changes in Northern California. With Mare Island and Marinship and other Bay Area defense plants employing thousands of men and women, it sometimes seemed as if the entire southern United States and a good share of the Midwest had moved in. The demographics of cities nearer the urban core changed markedly. Cities like Richmond and Vallejo, both of which had been quiet suburban towns in 1940, became beehives, with temporary government housing thrown up in every vacant space to shelter the new residents.

Santa Rosa and Sonoma County were on the fringe of the activity. But the impact of this cannot be minimized. It was not just the expected toll that war takes, although 411 Sonoma County men died in WWII, seventy of them from Santa Rosa. It was the "Big Change." At the start of the war Santa Rosa was agricultural center of 12,000 people, emerging from the nation's worst Depression. War added some 7,000 soldiers and sailors and prisoners of war, and stirred them liberally into community life, creating a whole new mix

Hugh Coddling and Henry Trione

Hugh Coddling was “a self-styled showman with a flair for publicity.” Henry Trione was “a regular guy in the right place at the right time.” Each was singularly responsible for the growth and creation of a modern, “boom-made” Santa Rosa. Trione’s influence stemmed from his judicious sense of power and his business acumen which bore him his personal wealth. Coddling was a “boom-made man” who was Santa Rosa’s most important builder, continually finding ways to accomplish the impossible, and creating products in which he believed. When we compare and contrast these two leaders, we are immediately conscious of opposite personalities: Henry Trione, a quiet, behind-the-scenes, nearly spiritual community leader with a sense of understatement; Hugh Coddling, a master salesman with tremendous faith in his own abilities, and a powerful sense of vision. Santa Rosa owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to these two gentlemen who devoted their lives and careers to the betterment of their community.

Hugh Coddling Timeline

July 11, 1917 Hugh Bishop Coddling is born in Oakland to George Coddling and Ruby Jewell Coddling Hall.

1922- 1930 Moves to Piedmont with family. Coddling grows up there and on the family ranch near Covelo. He loves to hunt, fish and play pranks – hobbies that continue throughout his lifetime.

1930 During the Depression, George sells the Piedmont home and the family moves to Rincon Valley.

1934 George Coddling dies. After Ruby sells most of the Covelo Ranch, Coddling builds his first housing structure, a 200 sq. ft. shack, on the remaining land. Ruby marries plumber David Webster Hall. Coddling works for Hall while taking construction courses.

1936 Graduates from Santa Rosa High School, starts to work for Bunyan & Bunyan Construction.

1938 Borrows money from Santa Rosa Savings & Loan to buy the lot on Bush St. where he builds his first (official) home. He makes a couple hundred dollars and is encouraged to continue building.

1939 Marries Dorothy Geisel. Santa Rosa City Council views the foundation for a house Coddling is building and deems it substandard, ordering it torn down; Coddling vows never to build another house in Santa Rosa.

1941 After Pearl Harbor, joins the Seabees with the 48th Naval Construction Battalion, honing his construction skills and learning to build quickly. Rapid building later becomes a trademark during Coddling’s stunt-building promotions.

1944 Ruby Coddington Hall runs for Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the first woman to do so, but loses.

1945 Coddington reinvests his discharge pay into housing developments and hires veterans. He marries Elizabeth 'Bette' Ferenz.

1946 Hugh "Brooks" Coddington Jr. is born.

1947 Coddington forms his first corporation – Coddington Homes – with Charles Magowan.

1948-1949 He builds his first shopping center – Town and Country, selling it soon after completion and using the proceeds to finance Montgomery Village.

1949 Buys the Hahman Family orchard on Farmer's Lane and begins construction on Montgomery Village. Montgomery Street is named after Billy Montgomery, the first Santa Rosa to die in WWII (at Pearl Harbor). Continues to buy land and build homes in the area to build up the community- and help provide customers for his merchants.

1950 Montgomery Village opens. Coddington Construction puts a house together in three hours and nine minutes as a publicity stunt.

June 1952 Coddington Homes puts up the Presbyterian Church of the Roses in five hours and sixteen minutes.

1954 Son, David Coddington is born.

1955 Coddington builds at the outskirts of Santa Rosa occasionally clashing with the city over his projects. After trying to turn Montgomery Village into its own city, he agrees to the annexation of Montgomery Village, adding 12,000 people to Santa Rosa's population. Sends a caged ocelot to city manager Sam Hood in celebration.

1956 Marries Nell Williams Pearson. During a recession, he goes broke, losing the Flamingo Hotel and selling various properties and shares, including Montgomery Village, but eventually recovers.

1957 Coddington creates Fubar Co. the same year as Sputnik is in the news. In jest, he proposes putting a cat into space via rocket calling it "Pussnik."

November 29, 1962 Coddington opens. The revolving sign initiates an on-going feud with the City of Santa Rosa – it was turned off in 1981, but would turn on again from time to time until officially approved in 1993.

1960 Coddington Airport built and dedicated off Piner Road with a single North/South paved runway. It was initially owned by Santa Rosa Enterprises and had 200 planes at its height, including the Cessna 421 owned by Coddington Enterprises.

1963 Ruby Jewell Coddington Hall dies.

1964 Coddington runs for a seat on the Santa Rosa City Council and wins. He serves until 1972, including a stint as mayor. He buys an elephant and leads it around as a campaign stunt.

1970's Coddington loses Mervyns to Downtown Mall, but helps State Farm move to Rohnert Park. He turns his attention to building up the city.

1981 The revolving Coddington sign is turned off because of a city ordinance. Mysteriously, it begins turning again a few years later.

1990 Nell Coddington dies.

1990 Marries Connie Williams.

1996 Coddington runs for Santa Rosa City Council, but loses.

April 2, 2010 Hugh Coddington dies at age 92.

Trione Timeline Information (from PD)

Henry Trione was the sole survivor of a small fraternity of civic leaders, including savings and loan executive J. Ralph Stone, bankers Jim Keegan and Charles Reinking and lumber company owner Elie Destruel — men Trione referred to in later years as the “old bulls” — who charted Santa Rosa’s pro-growth postwar course in an era of minimal government restrictions well before the rise of the environmental movement.

1920 – 1941 Born and raised in Humboldt County; learned to fish on the Eel River and ride horses; attended Fortuna High School where he played the violin and the trombone.

1941 - 1945 Attended Univ. of San Francisco, Humboldt State and U.C. Berkeley, graduating just as WWII began. Enlisted in the Navy where he served on a PT boat in the Aleutians, and later was stationed at Alameda.

1945 Arrived in Santa Rosa; founded Sonoma Mortgage with small offices in the Rosenberg Building and 700 employees. Sonoma Mortgage later merged into Wells Fargo Bank.

1946

Marries Madelyne Keyes a WAVE (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) and aide at the Alameda Naval Base. They have two sons, Victor and Mark, who become businessmen with multiple interests in Sonoma County.

1960 Founded, with partners, and invested in the Oakland Raiders who subsequently won three Super Bowls. Henry sold his interest to Al Davis in the 1980s.

1961 Bought the former Bank of American building on Courthouse Square and established Empire College as a business school; the law school was added in 1973.

1963 Became a partner in Molalla Forest Produces located in Cloverdale; company merged with Masonite Corporation in 1970.

1968 Sonoma Mortgage merged with Wells Fargo making Henry the bank's largest individual stockholder. Subsequently became Senior Vice President and later a Wells Fargo board member, a position held until 1990 when he reached mandatory retirement age.

1969 Prevented the commercial development of 5,000 acres surrounding Lake Ilesanjo by acquiring Annadel State Park in what the Press Democrat called his "master stroke."

1974 Partnered with Ralph Stone, founded Tristo Ltd. with the idea of commercially producing truffles in Sonoma County.

1979 Donates \$50,000 to set up the move of the former post office from its A Street corner to a site on Seventh Street, where it became the Sonoma County Museum.

1981 Put together an investment group to purchase the bankrupt Christian Life Center; it became the Luther Burbank Center for Performing Arts.

1983 Purchased Geyser Peak winery and subsequently sold it to Fortune Brands conglomerate. (His sons opened Trione Winery in Geyserville in 2008).

2000 In a major philanthropic move, Henry and Madylene Trione donated \$1.5 million for the courtyard at the Green Music Center as well as for Sonoma State's wine business program.

2006 Marries Eileen Ryan, widow of Santa Rosa Mortgage banker, John Ryan

2015 Henry Trione dies.

Henry F. Trione timeline

1920	Henry is born on June 11 th , in Fortuna, Humboldt County
1941	Graduated from UC Berkeley
1946	Trione marries his first wife, Madelyne
1947	Trione arrives in Santa Rosa and begins writing Mortgages in the downtown area
1960	Trione invests 50k on a pro league football team
1961	Trione buys the former Bank of America building on Old Courthouse Square and founds Empire College
1963	Trione becomes partial owner of Molalla Forest Products
1968	Trione becomes Wells Fargo Bank's largest individual stock holder
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trione spends more than a million dollars in order to save Annadel State Park from becoming a housing development. • Trione donates 50k to set up the move of the former post office(now the Sonoma County History Museum) from A street to 7th street
1970	Molalla Forest Products is sold and merged into Masonite Corp.
1981	Henry's Angels purchase the former Christian Life Center, became Luther Burbank Center (now Wells Fargo Center for the Performing Arts)
1983	Trione buys Geyser Peak Winery for 20 million

1998	Trione sells Geysler Peak brand to the conglomerate Fortune Brands for \$100 million in 1998
1999	Trione is recognized and named by the Press Democrat as one of the 50 people who shaped Sonoma County's 20th century.
2008	Trione's sons open Trione winery in Geyserville
2012	Trione spends another \$100,000 dollars to keep Annadel State Park open for the year

Golden Gate Bridge

After five years of construction, this stunning technological and artistic achievement opened to the public on May 27, 1937. On May 28, the *Bridge* opened to vehicular traffic, connecting San Francisco to Marin and Sonoma Counties and all points north.

To finance the bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District was formed in 1928, consisting of San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Del Norte, and parts of Mendocino and Napa counties. In November 1930, residents of the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District voted 3-1 to put their homes, farms, and businesses up as collateral to support a \$35 million bond to build Strauss' Golden Gate Bridge. More than a decade before, Frank P. Doyle, the prominent Santa Rosa financier and civic leader, had gathered support in Sonoma County. Fourteen years later, when the bridge opened, Doyle rode across the span in the first car. Civic leaders named Doyle Drive for a man known as the "Father of the Golden Gate."

Waiting for Growth

In 1934, Santa Rosa merchant Fred Rosenberg wrote that "Santa Rosa and Sonoma County are on the verge of the greatest development and growth in [their] history...with the Golden Gate Bridge soon to be opened the city faces the prospect of more tremendous growth than ever before." But the span connecting San Francisco to the north bay did not deliver the growth that Rosenberg predicted—at least not right away. Major growth would have to wait until the transformation wrought by World War II.

As automobiles once again rolled off the assembly lines of the Big Three: Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler. The Interstate Highway Act authorized the construction of thousands of miles of high-speed roads that made living farther from work a possibility. Families that had delayed having additional children for years no longer waited, and the nation enjoyed a postwar Baby Boom.

Automobile

The automobile changed much more than the way we came and went. It changed our landscape and our habits. The spa-like resorts, often at the sites of hot springs, where families came with trunks to spend the summer months, were replaced by the motoring vacation. Auto camps, courts, and motels replaced hotels. Livery stables gave way to service stations on nearly every corner of the business district.

The automobile changed America's traveling habits. The auto camp of the '20s and '30s evolved into the "motel," a composite word made from "motor" and "hotel." The Cedar Shake Motel opened on the Redwood Highway at Santa Rosa's northern edge in the 1940s.

Car Culture

The automobile made suburbia possible, and the suburbs made the automobile essential. By the end of the 1950s, one-third of Americans lived in the suburbs. Beyond just delivering suburbanites from their homes to their jobs and into cities and downtowns, 1950s car culture had an enduring influence that goes well beyond transportation.

The automobile changed America's traveling habits, particularly in the 1940s and 50s. The auto camp of the '20s and '30s evolved into the "motel," a composite word made from "motor" and "hotel." The Cedar Shake Motel opened on the Redwood Highway at Santa Rosa's northern edge in the 1940s.

More than ever before, cars became symbols of status and freedom and were intimately connected to the passages of youth. Cruising- driving slowly up and down the streets to see and be seen- existed prior to the World War II but took on new importance as part of the teenage social ritual. In Santa Rosa, the favored cruising route wrapped around the courthouse and went up Fourth Street to College with the turnaround at Gordon's Drive In—which, not coincidentally, became the favored spot for the Santa Rosa Police Department to issue tickets. In Petaluma, the cruise went from Quinley's Drive-in (later Hollie's) at Third and I streets, to the Roost-Inn Drive at the north end of town. George Lucas shot 1973's *American Graffiti*, the classic tribute to American teenagers and cars, largely on Petaluma Boulevard and its surrounding streets.

In Sonoma County, car dealers emerged as part of the postwar boom. Dealers who had been in the area already, like GK Hardt, took advantage of new opportunities. Hardt established a successful Mercury dealership in 1953. Ed Zumwalt moved his family to Santa Rosa the same year. His first business was at 955 Santa Rosa Avenue and he eventually adopted the slogan "On the original automobile row" to denote the home of many Santa Rosa car dealers who later moved to Corby Avenue. Bob Bishop, who owned a Ford dealership on the Fifth Street in Santa Rosa would become a major civic leader and member of the state transportation commission.

Drive-In restaurants were a fixture of the postwar era as businesses adapted to the growing prominence of the car. Carhops, who brought food out to waiting motorists, also became a symbol of the time. The work was sometimes frantic as carloads of teenagers would appear on a Friday night and carhops earned around 62 cents an hour in 1947.

The Freeway

"It chops the town in two!"

In a decision that would dramatically alter Santa Rosa, a freeway was built through town in 1948 and 1949 along a route that remains a source of controversy to this day.

For car travelers passing through Sonoma County in the 1940s, one of the memorable moments was driving around the domed courthouse in the middle of town underneath the arching sign that read Santa Rosa and Redwood Highway. Though pleasing, the route was slow and sometimes difficult for large trucks, prompting suggestions for change.

Consideration of a new route began in the 1930s—but the war delayed any final decision. Engineers for the State Division of Highways recommended the route be sited well west of town, perhaps near Fulton Road. Fearing the diversion of traffic- and customers- the Chamber of Commerce and a variety of individual Santa Rosa merchants- opposed the route and also helped defeat a second option along Wilson Street.

In 1944, a final route was chosen, only three blocks west of the Courthouse. Local leaders further rejected proposals to elevate the freeway to prevent the series of dangerous intersections that would be necessary for a ground level street. Despite a consistent outcry from residents and observers warning against cutting the town in half, the freeway opened in May of 1949. By the 1960s, the mounting number of accidents and traffic volume required that the freeway be elevated.

Housing Boom!

At the center of Americans' vision of postwar prosperity was the private home, fully equipped with consumer durables.

By 1945 a decade of depression and half a decade of war had left the country with a housing shortage. It was not surprising that GIs bunking in close quarters and civilians doubled up with relatives during the war would fantasize a peacetime prosperity built around more spacious and modern dwellings, but images in government publications, advertisements, and popular culture were even more specific: They overwhelmingly depicted "home" as a detached single family house in a suburban setting. Most influential was government and corporate commitment to new suburban home building as the pump primer for the postwar economy

Hugh Coddling and Montgomery Village

Developer Hugh Coddling is one of the best examples of Sonoma County's post-war home builders and deal-makers. In 1950 Coddling opened the Montgomery Village Shopping Center and surrounded his retail venture with 2600 homes that sold faster than he could build them. Coddling garnered national attention for his good business sense and for publicity stunts such as the building of a church in five hours and sixteen minutes.

Santa Rosa adopted a plan to manage the rapid construction. The City moved to annex a number of outlying developments, including Montgomery Village. Coddling, sometimes at odds with city officials, refused the proposal partly over fees for sewer connections. Instead, Coddling moved ahead with plans to incorporate his development into a separate city. On the verge of success, but faced with the daunting tasks of providing a water supply and sewer facilities on his own, Coddling arranged to meet with City Manager Sam Hood and City Engineer Robert Van Guelpen. Two meetings were held, one at the Topaz Room and one at Coddling's home. The parties cut a last minute deal and Montgomery Village was annexed to Santa Rosa in 1955. Santa Rosa's population leapt from about 18,000 to more than 30,000 overnight.

Were suburbs a blight upon the natural landscape?

In the 1950s, most individuals concerned about the environment were focused on the preservation of wilderness areas. Post-war economic policies led to a boom in cheap housing. Sprawling suburbs visibly encroached upon open and agricultural spaces—which helped bring conservationism out of the wilderness.

Rohnert Park

The city of Rohnert Park—the “Friendly City”—is an example of post-war suburbanization in Sonoma County. Looking to develop large tracts of land quickly, partners Paul Golis and Maurice Fredericks created the “Neighborhood Unit” concept and began to lay out a town in 1954. The plan was a modified version of New York’s Levittown, which pioneered the idea of quickly built, “assembly-line” homes. Each neighborhood would consist of 200-250 homes centered on a ten-acre school site and a five-acre park. With plans for pools, parks and services the promoters billed the concept as a country club for the working-class which could accommodate about 30,000 people.

The partners purchased the 2,700 acre Rohnert Seed farm in 1955. By 1957 the first homes had been completed and, in the summer of 1962, Rohnert Park became an incorporated city.

Reactions

In his 1964 commencement address at Sonoma State University, Bay Area architectural critic Alan Temko decried suburban sprawl, saying, “Even this far north of San Francisco we have coarsely devastated the valleys. You may call Rohnert Park a ‘park,’ but that—to anyone with normal eyesight—is a cruel euphemism.” In response, Paul Golis accused Temko of really being bothered by population growth and stated that, “We must still build the true monuments to a free man.” For Golis, this meant homes for the working-class.

Agriculture

The state of agriculture in Sonoma County was fluid in the postwar years. Some crops and livestock were up, some were down, and some stayed about the same. Certain trends emerged. We have focused on three relatively volatile areas – wine grapes, eggs and hops--from 1946-1958 to illustrate the fluctuations.

The world of wine grapes that we know today truly began to take shape after World War II. A steady shift away from dessert wines to a growing popularity for table wines altered the power structure of grape growing in California and put Sonoma County on the path to its current prominence in the wine world. In the 1930s and 40s, dessert wines, mainly produced in the Central Valley, dominated the market and the pricing for all grapes—dessert or table—were linked together. Increased demand for high-quality table –wine, driven in part by the growing affluence of the postwar period, along with the recognition that the grapes in Sonoma and Napa Counties were superior, steadily led to higher prices for “standard” grapes grown on the north coast rather than in the San Joaquin Valley. This premium led Sonoma County growers to shift more and more to wine grapes and away from other crops that did not offer the same regional advantage.

Despite an upward trend it wasn’t always steady, starting with 23,000 acres in 1946, yielding approximately 46,000 tons of both black and white grapes, and ending 1958 with 11,000 planted acres and 33,000 tons. The price per ton in 1946 for black grapes was \$122.50 and white, \$137.50. In 1957, according to the Ag Commissioner Report, wine grape production was down, partially due to losses from a heavy October rainfall. By 1958, prices had leveled out to approximately \$60 a ton for all varieties.

The Petaluma area held the title “Egg Capital of the World” in the 1940s, and egg and poultry production maintained its status until 1956 when “the value of poultry products dropped; egg prices were lower and meat birds slumped due to the unfavorable ratio between feed and prices paid for poultry.” By that year, although the volume in dozens of eggs remained at about 43 million, egg prices had dropped from a high of \$.52 per dozen to \$.38. The rise of “agri-business” and the corporate farm Competition with larger egg production operations also presented competition and major challenges for the smaller producers in Petaluma, Sebastopol and other parts of the county.

The postwar 1940s represented the golden era of Petaluma’s Jewish chicken farmers, but that world came crashing down by 1950 when Senator Joe McCarthy’s blacklists and Communist witch-hunts spawned a national “red scare.” The

community split ideologically, with the right-wing population anxious to avoid being identified with their Communist party friends.

Hops proved to be the agricultural Waterloo of Sonoma County. In 1946, hops acreage totaled 2,600, and 22,000 bales sold at \$105 a bale. Subsequent annual Ag reports delineated the progression to the bottom for hops acreage, pounds and price. The 1952 Ag Commissioner's report stated, "Hops producers had a disastrous year. Prices were lower; 65% of the crop was harvested under the terms of the [federal] marketing order, and considerable acreage was abandoned." For 1953, the Ag Commissioner reported, "The hop acreage dropped from 2,562 to 967 due to mildew and a poor growing season. Some acreage turned over to green beans for freezing." "Mildew" was the dreaded downy mildew that was a major factor in the demise of the hop yards. One theory was that the mechanization of hops picking, facilitated by Santa Rosa resident Florian Dauenhauer's invention of a mechanized harvester, weakened the vines, enabling the mildew to creep in.

But hops production also suffered from overproduction. When the war ended, the European countries started to reestablish their own hop production, and countries that had heretofore never produced hops began to grow their own. A final low blow to the hop growers was the changing taste of the American public who went "light." One source stated, "...If the trend continues, beer will lose more and more of its distinctive quality and become strictly a thirst-quencher....Today, about 70% of the beer is sold in delis, supermarkets and groceries, and the bulk of packaged beer is bought by women. The result is that brewers have found that in order to cater to this trade, they must take the backbone out of beer."

The Ag Commissioner's report for 1958 stated clearly and prophetically, "Hops are steadily declining in acreage and it appears they will soon be a minor crop in the county."

Bracero Program

The "American Dream" captivated the Mexican people as far back as the turn of the 20th century. Their rural, agrarian existence had become threatened by a new class of Mexican land barons and industrialists. Shaken by exploitation and capitalist malfeasance, Mexico devolved into a class war, resulting in the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The civil war that followed eventually bankrupted the country, paralyzing industry. Mines and factories closed down and inflation skyrocketed, which caused tens of thousands of Mexicans to flee to America for better wages and a life free from civil unrest. By 1915, the United States appeared to be their only salvation.

Mexicanos or "Chicanos", as they came to be known in America, were initially encouraged to fill a severe labor gap in the newly developing West. These migratory Mexicans, who were considered political refugees, were only too happy to take menial, manual labor jobs. Though these jobs paid significantly better wages than could be found in Mexico, this new labor force was eagerly exploited by American interests. Protracted unrest in Mexico kept these immigrants in America much longer than they had intended and a new system of debt-peonage and abuse was foisted on a people now caught between two countries. Despite these difficulties, however, the growth of Mexican labor expanded throughout the 1920's, where it accounted for nearly 75 percent of the agricultural workforce in California's Central Valley.

The Great Depression marked a turn of the tide as federal and state authorities began a process of deporting Mexicans. The American Federation of Labor and, in California, the California State Federation of Labor sanctioned nativist determination to repatriate Mexicans during the 1930s. This paradoxical mixture of need and rejection characterized the attitude of many California employers, who had relied so heavily on Mexican labor, but could not justify employing them in such high numbers year-round, especially in tough times. Ultimately, growers needed access to Mexican agricultural workers and envisioned a formalized system in which Mexicans would be allowed to provide labor when needed and then forced to return when demand subsided.

The Bracero Program was adopted by Congress in 1942 and was implemented to address this half-century old problem. At the insistence of the Mexican government, which was understandably leery about the historically fickle allegiances of private growers, this agreement made the U.S. government responsible for the contracts and care of Mexican immigrants. This new wave of post-Depression “braceros” (roughly translatable as “strong armed ones”) became the next crucial labor force in the WWII and post war era. Though it was intended to be a temporary program, it lasted until 1964.

Entering the Atomic Age: Fallout Shelters

Though the atom promised unlimited electrical power, it also held other connotations. Fear of atomic war was a shadow over the post-war era and affected the decisions Americans made about their lives and futures.

A booming economy and the promise of the atom offered great hope in the years after World War II. However, fear of atomic war was a shadow over the post-war era and affected the decisions Americans made about their homes, lives and futures.

In the 1950s and 60s, during the Cold War, citizens of the United States feared that nuclear war with the Soviet Union was a real possibility. As home building boomed throughout the country, some people constructed fallout shelters in homes and backyards to provide protection from radiation in the event of a nuclear war. Most of the objects here came from a complete, backyard fallout shelter in Santa Rosa constructed of cinder block. As opposed to a bomb shelter meant to withstand a blast, a fallout shelters incorporated two 90 degree turns into the living space to prevent the entry of radiation.

The Soda Pop Era

The Soda Pop Era began when rationing was over and sugar was again available to the civilian population. To the delight of children everywhere, companies produced multiple varieties of colas and flavored soda, including great syrups for use in the ubiquitous Soda Fountain. It was a fun time to be a kid (and maybe even a grown-up!)

In the mid-50s, the Petaluma Argus-Courier sponsored a contest for its delivery boys who sold the most subscriptions. The prize was a case of Coca Cola!

Photo courtesy of the Petaluma History Museum. Soda pop courtesy of Steve Castelli

Retail and the Emergence of the Shopping Mall

“Something New Has Been added to retail Shopping in Santa Rosa...”

A growing population and rising affluence in the postwar era meant booming business in Sonoma County.

Retailers enjoyed a new world of consumer consumption as home owners filled their dwellings with all manner of items—and businesses were ready to oblige. In Santa Rosa, a new Sears and Roebuck store at Seventh and B Streets was built in 1948 and boasted that it was the largest retail store in the “Redwood Empire.”

Shopping centers emerged for the first time, reflecting suburbanization and the shift in emphasis away from downtown districts. The first Shopping Center in Sonoma County was conceived by developer Hugh Coddling with his Town and Country Village. He quickly moved on to Montgomery Village and later to the development of the Coddlingtown mall.

Over time, the formula of an enclosed space with stores attached, away from downtown and accessible only by automobile, became a popular way to retail across the world.

A place to eat, A place to meet

Restaurants, eateries and stores evolved to meet the changing nature of social life in the years after WWII. Teenagers were more likely to go to college and less likely to be put to work on the family farm—extending the duration of childhood and helping to create a more distinct teenage culture. Teenagers looked to malt shops and drive-ins as places to congregate. For adults, restaurants and bars took on more sophistication and became part of “high society” in the 1950s.

Malt shops and soda fountains became symbols of the inyllic image of the 1950s—and for good reason. The Soda Fountain hit its stride in the postwar era, peaking just before the rising popularity of fast food, commercial ice cream, bottled soda and restaurants initiated their decline. In Santa Rosa, the Winkin Lantern on Fourth Street became an after school hang out for teenagers.

Following a national trend for the years after World War II, people dressed up more, ate out more and partied more. Nowhere, perhaps, was the intersection of new political power and attendant “high-society” more apparent than at restaurants like Santa Rosa’s Topaz Room. Built during the war, The Topaz Room became the place for politicians and businessmen to congregate and “cut deals.”

The Italian hotels, a presence in Sonoma County since before the turn of the century, modernized and restaurants like Lena’s and Guidotti’s retained their popularity in the years after the war. Other eateries like the Golden Bear Lodge and the Green Mill in Cotati competed to offer the most lavish smorgasbourg in the county.

Student Activity for Grades K-6:

After giving students an introduction to the post-WWII period in Sonoma County, ask them how often people wear hats nowadays. Mention that during the post-war period, people wore hats, lots of hats! Ask them to count how many hats they can find, including hats in photos. Hardhats count as well.

Discussion Questions for Students in Grades 7-12:

1. How did the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge affect this region?
2. The Bridge was finished in 1937, but the predicted economic boom didn’t occur until after the war—why?
3. What are three key factors in this exhibit that were the impetus for this region’s building boom?
4. In 1949, the freeway 101 was built. The engineers wanted to build it on the outskirts of the city, and the city wanted it built through the middle of the town. The engineers then wanted to elevate the freeway, but the city wanted the freeway at street level and with no fewer than 7 stop lights. Discuss and compare the engineers’ desires versus the city’s desires.
5. Explain why suburban sprawl is a blight on the landscape. Why was this type of housing so popular? Why is home ownership so important to the American Dream?

ARTICLE:

Gaye LeBaron: Postwar building boom reshaped Santa Rosa in a flash

GAYE LEBARON THE PRESS DEMOCRAT | March 12, 2016, 3:55PM

I would venture a guess that the majority of Sonoma County residents who consider themselves “old timers” came here in the 1970s. This is a fairly educated guess since it is well-documented that the 1970s brought the greatest population growth in this county in its history. (From 204,885 in 1970 to 299,681 in '80, an increase of 94,796 newcomers).

They produced great change in so many areas — demographics, politics and culture.

That wasn't, however, the first big change. That came in the era known as the postwar years, the late '40s and the '50s, the dawn of a new age in the entire Bay Area.

It was the kind of change that made people who came then and since ask their older neighbors, “What was it like here before the war?”

This change — maybe upheaval is an operative word — is the subject of an exhibit that opened Saturday at the History Museum of Sonoma County, or the old Post Office to those who go back that far.

Titled “Building the American Dream: Sonoma County After the War,” it takes the visitor through those years, with photos and text and memorabilia and film and videoed histories to make that pivotal time come back to life, if only for an hour or so.

MEANWHILE, LET'S LOOK back 70 years to the first bold move that put Santa Rosa in the national spotlight for the first time since Luther Burbank died.

World War II had ended Santa Rosa's insularity. Some 7,000 soldiers and sailors from other states — other cultures — passed through the town of 12,000. Battle-seasoned young men, who might have stayed on the chicken ranch or the dairy, used the GI Bill to become engineers, doctors, lawyers and teachers. Subdivisions sprung up on the edges of the towns, with “no money down, move-right in” GI loans to accommodate new residents who had ventured out from the burgeoning Bay Area.

It was quickly apparent that despite Santa Rosa's stature as agricultural shipping point and retail center, much was lacking in its infrastructure. Now that the war was over, there was work to be done.

In 1946, a group of energetic businessmen took the City Council away from the “old guard.” With their leadership there were civic miracles — enacting building codes and zoning laws, opening dead-end streets in the business district, installing the first traffic lights, fixing the decaying water and sewer systems, even planning a fund drive that would build Memorial Hospital.

The city improvements were accomplished with a 1 percent sales tax approved by the voters after a remarkable campaign run by a committee of 100 volunteers. They haunted KSRO's studios, wrote to the newspapers, spoke at every service club and ladies' group and called meetings (even one in Italian, which was the language of Santa Rosa's largest immigrant population of the time).

Supporters of the tax measure rang every doorbell, literally, and stood on the doorsteps of every house in town. This blitz of progress, tagged “The City Designed for Living,” not only accomplished its aims, but it attracted nationwide attention.

In June of 1947, the State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission published a 28-page booklet about Santa Rosa's successes, titled "The People Design the City."

Mayor Obert Pedersen sent copies to every civic leader, saying that it "has made Santa Rosa one of the most publicized cities in the nation."

There was praise from editorial pages of metropolitan and national newspapers, including the New York Times ("an energetic attack on basic problems..."), The Christian Science Monitor ("Santa Rosa is a town that saw its own weaknesses and did something..."), and the San Francisco Examiner ("Democracy ...working among neighbors.")

The whole county basked in the glory.

AND THEN CAME the 1950s. If the civic leaders thought they were ready, they hadn't counted on the energy and enthusiasm of all the ex-GI's coming home from the war with great expectations.

The story of the early '50s — of boom and build and politics and power — was a microcosm of what was happening all over the Bay Area, indeed, all over the nation.

Santa Rosa's story can be told in the stories of two men, whose parallel lives, made indelible marks on Sonoma County. To say that it was all about Hugh Coddling and Henry Trione is oversimplification, I suppose. But not much.

They were in the midst of everything that was happening in the '50s and for the rest of the 20th century.

They came from very different backgrounds. Coddling, born in 1917 to pioneer families, graduated from Santa Rosa High School, apprenticed as a plumber to his stepfather, took construction classes and was building houses on spec near the fairgrounds before he was old enough to buy beer. Trione, three years younger, was born and raised in the Humboldt County town of Fortuna to immigrant parents, graduated with honors in economics from UC Berkeley. When war came, Henry entered the Navy with a commission. Hugh joined the Seabees.

HOME AGAIN in '46 with — as he liked to tell it, "\$400 in discharge pay in my back pocket" — Coddling built a small subdivision called Brookside Terrace, between Sonoma Avenue and Doyle Park, and moved on to a more ambitious development in what had been the Parson family's orchard behind the Rural Cemetery, borrowing \$10,000 to build homes and an under-one-roof shopping center, a new concept in California, called Town & Country.

He sold the shopping center before it was completed and took his profits across town to buy the Hahman family's prune and walnut orchard (minus the portion which contained the Carrillo Adobe that had already been sold for the town's second Catholic Church).

He started on a larger center, which he named Montgomery Village, drawing on the name of the relatively new street that connected the area with downtown. He told an increasingly admiring populace that he planned to surround it with acres and acres of affordable homes.

It was just the start of the decentralization of the city. The political power, which had rested for years with the farmers and the merchants, was making a not-so-subtle shift.

The new powers, more behind-the-scenes than their predecessors, were the moneymen — bankers (there were just three in town, if you can imagine that), the savings and loan (one only) and the town's first and only mortgage broker, Henry Trione.

GOING BACK and forth from his native Humboldt, Trione had seen the prospects in Sonoma County — available land at low prices, cheap redwood lumber and a new frontier for Bay Area expansion. So, while Hugh was hammering nails on

the Town & Country Center, Henry was in a fourth floor cubby-hole office in the Rosenberg Building, with a rented desk, chair and typewriter and a telephone, and announcing in a newspaper ad that he was offering mortgages at 4 percent.

By 1955, Montgomery Village, expanding into the orchards to a country lane called Summerfield Road, had 2,600 houses, selling faster than Coddling could lay the foundations. And Trione's Sonoma Mortgage Corporation, now with 140 employees, had financed most of them.

THE POLITICS were frontier-style. Coddling, who bore an old grudge against the city for a code violation, had pledged never to build in Santa Rosa again. And, in fact, he had not — everything had been on the edge. So, when Santa Rosa began the annexation process for the Village, Coddling countered with an incorporation procedure. Or maybe it was the other way around.

His new city was going to swallow Santa Rosa. He probably had the votes. The young families who populated the Village considered him a hero, for "fighting City Hall."

It came down to an 11th-hour meeting with city officials where concessions were made about streets that were not to city standards and other expensive "fixes." Coddling agreed to join Santa Rosa. Then he stopped in at KSRO and told "his people" to vote for annexation.

It is a testimony to the tenor of the time that, when the annexation was complete, Santa Rosa's population went from 17,000 to approximately 29,000 in that one day. By 1960, it had passed 31,000.

THE MUSEUM'S EXHIBIT tells many stories. The design for a new city, the Coddling and Trione stories are only a part of the Big Change.

People had more money to spend than could have been imagined by the Great Depression generation. The automobile had come into its own. Life now included freeways and "cruising" drive-in restaurants and drive-in movies. Drag races and rock 'n' roll.

Memories for some. History lessons for others.

Other Resources:

- Gate opened and the world rushed right in
<http://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Lebaron/id/1379/rec/8>
- Six things You May Not Know About the Golden Gate Bridge (6 great facts for docent tour!)
<http://www.history.com/news/6-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-golden-gate-bridge>
- 1949: The year they sawed the town in half (Fascinating article!)
<http://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Lebaron/id/1189/rec/4>
- Sonoma County when hops was the 'King of Crops'
<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/5200785-181/lebaron-sonoma-county-when-hops?artslide=0>
- Island of Crops in a Sea of Homes: Imwalle's endures (Joe Imwalle III is one of the panelists in Gaye LeBaron's panel on April 21)
<http://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Lebaron/id/112/rec/5>

- History of Winegrowing in Sonoma County
<http://www.sonomawinegrape.org/files/Sonoma-County-Viticulture-History-SCWC.pdf>
- Hugh B. Coddling interviewed by Gaye LeBaron
<http://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Lebaron/id/3224/rec/4>
- Hugh Coddling portrait of a developer
- <http://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Lebaron/id/1121/rec/5>
- Henry Trione interviewed by Gaye LeBaron
<http://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Lebaron/id/3216/rec/2>
- Lebaron: Henry Trione was a man of humor and humility
<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/3479570-181/a-man-of-humor-and?gallery=3590784&artslide=0>