

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Bay Becomes Bodega Bay

What is in a name? The towns of Bodega and Bodega Bay are often lumped together as “Bodega.” Until 1941 the town by the bay was simply known as “Bay.” Because there were already too many California towns named “Bay,” the US Postal Service asked our Postmistress, Glenice Carpenter, to come up with a new name. She chose “Bodega Bay.”



To add to naming confusion, the large outer bay beyond the jetties, where the Bodega Rocks are located, bordered to the north by Bodega Head and to the south by Tomales Bay, and popularly called the Pacific Ocean, is “Bodega Bay” on the NOAA’s Nautical Charts.

Meanwhile, the inner harbor surrounded by Bodega Head, Old Town, the Tides Wharf and Lucas Wharf on California Route One and Doran Beach, often referred to as “Bodega Bay,” but it is “Bodega Harbor” on the Marine Charts.

## EARLY SETTLERS IN THE BODEGA TOWNSHIP

by Lois W. Weeth - 2009

Having grown up in Los Angeles County, in 1939 I went to UC Davis. While there, my Dad took me to nearby Woodland to show me the graves of two great grandparents, part of the Gold Rush group. They were farmers who helped feed the miners. Talking to other Aggie students I learned about various other areas in California where their families lived. As a native Californian, I was curious about my home state. When I moved to Bodega Bay in 1981, the local history drew my interest because the influences are so unique.

Until the fall of 1775, the Miwok and Pomo Indians with a rich culture and heritage lived peacefully in the coastal mountains and valleys of what we now call Sonoma County. Their lifestyle revolved around the seasons, hunting and gathering from the land and harvesting the sea and rivers. Little changed over hundreds of generations (literally thousands of years) until the first white sails were spotted off the coast and exploration of the Pacific Coast attracted the Spanish, the Russians, English, and later the Americans. The Bodega Bay area offered very attractive options to the white settlers. There was land for grazing, dairying, and crops; timber for lumber, fishing for food. The Mexican land grants were influences in ownership and mapping of territory. The Russians held land at Fort Ross and inland to Sebastopol, to raise crops to feed their settlement in Sitka. With the help of local and Aleutian Indians, they were heavily involved in the fur trade and in sea otter skins.

Even before moving here, I had an interest in research gathering information about my ancestors, building my family tree. When starting to use a computer for this research, most of the records were in books, on microfiche, on film, and housed in various libraries. As these records were transcribed to computer format, I became acquainted with databases

EXHIBIT 1 - Free Subscribers in Bodega Township in the County of Sonoma, State of California enumerated by me, on the 24th day of July, 1860. *John Smith* was present

Post Office *Smith's Ranch* 1860 US Census: Bodega Township: Smith Family

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Color	Profession, Occupation, or Trade of male persons, and of female, over 15 years of age.	Place of Birth		Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Whether blind, deaf, dumb, or insane.
						Male	Female			
1	<i>John Smith</i>	M	<i>39</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Farmer</i>		<i>England</i>	<i>1821</i>	<i>England</i>	
2	<i>Mary Smith</i>	F	<i>37</i>	<i>W</i>			<i>England</i>	<i>1823</i>	<i>England</i>	
3	<i>John Smith</i>	M	<i>15</i>	<i>W</i>			<i>England</i>	<i>1845</i>	<i>England</i>	
4	<i>Mary Smith</i>	F	<i>14</i>	<i>W</i>			<i>England</i>	<i>1846</i>	<i>England</i>	

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

as a resource for research. Since there were many areas of information not yet available to searching, I embarked on a project to help other researchers by building such a database of early settlers of Bodega Township. If a person is researching specific family groups, indexed lists and references are helpful. For genealogical documentation, public records such as census and vital records are accepted as mostly accurate. These are federal, state, or county records and are open to the public. Using Excel for the database, a chart was built in my computer, indexed by surnames, showing where those individuals appear in census records, listing the page numbers of the census in the column for each census year.

In 1843 Captain Stephen Smith was awarded a Mexican land grant named Rancho Bodega, comprised of eight leagues, approximately 35,200 acres of land. He established a home and headquarters buildings near the present day town of Bodega. California became part of the United States through a treaty with Mexico in 1848. The gold rush hastened its adoption as the 31st State in 1850. Even though governmental procedures were

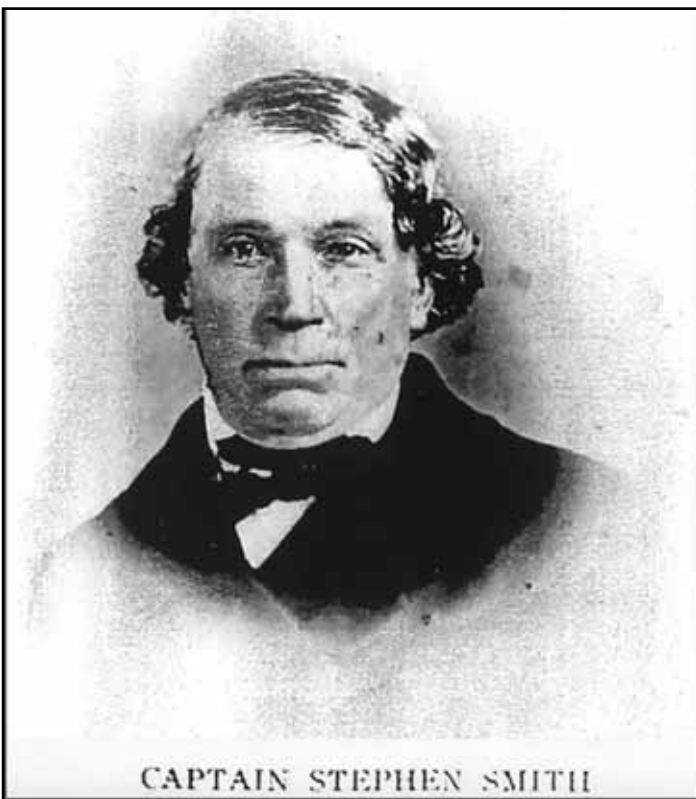
still being developed, counties defined, county seats determined and roads improved, it was decided to include the new state in the 1850 census data taking.

The boundary of Bodega township was composed of Rancho Bodega and part of Estero Americana land grants. This was one of the four named Sonoma County townships at the time. Sparsely populated Bodega Township was re-apportioned in later years until there were finally 14 townships in 1867. In the 1850 census records there were no landmarks or named locations for determining a framework for census records. So census information would start with a group of existing families, such as the Smith family because there was a post office on the Smith Ranch, then expanded to the neighbors, until other families were recognized as being in Sonoma County.

Subsequent census information was collected in 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1890. Most of the national records for the 1890 census were destroyed in a fire in Washington D.C.; in Sonoma County, these names were reconstructed from the Great Register of Voters and from other resources. In the early census years, the legal status of women was not specified. The federal census was not considered legal documentation of a woman's marital status and the term "housekeeper" was used for adult women in the occupation column.

When the term 'housekeeper' was applied and the surname matched that of the head of the household, she could be a wife, mother, daughter, niece, granddaughter, or a paid housekeeper. To determine whether the woman was married required access to public records or church records for marriage documentation. In the 1860 U. S. Census, a total of 884 persons were listed for Bodega Township, Smith's Ranch Post Office; by 1870 that figure rose to 1,415.

Lois Weeth later resided in Pacific Grove. She is a native Californian, a botanist, and was a Bodega Bay resident from 1981 to 2005. An avid historian, she served as secretary of RBHS. ■



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### Remembering Lois Weeth whose life passion was the study of plants

Lois Margaret Weston Weeth died peacefully in her sleep at the age of 97 (1922-2019). She was a beloved mother, grandmother, great grandmother, aunt, great aunt and friend who lived a full life.



Born in Los Angeles, Lois was given the nickname “Spot” for her many freckles. By the age of four she already knew her life’s passion: the study of plants. She was supported by her creative and hardworking parents, Joseph and Carol Weston, and her two rambunctious brothers, Robert and Joe Jr.

Lois had a long-time connection with the University of California. When she was there, she was one of the few female students at UC Davis, earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Plant Pathology in 1943.

Her dedication to UC and her outgoing and practical nature led her to become president of the Cal Aggie Alumni Association, chair of the UC Davis Foundation, and ex-officio member of University of California Board of Regents. Later in life she continued her association with the University by being a docent at the UC Davis Arboretum and Bodega Marine Laboratory.

Lois met her husband-to-be, Harold Weeth, at UC Davis. They married in 1944 after he finished his studies and served in WWII. Eventually, she moved back to Davis, and then Bodega Bay following her divorce with her husband in 1980.

She continued to seek out adventures and new ways of connecting to the world. She spent many summers in the Sierras often accompanied by her great niece and nephew, Ariel and Alex. She led them on hikes and kayaking trips, cataloging the many plants that grew in the area. Rarely did Lois leave a place where she traveled without making lifelong friends and identifying the area’s local flora.

Lois’ resiliency never wavered. With a diagnosis of macular degeneration, she decided to move from her beautiful home in Bodega Bay to Pacific Grove, where she could be closer to her son Fritz and his wife Lola, and where supportive services would be more readily available. Continuing to explore California she discovered a type of oak tree not previously known in the Boonville area, which led to further research and collaboration with Dr. John Tucker, a world renown oak expert.

Lois was inquisitive, highly intelligent and eager to share her knowledge. She was outgoing and genuinely interested in the people that she met. Generous in spirit she was ready to listen and give good council. Up until the last few months of her life she was as sharp as ever, maintaining her interests in plants, the natural world, her family, and many, many friends. She will be greatly missed.

Lois is survived by brother Joseph Weston, son Fritz Weeth, grandsons Joe and Brent Weeth, great grandchildren Caitlyn and Ryan Weeth, nieces Caskey Weston, Suzanne Jellison, Ravenna Dirks, Jennifer Hanson, Melissa Andrezewjewski, and nephew Matthew Weston, and great nieces and nephews, Alex and Ariel Hirsch, Andy Weston, Sara Montero, Will Hanson, Lauren Malone, Julia Walsh, and Emily De Long. ■

<https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/01/22/remembering-lois-weeth-whose-life-passion-was-the-study-of-plants>