PRESTON:
HISTORY OF A LATE 19TH-CENTURY RELIGIOUS COLONY
IN SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

by
Holly L. Hoods

A thesis submitted to
Sonoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in
Cultural Resources Management

Adrian Praetzellis, Ph.D.
Daniel Marks, Ph.D.
Susan M. Clark, M.A.

5 December 2000
Date
Copyright 2000

By Holly L. Hoods
AUTHORIZATION FOR REPRODUCTION
OF MASTER'S PROJECT

Permission to reproduce this project either in part or in its entirety must be obtained from me. In most cases I will authorize reproduction of all or parts of this project on the condition that the person or agency requesting reproduction absorb the cost and provide proper acknowledgment of authorship.

DATE: 12/1/2000

Holly L. Hoods
Purpose of the Study:

The primary goal of this thesis is to comprehensively document the social history and physical development of Preston, a health-oriented religious colony which existed from 1885-1935. The Sonoma County settlement numbered about 150 people at its peak in 1895, and declined sharply in population after the death of its leader (and main employer) in 1909. The community centered around the spiritual teachings and medical practices of charismatic founder, "Madam" Emily Preston. The thesis analyzes the community within the context of late 19th-century religious and medical history, and considers the mechanisms of commitment which held the settlement together. Historical photographs, excerpts from letters, and newspaper coverage of Preston are included to present Preston as it was viewed during the historic period. Modern photographs document the surviving historic resources.

Procedure:

Research involved extensive review of primary sources and other documents. A collection of papers from Emily and Hartwell Preston was closely examined. To research Preston real estate transactions and land use, maps, leases and deeds were obtained from the Sonoma County Recorder's Office and the Mendocino County Recorder's Office. Also consulted were probate records, census records, voting records, city directories, Sonoma County histories and atlases. A survey of medical, utopian and religious literature was conducted to evaluate Preston within its historical context.

Conclusions:

Preston is a notable example of a late 19th-century religious colony. While it has characteristics in common with several contemporaneous Sonoma County utopian communities, it is more aptly described as a religious sect. Such communities have had an important influence on the social history of California.
Acknowledgments:

Thanks and love most of all to Peter Leary and to Susan Clark for encouragement and inspiration;

and with gratitude to Daniel Markwyn and Adrian Praetzellis, Lisa and Edwin Ellis, Umma, Ruthann and David Hoods, Barbara Webster, Barbara Baxter, Tom Baxter, Dennis Harris, Marie Djordjevich, Jeri Myers, the 1998-1999 Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society Board of Directors, B.J. Hanchett, the Cloverdale Reveille, Dennis Imbach, Marie Giaccalone and Gina Biery, Dan and Colleen Coffman, Deborah Fischbech, Tom Cochrane, Linda Cochrane, Linda Phillips, Mauka and Makai, Mary Mowbray, Nathan Bowers, and Julia Lewis, and Emily and Hartwell Preston and the Volunteers of Heaven.

DEDICATED TO DAVID R. HOODS (1936-1998)
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. BACKGROUND OF STUDY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Information</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Preston Papers and Previous Preston Scholarship</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of Study Area</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. BECOMING A COMMUNITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Period</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Era</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secularization</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Ranch (1872-1885)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture in Sonoma County</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Preston Bridge and the Railroad</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Preston Community (1886-1909)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. PERCEPTIONS OF PRESTON</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Impression of Preston</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Descriptions of Preston Residential Area</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker's House</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Church</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Schoolhouse and Teacher's House</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Residential District</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appleton House</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. RELIGIOUS COLONY

Founding a New Religion ........................................... 108
Design of Preston Church ........................................... 111
Madam Preston and Other 19th-Century Prophetesses .......... 113
Mary Baker Eddy .................................................... 115
Ellen G. White ..................................................... 117
19th-Century Utopian Movements ................................ 119
19th-Century Sonoma County Utopian Colonies ............ 121
Fountaingrove ...................................................... 122
Icaria Speranza ..................................................... 124
Altruria ............................................................. 126
Preston as Utopian Colony? ..................................... 127
Mechanisms of Commitment ..................................... 129
Sacrifice/Investment ............................................... 129
Renunciation/Communion ........................................ 131
Mortification/Transcendence .................................... 132
Profile of a Preston Colonist: Frederick Rindge ........... 134
Life at Preston ....................................................... 136
Inland Camp ......................................................... 137

VI. PRESTON POST-MADAM PRESTON

Losing a Leader ...................................................... 142
Oster Ownership of Preston(1943-1967) ......................... 149
Dr. Russell Lee and Associates' Ownership (1967-1989) .... 150

1990s-2000 .................................................. 153

Significance of Preston Colony ................................ 154

PHOTOGRAPHS

Makahmo Pomo ............................................. 12
Aerial View of Preston ...................................... 12
Preston Covered Bridge ...................................... 18
Preston Steel Truss Bridge ................................. 20
Preston Lake and Lake House ............................... 28
Preston Springs “Barcal” Mineral Water Label .......... 29
Rustic Cottage at Preston .................................. 29
Church of the Wildwood .................................... 31
Colonists at Preston Lake ................................... 31
Preston Nob Hill Cemetery .................................. 35
Aerial Photo of Preston Cemetery ........................ 35
Preston Commercial District ................................. 40
1895 Preston Panorama .................................... 43
Caretaker’s House ........................................... 43
Preston Church Exterior ...................................... 46
Colony Road to Preston Church ............................. 47
Interior of Preston Church .................................. 50
Preston School .................................................. 53
County Road Through Preston .............................. 53
Preston Church and Residences in Snow ................. 57
CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Introduction

The primary goal of this thesis is to comprehensively document the history and development of Preston, a late 19th-century woman-led religious colony. Preston, two miles northeast of Cloverdale in Sonoma County, California, was a health-oriented Christian community which existed from 1885-1935. The village numbered about 150 people at its peak in 1895, and declined sharply in population after the death of its leader (and main employer) in 1909. Preston was contemporaneous with three utopian communities in Sonoma County, and had quite a few characteristics in common with them. Sonoma County continues to be a fertile region for alternative religious movements. Preston will be considered within this context.

Life in the rural community centered around the religious teachings and medical treatments of the charismatic Mrs. Emily Preston, widely and respectfully known as "Madam." Madam Preston claimed to possess a divinely-inspired gift of healing and religious insight. Her medical treatments and remedies--offered without benefit of medical training or license--were sought by hundreds of people. Surviving letters from patients indicate that Madam Preston had a good deal of success in treating their ailments of body and spirit. Mrs. Preston encountered skepticism and ridicule in the public eye for her unorthodox claims and methods, but she also attracted many believers. The evident
sincerity of her motives and charitable deeds eventually won over most of her detractors. She died a respected benevolent figure in Sonoma County.¹

Emily Preston prescribed and dispensed medicine to hundreds of people in her lifetime; most of them diagnosed and treated entirely by mail. She inspired a group of followers to build residences and summer cottages on the 1,500-acre Preston land holdings. These people dedicated the rest of their lives to living by her teachings. Together they formed a close knit community that welcomed the patients who came to Preston in the summers for treatment. This thesis is a history of their settlement.

Sources of Information

To present as comprehensive an account of Preston as possible, research was conducted at numerous archives, including the California State Library at Sacramento, the Sutro Library in San Francisco, the San Francisco Public Library, the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, the Reuben Salazar Library at Sonoma State University, the Sonoma County History Annex at the Sonoma County Regional Library, the Sonoma County Historical Archives, the Sonoma County Museum, the Healdsburg Museum, the Cloverdale Historical Society, the Santa Monica Public Library, and the Sonoma State University History Department.

¹(Healdsburg, CA) Sotoyome Scimitar, 26 January 1909, 1; (Santa Rosa, CA) Press Democrat, 9 January 1909, 1.
Some of the research involved reviewing public records. To research Preston real estate transactions and land use, maps, leases and deeds were obtained from the Sonoma County Recorder's Office, the Mendocino County Recorder's Office, the Sonoma County Assessor's Office, and the Mendocino County Assessor's Office. Also consulted were probate records, census records, voting records, city and county directories, Sonoma County histories and atlases. Several Preston colonists were profiled in the Sonoma County "mug book" histories.

Newspaper articles provided a particularly rich source of information about Preston as viewed during the historic period. Chapter 5 will discuss the shifting media perceptions of Madam Preston and the community over time. Firsthand accounts of Preston by residents Mary Mowbray and Nathan Bowers were excellent sources of information about Preston beliefs and practices. Mrs. Mowbray, a skilled amateur photographer, also took photographs of Preston from the 1890s through the 1930s. The many historical photographs included in this thesis were taken by her.

Lisa and Edwin Ellis, who have lived at Preston for nearly 30 years, have become the recognized local experts on the history of Preston and the leading advocates for the preservation of Preston history. Founders of the Preston

---

2Photocopies of these unpublished manuscripts are on file at the Cloverdale Historical Society and at the Healdsburg Museum.

3Mary Mowbray's photos of Preston are preserved in the California State Archives.
Historical Society, they have accumulated an extensive archive of letters, photos and newspaper articles, which was made available for this project. Barbara Webster, descendant of a Preston colonist, shared letters written by Julia Lewis in the 1880s, when she was undergoing medical treatment at Preston. These letters were a valuable source of information.⁴

Most illuminating were the surviving papers of Emily and Hartwell Preston themselves. The Prestons left quite a detailed record of their lives. They lived during a paper-based era and saved virtually everything. Surviving documents range from family letters to sermons to receipts for medical ingredients, but the majority are pleas for medical help or spiritual guidance, orders for medicine, complaints about shipping, and thank you letters from improving patients. The letters provided an intimate view of life at Preston and insight into Emily Preston’s relationships with her patients and followers. Construction receipts were useful for corroborating dates on some of the Preston buildings.

The Preston Papers and Previous Scholarship

When Fred and Eugenia Oster acquired the Preston property in 1942, they found that the Preston mansion had been left intact as a shrine to Madam Preston since her death in 1909. Among the belongings left in the house were 85 cartons of Emily and Hartwell Preston’s personal and business correspondence, mostly letters documenting her thriving medical practice.

⁴Photocopies of Julia Lewis’s letters are on file at the Healdsburg Museum.
Eugenia Oster took the Preston personal effects and papers with her when she sold the Preston property in 1967. In 1969, she loaned the several thousand letters and other documents to UCLA, recognizing that they had historical value. The History Department subsequently boxed the letters according to yearly dates and placed them in storage, but they were untouched for many years. Mrs. Oster eventually retrieved the papers.\(^5\)

In 1971, Matthew J. Votruba, pastor of the Geyserville Christian Church, wrote about Preston for the Pacific School of Religion at Berkeley. He interviewed Eugenia Oster. She gave him a tour of the property and shared some clippings, photos and letters, but he did not have access to the Preston papers since they were at U.C.L.A. In his overview of the Preston colony, Votruba concluded that Preston was "a positive and notable example of the development, maintenance and continuance of a religious and health-oriented colony of 19th-century Western American culture."\(^6\)

This thesis builds on previous scholarship undertaken by students of Sonoma State University. During the mid 1970s, Preston was the subject of a series of public history courses taught by Dr. Daniel Markwyn and Dr. Dennis

---


Harris of the History Department at Sonoma State University.\textsuperscript{7} Students in these courses amassed a good deal of historical material about Preston from a variety of sources. The photocopied newspaper articles, deeds and directories are stored in files at the History Department.

In 1977, Janice Payne, a Sonoma State University graduate student, spent six weeks cataloging the Preston papers in the Oster collection for a 1978 History M.A project. Payne reported that the collection comprised over 10,000 letters, close to 650 handwritten sermons, and several thousand business documents and miscellaneous materials. Her study of Preston, drawn mainly from these documents, presented an account of Emily Preston's medical practice and religious theories. Payne's work provided an introduction to the content (and flavor) of the Preston papers.\textsuperscript{8}

This thesis takes a different approach to Preston. It is intended as an overview of the social and physical development of Preston community. The colony will be considered within the context of late 19th-century medical practices, religious movements and Sonoma County, California utopian settlements. Historical photographs, excerpts from letters,\textsuperscript{9} and newspaper

\textsuperscript{7}Most helpful to this thesis was research about Preston compiled by students Lucy Kortum, K. Stanton Roscoe, Chris Porter and Michael Shainsky. Specific references are cited where appropriate.

\textsuperscript{8}Janice Payne, "Go Tell It On the Mountain: An Account of Madam Emily Preston With Prefatorial Note on the Preston Papers," v-vi.

\textsuperscript{9}The Preston papers have been stored in the Cloverdale garage of an Oster family member since Janice Payne's research. In 1998 the Healdsburg Museum acquired about 1,500 papers from the Oster collection from an antique dealer in Mendocino County. The Healdsburg Museum collection, Janice Payne's catalog of the Oster collection, and Barbara Webster's (Julia Lewis) collection are
coverage of Preston will be included to present Preston as it was viewed during the historic period.

Setting of Study Area

The Preston village was located 2 ½ miles northeast of Cloverdale, at the northern edge of Sonoma County. It straddled Section 31 of Township 12 North, Range 10 West, and Section 6 of Township 11 North, Range 10 West on the U.S.G.S. Cloverdale, California Quadrangle (7.5 minute series). At its peak, around 1895, the community was located on both sides of the Russian River, and featured a commercial and a residential district. The commercial center was situated just west of the river, on the flat near the Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks and the Preston depot. Businesses included a general store and post office, a livery stable, a lumber yard, a planing mill, and a water and soda bottling works.

A County road led from the business center across a covered bridge east to the residential district known as “Oak Mountain,” where the church, school and the homes of the Prestons and the Preston colonists were located. The historic resources that remain today are located within the former residential district, in a six mile area along Geysers Road. In 1988, most of the Preston buildings were destroyed in a devastating fire, including the just-restored

the sources for the letters cited in this thesis. Regrettably, the Oster family did not assist this project, as hoped.
Italianate Preston mansion. The loss of these buildings underscores the importance of recognizing, recording and preserving the remaining Preston historic resources.
CHAPTER 2
BECOMING A COMMUNITY

Native American Period

The town of Preston was established on land that was formerly inhabited and controlled by the Makahmo Pomo, a tribelet also known as the Musalakon. The 150-square mile Makahmo territory was located on the Russian River drainage at the northern end of the Alexander Valley in northern Sonoma County. The Makahmo area was roughly rectangular; measuring about seventeen miles from east to west, and nine miles from north to south. The principal village, “Makahmo,” was located at the mouth of Sulphur Creek. Cultural resource maps of the region document ceremonial areas and a convergence of Porno trails on Preston land. At the time of European contact in the 1820s, the Makahmo numbered between 600 and 960 persons.

Mission Era

Like most Native Californians, the Makahmo experienced the ravages of missionization during the early 19th century. In 1823, the Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma was established at what is now the City of Sonoma. It was the last--and northernmost--link in the chain of twenty-one Franciscan Catholic missions during the early 19th century.

---


missions in "Alta" California. Initiated by Spain as a colonization effort, the mission system had devastating effects on the native people of California. The key to the Spanish colonial plan was that Indians were to be made Spanish—in religion, in language and in the gradual intermixture of blood through marriage. Instead, during the entire mission period, the native population in California is estimated to have decreased by seventy-five per cent.³

In 1821, Mexico achieved independence from Spain, and claimed California and its twenty mission settlements as its own. The mission at Sonoma was founded two years later. Sonoma missionaries directed some of their conversion efforts at the Gallinomero—Southern Pomo speaking peoples, including the Makahmo, particularly during the years 1831-1832. Indian response varied. Sometimes the natives avoided the mission by moving their villages, sometimes the missionaries were able to persuade a few to come in, and sometimes the Indians attacked the intruders.⁴ However, with no resistance to European-introduced diseases, the sickness and death rate among the native people rose steeply.⁵


⁵ Fredrickson, Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: People of Lake Sonoma, 15.
Setting of Study Area, July 2000. Aerial photo taken facing northeast, overlooking the Russian River and the Preston colonist residences. Virtually all of the land that can be seen on the east side of the River was owned by Emily Preston 100 years ago.

The Makahmo Pomo were the first inhabitants of Preston. Photo taken by Mary Mowbray, circa 1895.
Secularization

The mission era officially ended with a secularization order from Mexico in 1833. The breakdown of the system was gradual, and the aftermath was a disaster. The Indians were estranged from their traditional lands and without means of obtaining subsistence. The land that was supposed be distributed to them was instead gradually subdivided and dispersed to others. There had been about twenty private rancho land grants made in California during the Spanish period. After secularization of the missions by Mexico, there were about 500 land grants awarded.³

Immediately south of Preston land was the Rincon de Muscalon land grant, two square leagues of land granted by Governor Pio Pico to Francisco Berryessa in 1846.⁴ By the 1850s, most of the surviving Makahmo had been driven from their lands by white encroachment and reduced in number by disease. Those who remained in the area frequently worked as laborers for local ranchers, and camped, with permission, on these ranches. The 1900 census counted only twenty-two Native Americans living in Cloverdale township (though undoubtedly some were missed). In 1921, a twenty-five-acre Cloverdale Rancheria was established to house surviving landless Makahmo.⁵

---

³Rawls and Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, 52.
⁴J.P. Munro-Fraser, *History of Sonoma County, California* (San Francisco: Alley, Bowen and Company, 1880), 146.
Preston Ranch

For more than a decade before there was ever a “Preston” town, there was a Preston ranch. The physical evolution of Preston as a community had its roots in the individual land purchases and consolidation of real estate by Hartwell L. Preston, attorney-at-law, beginning in 1872. Hartwell’s younger brother, Lindley Murray Preston, managed the Sonoma County property until Hartwell and Emily moved there from San Francisco after their marriage in 1875.

Over the next twenty years, the ranch grew as the Prestons purchased additional property in the area (U.S.G.S. Township 12 North, Range 10 West, all or portions of Sections 30, 31 and 32; also Township 11 North, Range 10 West, portions of Sections 5 and 6). They joined the pioneer families of Samuel Larrison, James Mowbray, and Claiborne Worth who were already farming the fertile land north of Cloverdale. Mowbray and Larrison owned property on the

---

9 19 May 1875, Book 56 of Deeds, 408. Sonoma County Recorder.

10 Raised as farmers in a large Quaker household and educated as lawyers, the Preston brothers enjoyed a lifelong close relationship, despite an 11-year age difference. More than 20 letters from L.M. Preston to H.L. Preston are preserved among the Preston papers at the Healdsburg Museum. In the late 1850s, they practiced law together in Crescent City, California. Hartwell’s background is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.


12 Tom Gregory, History of Sonoma County (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1911), 668.
west side of the Russian River; Preston bought his land on the opposite side of
the river, known as "Oak Mountain." Deed records indicate that the three men
engaged in land swaps to consolidate their holdings on their side of the river.\textsuperscript{13}

In June 1872, the \textit{Cloverdale Bee} announced that H.L. Preston, "a well-known
attorney from Northern California," had purchased the Drieux vineyard and stock
ranch, 1-½ miles from Cloverdale. According to the newspaper, Preston's plans
were to retire from the practice of law and devote his attention to stock raising
and winemaking.\textsuperscript{14} He entered Sonoma County agriculture at an exciting time.

\textbf{Agriculture in Sonoma County}

The 1860s and 1870s saw the emergence of specialty agriculture in
California. Largely in response to the Gold Rush, the population of the state
increased by almost 500,000 people between 1850 and 1870.\textsuperscript{15} Closely tied to
the population surge was an agricultural boom, as farmers attempted to met the
demand for agricultural products. Potatoes became one of Sonoma County's
first agricultural exports. In 1852, the County produced more than 300,000
bushels.\textsuperscript{16} By 1860, 18\% of the state's potatoes were grown in Sonoma

\textsuperscript{13}9 May 1875, Book 56 of Deeds, 408. 9 November 1875, Book 181 of Deeds, 443. 10 April
1883, Book 95 of Deeds, 453. Sonoma County Recorder.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Cloverdale Bee}, 29 June 1872, 2.

\textsuperscript{15}E.J. Wickson, \textit{Rural California} (New York: MacMillan Company, 1923), 75.

\textsuperscript{16}Dennis E. Harris, \textit{Redwood Empire Social History Project: 1852 California State Census
Schedule 1, Population and Schedules II and III, Production and Capital} (Santa Rosa: Sonoma
County Historical Records Commission, 1983), 97-98.
County. During the 1860s, wheat and barley became the leading agricultural crops of the state and of Sonoma County. Wool became the primary export of county farmers during the 1870s and 1880s. Fruit, nut and hop cultivation and wine production also became important during this period. The most commonly grown fruits included apples, peaches, prunes, plums, pears, apricots and cherries.

The hilly land east of Cloverdale along the Russian River was particularly well suited for sheep and cattle raising and fruit growing. In 1877, forty-six of the fifty-two residents of the Cloverdale Township (including Hartwell) listed their occupations as "farmer," "stock raiser" or "fruit grower." Samuel Larrison grew grapes and made wine.

With the help of his brother Lindley, Hartwell set about improving his property soon after purchasing it in 1872. Two years later, the ranch was described in the Russian River Flag. A wine cellar, measuring 22' x 48', with press rooms above, had just been constructed by J.H. DeForce. The Preston ranch consisted of 500 almond trees, set out the previous winter, and about 1,500 more in the nursery, to be set out the upcoming winter. Hartwell also had

---


18 Ibid.


20 Ibid., 99.
a young orchard planted with prunes, plums, apricots, apples, peaches and cherry trees; several thousand grape vines of foreign varieties set out the previous spring, and an "old vineyard" of twelve acres. His wine cellar contained 6,000 gallons of wine made on the property during the previous two seasons. The article noted H.L. Preston's plans to store several thousand gallons of wine from his current vintage in the cellar to ripen.  

Transportation Links: the Preston Bridge and the North Pacific Railroad

Hartwell Preston was joined by many of his neighbors in making improvements to their ranches during the early 1870s. Even more significant improvements to the area, particularly in transportation, also took place at this time. In 1872, just two months after H.L. Preston's land purchase, the Cloverdale Bee announced the approval of a petition "from Cloverdale and vicinity" for a bridge across the Russian River to be located on the James Mowbray place two miles above Cloverdale. The new bridge would shorten the route to Ukiah by eight miles and provide year round communication with Clear Lake. The west footing of the bridge was on James Mowbray's land, and the east footing connected with the County road at the base of H.L. Preston's land—an extremely advantageous location for Mr. Preston. The covered bridge, completed in November 1872, was 168 feet long by 20 feet wide, and 18 feet

---

21 Russian River Flag, 29 October 1874, 1.

22 Cloverdale Bee, 10 August, 1872, 3.
Preston Covered Bridge over Russian River. Photo taken facing southeast. Church steeple visible behind bridge on left; barn in distance on right. Mary Mowbray photo, circa 1900.

Mary Mowbray and children at Preston Bridge. Photo taken facing south, circa 1900.
high. It was painted with red fireproof paint, with abutments of redwood logs on one side and solid rocky foundation on the other. It was built by Pacific Bridge of San Francisco for the price of $5,543. Later that year, Peter Donahue's San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad reached the newly incorporated town of Cloverdale from the south. Cloverdale remained the northern terminus of the railroad until 1887, when construction began on the extension to Ukiah. Before his death in December 1889, H.L. Preston donated land to the railroad for a "Preston" depot.

The old County stage and wagon road, which ran north through the county from Petaluma (later becoming U.S. Highway 101), went through Preston and on to Hopland and Ukiah. A private road, serving the Preston residential district, branched off from the main County road, and led up a fairly steep grade. The County road crossed the bridge at Preston and wound northward for two miles through the Preston-owned canyon west of Oak Mountain, and then turned west for a mile leading back to the river. It turned again to the north out past Squaw Rock, leading into Mendocino County.

The covered bridge spanned the Russian River at Preston from 1872 until it was replaced by a steel truss bridge in 1933. In September 1875, a

---

23 *Cloverdale Bee*, 16 November, 1872, 3.


25 *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 5 October 1933, 1. This second bridge, too, has since been removed, and only the footings remain. The Russian River can no longer be crossed at Preston.
This W.P.A.-financed Steel Truss bridge replaced the covered bridge at Preston in 1933. Photo taken 1987 by Barbara Webster, facing northwest. Mowbray house is visible in the distance on west side of bridge.

Photo 1999, view facing northwest. The bridge has been removed and the Mowbray house has been moved. The Russian River can no longer be crossed at Preston. Hwy 101 winds northward in the upper one-fourth of the photo.
Map from 1877 Thomas H. Thompson and Company *Historical Atlas of Sonoma County, California*, showing H.L. Preston Ranch and land holdings in upper left corner.
correspondent for the *Russian River Flag* noted the bridge in his description of the Preston ranch:

Riding out into the country a couple of miles above town we cross a well-built covered bridge, spanning Russian River. . . Near the bridge is the winery of Col. H.L. Preston, a gentleman of wealth and fine tastes. . . He has, within a few years, added to his little ranch, until he now has 480 acres of choice hill land, more than half of which is well adapted for fruit trees and grapes. The finest Mission, Isabella and Catawba grapes we ever tasted were in his vineyard. . . Perhaps the chief attraction of the ranch is the superabundant supply of spring water. The house, barn and grounds are all furnished with it in unlimited quantity, or can be so furnished, for the place contains about a dozen fine springs, one of which, at this the lowest stage of water in the entire year, runs a stream as large as a man’s leg.26

Hartwell continued to add to his property holdings. By 1877, Hartwell owned 1,500 acres27; 595 of which were “improved” by 1880.28 In 1881, he purchased his own fruit dryer to process the fruit from his orchards;29 three years later he had need of an additional one. In October of that year, the *Cloverdale Reveille* reported that Hartwell’s two fruit dryers were at work night and day on prunes, “turning out a very good article.” The writer observed that “P.P” (Preston’s Prunes) were becoming a noted brand in the market.30

---

26*Russian River Flag*, 23 September 1875, 3.


29*Cloverdale Reveille*, 23 July 1881, 2.

30*Cloverdale Reveille*, 11 October 1884, 3.
Development of the Preston Community (1886-1909)

The transformation of "Preston" from a fruit ranch into a quasi sanitarium evolved gradually—not the usual origin of an intentional community. The people were drawn by the charismatic religious leadership and thriving medical practice of Emily Preston.

In San Francisco 1871, Emily Burke, a twice-widowed mother of two grown children, had experienced a profound religious revelation which she claimed:

Removed a veil or something from the front of my eyes, which enabled me to read, in my real normal state, the open Book of Life—the words of God which fill the Universe... Besides the words of written language, I see infinite varieties of Photographs representing—as I am told and believe—the real realities of things in the Universe, Heaven, Earth and Hell. And it is by this Photography that I am enabled to diagnosticate cases at a distance.31

Mrs. Burke, thereafter, devoted her enhanced sight to diagnosing and treating the hopelessly ill. As her fame as a faith healer spread, desperate people flocked to her for cures and spiritual guidance. Mrs. Burke attracted followers, as supposedly incurable people found their health greatly improved under her care. During this time she also attracted the attention of religious pilgrim Hartwell Preston. They courted in San Francisco, and evidently decided to leave the city together.

Emily and Hartwell Preston were married in Oakland on May 30, 1875 by Rev. C.W. Anthony, Minister of the Gospel.\(^{32}\) The Prestons moved into a modest hilltop cottage on Hartwell's ranch northeast of Cloverdale.\(^{33}\) In their late middle-age, both sought to retire from active public life and had the financial means to do so.\(^{34}\) However, retirement did not prove to be easy: Madam Preston's believers continued to seek her out in person, and written requests for aid poured in.\(^{35}\) Mrs. Preston could not refuse to use her divine gift to help relieve suffering.\(^{36}\) Hartwell began construction of a twenty-room hospital/boarding house close to their home to house patients whose illnesses required special care and close monitoring.\(^{37}\) Less severely ill clients boarded in Cloverdale, or just south of Preston at Pine Grove resort, where Mrs. M. McConathy charged a modest $5-9 per week for her furnished cottages.\(^{38}\)

\(^{32}\) 30 May 1875, Book D, 261, Oakland, Alameda County, California Marriage Records. According to the marriage certificate, Wellington Appleton, Emily's son by her first marriage, was present at the ceremony as a witness.

\(^{33}\) The cottage was upgraded to an Italianate mansion in 1883. The new house was built directly in front of the cottage, and the cottage was used for the manufacture of Mrs. Preston's medicines.

\(^{34}\) Letter, L.M. Preston to H.L. Preston, 2 November 1879. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

\(^{35}\) According to Janice Payne's 1976 analysis of the Preston papers, more than 1,000 medical letters arrived at Preston in 1879 alone. Payne, "Go Tell It On the Mountain: An Account of Madam Emily Preston with Prefatorial Note on the Preston Papers," 12.

\(^{36}\) Letters, Mollie Green to Emily Preston, 6 November 1876; M. White to Emily Preston, 19 January 1878; Ella Tallant to Emily Preston, 9 May 1879. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

\(^{37}\) Sonoma Democrat, 20 March 1886, 1.

\(^{38}\) Healdsburg Enterprise, 25 July 1891, 3.
The Preston health seekers were a boon to the local economy.\textsuperscript{39} In August 1881, the \textit{Cloverdale Reveille} reported:

Mr. C. Werth's [Claiborne Worth's] private hotel is crowded with Mrs. Dr. Preston's patients to such an extent that he has been compelled to build four additional rooms.\textsuperscript{40}

By 1908, the Nelson Wiswell family was operating Hotel Vine and the George Cox family was hosting guests at Oleander Farm resort in south Preston. Located along the Russian River, these boarding facilities offered house or tent lodging, transportation to the nearby Geysers Hot Springs, and boating, bathing and fishing in the Russian River. These lodges were owned by Preston colonists, and were open to summer tourists, but were usually filled with Emily Preston's clientele.\textsuperscript{41}

The decision to create a permanent community was first evidenced by the erection and dedication of the Preston Church in 1886. Some people were so drawn to the Prestons and to the restorative climate of Oak Mountain that they wanted to reside nearby. The earliest residents were single men, William Howard, Fred Clark and Henry Hubbard, who came for treatment at Oak Mountain, and never left. According to an 1898 article in the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, based on an interview with Emily Preston:

\textsuperscript{39} More discussion of Emily Preston's role and impact on the local economy is presented in Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Cloverdale Reveille}, 30 August 1881, 3.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Vacation 1908}, (San Francisco: Northwestern Pacific Railroad, 1908), 127-128.
Agreeable people came to her [for medical help], and she was loath to part with them and they with her, so she bestirred herself to make life agreeable for them up here, and they stayed on.\footnote{San Francisco Chronicle, 25 September 1898, 10.}

Several accounts have implied that Preston didn't become a community until after Hartwell died in 1889,\footnote{Ibid., and H. Lightfoot, Sonoma County Historical Journal, vol. VII, no. 2. (Summer 1969), 3.} but it was Hartwell who sold the land to the first three colonist families, Rindge, Clark and Hubbard, who built houses near the Prestons in 1886. Other buildings constructed before his death included the church, railroad depot, general store, and a school; certainly signs of civic planning. Hartwell himself--a thoughtful and articulate attorney of deep religious faith--would likely have been part of the appeal of life at "Preston." Supportive of his wife's healing ministry, he regularly led worship at the Preston church.\footnote{Emily Preston, The Hell and the Heaven: Inspirational Messages Read by Mrs. Emily Preston (Preston, CA: By the Author, 1902), II.}

The first--and most significant--building in the community was the church, built in the style of a New England Meetinghouse by Frederick Hastings Rindge, a wealthy Preston follower, in the Spring of 1886.\footnote{Sonoma Daily Democrat, 17 January 1886, 2. Frederick H. Rindge, who married Emily Preston's niece, was a notable colonist in Preston history. Rindge is discussed further in Chapter 6.} In November 1886, Emily and H.L. Preston sold a 31.89-acre tract to Rindge. Rindge was granted rights to build a road and lay pipes across Preston lands to obtain water.\footnote{15 November 1886, Book 103 of Deeds, 60. Sonoma County Recorder.} One month later, the Prestons leased a ½-acre parcel each to Henry Hubbard and Fred S.
Clark for $1.00. The lots were intended for housing. These parcels adjoined the Rindge land, and all three were located along the "Front Lane" close to the Preston home. A one-room schoolhouse was built by Hartwell Preston at the base of the hill near the church in spring of 1887. Emily Preston taught in the school for the first six years.

At its peak, around 1895, the Preston community existed on both sides of the Russian River. The commercial district of Preston was located just west of the river, on the flat near the Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks and the Preston train depot. Businesses included a general store and post office, a livery stable, a lumber/planing mill, and the bottling and soda works of John Kolling, who contracted with Emily Preston for the rights to pipe and bottle water from springs high in the hills over Preston. The mineral-rich Preston water was sold commercially by Kolling under the label "Bar-Cal" until his death in 1935.

The County road led through the business center east toward the residential district of Preston via the covered bridge over the Russian River. This County road continued north to Hopland and Ukiah, and the Preston residential road branched off uphill to the south, about a half mile from the bridge. The church and most of the homes were situated along sunny terraces.

---


48 Cloverdale Reveille, 28 May 1887, 3.

49 Mary S. Mowbray, "My Memories, 1849" [Manuscript photocopy], 20, Healdsburg Museum.

50 Healdsburg Enterprise, 18 July 1935, 1.

Preston Lake, 1991 photo.
Advertising brochure for Barcal Mineral Water, bottled at Preston Springs.

of Oak Mountain. An evenly spaced row of eucalyptus trees, planted by Hartwell Preston, lined the road leading up to the main residential neighborhood.

By continuing along the County road instead of taking the southern fork up to the residential area, travelers could reach Preston Lake, another important locus of Preston activity. Preston Lake was a six-acre spring-fed lake that was located on the vast Preston estate, in the hills about two miles north of the residential district. In 1884, Hartwell built a four-room summer cottage at the Lake ("the Lake House") for himself and Emily to enjoy.\textsuperscript{51} They invited others to join them. A large wood-frame gabled church, built to seat 300 and called "the Church of the Wildwood," was constructed near the Lake. During summer, Preston followers moved to "Inland Camp" at "Inspiration Valley" about a mile southwest of the lake for 2-3 months of retreat, contemplative enjoyment and prayer. They were encouraged to build their own rustic cottages there. If money was a problem, a cottage would be built for them without charge. Julia Lewis reported to her husband Charles in July 1886:

\begin{quote}
I talked to the carpenter that built the houses up there. He said he would build me a good house like the rest and furnish everything for 69 dollars.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

In 1898, a reporter from the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, visiting Inland Camp noticed "about a dozen cottages at the base of the hill."\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Cloverdale Reveille}, 15 November 1884, 3.

\textsuperscript{52} Letter, Julia Lewis to Charles Lewis, 10 July 1886. Reprinted courtesy of Barbara Webster. [Photocopy], Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, 25 September 1898, 10.
Church of the Wildwood at Preston Lake. Mary Mowbray photo, circa 1900.

Preston colonists at Preston Lake. Mary Mowbray photo, circa 1900.
campground church, school, boat house and cottages at Preston Lake burned down in several separate fires by 1974. Now only the sites remain, terraced on the hillsides, marked by wooden foundations and bits of historic household refuse. One dilapidated cabin remained standing in 1981; it is now gone.\textsuperscript{54} The Lake House and carriage barn, extensively remodeled, are the only remaining Preston-era standing structures at Preston Lake.

In 1875, the Preston property consisted of 160 acres, a quarter section of land. By the time of Hartwell's death in 1889, his holdings had grown to about 1,500 acres. Preston owned land on both sides of the Sonoma/Mendocino County Line, extending eastward from the east bank of the Russian River up to the top of the high mountain range, a lift of some 1,200 or 1,500 feet. In the other direction it reached from Ash Creek on the north almost to [Big] Sulphur Creek, some 2-½ miles to the south.\textsuperscript{55}

In the Spring of 1887, one and one-half years before his death, Hartwell Preston transferred title to all of his property to his wife.\textsuperscript{56} She continued to purchase property in the area for over fifteen years.\textsuperscript{57} In 1898, when asked by a reporter to estimate the extent of her holdings, Mrs. Preston claimed that she

\textsuperscript{54}K. Stanton Roscoe, "A Partial Inventory of Historic Resources, Preston, California" (Paper submitted to Dr. Dennis Harris, History 501,1981), 7-8. Preston Files, Sonoma State University History Department.


\textsuperscript{56}19 March 1887, Book 103 of Deeds, 446. Sonoma County Recorder's Office.

Map from 1898 Reynolds and Proctor *Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County, California*, showing Preston community and land ownership in upper left corner.
hadn't the faintest idea of how many thousands of acres they comprised, as she had "never counted them up." By January 1909, Emily Preston owned 2,378.8 acres (1,279 acres in Sonoma County and 1,099.8 acres in Mendocino County), according to probate inventory taken after her death. The estate was valued at $68,598.94.

Hartwell Preston was the first person to be interred in the private Preston cemetery known as "Nob Hill." In December 1889, his body was placed in a vault on a hilltop overlooking the residential area. In fact, the Preston vault could be seen from Emily Preston's house. Between 1900 and 1902, she and her followers engaged in active planning for their cemetery. The need for planning may have arisen due to the large number of aging adults in the community. For ten dollars, Mrs. Preston sold plots measuring 18 feet x 18 feet or 15 feet x 17 feet to colony members who wished to someday be buried at Preston.

By 1903, other signs of community organization were evident. Mrs. Preston hired J.S. O'Neal to survey land along Geysers Road to create ten town lots. These small but choice lots—close to the church and overlooking the Russian River—were awarded to Emily's most devoted followers and to her son by her first marriage, Wellington ("Wellie") Appleton. Today the Preston homes

56 San Francisco Chronicle, 25 September 1898, 10.
59 Probate Inventory, Emily Preston, #4629, Book 9, 29. Filed 15 February 1909.

Preston Cemetery, aerial view, 2000 photo. Grapes are being planted on all sides of the cemetery. Photo taken facing northeast.
Site map of Preston, circa 1895, color coded to show status of buildings in 2000. Buildings in Red are still standing. Green buildings are not.
of Wellington and Jessie Appleton, the Stella (Mrs. Warren) Green family, and
William and Bell Howard remain largely intact on adjacent parcels on Geysers
Road, downhill to the southwest of the church. These buildings, in addition to
the church caretaker's house, the Lake House and the cemetery are the only
surviving historic buildings and sites which remain to commemorate the
significance of the Preston colony.
CHAPTER 3
PERCEPTIONS OF PRESTON

Early Impressions of Preston

Madam Preston's budding community was favorably described in 1888 by George Baer, the publisher of the *Cloverdale Reveille*. It was common for Sonoma County newspapers in the late 1800s to feature short articles about neighboring towns and rural properties around the County. Cloverdale was the nearest town to Preston. The *Cloverdale Reveille* declared:

Oak Mountain, the home of Madam Preston and her religious followers, is located on the side hill about two miles from Cloverdale. A prettier site cannot be found in California. The prominence of the location commands a view down the valley that is indeed impressive... an extensive chessboard laid out in blocks of orchards, vineyards and fields of green alfalfa... A church has been established, and a large and attractive building erected, which is called the Covenant Meeting House... The home of the Madam is a most inviting one. Dr. Henry Hubbard, Frederick Rindge and Mr. Clark also have handsome residences on Oak Mountain... Extensive vineyards and prune orchards are to be found in these foothills, which are very productive under the management of Colonel Preston.¹

Baer's passage is notable for its vivid agricultural metaphor, positive tone, and the fact that he did not yet refer to the Oak Mountain settlement as "Preston."

In the Fall of 1889, the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad completed its rail line north from Cloverdale to Ukiah. A "Preston" depot was erected in 1889 along the route. The railroad depot was a rectangular wood

¹George B. Baer, "Cloverdale: the Orange Grove District of Sonoma County, California, the Home of the Olive and the Fig," (*Cloverdale Reveille*, 1888), 24-25.
frame building with a gable roof, horizontal siding and two bay windows. The building faced west and was sited on the east side of the railroad tracks. A rectangular sign under the eaves bore the name "Preston." Mail trains delivered to the depot four times per day.² A post office was established at Preston February 25, 1890. Wellington Appleton, Madam Preston's son, was the first Postmaster.³

To the north (and rear) of the railroad station was the General Merchandise Store, operated by a succession of Preston merchants. Hartwell erected the General Store, which also housed the Post Office, Wells Fargo Express office and a telephone station. It was a one-room store with a shed addition on the back. A gable roof and a simple porch were supported by three columns extended over paired entrance doors. A rectangular sign at the top of the gable advertised the proprietor's name and "General Merchandise."

North of the store was the livery stable: a one and one-half story wooden barn with a false front façade. The building faced south. Southeast of the store was the Planing Mill, a wood lot, and the office for the wood lot. Like the store and depot, these were simple, one-story wood frame buildings with gable roofs. Two windmills flanked the planing mill. Across the road from the store was the John Kolling Bottling Works. With a railroad depot, commercial enterprises and

²Mowbray, "My Memories," 38.

Preston commercial district in foreground (store and depot); Preston colonist residences in distance. Mary Mowbray photo, circa 1900.

Preston commercial district, circa 1890. Livery stable, general store and railroad depot in foreground. Cottage in background at center; church in distance behind depot. County road parallels railroad tracks and turns east toward Preston residential district. Photo facing northeast.
a post office in operation, Preston was a full-fledged community. The

*Healdsburg Enterprise* took notice in November 1889:

> [Emily Preston] has succeeded in drawing about her, during the last few years, a community whose number may be judged by the greatly increasing pretense of their dwelling place, which begins to resemble a little city, embowered in leafy avenues and pleasant promenades at the base of the mountain upon which the Madam lives in imposing style. Already has the little town been christened Prestonville.\(^4\)

The Healdsburg reporter enumerated signs of municipal progress he saw at Preston: a railway station and express office, a school, a music hall/pavilion, a few stores, workshops and a large boarding house. The church was singled out for special mention (and a touch of sarcasm):

> One of the Madam's wealthy followers, who left a palatial home in Boston in order that he might come and dwell in the society of his divinity, has built quite a handsome little church.\(^5\)

The *Healdsburg Enterprise* continued to take interest in Preston. In July 1891, *Enterprise* reporter J.J. Livernash surveyed northern Sonoma County, highlighting businesses and ranches in the Cloverdale area. His article emphasized the apparent prosperity of Preston, "a really new town, having been established but a few years, yet many are the families living there."\(^6\)

Livernash touted several "wide awake" Preston businesses, including

\(^4\) *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 20 November 1889, 3.

\(^5\) Ibid. The reference is to eastern millionaire Frederick Hastings Rindge, builder of the Preston church. Rindge, a founding Preston colonist, married Madam Preston's niece. He is featured in Chapter 6.

\(^6\) *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 25 July 1891, 1.
William King's Grocery Store, George Elliot's Livery Stable, H.W. Davidson's Planing Mill and Mr. Benson's Lumber Yard. He was particularly struck by the beauty of Oak Mountain, the home of Madam Preston and her religious followers. Surrounded by vine-dotted hills, grain fields, orchards, blooming gardens and shade trees, the homes of the colonists were "models of neatness." Livernash observed, "Verily, this must be a home for rich people." At least in the eyes of this writer, the Preston followers were not yet perceived as a threat to local values.

Building Descriptions of Preston Residential Area

After crossing the Russian River at the covered bridge, the unpaved county road led uphill past the church caretaker's house, the Preston schoolhouse and the teacher's house. Only the caretaker's house remains today. It was formerly the home of Fred Elmers, a loyal Preston colonist who shared with Joseph Zahner the responsibility for managing the Preston property during Madam Preston's lifetime and after her death. It was Elmers and Zahner who kept the clock wound in the church tower, and the all-important church bell tolling the hour and half-hour, keeping the villagers always aware of the passage of time. Punctuality was important to Madam Preston.

---

7Ibid.

8Mowbray, "My Memories," 27.
Preston panorama. Commercial district in foreground, residential district in distance. Photo taken facing southeast by Mary Mowbray, circa 1895.

Caretaker's House

The caretaker's house is located on the east side of the road, and faces north. The simple one and one-half story, wood frame building is painted red, and has a medium-pitched gable roof covered with composition shingles. It is clad with channel rustic siding and has one-over-one double hung wood sash windows throughout. The church is located uphill approximately 100 yards northeast of the caretaker's house. The building appears to be in fair condition.

Preston Church

The Preston church was the most significant building of the Preston colony. It was constructed in the Spring of 1886 by Frederick Hastings Rindge. His intention to build the church was announced in the Sonoma Daily Democrat:

A gentleman by the name of Rindge, from Boston, who has been under the treatment of Madam Preston of Cloverdale for some chronic ailment, and who has been greatly benefitted, is going to show his appreciation in a very substantial manner, in erecting a church where the followers of the Madam may worship. The church will be 24 by 50 feet, and will accommodate the devoted followers of the Madam, who are said to be increasing every day.

The church that Rindge built for Madam Preston at Oak Mountain was known by several names. It was called the "Free Pilgrim's Covenant Church" and the "Covenant Meeting House" by its members. Emily Preston also sometimes

---

\(^9\) It houses Lisa and Edwin Ellis, the present caretakers, today.

\(^{10}\) Sonoma Daily Democrat, 17 January 1886, 2.
referred to it as the "Church of Heaven on Probation." It is locally known as the "Preston Church." The first meeting and dedication of the building took place on Sunday, September 19, 1886. The occasion merited coverage by a Sonoma Daily Democrat reporter from Santa Rosa, who noted that the seats were all filled and there was no spare standing room in the entry.11

The gabled wood frame church was constructed in the unadorned style of a New England meeting house. The simplicity of the rectangular building strongly reflected Madam Preston's preferences.12

The church is clad with channel rustic siding. It has always been painted white. The exterior of the building is weathered, but the redwood interior is in excellent condition. Three one-over-one double hung sash windows pierce the north and south façades of the building. The windows were originally ornamented with shelf decoration on top and shutters; some of these are missing or damaged. Two small, fixed rectangular windows flank the chimney on the eastern elevation. Directly opposite these windows are two fixed triangular windows which flank the steeple in front of the Meeting House, accentuating the intersection of the square steeple with the building's gable roof. The roof is covered with composition shingles.

The two-story square bell tower faces west, and is centered in the front façade of the building. A pair of double-paneled wood doors is centered in the

11Sonoma Daily Democrat, 25 September 1886, 1.
12The significance of the church design is further discussed in Chapter 5.
Preston Church, dedicated 1886, western and southern elevations. Photo taken circa 1886.

Preston Church, western and southern elevations. Photo 1999.
Preston Church, eastern and northern elevations. 1999 Photo.

Private Road from colonists' homes to Preston Church, now abandoned. 1999 Photo.
front of the bell tower. The bell tower is flanked on two sides by a single one-over-one double hung sash window at the first and second floor. The bell tower is topped by a square, louvered cupola from which the bell tolls on the hour and the half-hour. Engraved on the bell are the words, "To God's glory, not ours."

The Roman numeral clock still operates today and its mechanisms are located inside the second story of the bell tower. The face of the clock is worn and missing some numerals. Added sometime later, a simple shed-roofed wooden porch with two sets of stairs shelters the entrance through the front doors.

The placement of doors and windows in the interior of the church is symmetrical and well proportioned. An anteroom, which probably served as a cloakroom (judging by the hooks on the walls), precedes the entrance into the meeting house. A ladder leads to an attic where the clock mechanisms are housed. Two doors lead from the anteroom into the main room, flanking a raised platform and altar. (The altar may date from 20th-century use of the building by another congregation.) The floors, walls and ceilings are made of bleached redwood, which gives the room a warm glow. The interior paneling consists of long, narrow, bleached redwood boards applied horizontally to the upper 2/3 of the wall. The walls are divided in two sections by a wainscoting of short, vertically-applied bleached redwood boards that sheath the lower 1/3 of the wall. At the four corners of the rectangular room, the horizontal boards meet the ceiling in the form of a curve (rather than joining it at right angles). The doorways, the top of the walls and the top of the wainscoting are trimmed with
horizontal redwood boards which are darker and wider than the main bleached wood paneling. The redwood sash windows match this dark trim.

The most arresting feature of the large room is the black lettering stenciled on the east and west walls. The congregation faced east, and read the following words of inspiration centered in large letters on the wall:

We worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
We go in secret and pray; and confess our sins one and all. We meet together on Sundays and Thursdays for edification; when each in turn should lead, until we find our respective places in the Spirit. We are to live this religion everywhere and especially in our homes. Otherwise we are not of the Covenant of God and Heaven. This we voluntarily do. Amen.13

The church building was originally lit by kerosene lanterns, and had decorative sconces on the north and south sides of the room. (All but one of these light fixtures have disappeared over time.) At the rear of the room is a brick fireplace, unusual in a California church, but typical in New England architecture. The fireplace was probably welcome on nights when the meeting house served as a community hall. Printed on the wall above the wooden mantel are more words of inspiration for the "Volunteers of Heaven:"

Truth is our motto! Purity is our pass-word into Eternal Life.
I do this day give unto God this Meeting

13The Oster family has a handwritten first draft of this text. The words are typed here exactly as they are written on the church wall. It is interesting to note that similar evangelical writing appeared on a several of philanthropist millionaire Frederick Rindge’s other buildings, constructed later. See Chapter 6.
Interior of Preston Church. Photo taken 1999, facing front (west). Inspirational words from Madam Preston are printed on wall.

Interior of Preston Church. Photo taken 1999, facing back of church (east). More inspirational words are printed on the wall.
House as one covenant to keep, and I invite you, who wish to make a covenant With God, to come and help me keep this covenant, and to place your names with mine, for strength in faith in this God we talk about, that He will bless us and take us into Heaven.\textsuperscript{14}

At this religious settlement, the church was the hub of community life.

**Preston Schoolhouse and Teacher’s House**

An unpaved driveway led downhill from the church to the County road. From this driveway, the Preston school and teacher’s cottage were located about 300 feet up the county road, on the north side of the road. Constructed in 1887, the school building was sited to the north of the teacher’s residence. Neither building exists today. The school was a one-story wood frame building with a gable roof and channel rustic siding of rough boards. The surviving bill of sale for the schoolhouse construction materials shows that Hartwell Preston paid a total of $74.13 in May 1887 to Tod Crawford of Crawford and Faulds, “Dealers in all Kinds of Lumber, Doors, Windows, Blinds, Lime, Plaster, Salt, etc..”\textsuperscript{15} The building had six 15' x 36' double hung sash windows and was 16 feet high. In 1898, it was described by a San Francisco reporter as:

One of the prettiest little country schoolhouses, shining white, like [Madam Preston’s] own home, and bowered in green foliage,

\textsuperscript{14}Text is typed here exactly as printed on the church wall.

with green blinds to shut out the sunshine when it grows too strong.¹⁶

The teacher's house was similar in size and construction to the school, but was built a few years later. Also painted white, it was clad with channel rustic siding, and had a gable roof. Three one-over-one double hung wood sash windows pierced the northern and southern elevations. Both buildings burned to the ground in the 1988 fire.

Main Residential District

The road followed a fairly steep incline uphill toward the main residential district. The county road continued north to Hopland and Ukiah, and the Preston residential road branched off uphill, becoming what residents called the "Front Lane." The Front Lane led westward along a level open terrace, past the Preston mansion complex, the hospital, at least four other colonist family residences, gardens, orchards and outbuildings before looping back down to the church. The 1988 fire destroyed every building along the Front Lane.¹⁷

An additional road led from the church to the southern residential area of Preston, where most of the surviving historic resources of the colony are located. This carriage road ran parallel to Geysers Road, along a ridge at the rear

¹⁶San Francisco Chronicle, 25 September 1898, 10.

¹⁷Thanks to fire breaks, which had just been completed near the church by Lisa and Edwin Ellis, and heroic work by firefighters, the fire did not reach the church or the southern colonist residences.
Preston Schoolhouse. Photo by Mary Mowbray, circa 1900.

Unidentified boy on the County Road through Preston. Photo by Mary Mowbray.
(eastern boundary) of the Preston Town lot parcels. The graded road bed remains, but the road has been abandoned.

The surviving residences of three Preston colonist families are located along the east side of the Russian River, south of the Preston Church, within the sound of its bell. The houses were built on hillside terraces above Geysers Road, and are nestled among mature trees, making the homes almost impossible to see from Geysers Road. The colonist residences can be clearly seen alongside the church in the distance when looking east, driving on Highway 101 North, about 1/2 mile south of the Mendocino County line. The Preston cemetery vaults can also be seen atop a neighboring hilltop to the north of the church.

Appleton House

Closest to the church, at 180 Geysers Road, is the former home of Wellington Appleton, Emily Preston's son by her first marriage. "Wallie" and his wife Jessie Moody were married in 1895, and the house was built and furnished for them on a one and one-half acre parcel that year. Jessie and her widowed mother, Adeline Moody, were devoted Preston followers. They had moved to Preston from Oakland after the death of Jessie's father, Volney Delos Moody,

---

18 Mowbray, "My Memories," 34.
founder of the First National Bank of Oakland.19

The Appleton-Moody marriage was reputed to be an arranged match engineered by Emily Preston, who hoped to tame the wild ways of Wellie through the stabilizing influence of marriage to a suitable young lady from her religious colony.20 Jessie Moody taught music at the Preston school and played in the Preston Orchestra.21

The Appleton house—the couple's wedding present from Emily—is a two-story Queen Anne vernacular farmhouse with a cross-gable roof and 1920's porch additions on the first and second floors. The 14-room, wood frame house has been well taken care of by its owners, and has extensive gardens and mature fruit trees. It also has an original carriage house. Unfortunately, the Appletons had a very short life together in the big house, and, having married relatively late in life, they had no children. In March 1902, Wellie died unexpectedly in his sleep of heart failure at the age of 51.22

Wellington Appleton's death was a great shock to Madam Preston and a


20Marriage was one of Emily Preston's key values, and she frequently engaged in matchmaking among her followers. She required men and women of the Covenant church to marry at the respective ages of 21 and 18, according to a Message she preached 4 December 1892. Other Messages concerning marriage were preached on 1 January 1890, 16 June 1889, 18 December 1892, as cited in Payne, "Go Tell It On the Mountain: an Account of Madam Emily Preston with Prefatorial Note on the Preston Papers," 43-43.

21Mowbray, "My Memories," 34.

2219 March 1902, *Sonoma County Death Records, Cloverdale Reveille,* 22 March 1902, 1.
tremendous blow to the community. According to Mary Mowbray, some of the colonists lost faith in the infallibility of her vision after that. They viewed Wellie's death as a failure on Madam Preston's part to diagnose, treat or prevent his heart ailment. His widow Jessie continued to live at Preston and remained loyal to Madam Preston.

Jessie's mother, Addie Moody, was also (re)married at Preston through the matchmaking efforts of Madam Preston. Addie outlived Henry Hubbard, her second husband, and moved into the Appleton house with her daughter after his death. Mother and daughter both faithfully attended church services at the Preston Church for the rest of their lives.

Jessie Appleton died September 28, 1936. In her will, she left her "Home Place" and household belongings and jewelry to her nephew Delos M. Blood. Blood died in April 1937 before the estate was settled. The Appleton Home Place passed with the rest of his estate to his widow Gladys officially in 1939. In October 1943, Gladys Blood sold the Appleton House to Clara S. Selby. Mrs. Selby and her husband lived there until 1966, when they sold the property to Harry G. and Mildred Shumway of San Diego. Mildred remained in the

---


24 Cloverdale Reveille, 1 October 1936, 4.


26 22 October 1943, Book 593 of Official Records, 105. Sonoma County Recorder. The Selbys were related to Eugenia Selby Oster who purchased the Preston ranch.

Preston church, Appleton House and Green House in snow. Photo by Mary Mowbray, facing east, circa 1900.

house after Harry's death in 1973, but sold the property to Malcolm and Suzanne Ross in 1976.\textsuperscript{28} The Rosses owned the property for only a short time before they sold it to Leonard "Lonnie" Turner in 1979.\textsuperscript{29} The present owner, Marie Giacalone, purchased the property with her first husband Edward A. Biery III from Turner in 1984. The house is now jointly owned by Giacalone and her second husband Dennis Imbach.

Green House

Next door, directly to the south of the Appleton Home Place, is the former residence of the Green family. Warren Green, a devoted Preston colonist for twenty years, was born and raised in Ohio, and moved to Marysville, California in 1860 where he operated a very successful stage business for over a decade. Warren Green was one of the first patients to travel to Oak Mountain to seek medical treatment from Emily Preston in 1876 when the Prestons moved to Sonoma County. Warren met and married Stella Morrison--also a Preston

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{28} 11 March 1976, Book 3056 of Official Records, 158. Sonoma County Recorder.
\textsuperscript{29} 10 January 1979, Book 3342 of Official Records, 466. Sonoma County Recorder.
\textsuperscript{30} Honoria Tuomey, \textit{History of Sonoma County, California} (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1926), 784-795.
\end{footnote}
believer—in 1880. They owned a ranch in Cloverdale where they raised sheep, cattle and grain. The Greens raised seven children at Preston (including one whom they named “Emily” and one “Warren Preston”).31

Warren Green died March 20, 1901.32 The Greens’ first house at Preston, located about 1/4-mile from the Preston mansion, burned down in March 1903.33 The second Green house was built for Stella Green in 1904 on Lot Five of Preston Town Lots, (200 Geysers Road). The property was deeded to her by Madam Preston.34 The Green house is a two-story Queen Anne residence on a one and one-half acre parcel. It has a hip with gable roof and a three-sided wraparound porch on both floors. The five-bedroom house was eventually inherited by Elisha Cole Green, Stella and Warren’s youngest son, who lived there until his death in the early 1970s.

Before his death, Elisha Green deeded the house in joint tenancy to his niece, Myrtle Davis Hope, and the Right of Survivorship passed to her in 1972.35 She and her husband Leonard T. Hope then sold the property to Thomas and Dania Payne as joint tenants in 1976.36 In 1977, a quitclaim deed was filed by

31Ibid., 795. Cloverdale Reveille, 23 March 1901, 1.


33Cloverdale Reveille, 28 March 1903, 4.


Thomas C. Payne in favor of Dania A. Payne. Dania remarried, and spent several years restoring the house. As Dania Thompson, she sold the property to Daniel Bradshaw and Mario Rocca in 1986. They sold the property to Carol Craig, the current owner. The Green house appears to be in excellent condition and is for sale in November 2000.

The Howard House

The southernmost remaining colonist dwelling is the Howard house, located at 230 Geysers Road. William and Isabel (Bell) Howard were well-respected members of the Preston community. The Howards were active in community life and both were members of the Preston Orchestra. William, a native of Maine, was a carpenter. As early as 1880, as a single man, he boarded with the Prestons at Preston. His wife Bell grew up in Chico, California and was graduated from the Mills Seminary in Oakland. She moved to Preston after her marriage. In November 1893, Madam Preston leased property to William M. Howard so that he could erect a house at Preston. In

39 Program, "Third Annual Concert of the Preston Orchestra," 24 December 1886. Included as Appendix C.
41 Cloverdale Reveille, 21 June 1956, 5.
42 3 November 1893, Book 151 of Deeds, 238. Sonoma County Recorder.
July 1904, Emily Preston deeded Preston Town Lots Four and Eight to the Howards.\textsuperscript{43}

The following year Madam Preston purchased "Buzzard's Roost," a 177-acre poultry ranch in Mendocino County, owned by Mary Jane Mowbray.\textsuperscript{44} Its name was changed from "Buzzard's Roost" to "Emilyville." The Howards and other colonist families lived at least part of the time as caretakers at Emilyville. In 1908, a tragedy took place at the remote Mendocino County ranch. A forest fire broke out on the property. William Howard fought the fire until he was overcome by it. His burned body was found afterward. Mrs. Preston had a four room cottage in Preston that she called the "Castle." She deeded the "Castle" to the grief-stricken Mrs. Howard, then took her up to her house and gave her work.\textsuperscript{45}

The Howard house is a two-story, wood frame, front gabled residence of somewhat rustic appearance. The house is built directly over a carriage barn, so the front door to the house is up one flight of stairs. The building has a wraparound porch on the north, west and south elevations, held up by seven broad wooden beams. The square building is clad with v-rustic siding, and the medium-pitched roof is covered with composition shingles. The windows are double hung sash throughout.

\textsuperscript{43}15 July 1904, Book 214 of Deeds, 141. Sonoma County Recorder.
\textsuperscript{44}18 May 1895, Book 11 of Deeds, 20. Mendocino County Recorder.
\textsuperscript{45}Mowbray, "My Memories," 31-32.

Bell Howard remained in Preston until 1920, when she moved to Tonopah, Nevada, where she had relatives, and owned a gold mine. She lived there for thirty years, and never remarried. Mrs. Howard returned to Preston in 1950, and died in 1956 at the age of 93. She was laid to rest beside her husband in the Preston cemetery.46 Ten years later Michael and Judy Wallace bought the house. The Wallaces sold the property to the present owners, Daniel and Colleen Coffman. Unaltered and apparently in good condition, the house was for sale in November 2000.

The Preston Mansion

From 1875 until 1883, the Prestons resided in a simple, one story wood-frame gabled cottage on Oak Mountain, overlooking the Russian River. In 1883, they built a much more elaborate home: an eighteen-room, Italianate two-story mansion, constructed directly west of the cottage. The cottage was turned into a workshop/laboratory where Emily prepared her medicines. On the other side of the cottage (and attached to it), another important building was erected: the "Medicine House." This square, unadorned two-story building served as an apothecary, where Emily Preston packaged her medicines for shipping and also sold them over the counter. Clad with channel rustic siding, painted white, it had a shingled hip roof, and evenly spaced one-over-one double hung sash windows.

46 Cloverdale Reveille, 21 June 1956, 6.
The Prestons' grand house was destroyed by fire in 1988, more than one hundred years after it was constructed (and just months after it had been renovated). Pictures show an impressive and immaculately maintained structure during the Preston era. In 1898, a San Francisco reporter described it as follows:

Mrs. Preston's house is on the heights that overlook the demesne of her marvelous achievements. It is a roomy structure, with a square front and broad piazzas and a dignified entrance, but investigation proves it to be a matter of growth and evolution, for following it along toward the rear one comes to a gabled portion and a lowlier cottage beginning. Outside it is as white as marble. Within there is immaculate housekeeping comfort and coziness, and a skilled housewife's perfect system. Tall trees shade it on these warm days, and a neat iron fence gives it a distinctly metropolitan air. Everything else about it is white—the stone walks; even the great snow white turkeys that strut upon the nicely trimmed lawn.47

The home of Emily and Hartwell Preston was a "roomy, imposing, two-story mansion."48 The front façade of the building was symmetrical, with one-over-one double hung wood sash windows and tall, narrow shutters. The house was clad with channel rustic siding which extends to the cornice, a two-board horizontal frieze with interspersed decorative brackets. The all-white building was later trimmed with color; the shutters were painted dark green, matching the church and schoolhouse. The windows and the doors were decorated with triangular pediments with dentils and brackets; the windows on each floor were in

47San Francisco Chronicle, 25 September 1898, 10.


symmetrical alignment. The verticality of the building was emphasized by tall, thin vertical corner boards from the first floor to the cornice. A two-story veranda encircled the building's front facade (northern elevation) and eastern elevation. The veranda was supported by nine slim columns that connected a first and second story porch. To the front and side of the mansion was a small green lawn surrounded by a low cement wall, and steps that led down to the driveway and barnyard. The top of the wall, level with the lawn, was topped with ornamental wrought iron fencing.

Across the "Front Lane" from the mansion was a cluster of buildings to the east: the hospital, garden house, carriage barn, horse barn and cattle barn.49

The Hospital

The two-level hospital/bunkhouse was a rectangular building with a gable roof. The main level was clad with channel rustic siding and had an attached three-sided, hip-roofed screened porch, which appears to have been added after the initial construction. The north side of the porch was supported by vertical 2' x 4' boards which resembled stilts. On the ground level was a stone basement used as a wine cellar. The building was also known as the "wine house," as indicated on the 1911 real estate inventory of the Preston property.50 Male

49 The locations of these buildings are shown on the circa 1895 Preston Site Map on page 36.

50 Augusta Knight Green and May K. Rindge, "Petition For Sale of Realty, etc." to the California Superior Court in and for the County of Sonoma," 1911, 18. Sonoma County Recorder.
workers slept in the bunkhouse over the wine cellar. During the 1960s and 1970s, long after the Preston era, the building was called the “Plantation.” It burned down with the mansion, medicine house, garden house, and barns during the 1988 fire.

Horse Barn

After the Mansion, the horse barn was perhaps the most significant architectural loss in the 1988 Preston fire. The immense two-story barn was sturdily constructed using mortise and tenon joinery, and had a shingled gable roof and shiplap siding. On the first floor of the east end of the building, two six-over-six double-hung sash windows provided light. On the second floor, two small square windows flanked a double-door hay mow. The building also had a double-wide sliding door on the south, and featured hand-forged hinges and five hay chutes.

Carriage Barn

Destroyed in the fire of 1988, the carriage barn was a single-story structure with channel rustic siding and a medium-pitched, shingled gable roof.

---

52 Santa Rosa Press Democrat, 3 July 1988, B1.
The building featured a unique means of air circulation. Two six-over-six double hung sash windows on the north and south walls were constructed so that the entire window could be pulled up inside the wall to freely admit air within the building. This window framing construction was also employed on the mansion (built 1883) and the Lake House (built 1884), which suggests a similar date of construction for the carriage barn. Later the barn was converted for use as a garage, and a gravity flow gasoline pump was installed next to the building.\textsuperscript{54}

Cattle Barn

The cattle barn was a 1-\frac{1}{2} story, split-level rectangular structure. Built of double wall construction, the building had channel rustic siding.\textsuperscript{55} Internally, the barn was composed of four distinct levels, which were arranged according to the topography of the hillside. Both the north and south gable ends were pierced to complement one another, window for window and doorway for doorway. The lowermost tier was a passageway that extended from one gable-end to another to allow wagons in and out of the barn. Above this tier was a loft/landing which extended to the second passageway on the second level. Above this second passageway was a hay loft, which had a hinged, double-door hay mow offset to one side of the gable. In the southeast corner a small chute and doorway,

\textsuperscript{54}Roscoe, "A Partial Inventory of Historic Resources, Preston, California," 4.

\textsuperscript{55} No photograph of this building was located. Fortunately K. Stanton Roscoe described it in detail in 1981, seven years before it burned down.
perhaps for loading sheep, were installed at a later date by the Osters [1943-1967].

Garden House

The garden house was a simple, small, one-room wood frame building. It was clad with channel rustic siding and had a gable roof. Like the hospital building, it had a shed-roofed screened porch encircling the building on three sides that was probably added after the initial construction. A 1911 real estate inventory described it as "a building of little account." 

Outside Perceptions of the Preston Colony

As might be expected, the Preston colony attracted a good deal of attention in Northern California during its brief existence. Newspapers and County publications of the day provide not only scenic descriptions of the village, but also reveal clues about attitudes toward Emily Preston and her followers. One reporter from the Sonoma Democrat wrote an article after a November 1886 visit to "Prophetess Preston":

It is generally known that she performs her treatment from directions given from an unseen power, and which she terms as faith cure. Mrs. Preston has become very wealthy in a few years from her practice, as it is claimed she was comparatively

---

56Ibid., 5.

57Augusta Knight Green and May K. Rindge, "Petition For Sale of Realty, etc." to the California Superior Court in and for the County of Sonoma," 1911, 19. Sonoma County Recorder.
without means when she came to Cloverdale. She is regarded by everyone acquainted with her as enveloped in an unfathomable mystery. She has patients from nearly every part of the civilized world. Most of them are very wealthy, and while she talks religion she is looking after the dollars and cents with a practical and businesslike manner.\textsuperscript{58}

There were, of course, a wide variety of responses to Preston. Numerous critics and skeptics dismissed Mrs. Preston's medical practice as "quackery," and her religious visions as either occult spiritualism, proof of a delusional mind, or altogether fake. Others downplayed the disconcertingly mystical aspects of the colony to emphasize the benevolence and charity practiced therein. A few, like the \textit{Sonoma Democrat} reporter quoted above, observed the number of wealthy individuals at Preston, and made insinuations about Emily Preston's finances.

In November 1889, a reporter from the \textit{Healdsburg Enterprise} remarked upon the unusual phenomenon of Preston. Noting that there were probably very few people in Sonoma County who had not heard stories--some true and more that were greatly exaggerated--about Madam Preston:

> Who wields a strong influence over affairs in the northeastern corner of the county... While she is called an imposter and an ecclesiastical mountebank, there are not a few who ascribe to her a power all but divine... Those who would condemn her as an imposter on the strength of her pretense to divine inspiration and direct communication with the ruler of the universe, consider the good results of her teaching among those who believe, and are silent.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Sonoma Democrat}, 20 March 1886, 2.

\textsuperscript{59}"Madam Preston's Community," \textit{Healdsburg Enterprise}, 20 November 1889, 2.
Whether they approved of Madam Preston or not, nearly all of the journalists were struck by her personal magnetism and influence over her followers.\(^{60}\)

Despite being surrounded by admirers, Emily Preston was well aware of the larger skepticism and controversy that swirled around her “talents.” She spoke of feeling misunderstood and misjudged, but she was nevertheless committed to her calling. In some of Mrs. Preston’s earlier appearances, she expressed discomfort in the role of prophetess. She evidently first moved into the arena of public speaking—"reading messages"—in the early 1880s. In 1884, two years before the Preston church was constructed, Emily Preston spoke before an audience at the Metropolitan Temple in San Francisco. The text of her discourse was printed afterward as a pamphlet. Mrs. Preston admitted to the group that it seemed strange to appear in public, but:

> I promised the Great God that, if he would spare my life, I would read His messages to the people, here and in every part of the world, at His command. He had told me for more than a year past, that I must go and tell the world, that there is a Hell, and there is a Heaven; and I have seen photographs of Heaven and Hell. I have been shown all the different conditions of people, for every grade of life has been laid open and plain before my sight, and having this Sight, I am responsible if I hide myself away from the world.\(^{61}\)

Certain that she was fulfilling a sacred responsibility, Emily Preston began speaking regularly. She was not impervious to criticism. One recurring theme in

---

\(^{60}\)Ibid; *Santa Rosa Daily Republican*, 10 June 1895, 3.

Madam Preston's messages was maintaining faith and composure in the face of rejection: "If you are a Christian and people look at you ever so wrongfully, if you are right it does not hurt you."  

Emily Preston was ridiculed for her occasional tangled syntax and incorrect grammar. Skeptics snidely asked, why, for instance, did she make grammatical errors when she was supposedly reading the perfect words directly from God? Mrs. Preston was obviously wounded when she declared to her congregation:

> There are people who talk about God more than I can, and tell more and know more than I do, and speak grammatically and I do not. That is a great thing. Yet where is it? Have they spent twenty five years to help the people in the world, and have they ridiculed you and made fun of you and then come in and talked to you again? . . . There is nobody but will have somebody against them. If you go forward and do right, it does not matter that you have little funny ways that do not suit other people.

In messages that Madam Preston delivered to the Preston congregation at church, she regularly addressed the charges that she and the followers of her religion were "queer." Mrs. Preston wished people would take a closer look at the community:

> If everybody would look at what we are trying to do, and how we are trying to live, and what our object in life is, they would not want

---


63 Samples of Emily Preston's handwriting and spelling confirm that she did not have an advanced education. When Hartwell was alive, he handled the couple's correspondence, including the shipping and accounting for her medicine business.

64 Ibid.
Sample of Emily Preston's Writing:

"It is not fralis it is only the desiese that was Back of the eye so dont Be afraid. You are so fafull you will make it yet. You will have headackes when you use the linement. I dont see enething to fear yet. I will write you when I go to the citey."

[Notes by Emily Preston written on back of letter from Emily Reynolds to Emily Preston, 23 February 1891, in Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.]
to ridicule or make fun of us. They would say, "I would like to know how that is. I would like to feel that on me. That brings something good to a person."  

She welcomed visitors to her church in the spirit of fellowship, but not to come and spread rumors or gawk. The Preston faith was ecumenical. Madam Preston explained:

We do not condemn any religion or any good way in the world. We come hand in hand to help them do right. We ask all the world to come and help us to be good and do right. If anybody wants to come and worship God with us, they are welcome. We do not want to put anybody off.

Faith and forgiveness were common themes. She urged her followers to remain spiritually strong in the face of disparagement:

This religion is genuine. Your life must be your Bible, or you have no religion. It has been talked over and over for many years by me, in such an imperfect manner, but always trying to do my best. I would think so much of what the world would say, and my pride would hurt so much sometimes, that I would think I could never talk again, for I could see what they thought of me. The people do not understand my way, nor the meaning of what I say.

Favorable Press for Preston

Though Preston’s spiritual leader faced skepticism on a variety of fronts, the community actually received a great deal of positive press in the Sonoma County newspapers during the 1890s. Some of the writers were particularly

---

65 Emily Preston "How is Your Bible?" The Hell and the Heaven (Cloverdale: By the Author, 1902) 271-272.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 129-130.
intrigued by Madam Preston's achievements because of her gender.

One such article in the *Healdsburg Enterprise* was headlined "A Woman Builds a Town." The reporter—evidently female herself—(writing under the pen name "Farmer's Wife") was unabashedly impressed. The following passage exemplifies the pro-feminist stance of some of Madam Preston's coverage by newspapers in the 1890s. It is also an excellent brief summary of the settlement, based on an interview with Emily Preston, so the article is quoted in full:

Woman's activities in this progressive century are practically uncircumscribed and unlimited, yet such an accomplishment as the founding and building of a town by a woman seems almost an impossibility. The impossible, however, has come to pass in the steady growth and prosperity of the little town of Preston, Sonoma County, California, which came into existence through the work of Mrs. H.L. Preston, formerly a Connecticut woman, who upon the death of her husband, less than a decade ago, found herself the owner of the homestead, a prosperous fruit farm.

Possessing natural qualifications as a nurse and physician, Mrs. Preston had acquired something of a reputation in that line and many persons came to her for treatment. The necessity of providing for them suggested the idea of building a town, and a number of houses were put up. Then Mrs. Preston built a school house, and for six years taught the children herself. A church was built and she became the preacher. The needs of the little town drew mechanics and merchants, and though Mrs. Preston doesn't care to sell property, tenants are given a life tenancy free. No liquor is sold in the town. Mrs. Preston has had bridges constructed, the roads kept in order and new ones made at her expense. In the summer, her tenants go to a lake resort she owns in the mountains, comprising a lake and ten acres of land, where camping facilities are furnished them free of charge.

The little community is prosperous and happy, and apparently appreciative of the genius and generosity of the woman who has created the ideal conditions under which they enjoy life. It is doubtful if Mrs. Preston's success as a founder of a town has been equaled by any man or company of men, especially as contributing so satisfactorily to the comfort and general welfare of
all who live within its boundaries.  

About the same time as the Enterprise article was published, Madam Preston and the community merited a full-page illustrated spread in the San Francisco Chronicle. Published in September 1898, the article bore the headline: "An Extraordinary Russian River Settlement. A Woman Owns All the Property: Is Director, Teacher, Preacher and Ruler." The writer obviously came away from the interview captivated by Emily Preston:

Is there anyone who will credit that somewhere in the world there is a woman who not only owns a townsite, but runs every enterprise of importance in it; who is Mayor and Council and School Board and preacher, who owns the water supply and provides work and wages for the inhabitants, who is their medical adviser and cemetery association and their spiritual guide; who develops their mental resources and directs their aesthetic tastes, who superintends the designs and construction of houses and plans all their amusements and recreations? She has been found in California. As a matter of course, she could scarcely exist elsewhere.

The unsigned writer chronicled the religious community and its internal organization in admiring detail. It printed the full text of the creed of the Free Pilgrims Covenant Church. The article also featured line drawings of the Church, some cottages, the Preston Post Office and a panoramic view of Oak Mountain. There was no hint of patronization in the coverage; in fact, the article was practically a press release.


69 San Francisco Chronicle, 25 September 1898, 10.
Emily Preston began receiving fan letters from spiritual admirers, such as Prof. D. McLean of Temperance House in Santa Rosa. "As a worker for Humanity, like your highly respected self," McLean extended his cordial greeting to Madam Preston in 1904, in the hope that "we may be able to co-operate some day in the work of enlightening the masses, practically, upon the sovereign subject of Spiritual Science." McLean modestly signed himself, "Astral Seer, Practical Healer, and Pathfinder for the New Land and Labor Universal Suffrage Practical Reform Movement à la Australia, my native land." There were no greetings from more notable local mystics, such as Thomas Lake Harris, ("Primate" of Fountaingrove in Santa Rosa); or Healdsburg resident Ellen G. White (founding "Prophetess" of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church), located among Madam Preston's surviving correspondence.

During her lifetime, Emily Preston was contacted by at least one published author. William Cubery, of Cubery and Company, San Francisco, offered to produce the definitive biography of her, because she was "one of those fortunate persons who has made a great success of life." Mr. Cubery proposed to document Madam Preston's "enterprise" with her full participation. It must be written up some time, he declared; "it can only be written correctly by

---


71 There are no such letters among the 1,500 documents in the Healdsburg Museum collection. The possible existence of such letters in the Oster collection cannot be ruled out.

72 Letter, William M. Cubery to Emily Preston, 6 December 1906. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.
yourself, and it certainly cannot be done properly through hearsay.\footnote{Ibid.} William Cubery's flattering 1904 letter was saved among Madam Preston's correspondence, but there is no record of her response, and no evidence that a book was ever published or planned.

**Background of Emily and Hartwell Preston**

Emily Preston, whose maiden name was Emily Lathrap,\footnote{Occasionally spelled “Lathrop” by some members of the family.} was a native of Schoharie County in upstate New York, and spent most of her early life in Michigan. She was born January 1, 1819. This information, gained through 1820 census data (before she was old enough to have motive to conceal her real age!), contradicts her marriage certificate, death certificate, later census records, and several newspaper articles. It seems that Emily chose to intentionally shield some aspects of her personal background. Her birthplace has been variously given as New York, Connecticut, and Michigan, and her birth date ranges from 1818-1832, depending on the source consulted. Probate records specify that Emily Preston was one of six children, and that her parents, her two children, and all of her siblings predeceased her.\footnote{Probate Record for the Estate of Emily Preston, filed by Parley Green and Augusta Knight Green, 15 February 1909.} She enjoyed a warm relationship through the mail with her brothers and sisters back east, and with her husband's siblings as well. Aunt Emily's nieces and nephews wrote to her
Emily Lathrap's first marriage was to Henry Appleton, the father of her two children: Emma, born in 1847, and Wellington, born in 1850. The Appletons lived in Michigan. The marriage ended early, perhaps in divorce. In 1850, U.S. Census records showed that Emily Appleton and her three year old daughter were living separately from her husband. Henry Appleton, a 38-year old British clerk, was living alone in Detroit at "Johnson's Hotel." The census showed that Emily and Emma Appleton were living with Emily's older brother Andrew in Wayne County, Monguagon township, Michigan. Her medical practice was not in evidence. Pregnant with son Wellington, (born in Trenton, Michigan that October 1850), Emily's stated occupation was "keeping house."

Henry Appleton died in Michigan in the early 1850s. Whatever the exact state of their union had been, Emily Appleton identified herself as a widow after his death. She was listed in the 1860 census as a widow with two children,

---

76 In the Preston papers at the Healdsburg Museum alone, there are six overflowing folders of letters to Emily Preston from nieces Augusta Knight Green, May Knight Rindge, Carrie Preston and Nellie Prescott; and siblings Montgomery Lathrop, Melvin Lathrap, Andrew Lathrap, Lindley M. Preston and Sarah Preston.

77 Michigan was one of the few states to permit divorce at this time, though it was still highly stigmatized. A divorce in Emily Preston's past could account for some of her noted reticence to answer questions her background. Divorce records for Michigan from this early date were not located, so the divorce theory is admittedly speculative, based on the separate residences of the couple in the 1850 Census.


residing in Detroit. Later that year, Emily Appleton and her two young children made the long journey by steamer around Cape Horn to California. In San Francisco she soon met and married a man named Burke. The Burkes lived in Sierra County, locating in Downieville for a few years, where Emily's healing abilities began to gain recognition in the mining areas. Based on the stamps in some of the surviving Preston books, the couple may have also lived in Bodie for a short time. There are numerous letters from Gold Country residents among her surviving correspondence, as well as at least one letter mailed in 1879 from someone who claimed to have consulted her when she was "Mrs. Doctor Burke." The marriage to Burke did not last long. By 1868, she was back in San Francisco, where she appears in the City Directory of San Francisco as "Emily Burke, widow" residing at 717 Bush. In 1870, "Mrs. Emily Burke" was living at 708 Mason. In 1874, "Emily Burke (widow)" resided at 516 Sutter. By then her reputation as a doctoress had spread across the Bay Area. That same year Hartwell Preston, attorney-at-law, was first listed as living at 418 Post. The following year they were married. Nothing about their meeting or courtship

---


81 Tuomey, ibid.

82 In the Oster collection, as reported in M.J. M.J. Votruba’s, "The Preston Story," 13.

83 Letter, L.P. Drexler to Emily Preston, 15 December 1879. It is impressive that the letter was delivered to Emily Preston at all. The envelope was addressed to "Mrs. Doctor Burke, Cloverdale, California." In Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

is known.

Emily Preston's third husband, Hartwell Lytton Preston, was an earnest man of many accomplishments. When he married her in Oakland May 27, 1875, Hartwell, at the age of 54, was ready to retire from law. He wanted to devote his attention to fruit growing, raising livestock and making wine on his northern Sonoma County property. H.L. Preston had never before been married, but had enjoyed a long and successful career as an attorney on the north coast. Though he was commonly referred to as "Colonel" Preston in Sonoma County, research did not disclose any evidence in military records of a military career nor involvement in the Civil War. "Colonel" was most likely a honorary title of respect for the esteemed gentleman, the same way that "Madam" came be for his wife.

Hartwell Lytton Preston was born June 20, 1821. According to Preston family papers, he was the ninth child in a family of sixteen born to Peter and Abi (Hole) Preston, who were Quakers. The first eleven children were born in Campbell County, Virginia on a small family farm on Rock Castle Creek near the foot of Chandler's Mountain, about six miles west of Lynchburg. Peter Preston was opposed to slavery and moved the family north. The next five children were born on a 160-acre farm in Columbiana County, Ohio, where the family moved in

---

85 No military papers exist among the Preston papers at the Healdsburg Museum. Janice Payne, the last researcher granted access to the Preston papers by the Oster family, also concluded on page 8 of her M.A. thesis that "the title of Colonel was apparently honorary."
In 1849, after being educated in the east, Hartwell came to northern California. He was active and respected in politics in the northwestern United States, living in Crescent City (then part of Klamouth County), and frequently working Idaho and Oregon. In July 1854, the Democratic County Convention met at the Court House in Crescent City. "H.L. Preston, Esq." was appointed Chairman and H.H. Bancroft was appointed Secretary.

Hartwell advertised his services as "H.L. Preston, Attorney at Law," in 1854 in the Crescent City Herald. By 1858, he and his younger brother Lindley Murray Preston were in partnership in Crescent City, as "Preston and Preston, Attorneys at Law". In 1860, H.L. Preston was single, practicing law, and still living in Del Norte County, California. L.M. Preston and H.L. Preston shared in some mining investments, and L.M. managed Hartwell's Sonoma County property before it became "Preston" in the early 1870s.

Hartwell Preston was a deeply religious man whose quest for answers to theological questions took him far outside his Quaker background. By his own admission (in an 1887 letter to Joel and Elizabeth Wood), he "ranged through

---

87 Crescent City Herald, 8 July 1854, 1.
88 Crescent City Herald, 27 October 1858, 5.
the whole field of philosophy" during the ten-year period before he met his wife.\(^{60}\)

Hartwell's faith in her was complete:

If you believe the Messages [delivered by Emily Preston] are from God, when they tell you to do anything, however inconsistent with your ideas of propriety or dignity, ask no questions and make no objections. Obey instantly. If you are told to do a thing, go do it. The moment the order is given to do a thing, do it or you will never be in covenant relations with God nor have any atonement with Him, for that is the only point that we can be in unity with God. Subject your will to His.\(^{91}\)

Hartwell Preston died 12 December 1889, of heart failure at the age of 69.\(^{92}\) The Santa Rosa Democrat obituary described him as a noted lawyer and jurist who gained great political distinction in Oregon. On his marrying Mrs. Preston, "whose fame is world-wide," he retired from active life and, with his wife, located on Oak Mountain, where "they have a large following of devoted admirers."\(^{93}\) Despite Madam Preston's special sight and many talents for healing, she was unable to predict or delay death in the people closest to her.

The next chapter considers Emily Preston's medical practice within the context of late 19th-century medicine.

---


\(^{91}\)H.L. Preston, "A Discourse by Mr. H.L. Preston, in Emily Preston, The Hell and the Heaven, Cloverdale: By the Author, 1902), 12-13.

\(^{92}\)"Hartwell L. Preston," (Duplicate) Certificate of Death, California State Board of Health, 12 December 1889, Cloverdale, Sonoma County.

\(^{93}\)Santa Rosa Democrat, 21 December 1889, 2.
"I want God to recognize me whether the world does or not. The world is not anything to me. When I come to die, if I know God, I am not afraid."

Emily Preston, September 10, 1899
"There is one thing that you can build that is everlasting. That is, build a harmony between yourself and God, and He will make it everlasting."

Hartwell L. Preston, June 12, 1887
CHAPTER 4
MEDICAL PRACTICE

Late 19th-Century American Medical Context

Emily Preston's practice flourished within the unregulated context of late 19th-century American medicine. In California from 1850-1900, the practice of medicine was open to anyone, subject only to liability for damages in a case of lack of skill on the part of the practitioner. It was not a crime, for example, to treat the sick with their consent and with honest intention, no matter how ignorant one was of the quality of the remedies used.\(^1\) This was how Madam Preston was able to diagnose illnesses through the mail and prescribe her own homemade medicines to patients without benefit of formal medical training or license, yet remain within the law.

Before 1900, most practicing doctors in the U.S. had only a rudimentary medical education. There was a wide range in physician training and in quality of care. The scarcity of physicians in rural areas and in the West opened the door to treatment by lay practitioners, and expanded the role of midwives.\(^2\) Some people were fleeced or even harmed by so-called medical doctors, which led to a backlash against "quackery" beginning in the 1850s.\(^3\) By force of


necessity, many frontier women learned the basics of 19th-century medical techniques, combining folklore with pills, purges, herbs and poultices, so that if a doctor was not available, at least something could be done to alleviate pain and discomfort among family members. Home medicine chests contained a wide variety of staple remedies, ranging from whisky to rum, sulphur, powdered alum, castor oil and turpentine. When children were ailing, mothers commonly applied mustard plasters to their chests, onion poultices to the soles of their feet, and forced them to drink castor oil and sage tea. Many people developed more trust in folk remedies administered by women at home than in the medical profession.

Before vaccines were widely available, threats to public health were numerous, and the leading causes of death were infectious diseases that spread in the cities. Besides intermittent epidemics of cholera, yellow fever and smallpox, there were the ubiquitous pneumonia, influenza, typhus, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, and above all, tuberculosis. Tuberculosis—also called "consumption" or the "white plague"—was the most dreaded disease in the late 19th century.

During the Victorian era, societal notions about gender affected health care, as medicine became subdivided into "Medicine" and "Women's Medicine." "Medicine" was medical care for a man, provided by a male doctor, and

---


"Women's Medicine" was general medical care provided to women by a female practitioner, frequently a midwife. Although Emily Preston treated women and practiced gynecology, she did not limit her practice to "Women's Medicine." Her patients also included men and children.

Madam Preston's cures combined faith, exercise, beneficial herbs and minerals, spring water, and medicinal spirits. On the strength of word-of-mouth advertisement alone, she developed a lucrative medicine business. The collection of papers that Emily Preston left when she died comprised over 10,000 letters, the majority of which were written to her by people seeking medical advice or ordering medicine, including some doctors. Madam Preston's patients represented a cross-section of the California public, and included bank presidents, postal clerks, teachers, preachers, farm hands, sheriffs, millers, stockbrokers, shoemakers, editors, and politicians. Some mail arrived from Washington Territory, Oregon, Nevada and points further east, but the bulk came from the towns and hinterlands of northern California.

California "Health Boom"

Through the 1870s, there was a health rush to the West in general, and

---


8Ibid., 13-14.
to California in particular. Physicians frequently prescribed "travel" to their patients in attempts to alleviate illnesses whose causes and cures they could not diagnose. Climate and mental attitude were believed to greatly influence health. As a result, many patients, upon their doctor's advice or their own initiative, journeyed west on vacation to seek a cure for everything from tuberculosis to "nerves" to rheumatism. People looked for health benefits in both the dry heat of southern California, and in the hot springs and fresh mountain air of northern California.\(^9\) Mineral water cures ("balneotherapy"), spa treatments for alcoholism, fad diet regimes, and electrical cures also proliferated. Great attention was paid to "inner health and hygiene," particularly the digestive processes. Resorts and sanitariums in Napa and Sonoma County offered rest, recreation and solitude, and usually provided attractions like hot springs, geysers or mineral baths.\(^10\) The health boom faded with the end of the 19th century, when new medical theories and practices changed medical attitudes toward the effectiveness of a warm climate and the baths.\(^11\)

**Health Resorts in Sonoma County**

Sonoma County boosters began actively promoting the benefits of its climate and curative waters in the mid-19th century. The County became a

---

\(^9\)Rawls and Bean, *California: an Interpretive History*, 191.


popular refuge for the well-to-do to escape the stresses of city life. Health and/or pleasure seekers crowded to “take the waters” at mineral springs at the Geysers, Skaggs Springs, Litton (Lytton) Springs, Mark West Springs, Alder Glen Springs and White Sulphur Springs, where enterprising businessmen opened health resorts. In 1896, Dr. Wilfred Burke opened a large Medical and Surgical Sanitorium at Altruria, a former utopian site on Mark West Creek. Daily stages met the steamers and (later) the trains, transporting San Francisco travelers northward. By the turn of the century, numerous family-owned smaller scale resorts and guest houses had opened along the Russian River. During the summer months, resorts like “Pop” McCray’s, across the river south of Preston, filled with vacationers.

Preston as Health Resort

Invalids, not tourists, flocked to Preston. From 1876 until Madam Preston’s death in 1909, hundreds visited to consult her for medical treatment, spiritual advice, and to convalesce at Oak Mountain. Preston neighbor Mary Mowbray recalled seeing “a lot of human wrecks” come to Madam Preston for help:

---

12 LeBaron, et al, ibid.

13 Reynolds and Proctor, Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County (Santa Rosa, CA, 1898), 5.

14 Vacation 1908, Northwestern Pacific Railroad, 5-30.

She always did her best and tried to make them well. She had a lot of sick people come to her that were given up by the medical doctors. She cured a lot of them. Some were hopeless. Nothing would help them. And if you were too poor to pay for her treatment, she would give it to you free.\textsuperscript{16}

People frequently believed that they experienced positive effects from her treatments. Some of these patients—like Frederick Rindge, who built the Preston Church—felt that they owed Madam Preston their lives. These were the people, grateful and faithful, who moved to Preston to be close to her, and to enjoy the advantages of her spiritual influence on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{17} Fred Elmers, for example, supposedly treated and cured of Bright's Disease\textsuperscript{18} by Madam Preston as a young man, remained at Preston for the rest of his life as caretaker of the Preston Church and ranch, loyal to Emily Preston long after her death.\textsuperscript{19}

The restorative benefits of the climate and the mineral springs were recognized and promoted at Preston. Julia Lewis suffered from periodic bouts of diphtheria, an acute, contagious and sometimes fatal disease.\textsuperscript{20} She lived for months at a time at Preston, her sickness requiring the close care of Madam Preston and the healthful climate of Oak Mountain. Mrs. Lewis wrote

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18]A kidney disease characterized by albumin in the urine.
\item[20]Diphtheria is marked by the formation of a false membrane in the throat. It is caused by a bacterium that produces a toxin that creates inflammation of the heart and nervous system.
\end{footnotes}
enthusiastically about her faith in her care at Preston and about the healing Preston water in a letter home to Petaluma, dated July 1886:

The spring water is helping me. It is making some wonderful cures with them that are drinking it. They all say it is helping them ... I went up to the campgrounds this morning and filled my jugs. When I was going past Mrs. Preston’s she came out. She said she was glad I was using the water. She said it was helping me a great deal. I took a bath in it yesterday.21

The shared belief in the efficacy of the Preston mineral water no doubt enhanced its effects.

**Emily Preston as Physician and Pharmacist**

Madam Preston concocted her own medicines and ointments, and devoted the majority of her time to treating the sick. Hartwell handled most of the correspondence and filled the orders for medicine.22 He also ordered the bottles, oil silk, and other supplies for his wife’s practice. Herbs and roots gathered on the property were mixed with store-bought ingredients, such as asafoetida, cream of tartar, bromide potassium and licorice powder.23 Trusted assistant Joseph Zahner helped with the gathering of the necessary medicinal plants, but the recipes were secret.

On Mondays, Madam Preston received clients at her home for free

21Letter, Julia Lewis to Charles Lewis, 12 July 1886. Reprinted courtesy of Barbara Webster.

22Two account ledgers in Hartwell Preston’s handwriting, dating from 1884-1888, show that he kept records of the medicine sent. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

consultations. Preston colonist Nathan Bowers recalled that she hosted visitors in a very small room conducive to confidences. The invariable custom during the intimate interview was for Madam Preston to serve glasses of very good cordial, "one for the patient and one for herself." For years Mrs. Preston maintained an office on Leavenworth Street in San Francisco, where she traveled twice a month to see city patients who were too ill to come to her.

Since Madam Preston's divine vision revealed to her the causes of diseases, she was able diagnose ailments without having to examine the patients in person. Much of Emily Preston's medical practice was conducted entirely through the mail. The letters she received ranged from nonchalant to anguished, depending, of course, on the writer's circumstances. Madam Preston regularly received desperate pleas, such as the following letter from a struggling Sebastopol farmer's wife. Frightened, confused and pregnant, she begged Mrs. Preston for help:

I've heard you have a preparation that is good to cause a miscarriage. I have a baby and a small one at that... He can only just sit alone and I think I'm in the family way again and I don't feel as if I could have two babies to take care of... If you haven't medicine I could try other plans such as jumping off high places but they might injure me... Please help me as you would like a daughter of yours to be helped if you had one. I've never


had any one to tell me anything how to keep out of these things.27

It is unknown whether Madam Preston was able (or willing) to provide abortifacients. More common was the two-line generic medical letter to Madam Preston. Mrs. Celia Andrews of Cheyenne, Wyoming, exemplifies the typical nonspecific request for help: "Will you please tell me what ails me and can you help me? If so, will you please send me enough of your medicine C.O.D. to commence with."28 To aid Madam Preston's diagnosis, many patients detailed the dire symptoms of their illnesses. Others enclosed a lock of hair or a photograph, such as F.B. Ward of Petaluma, who wrote to Emily Preston in 1879:

Hearing that you could, by viewing the photograph of a person, tell their ailment I will send my likeness. I am not sick, but never well. Hoping to hear from you as soon as convenient.29

The Ward letter above featured an interesting note penned at the bottom in the precise handwriting and careful wording of attorney, Hartwell Preston: "There is not a person in the world who can truly say that I ever wrote a diagnosis of any case from receiving a photograph or any token."30 Hartwell made sure that his wife's practice remained safely within the law.

27Letter, Mrs. Leroy Dibble to Emily Preston, 28 December 1907, Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum. Mrs. Preston's response to the request was not indicated on the letter. No other requests of this nature were located within the Preston papers at the Healdsburg Museum. It is unknown whether such letters exist within the Preston papers held by the Oster family.

28Letter, Mrs. Celia Andrews to Emily Preston, 7 June 1904. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.


30Ibid.
In addition to having the full support of her husband, Madam Preston’s calling enjoyed the confidence of her family. They used her medicines to treat their own illnesses. M.J. Lathrap, Emily’s brother, wrote that his success using his sister’s medicines had created a stir back east:

I am getting quite a reputation here lately and I haven’t made any effort either. There have been some three or four of my friends here that had been sick for two and three years and I have raised them up with the paint [liniment] and bitters, and I have had calls from Toledo and Detroit. And I can’t attend to them, for I don’t like to get short myself and be without it in my own family.31

Correspondence from Hartwell’s relatives attests to their faith not only in her abilities as a doctoress, but in her powers of prediction as well.32 Among the Preston papers are letters from Hartwell’s niece, Carrie Preston, and his sister, Cynthia Preston, written to Emily Preston after the 1906 Earthquake. Both letters refer to Madam Preston’s “foretelling” of the San Francisco Earthquake. Carrie Preston wrote on April 17th:

Word of the destruction of San Francisco has reached me and I shall be very anxious until I know that you . . . are safe. It shows again that you had true insight when you foretold the destruction of the city.33

Cynthia Preston had so much faith in Emily Preston’s divination of the San Francisco Earthquake that Sarah asked her sister-in-law to evaluate another man’s predictions. Cynthia wrote, “Have you heard that we are to have an

32Ib1d.; Letter, May Knight (Mrs. Fred) Rindge to Emily Preston, 23 September 1907. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.
33Letter, Carrie Preston to Emily Preston, April 18, 1906. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.
earthquake here in New York? Well some one has prophesied to that effect. Do you think it will happen soon?"  

No other clues have been found to determine how specific Madam Preston's prediction of the 1906 Earthquake was. Did she make general claims that "God will punish San Francisco someday" or did she offer a specific vision of an earthquake? Perhaps the most significant aspect of Emily Preston's predictions was the credence that others gave to them.

19th-Century Proprietary Medicine Industry

The year 1906 was significant for another event: the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act, which introduced the first regulations concerning the sale of medicines in the United States. The period between 1850 to 1900 is considered to be the peak era of medical drug fraud and misrepresentation. Prior to the 20th century, many unscrupulous producers took advantage of the unregulated drug market and the credulous public. Bottled and advertised as tonics, bitters, killers and liniments, many of these remedies consisted of nothing more than alcohol, sugar and water. Some manufacturers added narcotics or opium, for its addictive as well as pain-relieving qualities, ensuring a steady market for the product. Extravagant claims and wild promises were made about cures. Some

34 Letter, Cynthia Preston to Emily Preston, 18 July 1906, Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

remedies were advertised to cure up to twenty ailments.\textsuperscript{36}

"Patent medicine" has become the common term applied broadly but erroneously to all remedial agents sold without prescription. Actually most 19th century "medicines" were produced and distributed without patent. Patents, then as now, required disclosure of formulas and ingredients, which many manufacturers sought to avoid. Instead most drug vendors sought to safeguard their commercial interests by registering brand names, distinctive bottle types or shapes, and trademarks. Trademarks were issued for twenty years, and were renewable. Most importantly, they were not subject to government scrutiny. Registered, these brands became known as "proprietary medicines."\textsuperscript{37}

Emily Preston's mail-order proprietary medicine business expanded in the 1890s, with the establishment of the Preston depot, and the connection of Preston with the services of the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad and the Well's Fargo and Company's Express. All of Madam Preston's medicines were made on the property in the cottage next to her house. She used a lot of port wine in her medicine. During the 1880s-90s, Emily Preston had ten acres planted in zinfandel vines.\textsuperscript{38} She had a wine cellar and a small still for distilling


alcohol for medical use.\textsuperscript{39}

Madam Preston's holistic prescriptions included exercise, fresh air, spring water, and herbal tonics to build up strength. Her medical practice raised objections, however, for her unorthodox means of diagnosis, and especially for her unpleasant and uncomfortable "blister treatment."

\textbf{The Infamous Blister Treatment}

The blister treatment was the fairly common, if drastic, practice in early medicine of applying irritants to the skin, in the belief that internal diseases could be thereby drawn to the surface of the body and dispelled. A widely prescribed therapy since the Middle Ages, it has fallen out of favor in the United States within the last 100 years. \textit{Chambers Encyclopedia}, published in 1903, reported that blisters were used for the relief of acute inflammation in the internal organs; for the dispersion of the products left by the inflammation; and for the relief of pain, even where no inflammation is present.\textsuperscript{40} Chambers wrote: "To name all of the conditions where blisters may be of use would mean an enumeration of more than half of the diseases known to medicine and surgery."\textsuperscript{41}

A bottle of Madam Preston's "paint" with the contents and label intact was

\textsuperscript{39}Mowbray, "My Memories," 8.

\textsuperscript{40}(e.g. in indolent ulcers of the skin, enlarged lymph glands, chronically inflamed joints and in many forms of neuralgia); \textit{Chambers Encyclopedia, vol. 2}, (San Francisco: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1904), 23.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid.
found in Preston resident Elisha Green's house after his death. This multi-purpose liniment was the cornerstone of Madam’s medical treatment. The label described the effects of the medicine:

This liniment does not blister like Mustard or Croton, but penetrates the system and destroys the germs of disease and procures their discharge through the skin in poisonous and offensive matter.\(^\text{42}\)

Instructions were provided for the use of liniment:

Apply with a soft brush or with the hand, every day or two, upon any diseased part, and wear over it constantly a bandage of oiled silk or cotton batting until it produces a running sore. Dress the sore by cleaning it simply with a dry, soft rag as often as it may require. When you wish to heal a sore, remove the oiled silk, cleanse the sore, and apply a cloth well covered with salve or mutton tallow until healed.\(^\text{43}\)

Madam Preston's liniment appears to have been a typical blistering agent.

Some of her patients believed so strongly in the merits of the blister treatment that they were rarely without one or more running sores somewhere on their body. The prevalence of the Blister treatment at Preston led disparaging neighbors to dub Emily Preston “the Blister Lady” and Preston “Blisterville.”

Mary Mowbray commented critically on the blister treatment:

My husband and his mother had a lot of faith in the treatment. They were like the rest of the Prestonites, they thought it was the only treatment for all ills. As for myself, I didn’t want any of it. I often wondered how those people could stand them. Some of the people I knew had a blister on all the time. I knew one woman that

\(^\text{42}\) Label from bottle of Preston Liniment, circa 1900. In possession of Lisa and Edwin Ellis.

\(^\text{43}\) ibid.
could not live unless she had a blister somewhere on her body. Of course it got to be a habit with some people. 44

Despite her distaste, Mrs. Mowbray admitted, "I do know that the treatment helped a lot of the hopeless cases." 45

Wine bitters and delicious wine cordials were prescribed as crucial adjuncts to the blister treatment to keep up the patient's strength. One can certainly imagine how much the person would have appreciated a strong draft of something to accompany the blister treatment. A tax-related letter, dated 1907 (after passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act), from the U.S. Treasury revealed the high alcohol content of these remedies. The preparation of Emily Preston's wine cordial and wine bitters was therein described:

After the fresh Must made from grapes grown by the manufacturer has been allowed to ferment down to about 12 degrees saccharine strength, a pure grape syrup is added and the wine is fortified with tax paid spirits. After fortification the wine is allowed to stand for a time for the purpose of aging and to it is added roots and herbs, the completed product being sold as wine cordial and wine bitters. 46

In 1903, Madam Preston began printing a "Price List of Medicines and How to Use Them." Besides liniment, wine bitters and wine cordial, the mainstays of her practice, the list of available medicines included: blood medicine (tonic), sweet oil, cough medicine, gin and garlic, fever paste, pile

44Mowbray, "My Memories," 42.

45ibid.

46Letter, Robert Williams, Jr., Acting Commissioner, U.S. Treasury Department, to H.E. Crabb, Esq., [Attorney to Emily Preston], 20 July 1907. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.
remedy, assafoetida pills, vagina balls, vagina wash, eye sponge, salve, fasting paste, wine bitters paste, and catarrh snuff. According to this guide, the blister treatment should be used for a variety of ailments, including: heart, stomach, bladder, kidney, liver or lung trouble; rheumatism, and diphtheria. Some of the instructions sound quite unpleasant, such as the treatment recommended for croup or asthma:

Take three drops of liniment in a spoonful of sweet oil, three times in half a day, paint the throat and lungs with liniment, and take Ipecac until you vomit. Make a sore on the back, between the shoulders and one in front, over the lungs.47

Despite the discomfort, hundreds of people trusted and followed Emily Preston’s medical advice. Though she cultivated this influence, she did not want to overstep her abilities, and she did not claim to be infallible. Occasionally Madam Preston even sent her patients to see other doctors. Julia Lewis, under treatment at Preston during a serious bout of diphtheria, wrote about one such episode to her husband:

Last Thursday night the Madam said she did not see how I could live through it, but said that she would do all she could for me and I believe she saved my life. She wanted me to call another Doctor. She said she would not feel hurt at all. I told her that if I had to die, I was willing to die in her hands, that I was satisfied with what she was doing and that if any one on earth could help me she could.48

Not all of Emily Preston’s clients fared so well under her medical

47Emily Preston, "Price List of Medicines and How to Use Them," 1903. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum. The full text of "Price List of Medicines and How to Use Them" is included as Appendix B.

treatment. Nathan Bowers, a child of devoted Preston colonists, reported that his family "observed the Madam's medical activities from the sidelines" after her medical advice blinded his father in one eye. The elder Bowers had consulted Madam Preston about an eye in which a cold seemed to have settled. She advised him to poultice the eye with macerated green onions. After a few days of treatment, the results so worried Mrs. Preston that she advised Mr. Bowers to go immediately to see an oculist in San Francisco. The oculist told him that he had poulticed the lens out of the eye and would never see out of it again.49

Unlike Mary Mowbray, who opted never to try Madam Preston's blister treatment, Nathan Bowers had direct experience with its effects. In 1966, he reported that "more than sixty years later, my body still carries the marks where blisters caused by her liniment went so deep as to leave permanent scar tissue."50 Bowers spent his military years having to answer questions from Army doctors about what disease left those scars on his body.51

Preston in Context of Late 19th-Century Sonoma County Medicine

Elisha Ely of Geyserville and John F. Boyce of Santa Rosa were among the earliest physicians in Sonoma County, both in practice by the mid-1850s. Much of their work centered on accidents and diseases, such as typhoid,

50Ibid, 6.
51Ibid.
diphtheria and smallpox which were constant threats. Epidemics were common. Surgeries were performed only in emergencies, and without anesthetic, usually on the kitchen table of the patient or at the scene of an accident.\textsuperscript{52}

As the population grew in the 1860s, so did the number of doctors and unlicensed practitioners. Dr. R. Press Smith was appointed as the first County Physician in 1869. During the 1870s, educated local physicians pushed to have laws passed to regulate and suppress "quackery"—the practice of medicine by unlicensed practitioners. The Sonoma County Medical Association was formed. In Jan 1873, the \textit{Russian River Flag}, reported on the local scene that:

\begin{quote}
The doctors of Santa Rosa have gone into the self-protection business, and given all notice that quackery must be suppressed. If you get sick and call in anybody but a regularly educated physician, and the quack nearly kills you, the associated doctors won't step in at your request at the last moment and try to save you.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

Four years later, the same newspaper reported, without editorial comment, that none but those holding diplomas from legally chartered medical institutions, in good standing, can hereafter obtain licenses to practice. The penalty for infringing this law is heavy.\textsuperscript{54} In 1876, a series of laws were passed, regulating the practice of medicine in the State of California. The ordinances related to Madam Preston's career were specified in Section One:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{52}Gaye LeBaron et al, \textit{Santa Rosa: a Nineteenth Century Town}, (Santa Rosa: Historia, Ltd., 1985),192.

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Russian River Flag}, 1 January 1873, 2.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Russian River Flag}, 4 January 1877, 1.
\end{flushleft}
Any person shall be regarded as practicing medicine, within the meaning of this Act, who shall profess publicly to be a physician and to prescribe for the sick, or who shall append to his name the letters "M.D." But nothing herein contained shall be construed to prohibit gratuitous services in cases of emergency.55

In 1877, there were eighteen Sonoma County "medical gentlemen," legally authorized to practice medicine and surgery in California. They were authorized to practice in Sonoma County because of having recorded with the County Clerk, prior to January 1, 1877, their certificates from the State Board of Examiners. These gentlemen included: Elisha Ely, A.W. Gamble, Q.C. Smith, James Shepard, B.B. Allen, I.O. Boggs, T.E.R. Gildersleeve, J.H Crane, J.B. Christie, S.H. Rupe, T.W. Seawell, W.D. Harrison, G.W. Wells, G.W. Graves, E. Von Hasslocker, W.W. Carpenter, James Forsman, and Charles Von Geldern.56

The Medical Establishment vs. Madam Preston

On March 5, 1888, the medical gentlemen of Sonoma County assembled in Santa Rosa for the purpose of organizing a County medical society and ridding the County of unlicensed practitioners. Very soon afterward, Madam Preston's unregistered practice attracted the attention of the State Board of Medical Examiners. Her playful response to their apparently-stern admonition in


56Russian River Flag, 4 January 1877, 1.
November 1888 reflects the security that she felt in knowing that her practice was within the limits of the law. After all, Emily Preston had the advice of an excellent attorney. Therefore the following letter written to Charles E. Blake, M.D. was most likely a shared chuckle between Emily and Hartwell Preston at the officiousness of the State Board of Medical Examiners. The humorous text of their irreverent letter is reprinted in full:

Dear Sir,

Your favor of 22nd, last, is duly at hand and contents noted. But you are wrong informed about me. I am not engaged in the practice of medicine at Cloverdale. In fact, I do not live there at all but reside some miles away in the mountains, and do not profess to be a physician at all.

But your kind and flattering letter has put an idea into my perhaps-all-ready too-ambitious mind. It is that possibly I have the making of a doctor after all. You will therefore please keep your generous promise and forward to my address the necessary blanks and instructions to comply with the law. Please send your curriculum very soon. Doctor, for I am getting along in years, and have much to learn—for truly, I have the first "Doctor Book" to read yet. And yet—who knows? I may become a helper in the Elevation of the Professional Character as well as an aid in enforcing obedience to the laws, which have got themselves enacted for your protection. Your profession, worthy as it is, and deserving of great honor, surely needs a more elevated character, and is showing decided evidence of the need of "protection," and I will gladly do what I can for you. The efficiency of the profession must be raised! Why, just think of it!

Even these mountains are alive with poor wretches, of both sexes, whom you have turned out of your offices and sanitariums to die upon their legs; and they so beset my doors and gates, crying for aid, and begging for the hope of life, that I can hardly find time to cook my old man's victuals, or wash his clothes! Poor things! They all tell the same story—and it almost breaks my heart—"The Doctors! The Doctors! They used their little morphine syringes upon me and deadened my pain, until they got all my money and
then turned me out to go to 'springs'!!" It is dreadful, Doctor, and we must try and cure them--some of them at least.
Yours sincerely, Mrs. E. Preston.

P.S. I forgot to speak of your great projected work—the Systems of Prosecution for violation of this law, being organized all over the state. That is superb, and has the ring of business in it! And my old man! He used to be a lawyer. Maybe we can get him to take a hand with us! If you will only send me the things and let me come in! Farewell. 57

The letter was all literally true. Madam Preston did not "practice medicine in Cloverdale—" she practiced two miles away at Preston. Many of her clients were indeed people who had been deemed hopeless by the regular medical practitioners. Mrs. Preston was at least willing to try to help them, and with faith on the patient's part, sometimes she succeeded. She had nothing to fear from the State Board, since she stayed within the law and never did "profess to be a physician." Four handwritten pages of H.L. Preston's notes concerning his wife's legal right to practice medicine were found among her surviving papers. His citations in her favor included the Constitution, the Preamble, and Webster's Dictionary. 58

There are indications that Madam Preston and her patients felt harassment from the medical establishment even earlier. Janice Payne cited seven letters written to Mrs. Preston in 1878, sympathizing about her possible


indictment and prosecution [which never did transpire].[^59] A few letters from mail-order customers even suspected jealous physicians of tampering with mail from Madam Preston. In one such example, Mary White warned, “When you send medicine to this place, please take great care in packing because one of San Juan’s best physicians is deputy postmaster and Mrs. Lisson’s last box of medicine had one bottle broken.”[^60]

The year after Madam Preston’s letter from the Board of Medical Examiners, she was still listed as Mrs. H.L. Preston, Physician and Surgeon in the 1889-90 *Sonoma County Directory*[^61]. She maintained an office in San Francisco, listed in San Francisco directories from 1896-1906 as Emily Preston, widow, physician, 1424 Leavenworth.[^62] In 1889, Emily Preston appeared in *Polk’s Medical and Surgical Register of the United States* with an asterisk, indicating “no report received in answer to enquiry regarding graduation.”[^63] Despite their scrutiny, Emily Preston was never prosecuted.

---

[^59]: Letter, Henry Jones to Emily Preston, 6 December 1878; Letter, Mrs. P.A. Benedict to Emily Preston, 12 April 1878; Letter, Mrs. Lizzie Mulligan to Emily Preston, 1 August 1878; Letter, M.S. Beers to Emily Preston, 5 December 1878; Letter, Sarah Barnes to Emily Preston, 6 October 1878; Letter, W.W. Greening to Emily Preston, December 1878; Letter, Mrs. L.A.A. Notch to Emily Preston, 2 December 1878; as cited in Payne, “Go Tell It on the Mountain: an Account of Madam Emily Preston with Prefatorial Note on the Preston Papers,” 31-32.

[^60]: Letter, Mary White to Emily Preston, 7 July 1878. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.


CHAPTER 5
RELIGIOUS COLONY

Founding a New Religion

As Emily Preston's medical practice flourished, so did her spiritual influence on people. Yet in the beginning it was Hartwell Preston and Frederick Rindge who led the church services. From the late 1870s through 1885, the Prestons held Christian worship services at their home, and shared their views about religion. They asserted that all faiths can go to Heaven "if their hearts are right," because "truth has a voice that puts way all dogmas."1 Emily and Hartwell Preston emphasized the importance of cultivating a direct personal relationship with God. The Prestons did not consider themselves to be ministers. In fact they advocated skipping the unnecessary middlemen--ministers and priests, because:

it is all folly to say that you can get into Heaven only on a certain line. If you come in with the truth in you, and talk to God and know Him for yourself, nobody can keep you out of Heaven. You can get religion under a tree. You do not have to have a preacher say a ceremony over you. God will say it over you with His divine law. You can be a Christian in yourself, and be baptized a little every day with the Holy Spirit, without going inside of a church, if you have that capacity for cultivation, and talk to God and keep it up.2

This relationship could only be achieved through meditation and prayer. The Prestons believed strongly in the importance of prayer, but were not restrictive in

2Preston, Emily, "To Be Born Anew," The Hell and the Heaven, 116.
defining it. Madam Preston declared that:

Every good thought is a prayer. You do not have to kneel down here and say over a lot of words and tell God what to do. God knows better than you or I. What is the use of kneeling down and praying? Stand up and pray, and pray every way.3

The Prestons invited others to join them in “living religion” at Preston. The new faith came to be called the Religion of Inspiration. In October 1892, Madam Preston proclaimed that their efforts to spread the Religion of Inspiration were divinely led:

We have started out, and God is our Captain. He has called to us and said, "I will be the Captain of your army; and I have called you Volunteers, and told you to stand up for God and Heaven, and separate yourselves from the world."4

The members of the new faith became known as the “Volunteers of Heaven” or the “Covenanters.” At the Church they were asked to sign a covenant book to freely pledge their lives to God. Volunteers were not required to renounce their previous religion, if they had one. The Prestons did not believe in condemning other faiths. Madam Preston preferred to attract converts by example. She was certain that the advantages of living by her covenant religion would become apparent, because:

this religion is to make you happy while you live, and to open every door for you; and when the time comes for you to die you will not be afraid... This religion brings you everything; yet it is so little appreciated; but in time it is going to be taken up. This religion will be sought after by and by; it is going to open

3Emily Preston, "What is This Life For?" The Hell and the Heaven, 102-103.
4Emily Preston, "Do You Want to Visit the Art Galleries of Heaven?" The Hell and the Heaven, 63.
people’s eyes, and they will see that they must come to God for inspiration and the love of heaven.5

Emily Preston constantly stressed the importance of the heavenly plane over the earthly plane. She contended that the purpose of human existence is to prove one’s worth to join God in the afterlife, so she spoke frequently about getting into Heaven:

What have you to do to gain Heaven? Only do right. That is something you want to do every day. God’s Heaven does not cost you anything, only good works. Then pay Him homage with your life. Thank Him every day, and talk to Him every way.6

Madam Preston claimed to be able to view “photographs” from God showing the true nature of Heaven and Hell. She was convinced—and she convinced her followers—that God’s will was revealed to her through the divine pictures and words that she saw in front of her on walls of light. Mrs. Preston assured the Volunteers that God Himself had created this religion and had told her that He would preserve it:

Why does not some preacher or learned man come and put this religion out and stop these words? Why, he might just as well blow in the wind. They can take it up and pick it all to pieces, but God will put it together again. It is the living life-force out of the Holy Spirit that photographs in the air, and it is a living substance that never dies. . . . This religion is genuine. Your life must be your Bible, or you have no religion.7

Despite its seemingly mystical aspects, the Preston faith was practical

5Emily Preston, "The Independence Day," The Hell and the Heaven, 81-82.
6Emily Preston "What is This Life For?" The Hell and the Heaven, 102-103.
7Emily Preston "What is Religion?" The Hell and the Heaven, 129-130.
and down-to-earth, grounded in simple devotion to God and good works.

Madam Preston expressed confidence that the Covenant faith would be perpetuated after her death:

This little grain of mustard seed that God has planted on this land will go all over the world and be taken up as the religion that is going to win. This religion is to take up the weak and weary, and help them to earn a place in Heaven, and to help them to have their last days their best days.  

In 1903 Emily Preston placed copies of her 1902 book The Hell and the Heaven and her 1903 medical brochure, "Price List of Medicines and How to Use Them" in the Sonoma County Library and the Library of Congress. Madam Preston may not have proselytized, but she clearly did not want her religion or her medical practice to be forgotten.

Design of the Preston Church

The way congregations choose to express themselves in wood, brick, stone, or concrete reveals much about their character. Patterns of worship, social standing and economic resources, the natural environment surrounding them, and their interaction with one another and with the surrounding secular realm are reflected in religious architecture.  

---

8Emily Preston "Do We Understand the Highest Law?" The Hell and the Heaven, 66.

9Emily Preston, The Hell and the Heaven, I; and "Price List of Medicines and How to Use Them," I.

Church at Preston was constructed by Frederick Rindge for Emily Preston. The 1886 church, built in the vernacular tradition of the New England Meetinghouse, epitomized her religious values.

Meetinghouse architecture was an extension and adaptation of the Puritan "plain style" and Yankee craftsmanship, in which austerity was promoted as a religious and aesthetic virtue. Though they differed widely on issues of both faith and practice, the Puritans and later the Quakers shared a common "plain style" aesthetic that manifested itself in their houses of worship. Ornament was excessive and worldly; it was an expression of vanity, self centeredness, and attachment to the transient rather than the eternal.

Characteristics of the New England Meetinghouse style of architecture included: a frontal tower and white wooden construction, entry through a long side; interior with a prominent stage and pulpit in the visual center and no statues, icons or pictures. A central pulpit emphasized the importance of the preached word. These characteristics were all present in the building design at Preston. In true Eastern tradition—unusual in California religious architecture, the Preston Church also featured a brick fireplace.

The New England Meetinghouse style perfectly symbolized Emily's homespun religion. Like the Quakers, who repudiated "steeple-house ways," she disparaged the snobbery of some elite churches:

Some go off to a church with a big steeple, and worship the grand

---

and fashionable people who belong to that great establishment. They worship so many things and have so many gods. There are more gods than you can count today.12

The Preston Church, set on terrace of Oak Mountain, facing west and painted a vivid bright white, presented a striking appearance of neatness and simplicity which could be seen for miles.

Madam Preston and Other 19th-Century Prophetesses

The Second Great Awakening was a religious revival movement that began in New England and surged across the United States in the 1830s and '40s. The movement opened the door to a widespread religious enthusiasm, which particularly appealed to women, many of whom became missionaries and lay preachers.13 America was a strongly Protestant nation as it approached the turn of the 19th century, but the increase in Catholic and Jewish immigration stirred anxieties among some Americans. Growing dissatisfaction with the doctrines and practices of traditional Protestantism gave rise to alternative movements, including Universalism, Transcendentalism and Spiritualism, an increasing fascination with the metaphysical and the occult.14 Emily Preston's claim of sharing divine messages written on walls of light by God lent the Religion of Inspiration a similar otherworldly appeal.

12Emily Preston "What is Religion?", The Hell and the Heaven, 126.
13Martin E. Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 75.
Metaphysical religions like Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventism, New Thought and Theosophy challenged the dominant position of traditional Protestant belief by the late 19th century. Historian Sandra Sizer Frankiel views the alternative Christian sects as having played an important role in American religious history, an impact that belied their numbers, because:

Even though their numbers were small, the people who voiced these alternatives weakened tradition and in some ways strengthened secularism. For by offering a version of religion that claimed to be spiritual rather than traditional, they broadened the concept of religion and made it impossible for any one group to speak for God's truth.

Although the Religion of Inspiration did not catch on to the extent of Christian Science or Seventh-Day Adventism, the ministry of Emily Preston bore quite a few similarities to that of Mary Baker Eddy and also Ellen G. White. All three women achieved prominence in the 1870s as prophetesses and founders of religious sects. Protestant Christianity was one of the few acceptable arenas in which (white) women in the United States could express leadership in the early to mid-19th century. The period produced numerous prophetesses and female evangelists. The revivalist spirit inspired or contributed to many social

---


16 Frankiel, ibid., 128.

17 The teachings of Mary Baker Eddy and Ellen G. White are easily available to the interested reader. Their respective religious publishing houses keep their writings in print. Mrs. Eddy's works are provided for free at Christian Science Reading Rooms which exist worldwide.

reform movements, ushering in the socio-political era historians call "Progressive." Women were active leaders in temperance, abolition and moral reform. They also sought leadership in public education, philanthropic endeavors, and utopian socialism. Participation in reform efforts crisscrossed denominational lines.  

Mary Baker Eddy

Like Emily Preston, Mary Baker Eddy was a woman of little formal education, in her late middle age when she built up a devoted religious following. Over a short period of time, Mrs. Eddy attracted a small band of adherents in Lynn, Massachusetts, consisting primarily of factory workers and artisans. She was initially attracted to the occult. She dabbled in mesmerism, spiritualism and hydropathy before training as a "mental healer" with P.P. Quimby of Portland, Maine in the early 1860s.

After P.P. Quimby's death, Mary Baker Eddy gradually evolved a system which she came to regard as wholly her own, published under the title *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* in 1875. She maintained that evil in general and physical illness in particular could be overcome through prayer and

---


a deeper understanding of God. Mrs. Eddy claimed that after her discovery of Christian Science:

I healed consumption [tuberculosis] in its last stages, a case which the M.D.'s, by verdict of the stethoscope and the schools, declared incurable because the lungs were mostly consumed. I healed malignant diphtheria . . . cancer. I have physically restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and have made the lame walk.

During Mary Baker Eddy's lifetime, she was scorned by many as a "spiritualist." Emily Preston also faced this charge. Mrs. Eddy provided for the training of healers by setting up the Massachusetts Metaphysical College in 1881, with herself as faculty, thus ensuring that her religion could be perpetuated. Madam Preston's singular metaphysical abilities were not transferable and she did not train anyone in her medical techniques. Without her, the Religion of Inspiration gradually faded from existence.

---

22 Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (Boston: By the Author, 1889), 12-15.


24 Mary Mowbray stated, "[Emily Preston] said to me, 'A lot of people think I am a spiritualist, but I'm not. I don't know anything about spiritualism.'" In Mowbray, "My Memories," 3.

Ellen G. White

Like Mary Baker Eddy and Emily Preston, Ellen Gould White was an unlikely leader. In 1844 at age seventeen, shy, sickly Ellen Gould experienced her first vision. According to one biographer, young Miss Gould's visions were given credence by the elders of the Seventh-Day Adventist faith because:

It was seen by those acquainted with her that this and subsequent visions benefited the emerging church, harmonized fully with Scripture teachings, and gave sound evidence of being a fulfillment of Bible predictions of the last-day renewal of the prophetic gift as set forth in Joel, Ephesians, and Revelation.

Throughout her life, Ellen G. White reported experiencing over 2,000 divinely-inspired visions and dreams. Reticent at first, she became a powerful orator, compelled to deliver messages to the Adventists and any others who would listen. Speaking for hours without benefit of notes or microphone, Mrs. White held large crowds spellbound. Inspired by miraculous visions and healing trances, her prophesies and admonitions laid the spiritual foundation of the


29 Ibid., 10.
Seventh-Day Adventist faith.\textsuperscript{30}

Ellen White also became a prolific writer, whose combined books, treatises and articles numbered over 100,000 pages. She lived about ten miles from Emily Preston in Healdsburg from 1877-1891.\textsuperscript{31} No evidence of their acquaintance was found, although the Sonoma County prophetesses certainly must have been aware of each other. Their visions shared a common emphasis on personal spirituality, decorous behavior, and maintaining health.

Although the name “Seventh-Day Adventist” was chosen in 1860, the denomination was not officially organized until 1863. The members chose the name because of their strong faith in the second coming of Christ, and their shared commitment to observe Saturday, the seventh day, as the Sabbath, a day of rest and religious duty. By 1863, the movement consisted of 125 churches and 3,500 members.\textsuperscript{32} That same year, Mrs. White received a comprehensive vision about healthful living, diet and temperance. She began to advocate the benefits of “Bible hygiene,” a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet, and abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and other harmful drugs.\textsuperscript{33} Ellen White and her husband James White, a church Elder, were leaders in the health reform

\textsuperscript{30}Numbers, \textit{Prophetess of Health: a Study of Ellen White}, 5-6.


\textsuperscript{33}Arthur L. White, \textit{Ellen White: the Lonely Years (1876-1891)}, vol. 5., 246.
movement and worked closely with Dr. John H. Kellogg to establish the health reform institute in Battle Creek, Michigan.\textsuperscript{34} Like Hartwell Preston, James White fully supported his wife’s calling as a prophetess, but did not share her same visionary gift. Ellen White’s teachings remain central to the beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventism.\textsuperscript{35}

Late 19th-century prophets and prophetesses provided believers with the assurances that God was alive and paying attention to them, that Heaven was attainable, and that God’s will could be understood and obeyed.\textsuperscript{36} Church membership in the United States increased steadily from 1870 to 1920. During the closing decades of the century, thousands of congregations of all faiths erected churches in the greatest building boom in American church history.\textsuperscript{37}

19th-Century Utopian Movements\textsuperscript{38}

During the 19th century an estimated 100,000 Americans participated in

\textsuperscript{34}Numbers, Prophetess of Health: a Study of Ellen White, 21.

\textsuperscript{35}The Pacific Union College of Seventh-Day Adventists, “Who Was Ellen White?”, 12.

\textsuperscript{36}Schlereth, Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 260-261.

\textsuperscript{37}Frankiel, California’s Spiritual Frontiers: Religious Alternatives in Anglo-Protestantism, 5.

various communal experiments, including utopian colonies. As defined by historian Robert V. Hine, a utopian colony is a group of people who are attempting to establish a new social pattern based upon a vision of the ideal society and who have withdrawn themselves from the community at large to embody that vision in experimental form.

Such religious groups usually followed a person or a revelation and believed themselves to be a chosen people. No outsider achieved membership until he affirmed allegiance to the essential teachings. The Shakers, the Moravians, the Perfectionists at Oneida, the Theosophists at Point Loma, Harris followers at Fountaingrove—all reflected this aspect of utopian Christianity.

Secular utopian colonies tended to view communal living almost as an end in itself: an expedient to ideal human harmony. Like the religious colonists, the secular colonists resented the pressures of the larger competitive society, and believed it best to withdraw from the oppressive influences to create a better way of life. Although requiring no religious allegiance, commitment to


42Hine, Ibid.

the cooperative way of life was crucial. 44 19th century-secular communities in California included: Modjeska's Farm, Icaria Speranza, Joyful, Kaweah, Winters Island and Altruria. 45

Between 1850 to 1950, at least six religious and eleven secular utopian colonies were established in California; more utopian communities than in any other U.S. state. Three of the seventeen utopian settlements in California were located in Sonoma County. 46

19th-Century Sonoma County Utopian Colonies

The three major Sonoma County utopian communities existed within a 30-mile radius of one another. Fountaingrove, located just north of Santa Rosa, was a religious community founded by the Brotherhood of the New Life. Centered around the teachings of spiritual leader, Thomas Lake Harris, the settlement existed from 1875-1900. 47 Icaria Speranza, founded south of


45Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies*, 5-6.

46Ibid., 6.

Cloverdale, was a secular cooperative French colony without a central leader. It existed from 1881-1886. Altruria, on Mark West Creek near Windsor, also a secular cooperative colony. This settlement existed only for one year, from 1894-1895. 48

**Fountaingrove**

Fountaingrove is perhaps the best known of the Sonoma County utopian communities. As a religious community headed by a dominant and enigmatic pivotal leader, it can be compared to Preston. The similarities fade upon closer examination into the character of its leader.

Proclaiming himself the "Pivotal Man" who would herald Christ's reappearance on earth, Thomas Lake Harris had preached celibacy, poetry and hard work to a devoted community of religious followers at a succession of upstate New York locations before coming to Sonoma County in 1875. His teachings involved an androgynous God (the "Divine Man-Woman") and the rejection of earthly ties. Toward this end, Harris frequently separated children from parents; and husbands from wives. 49 Members turned over all of their worldly goods to Harris, and followers lived communally. 50 He had his own

---


50 Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies*, 33.
residence. The other members of the community lived in two buildings: the men in the three-story “Commandery” and the women in the two-story “Familstere.” (or “Familistère.”). Louis Cowles, a Fountaingrove resident, was an architect. Cowles designed these and many other Fountaingrove buildings.\(^5\) Perhaps ten buildings survive today, including the winery and the blacksmith shop. A distinctive 12-sided round barn, which actually postdates Harris’s residency, overlooks Highway 101 in Santa Rosa.

Around 1891 troubles began in Fountaingrove, as a series of books and articles appeared which accused Harris outright of sexual and financial exploitation of his colonists. Under a cloud of suspicion, and presumed by most to be guilty, he fled to New York, never to return to Sonoma County.\(^5\)

After Harris’ scandal-ridden departure, Fountaingrove gradually regained respectability as a commercial winemaking enterprise under Kanaye Nagasawa. Without the charismatic presence of Harris to hold the group together, however, the rest of the colony members gradually drifted away. A clause in the deed provided that the property would revert to the one who lived longest and to his heirs. Winemaker Kanaye Nagasawa, a devoted Japanese-born follower of Harris who became his adopted son, became the sole owner of the estate in the 1920s, and managed the Fountaingrove winery until his death in 1934.\(^5\)

---


\(^5\)LeBaron, et. al., *Santa Rosa: a 19th Century Town*, 66.

Icaria Speranza was a secular utopian community founded upon the ideals of radical author Étienne Cabet. As followers of Cabet, Icarian colonists believed that inequality, the basic social evil, could be eliminated only through communism, a shared community of goods. Like Madam Preston, the Icarians considered marriage to be indispensable to happiness and community harmony.

In 1881, the French settlers purchased 885 acres of good agricultural land three miles south of Cloverdale, on the banks of the Russian River. Their property was located about five miles south of Preston, on the opposite side of the River. The Sonoma County colony was not the first Icarian experiment. Since 1848, Icarians had founded settlements in Texas (1848); Nauvoo, Illinois (1849-1860) where they moved into a former Mormon settlement; Cheltenham, Missouri (1858-1864); Corning, Iowa (1860-1878); "New Icaria," Iowa (1878-1898); and "Jeune Icarie," Iowa (1878-1886). All Icarias were purely French-

---


56 Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies*, 36.
speaking settlements; several of them splinter groups, formed by internal conflicts over private ownership issues.57

The colony near Cloverdale included the Dehay, Leroux, and Bée families and Gustave Provost. At least 55 individuals, including children participated in the social experiment. Like the residents of Fountaingrove and Preston, the Icarians planted vineyards and made wine on their property.58 They also grew peaches, prunes and wheat; and sold some of their agricultural products from a rented storefront in Cloverdale.59

The Icarian village had no large communal dormitory. Instead, small single family wood-frame dwellings were built clustered loosely around a two-storey, white clapboard farmhouse with high attic and broad porches. Here the members ate together and held meetings and social activities. The colony lasted five years. The breakup of the settlement was due to a combination of factors, most notably depressed business conditions, including a sharp decline in retail prices in the county; indebtedness of the colony, and failure to attract new French-speaking converts.60

57 Hine, California’s Utopian Colonies, 75-76.
58 Peninou, History of the Sonoma Viticultural District vol.1, 293.
60 Hine, California’s Utopian Colonies, 37. Shaw, Icaria: a Chapter in the History of Communism, 142;
The shortest-lived Sonoma County utopian community was located between Fountaingrove and Icaria Speranza, six miles north of Santa Rosa, on the banks of Mark West Creek. This was the secular settlement known as "Altruria," formed by a group of idealists from Berkeley, California. Like the Icarians, who derived their founding ideals from a book (Étienne Cabet's *Voyage En Icarie*), the utopian colony drew their inspiration from *A Traveler From Altruria*, a utopian novel by William Dean Howells.

Eighteen adults and eight children participated in the communal experiment. Members were required to give their all to the company; to contribute at least $50 to the venture, with a shared goal of self-sufficiency. The 185-acre site already had a grist mill and three small houses. The colonists planted beets, onions, lettuce, carrots, potatoes and rhubarb. They also raised chickens and cattle. Members pursued a variety of industries, including weaving, bamboo furniture-making, printing, art, carpet-making. They served in whatever department they desired and during whatever hours suited them. All

---


ate together in a common dining room.\textsuperscript{64}

In February 1895, the Grand Council, or governing body, decided to authorize an ambitious construction project: the erection of a three-storey apartment house and hotel. The building was to contain seven family apartments, a large dining hall, kitchen, office, library, suite of living rooms, and numerous guest rooms, bathrooms and closets.\textsuperscript{65} Work on the hotel progressed slowly, because there were only a few carpenters in the group. The project dragged on unfinished, and eventually drained the community of resources. With their finances reduced to shambles, the group disbanded in June 1895.\textsuperscript{66} They parted amicably, however, blaming the stressful economy rather than themselves for their colony's failure to sustain itself. In 1896, Dr. Edmund Burke took over the buildings and grounds to establish his Medical and Surgical Sanitarium.\textsuperscript{67}

Preston as Utopian Colony?

The Preston community was contemporaneous with the three Sonoma County utopian settlements, and as a rural agricultural community shared some


\textsuperscript{66}Hine, California's Utopian Colonies, 24.

\textsuperscript{67}Reynolds and Proctor, Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County, California, 5.
characteristics in common with them. The few writers who have considered Preston have all stopped short of calling it a utopian colony. Only M.J. Votruba has called Preston from 1875-1909, "a utopian dream come true."

A key difference between Preston and the other colonies is that Preston was not originally founded as an intentional community by a committed group of people. Preston evolved gradually into a settlement of like-minded individuals who were directed by the religious and medical teachings of Madam Emily Preston. The Volunteers of Heaven were definitely pursuing shared ideals. In the words of Mrs. Preston, "If there are only six who will live this religion, it will prove something." To evaluate Preston as a utopian colony, it may be useful to analyze the mechanisms of commitment that existed within the community.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter studied thirty 19th-century communes for her book, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*. Kanter concluded that for communal relations to exist and endure, there must be commitment on the part of the group to the individual and on the part of the individual to the group. Commitment therefore refers to the "willingness of people to do what will help maintain the group because the

---


mechanism provides what they need."\textsuperscript{71}

**Mechanisms of Commitment**

Based upon her analysis, Kanter posited three paired mechanisms of commitment in communal societies: Sacrifice/Investment; Renunciation/Communion; and Mortification/Transcendence. The first in each pair represented what the individual gives to the community; the second, what the member receives from the group. Kanter concluded that the nine long lasting colonies (40-100+ years) in her case study had organized their community life in such a way as to support the six commitment-building processes.\textsuperscript{72} The twenty-one short-lived groups, by contrast, had fewer of these mechanisms and in weaker forms.\textsuperscript{73}

**Sacrifice/Investment**

According to Rosabeth Kanter, the process of sacrifice is the price of admission to the community. Requiring members to give up something increases the perceived value of group membership. Two forms of sacrifice are

\textsuperscript{71}Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 66.

\textsuperscript{72}The communities Kanter studied included: the Shakers, 1787--; Amana, 1843-1933; the Harmony Society, 1804-1904; Snowhill, 1800-1870; St. Nazianz, 1854-1896; Zoar, 1817-1898; Bethel and Aurora, 1844-1880; Oneida, 1800-1881; and Jerusalem, 1788-1821.

\textsuperscript{73}Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*, 74-75.
common in utopian settlements: abstinence (food or drink, celibacy) and austerity.74

Members of the Preston colony willingly made many sacrifices. To live at Preston or summer at Inland Camp, community members had to submit to the authority of Madam Preston. She permitted no alcohol on her property, (except that which she prescribed), so abstinence from liquor was expected. Under Mrs. Preston's care, people regularly sacrificed their physical comfort, especially under the blister treatment. At Inland Camp in the summer, the Covenanters were permitted but one serving of meat per day.75 Dietary restrictions and strenuous physical exercise were commonly prescribed as medical treatments by Madam Preston. Celibacy was expected of single residents, and marriage was strongly promoted.76

"Investment" gives members a stake in something larger than themselves: the future of the community. Investment usually requires a physical commitment or financial gesture of faith. In Kanter's study, 100% of the long lived groups practiced celibacy, 78% had some form of abstinence in food or drink, and 100% built their own buildings.77 Emily Preston kept her financial interests entirely

74Ibid., 80-82.
75Discussion of Inland Camp to follow later in this chapter.
76Payne, "Go Tell It on the Mountain: an Account of Madam Emily Preston with Prefatorial Note on the Preston Papers," 54.
77Kanter, Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective, 82.
separate from the Preston community members, and never solicited money from
church members. Colonists at Preston were encouraged to build their own
houses and cottages on Emily Preston's land, but they were not required to live
at Preston.

Renunciation/Communion

"Renunciation" is the severing of relationships outside the group in order
to forge a stronger bond within the group. It is characterized by physical and
emotional insulation from the surrounding environment. Madam Preston did
not encourage colony members to withdraw from society, except during
scheduled spiritual retreats, nor did she require them to renounce outside
relationships. In fact, Madam Preston encouraged members to maintain
memberships in other churches. Renunciation was not promoted at Preston. At
Preston, members traveled from the colony freely. They had no special rules for
dealing with outsiders. Many Volunteers did not even reside at Preston year-
round.

"Communion" means unity and homogeneity, and is characterized by the
sharing of material goods, communal labor, forms of community rituals, and

---

78 The "Creed of the Free Pilgrims Covenant Church" states, "The religion has never cost anyone
that belongs to it yet. If anyone does anything for me, I pay them for it--in or out of the religion."
[undated pamphlet], Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

79 Ibld.

80 Kanter, Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological
Perspective, 104-105.
regular group contact. Only 33% of the communities Kanter studied had communal dwellings; 56% had a common dining hall. Sixty-three percent of Kanter’s colonies had songs about themselves and 100% had group singing.\(^8\)

Preston afforded many opportunities for communion, even though it did not promote communal living nor have a common dining hall. There was, of course, the Preston colony school and of course, the Church which brought people together. There was also the Preston colony’s private campground near Preston Lake where Preston Volunteers retreated during the summer months. It is not known if there were songs written about Preston, but group singing was a major part of all Church services. Members of the Preston Orchestra and the Preston Women’s Orchestra practiced together and performed regularly at the Church.\(^8\)

**Mortification/Transcendence**

At least half of the societies studied by Kanter practiced some ritual of “Mortification.” Mortification mechanisms included confession, criticism and sanctions. Two-thirds of the groups studied had clear sanctions in place for unacceptable behavior.\(^8\) At Preston, misbehaving individuals faced public

---

\(^8\)Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*, 105.

\(^8\)Mowbray, “My Memories,” 15.

\(^8\)Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*, 124-125.
scolding in church by Madam Preston. She did not hesitate to criticize bad behavior. One witness described an incident when Mrs. Preston publicly berated a man for being "too stingy to buy bread for his children." There were certain offenses--ranging from gossip to fornication--that were punishable by banishment from the group.

"Transcendence," Kanter's final mechanism of commitment concerned the degree to which the individual feels attracted to the group's ideology or exercise of power. The individual must feel an commitment to group's viewpoint.

The people who lived at Preston, joined in a common purpose, felt themselves lucky to be part of a particularly blessed enterprise in beautiful country. Emily tried to instill in them a reverence for their surroundings. Despite the fact that the Preston community grew out of Emily's medical practice with "human wrecks," the village was characterized as happy, neat and prosperous.

The residents of Preston, devout in their faith and dwelling so close to their source of inspiration, enjoyed the satisfaction of living purposeful lives dedicated to God. Nathan Bowers described the sentiments of his neighbors:

These people were obviously grateful for being alive, for being members of this community and especially for the privilege of living "here on this mountain."

---

85 Mowbray, "My Memories," 36.
86 San Francisco Chronicle, 25 September 1898, 10.
The many Preston followers who were not able to reside at Preston year-round wrote frequently to Madam Preston about missing her, and missing the special place. Mrs. O.J. Zellner wrote one such letter to Mrs. Preston from San Francisco in 1907:

The little book you sent me was received days ago and as I read it, I seemed to breathe in a divine and purer air and also new strength. Of course, to me the Mountain, the church and all pertaining to it seem a breath of Heaven.\(^{88}\)

The Preston “Volunteers of Heaven” or “Covenanters” hailed from all walks of life, but many were extremely well-to-do. At its peak, in about 1895, an estimated 100-150 people, including children, resided at Preston most of the year. It is difficult to achieve a precise count of Preston colonists because there was no residency requirement to belong to the group, and they came and went so freely.

Profile of a Significant Preston Colonist: Frederick Rindge

Harvard-educated Frederick Rindge was one of the original Preston colonists. Born in 1857, he was the only surviving son of Samuel Baker and Clarissa Harrington Rindge of Cambridge, Massachusetts.\(^{89}\) At the age of 29, Frederick Rindge inherited three million dollars from his father, a shipping merchant and banker. Madam Preston’s doctrine of charity had a great deal of

\(^{88}\)Letter, Emily Preston from Mrs. O.J. Zellner, 5 April 1907. Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.

influence over his life and his religious expression, but it is unknown how Emily Preston and Frederick Rindge first became acquainted.

Besides constructing the Preston Church in 1886, Rindge gave the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts funds for a public library, a school for manual training, and a city hall. Like the Preston Church, these buildings have inspirational text printed on their walls. Rindge good-naturedly referred to them as his "didactic public buildings." He also built Methodist churches in Cambridge, Massachusetts and in Santa Monica, California. He wrote several religious books, privately printed, which leaned heavily toward Madam Preston's teachings, including: *Can You Read Your Title Clear to a Mansion in the Skies?* (1889) and *The Best Way* (1902).

In May 1887, Rindge was married to Madam Preston's niece, Rhoda "May" Knight. They met through the matchmaking efforts of Mrs. Preston. In 1890, Frederick and May Rindge purchased an extensive coastal ranch of 13,000 acres near Santa Monica: the Rancho Topanga Malibu, where they lived the rest of their lives. In 1898, Frederick published a history of southern California titled *Happy Days in Southern California.* Rindge died in 1905.

---

90 ibid.


92 F.H. Rindge, *Can You Read Your Title Clear to a Mansion in the Skies?* (Los Angeles: By the Author, 1889); and *The Best Way* (Los Angeles: By the Author, 1902).

Rindge outlived her husband by many years, achieving some notoriety for her fight to prevent public access (and Coast Highway 1) through the Topanga Malibu Rancho. May Rindge and her daughter Rhoda later figured prominently in the management of Emily Preston's estate after her death.

**Life at Preston**

Community life at Preston centered around spiritual, medical, musical and agricultural pursuits. It was a family-oriented community, with a number of school-aged children in the 1890s. Fourth of July was the biggest holiday of the year, celebrated with a picnic, boating, bicycle races and games at Preston Lake. Christmas was also always festive, with special church services and a huge, decorated tree at the schoolhouse. Preston residents regularly entered the agricultural competitions, and participated in the displays and entertainments of the Citrus Fair, a harvest festival which is still held every year in neighboring Cloverdale. At the 1904 Citrus Fair, for example, Madam Preston took first prize for her Sicily lemons; Jessie Appleton won first prize for best Washington Navel oranges, and Henry Hubbard won second prize in the same category. Hubbard won first prize in Villa Franca lemons.

---

97 Russian River Advertiser, 27 February 1904, 1.
Emily was the main employer at Preston, since she owned all of the enterprises in town. She employed men and women to cook, clean, care for the sick, and to labor on the ranch. The female hired help lived with her in the mansion. The men lived in the bunk house over the wine cellar across the lane from the mansion. Mrs. Preston had a big bell on the top of her house that rang “as regular as clockwork,” and:

when that bell rang for meal time, all the men dropped their work and rushed to the house for their meals... She believed in early to bed and early to rise. When any of her help stayed out after eight o’clock in the evening, they were locked out.98

Emily Preston had strict rules against pastimes which she considered to be frivolous or wicked. These included card playing, drinking, gambling, dancing, and indulging in gossip. Musical abilities were encouraged; in fact, a music teacher from Healdsburg was hired to teach music lessons at Preston two days a week. In the mid-1890s, the community featured accomplished town and women’s orchestras. Besides providing musical accompaniment at the church services, the Preston musicians held regular concerts in the Preston Church and special concerts on holidays.99

Inland Camp

One fundamental component--and benefit--of religious life at Preston was

98Mowbray, ibid., 13-14.

the spiritual renewal time enjoyed by the Covenanters during the summer.

Hosted by Madam Preston, colonists spent summers in retreat at Inland Camp near Preston Lake. A *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter visited Inland Camp in September 1898. The writer presented an appealing picture of the summer encampment:

[Emily Preston] has arranged a summer camp on a place on the road to [Preston] lake, where exist some spring waters of a peculiarly bitter taste and medicinal value. Here she has built a church and there is also accommodation for the school and the public baths, and for two months in the year all of her people betake themselves thither to drink and bathe in the waters while education and worship go on uninterrupted. A nice garden and miscellaneous orchard supply the wants of the summer guests, and everything is as free as air to members of the settlement.\(^{100}\)

As camp director and host, Emily Preston set special rules for life at Inland Camp. Days were to be spent in contemplation, seclusion and prayer. No servants were permitted to attend the colonists, and consumption of meat was limited to once a day. One San Francisco reporter visiting the campground in 1887 listed some of the camp rules. This writer found one aspect of male camp life particularly intriguing:

\[\ldots\] To appreciate the petty trials of woman's life, man must share them, even to the extent of sharing household duties and caring for refractory infants. If a man be without personal responsibilities he must share those of his neighbor and his neighbor's wife and even his neighbor's small children. \(^ {101}\)

\(^{100}\) *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 September 1898, 10.

\(^{101}\) *San Francisco Daily Examiner*, 13 August 1887, 3.
The reporter commented on this practice as "admirable. It teaches man humility, and explains to him why so many sweet tempered maidens become peevish and fretful housewives."\(^{102}\)

Gossip was imperatively forbidden at Inland Camp. Members caught gossiping were scolded by Madam Preston in front of the whole group. Expulsion from camp was the penalty for the third offense, which did occasionally occur. The *Cloverdale Reveille* observed wryly in May 1887:

> Preparations are being made for the camp in Inland Valley on Oak Mountain. Mrs. Preston announced in her last message that a prize would be awarded to the one who minds his or her own business.\(^{103}\)

Most of the summer campers were families. Former colonist Nathan Bowers remembered Inland Camp from a child's point of view. To the younger generation, the important event of the day was the gathering each evening at the Church of the Wildwood:

> This was, in truth and in fact, a "sweet hour of prayer." It was a pleasant and refreshing release from the customary day-long seclusion and quiet. There was little news to share, of course, but there was a fine spirit of friendliness and everyone seemed to have an abundance of love and good will toward all.\(^{104}\)

Life at Inland Camp was a relaxing change of pace for Preston residents, but the emphasis was on the spiritual nature of the retreat. Volunteers attending camp sought to gain knowledge of themselves and to deepen their awareness of

\(^{102}\)Ibid.

\(^{103}\)Cloverdale Reveille, 14 May 1887, 3.

and dedication to God. Retreats at Inland Camp thereby served as mechanisms of commitment which strengthened and renewed the spirit of the community.
The Preston Orchestra. Photo by Mary Mowbray, circa 1895.

Picnic at Preston. Mary Mowbray photo, circa 1895.
CHAPTER 6
PRESTON POST-MADAM PRESTON

Losing a Leader

The most tragic day in the history of the Preston community came with Emily Preston's death January 22, 1909.1 Naturally, the Preston colonists were profoundly shaken by the loss of their beloved mentor. Mary Mowbray recalled how astonished the followers were to hear that Madam Preston dropped dead in her kitchen while washing dishes, "Of course her followers had such faith in her, that nothing could happen to her. I really believe that all those people thought she was immortal."2

By the time of her death, the eccentric Emily Preston had won over most of her critics, and was respected and honored in Sonoma County society. Her passing was front-page news. The funeral was simple but impressive, with an enormous crowd in attendance. Describing the service, the Healdsburg Tribune paid editorial tribute to "Madam Preston, Founder of the town of Preston and of the Preston Sanitarium." The newspaper offered its highest praise, that: "Mrs. Preston has made the world happier and better for having lived in it. She rests

---

1California State Board of Health Duplicate Certificate of Death, "Emily Preston," 22 January 1909. The cause of death listed is "Heart Disease."

2Mowbray, "My Memories," 50.
from her labors and her good works do follow her."³

The *Press Democrat*, under the headline “Sainted Mother is Laid to Rest,” wondered about the future of Preston:

Just who will carry on the good work that Madam Preston followed for many years or whether it will be continued in the church and Colony in that favored spot in old Sonoma County is not known. Just what Madam Preston's wishes were in the matter, or whether she ever expressed any, has not been stated.⁴

After Emily Preston's death, the year-round residential community gradually diminished through the 1910s-1930s. Most writers have concluded that the community lacked commitment or cohesiveness without Madam Preston as the pivotal figure. Actually other, more mundane factors contributed significantly to the decline.

Some colonists were forced to leave Preston for economic reasons: they needed to live elsewhere to find work. Madam Preston was, after all, the major employer of the rural village, and without her industries the local economy suffered a huge blow. Not all of the Preston colonists were independently wealthy or retired. Cloverdale, the nearest town, two miles away, had few employment opportunities to offer.

Preston also lost members through attrition. Many Preston colonists were older adults with preexisting health problems when they moved to Preston in the 1880s and 1890s. As these colonists aged and died in the early 1900s and

³*Healdsburg Tribune*, 29 January 1909, 1.

Madam Preston and the Volunteers of Heaven, Fourth of July at Inland Camp at Preston Lake, circa 1895. Mrs. Preston is seated in the second row, second from the right, gripping a parasol. Photo taken by Mary Mowbray.

Madam Preston and friend visiting in Front Lane next to Preston mansion. Photo taken by Mary Mowbray, facing southeast, circa 1905.
1910s, they were not replaced with new members. Another major loss was that the children of the Preston colony, who attended school in Preston in the 1880s and 1890s, did not choose to remain in Preston as Volunteers. These children did not make the same commitment to the community as their parents did.

Madam Preston, though affectionate with her followers, was an intimidating figure to the children in her community. They grew up witnessing the authority she had over their parents, and lived by her rules on land that belonged to her. Nathan Bowers, a child at Preston during the 1890s, described the “apprehensive” reaction of the kids to Madam Preston’s once-a-month Sunday Inspiration Meeting, where she read a personal message for each of them “out of thin air.” What she might say could be embarrassing, and it was said with an air of total finality. They were all “relieved” when an Inspiration Meeting was safely over.

Mary Mowbray observed that some of the children at Preston were so “headstrong” that Madam Preston had a hard time trying to teach them right from wrong. Mowbray explained, “These youngsters didn’t want to be tied down to this religion. They wanted more freedom.” The children of Preston came of

---

5 Buried/entombed in the Preston Cemetery during this decade were Wellington Appleton (1902), H.W. Birt (1908), Edgar B. Clark (1919), Elizabeth Clark (1900), Thomas Cottle (1901), Warren Green (1901), William Maltland Howard (1908), Henry Hubbard (1908), and Herbert Wilhelmi (1905), as recorded in Cemetery Records 1846-1921 (Santa Rosa, Ca: Sonoma County Genealogical Society, 1976).


7 Mowbray, “My Memories,” 37.
age, went to college and/or married, and moved away, raising their children under a less restrictive lifestyle than what had been offered at Preston.

The colonists who remained at Preston did not break faith with the Covenant. Alice Eimers Theuer attended services at the Preston church from 1919-1935, when visiting her Aunt Nettie and Uncle Fred Eimers at Preston during the summer. She described it as a very moving experience. The regular congregation “was made up of the folks who had stayed on the estate as had Uncle Fred.” One woman played the organ for the singing of several hymns. There was no minister. Mrs. Theuer described the church service as “a gathering of the folks who each in his own way stood and offered a few words of prayer. They were all very sincere and enjoyed their weekly meetings.”

The faithful continued to hold church services in the Preston Church through the early 1940s. Most of the remaining colonists had died and were buried in the Preston Cemetery by this time. Upon Mrs. Preston’s death, the mansion and the surrounding buildings were locked up. They remained vacant for thirty-four years. Emily Preston left as a “will” an undated, unsigned, and unwitnessed testamentary paper which bequeathed her entire $125,000 estate.

---

8 The Elmers House still exists in 2000. See page 43.


10 Jessie Appleton (1936), John J. Barnes (1924), Mary E. Barnes (1926), Jennie L. Barnes (1941), Stella Morrison Green (1939), Adaline Moody Hubbard (1926), Peter Nelson (1925) and Joseph Zahner (1944) were buried/entombed in the Preston Cemetery during this period. Isabel Howard was the last Preston colonist to be buried in the Cemetery. She was buried in 1956. Graveyard was examined by author in 1999.
to her church. The Cloverdale Reveille reported on the contents of this unusual document:

She decrees that if any of the numerous heirs of her family, the Lathraps, or her dead husband’s family, claim anything from her property they shall get a dollar each. She prescribes the form of worship she wishes followed in the church at Preston and urges that only devout members of the church be permitted to speak at the services. She advises against hiring preachers, as “that is a bad thing.”

The document was contested by her relatives, and subsequently dismissed in court as improper. It did not meet the legal requirements of an holographic will, so it was not admitted to probate. Judge Denny appointed Emily Preston’s nieces Augusta Knight Green and May Knight Rindge as administrators of the estate. In October 1911, they placed their aunt’s estate up for sale to the highest bidder, including all personal property, described as “wearing apparel, personal ornaments and jewelry, a miscellaneous lot of household and kitchen furniture, besides other and different property.”

11Will and Petition filed 2 February 1909, as recorded in Probate Register of Actions, Book 9, 29. Sonoma County Superior Court.

12Cloverdale Reveille, 6 February 1909, 4.

13No satisfactory explanation has been found to explain why Madam Preston’s nieces thwarted her obvious stated wishes by contesting her will. May Rindge and Augusta Knight Green were more than wealthy (both having been matched up with rich men by their Aunt Emily), and had seemed to sympathize with Emily’s religious views in her lifetime. Among Emily Preston’s correspondence at the Healdsburg Museum are numerous affectionate letters from her nieces.

14Decree Denying Probate and Granting Letters of Administration, filed 3 March 1909, as recorded in Probate Register of Actions, Book 9, 29. Sonoma County Superior Court.

15Cloverdale Reveille, 28 October 1911, 1. August Knight Green and May K. Rindge, Administratrices, “Petition for Sale of Realty, etc.”, filed 4 December 1911.
Bidding was lively at the estate sale, as the Preston home ranch was put up for auction at the Superior Court. From an opening offer of $11,500, the price of the property quickly rose to $19,000. It was purchased by Frederick and May Rindge's 16-year old daughter, Rhoda Agatha Rindge of Santa Monica, a grand-niece of Madam Preston, already a mature and exceedingly wealthy businesswoman.

Rhoda Rindge never lived at Preston and did not profit from the purchase of the Preston estate. Perhaps she wanted to perpetuate her great-aunt's legacy, if not her exact wishes. Rhoda Rindge paid aged Joseph Zahner to continue to maintain the 1,430-acre property as ranch foreman and caretaker for the next twenty years. The orchards continued to yield fruit and nuts. During the summer months, Miss Rindge permitted colonists to camp at Preston Lake.

The vacant buildings at Preston declined through disuse. In 1938, one reporter visited the deteriorating ranch property, noting tumble-down outbuildings that must have once been servants' quarters. The writer commented that "the house looks as if it died long ago. Everywhere leaves and debris and loneliness."

Rhoda Rindge presided over the Preston ranch as an absentee landlord.

---

16 Healdsburg Enterprise, March 1912, 1.
18 Letters, Rhoda Rindge to Joseph Zahner, 22 June 1912 and 4 August 1922, Preston papers, Healdsburg Museum.
until her fortune was swallowed up by troubles. The vast Rindge estate (incorporated as the Marblehead Land Company) was lost to bankruptcy in 1939. Over a 35-year period, her mother, May, had dissipated Frederick Rindge's $35,000,000 estate in grand architecture and a fruitless legal battle against the State of California. In seeking to block the coastal State Highway 1 right-of-way through her 13,000-acre Malibu Rancho property, May Rindge lost the entire Rindge fortune, and died greatly reduced in circumstances, leaving an estate of $750.20 Rhoda sold some of the easternmost Preston land to Moulton Hill Ridge Winery shortly after acquiring the property, and gradually deeded the commercial holdings near the railroad.21 Eventually the bankruptcy of her family's Marblehead Land Company forced her to sell the remainder of the Preston ranch, including the Church and mansion.

Oster Ownership of Preston (1943-1967)

The Preston estate remained largely intact until 1943, when Fred and Eugenia Oster bought the 1,400 remaining acres from the Marblehead Land Company (two separate parcels of 800 and 300 acres) in order to operate a boys' school and camp.22 They found that the mansion had been left virtually undisturbed since Emily Preston's death in 1909. Her clothes were still on the


hangers; her books were still on the shelves. Joseph Zahner had taken care of the house by locking it and leaving it intact as a shrine.\textsuperscript{23}

The Osters operated a working sheep ranch on the property and hosted a boys' camp in the summer. The camp drew urban children to experience ranch life and rural recreation. The Preston Ranch camp ended shortly after Fred Oster's death in 1947, but Mrs. Oster and the family continued to raise sheep as the ranch's primary source of income until she sold the property in 1967. Cottages and outbuildings on the ranch were rented to tenants or occupied by Oster family members.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Dr. Russell Lee and Associates' Ownership (1967-1989)}

In 1967, Eugenia Oster sold the 1,400 acres to Dr. Russell Lee, founder of the Palo Alto Clinic, who bought the land with four partners as an investment for $189,215. Mrs. Oster moved to Santa Rosa, taking with her all of the Preston papers, furnishings and personal effects that had been left at the estate since 1909. During the 1970s and 80s, Dr. Lee rented the historic Preston buildings to a group of artists and musicians who created a lively, artistic community in the pastoral setting. Bob Thomas, Christine Buffalo Larkin, Deborah and Ernie Fischbech numbered among the residents, as well as members of an

---

\textsuperscript{23} For reasons unknown, Rhoda Rindge never removed the personal effects or furniture from Emily Preston's house.

\textsuperscript{24} Santa Rosa Press Democrat, 9 November 1999.
international folk music band, The Golden Toad. These residents prized the unusual history of Preston and shared with the 19th-century Preston residents an appreciation for the natural environment. Current Preston ranch caretakers Lisa and Edwin Ellis were married at the Preston Church and began preserving Preston history during this period.25

Also during this time, historic Preston was studied by Sonoma State University students as part of the Redwood Empire Social History Project. Janice Payne satisfied requirements for a Master's degree in History at Sonoma State University by partially cataloging the Preston papers, still in the possession of the Oster family.26 In 1984, the Preston ranch was designated Sonoma County Landmark #141.27

The Preston ranch sustained two major blows in 1988. In June, one hundred acres of Preston lands were burned in a devastating fire, caused by a downed PG&E power line. Seven residents escaped injury, but were left homeless in the wake of the fire that leveled the Preston mansion, the school house, the medicine house, the wine house/hospital, and several other buildings.28 The realignment of State Highway 101 the same year disrupted the former Preston commercial district. The Mowbray house, formerly on the west


26 Janice Payne's thesis, "Go Tell it on the Mountain: an Account of Madam Emily Preston with Prefatorial Note on the Preston Papers," has been cited throughout this thesis.

27 Sonoma County Landmarks Index, Sonoma County Landmarks Commission, 2000.

bank of the Russian River at the Preston bridge, was moved several hundred feet from its original location. At the time of this writing, Nelda Barrett, Mary Mowbray's granddaughter still lives in the family home.

1990s to 2000

In 1989, the Preston property was purchased by Stagecoach Development Company, a corporate land development firm. The absence of full-time caretakers on the property resulted in major problems with trespassing, poaching, marijuana growing, violence, and vandalism to the remaining historic structures, particularly the monuments and vaults at the remote Preston cemetery. The neglected buildings fell further into decline. The Preston ranch property reverted to the bank in foreclosure.

In 1994, the property was subdivided and offered for sale by T.J. Nelson and Associates of Santa Rosa. Richard and Ann Marie Winterhalder bought and still own the 120-acre Preston Lake property, containing the Lake House and a carriage house. Mr. and Mrs. DiDonato owned the 160-acre lot, which included the cemetery, until 1998 when they sold the property to Codorniu Winery. Mike Kiser and Helen Sullivan purchased the main ranch parcel in 1994. The significant historic buildings remaining on this parcel are the Preston Church and the Caretaker's House. Edwin and Lisa Ellis reside in the Caretaker's House of the Kiser-Sullivan property. This property has lost most of its original historic

---

29 The aerial photograph on page 35 shows grapes being planted on all sides of the cemetery.
buildings, including the Preston mansion, the school, the teacher's house, the first Preston Cottage, the Medicine House, the Hospital, the Horse Barn, the Cattle Barn, the Garden House, and the homes of at least four Preston colonists. The setting has not been marred by new development. In 1997, Kiser and Sullivan entered into a 10-year contract with the County to preserve their open land as "Agricultural Preserve," but they have not restored the buildings.

**Significance of Preston Colony**

The Preston Colony buildings are significant and potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places because of their association with Emily Preston, a key figure in late 19th-early 20th-century Sonoma County religious history. The Preston Colony is also important for its association with larger trends in medicine and religion in 19th-century California social history. Located within an eight-mile area, these historic resources include: the Preston Church, the Preston Lake House, the Appleton House, the Green House, the Caretaker's House and the Howard House on Geysers Road. The Preston Colony cemetery is also located nearby. Though the setting has been affected by loss of potentially contributing buildings, the surviving related historical resources retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance.

Preston is a well-documented example of a successful late 19th-century health-oriented religious colony. While lacking a formal political structure, the community nevertheless had a unity based on commitment to Emily Preston and
to the shared ideals of the Religion of Inspiration. The settlement had characteristics in common with three contemporaneous Sonoma County utopian colonies—but unlike Fountaingrove, Icaria Speranza and Altruria, Preston was not founded as an intentional community.

Preston was an idiosyncratic blend of private ranch, sanitarium, and religious settlement. The community grew around the charismatic healing ministry of Emily Preston. In the final analysis, Preston fits the definition of a sect, rather than a utopian colony. One characteristic of a sect is that is generally a small, exclusive group which the members join as adults. Another characteristic is that religious authority is usually attained by personal charisma. Sects commonly are tightly organized, with explicit rules. All of these characteristics apply to Preston. Sects also tend to emphasize their differences with other established religions. Although Emily Preston was willing to work with other faiths, there was a certain amount of repudiation of established churches preached in her messages.

Emily Preston’s role within the Free Pilgrims Covenant Church was as both founder and prophetess. The founder of a religious sect is typically a dominant personality around which the religion is based. The prophet or prophetess is usually the one to convey holy messages to the group. It is

common for the two roles to be held by the same person within new sects.\textsuperscript{31}

Emily Preston filled both roles within the Preston Church. As a consequence, however, she was irreplaceable. After her death, her religion gradually faded from practice.

Since the late 19th century, Sonoma County has been host to a series of utopian colonies and religious sects. Such movements have influenced the social history of the County, and have reflected larger trends within the State and Nation. Madam Preston’s community, presented in this thesis in its historical context, deserves recognition as a successful health-oriented religious colony of late 19th-early 20th century California.

I gave a small piece of land to some people to build on and to hold as long as they live and their children live; they cannot sell the land, but it comes back to the estate to support the religion.

We believe in inspiration and that it lets us read out of the Book of Life that is printed in the air everywhere if we believe and act according to that law.

The law is by everybody to develop their talent. If He calls anyone to work for Him, He will tell them what to say.

If we have God first, then we will not get angry. We have overcome all.

MRS. H. L. PRESTON.

Be contented everywhere.—Amen. His will be done.

Our life has to be our Bible.

Our life decides which place we go to—the Hell or Heaven.

We meet in church and try and say what we can live in the coming week.

We never pray in public, but thank Him all of the time. This is the prayer that bridges us over everything.

We never tell the God what to do, for He knows better than we.

We must live what we want or we cannot have our own individuality. We can find Him everywhere—under a tree as well as in a church—if we have the Truth in us.

We do not condemn any religion—all can get to Heaven if their hearts are right.

We do not believe that baptism is a saving purpose; it is only to be obedient to an earthly law. And to take the Sacrament would be all right if we do not sin after it. If we live it in us it is all that is asked of us.

Truth has a voice that puts away all dogmas.

We are to have no hatred. Do good to our enemies.

Teach the children to know the good before they know the bad, and to study half a day, and teach them to work the other half.

The religion has never cost anyone anything that belongs to it yet.

If anyone does anything for me I pay them for it—in or out of the religion.

This estate will always take care of this Church, and this religion will never beg. The Great God has opened the way.

WE VOLUNTEER TO SERVE HIM THIS way.

We call it the Church of Heaven.

We worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

We pray to God—the Living Man.

Have Him first in our mind before we do anything, to have the Law of Heaven stronger around us.

Take the second thought:

Do as we would like to be done by.

Confess our mistakes to God till He gives us His love so we will not be afraid to die.
APPENDIX B
Price List
of
Medicines

AND

How to Use Them
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liniment</td>
<td>6 oz</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liniment</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotion</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotion</td>
<td>2 qt</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotion</td>
<td>1 gal</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Bitters</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Bitters</td>
<td>2 qt</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Bitters</td>
<td>1 gal</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Cordial</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Cordial</td>
<td>2 qt</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Cordial</td>
<td>1 gal</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Medicine</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Oil</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough Medicine</td>
<td>6 oz</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough Medicine</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gin and Garlic</td>
<td>6 oz</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gin and Garlic</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever Paste, per box</td>
<td></td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile Remedy, per box</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asafoedita Pills, per 100</td>
<td></td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagina Balls, per dozen</td>
<td></td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagina Wash</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Sponge</td>
<td></td>
<td>$.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salve, per box</td>
<td></td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fasting Paste, per box ........ :25 and 50 cts.
Wine Bitters Paste, per box .... :25 and 50 cts.
Oil Silk, in pieces ............. 25 and 50 cts.
Catarrh Snuff, per box.25 cts., 50 cts. and 1.00
   Box for shipping, 25 cts. extra.

Medicine put up by the two quarts and gallons.
is in demijohns. If you send your own to be
filled, deduct fifty cents off price marked on the
list.

Medicine can be had only at Preston, Sonoma
Co., California.
Reception Day, Monday of each week.
The round trip from San Francisco can be
made in a day.
Address all letters and communications to
MRS. E. PRESTON,
Preston, Sonoma Co.,
California.

General Directions for Using the Liniment and
other Medicines.

When taking this treatment, you have to make
sores on different parts of the body.
   For Heart trouble, make a sore under the
   heart.
   For Stomach trouble, make a sore on the
   stomach.
   For Bladder trouble, make a sore on the
   abdomen.
   For Rheumatism, make a sore on the afflicted
   part.
   For Kidney trouble, make a sore on the back
   over the kidneys.
   For Liver trouble, make a sore under the
   liver on the right side. After you heal that,
   make one on the left side.
   For Lung trouble, make a sore on the chest
   over the afflicted lung. After you heal that,
   make one on the back between the shoulders.
   For Croup or Asthma, take three drops of
Liniment in a spoonful of Sweet Oil, three times
in half a day, paint the throat and lungs with
Liniment, and take Ipecac until you vomit.
Make a sore on the back, between the shoulders and one in front, over the lungs.

For Catarrh or a Cough, take two drops of Liniment, and two drops of Sweet Oil on a piece of sugar once an hour, until relieved. Also, use Cough Medicine according to directions on the bottle. Keep increasing the Liniment every day for a week, till you take one-quarter of a teaspoonful for a dose. Then after awhile, repeat the same thing over again, if not cured.

For Fever, take a piece of the Fever Paste, about the size of a small pill, three times a day, one before each meal; and if the fever is very bad, double the dose. While taking them, keep the bowels free with Wine Bitters and Sweet Oil; commencing with a tablespoonful, and increasing the dose, if you need it. If the Wine Bitters do not act enough, use a piece of the Fasting Paste, about the size of a small pill.

For Extreme Pains in the Stomach, take as high as fifteen drops of Liniment, with a tablespoonful of Sweet Oil internally, and repeat the dose every hour, until you get relief. In the case of a child, give less; from two to five drops with a teaspoonful of sweet oil being sufficient.

For Catarrh, and all affections of the head, use the Liniment, applying it on the scalp and making the head sore, one place and another.

until you get relief. Take the Catarrh Snuff as often as you please.

For Diphtheria, apply mustard plaster on the throat and lungs, back and front, until red, and then use Liniment and pad to make a sore. Keep the bowels free with Wine Bitters or Paste.

For Ordinary Sore Throat, apply Liniment on the outside of the throat to make it red; and if that does not give the necessary relief, use the pad and Liniment to make a sore. Also, paint the throat inside with enough Oil and Liniment to wet the throat. It won't hurt to swallow it.

For Typhoid Fever, make a sore on the abdomen as quickly as possible, and take the Fasting Paste.

For Extreme Headache and Neuralgia, paint the head with Liniment one place and another, and wear a piece of oil silk over the hair, to help draw the disease to the surface.

The Liniment will not hurt the hair. It will stop it from falling out, and keep it in a healthy condition.

Liniment applied on the body once or twice a week, with or without oil silk, is a good prevention for colds and contagious diseases, and helps to keep the circulation active.

For pain in the body, or weak places, apply the
Liniment; then put on a porous plaster, and wear it for two or three weeks at a time.

If you feel bad and want the bowels to move soon, put Liniment and oil silk over the bowels. If you have no oil silk, use a piece of flannel; and when you feel relief, take it off, as you cannot care for a running sore with flannel.

When the eyes are weak, sore, or inflamed, soak a small piece of cotton-batting with Lotion, and bathe the eyelids with it; and let a little of the Lotion go in the eyes. It will smart a little; but it will strengthen the eyes and make them better.

If you have a cold or gathering in the ear, take a feather and dip it in Sweet Oil, then in the Liniment, and put it in the ear once every other day, till it commences to discharge. While it is discharging, dip the feather in Sweet Oil only, and put it in the ear to clean it. Do that several times a day, as long as it discharges. If your ear still troubles you, repeat the treatment till relieved. Wet cotton-batting with Lotion and keep it in the ear while treating it.

When ladies are nervous, they want to drink very strong hop tea through the day, and put it in the vagina at night.

The sponge is to put back of the womb to hold the womb and rectum up, and let the air out of the body. Get a small eye sponge and thoroughly cleanse it with castile soap and water. Then rub a little of the soap on it; and after tying a string to it, wear it in the vagina during the day, taking it out at night.

To use the Vagina Balls, cut them in quarters, and take one-quarter and spread it on the sponge. Wear it day and night for a day or two, if it is agreeable; then cleanse the body with borax water. Also, wash the sponge in borax water. Put a piece of the Vagina Ball in the rectum for a passage.

For disease of the rectum, insert salve every night, and poultice with onions. And for piles, use the Pile Remedy to keep them up in place.

The Wine Bitters are to cleanse the stomach and to act on the bowels. Use your judgment how to take them, more or less, according to how they affect you. A tablespoonful is an ordinary dose. Always take sweet oil with them, if the stomach will bear it; otherwise, take glycerine. Commence with a teaspoonful and increase to a tablespoonful, or more.

The Wine Bitters Paste is for travelers, and acts the same as Wine Bitters.

While using the Liniment, if you feel the need of a tonic, take the Wine Cordial, or Blood Medicine, according to the directions on the bottles.
Gin and Garlic is given to kill the worms in the stomach. Dose for adults, a tablespoonful every morning. Dose for children, a teaspoonful every morning.

When you are dizzy in the head, you have gallstones in the liver. You want to go without eating any supper; and before you go to bed, take a piece of Paste, with a good deal of Sweet Oil. Or, take them the first thing in the morning, and go without your breakfast.

When you vomit and are sick at the stomach, you have a gathering on the liver. Sweet Oil and Bitters will take that off.

When you have Catarrh in the Stomach, and hardening of the kidneys, it affects the limbs. Then you have Catarrh in the Bladder. When you feel a kind of hurt in the back of the head, the water stays at the base of the brain, and affects the arms and makes the fingers numb. You can make sores on your arms, legs, feet, or anywhere on the body, and they won't hurt you. Keep Liniment on the back of your head all the time it hurts. When you make sores on the abdomen, and on the back over the kidneys, it takes all inflammation from the inside of the body.

When people appear to be real well, and do not feel any aches or pains, sometimes their circulation is stopping: and they had better make a sore where they can handle it the best. Then their circulation will improve; and that will stop the disease before it gets seated.

When making sores on the body, you are apt to feel very nervous, and are liable to be-feverish and to have cold chills running through the body; and, in fact, to feel worse for a time than before you had any sores. These feelings are caused by the disease coming to the surface. The Liniment penetrates the skin and draws the impurities of the body to the surface in the form of a running sore. By applying the Liniment on the parts affected, you draw the disease from the inside to the surface. And when you have made sores enough to cleanse and purify the system, you will feel the benefit derived from the treatment.

After the first sore you are apt to feel worse than before, because the Liniment has stirred up more disease than the sore has discharged, and another sore is necessary to give relief.

In chronic cases where the disease is located, it takes many sores before you get much relief. While using the Liniment, the privates and eyes are liable to become sore. Poultice them with scraped potato, or onion poultice, and then wash them with hot water. It is only the disease coming out, and need cause no alarm.
Directions for Making the Pad.

Cut a piece of oil silk about four inches square; then cut a piece of cloth a little smaller; then cut a piece of cotton wadding the same size as the cloth; then baste the three pieces together. The ends of the oil silk that project over, turn them down and sew them to the cloth. (If the sore spreads you can let the ends of the oil silk down). Then sew tapes on each corner of the pad, so as to hold it firmly on the place you want the sore. The oil silk is the side of the pad to be worn next to the skin. The pad has to be worn constantly on the sore, from the time you commence applying the Liniment to make a sore, until you are ready to heal it.

It is better to make two pads and put them on, when you want to make a sore. When one commences to run, take the other off.

If you wish, you can make a bandage, and sew or pin the pad to it, and put it around your body to hold the pad in place. Or, you can go to any drug store and buy a piece of adhesive plaster and cut off a piece the size of the pad, and sew one end to the pad, and the other stick on your body. That will hold the pad in place.

Directions for Making a Sore.

To make a sore, apply Liniment with a soft brush, or the hand, on the place you wish to make a sore, every morning and evening, until it begins to run. Then apply Liniment on other parts of the body, to keep the sore running; but do not put Liniment on a running sore, or near the edge of it.

A sore should be run from two to four weeks, according as your strength and nerves will allow. If the sore is offensive, make two pads and wear alternately, one in the day, and the other at night.

To dress a running sore, take off the pad, clean it and the sore with a soft dry rag; then put the pad back on. Or, raise the pad and put a piece of toilet paper on the sore; then put the pad down and gently press it against the sore; then raise the pad again and take the toilet paper off, which will be covered with the discharge from the sore; then put the pad back and keep it there till you want to clean it again.

Directions for Healing a Sore.

If it is very much inflamed, take off the pad and make a poultice of raw onions bruised up, and put them in a cheese cloth bag and wear them on the sore, changing for a fresh poultice.
once every two or three hours, until the inflammation is allayed, which will be from twelve to twenty-four hours. In that way you take out a great deal of impurity. Or, you may put the onions in the oven and half bake them; then mash them up and put sweet oil on them, and put them on the sore two or three times, just as hot as you can bear it; then put a greased rag on to heal it. After taking the onion poultice off, heal the sore by putting on a new piece of oil silk with sweet oil on it; or by putting on a soft cloth spread with salve, or any kind of clean grease that has no salt in it.

When you heal a sore and stop it running, you need to thoroughly cleanse the stomach with Vine Bitters, or Paste.

While having a running sore, use Lotion freely, and take Asafoedita Pills three times a day, or one every two hours, all through the day, if you are nervous.

A teaspoonful of white mustard seed taken just before going to bed, will help you to sleep. Do not chew it; but swallow it whole.

When you wish to make a sore as quickly as possible, in extreme cases, such as diphtheria, use mustard plaster until the skin is very red; then proceed according to directions for making a sore.

Treatment for Infants.

You can paint them with the Liniment and make them red, when they are only a month old, and give them Sweet Oil and Wine Bitters. Also, put Lotion on them to quiet them. It won’t hurt them.

For Other Information, see the Directions on the Medicine.

REMARKS.

If the father and mother are satisfied with each other, and live together in harmony and love, it is easier for the children to live and do right. But if they do not live together in harmony and love, and are not satisfied with each other, they have to spend more time with their children, in order to bring them up in the way they should go through life.

The father and mother should teach their children to take care of themselves when they are little. They should teach them to be good in their private life, and impress it on their minds, that they will have to pay for all the mistakes they make when they get older; and that they will have to give an account in life for all the things they do that are not right.

The children lack home education. Book education will not do them any good, when they do
not know how to do right with their physical bodies. When children are not taught to do right when they are little, they are not as responsible as their parents are. If they want their children to grow up and be useful in the world, they have to teach them how to take care of their physical bodies.

Young people have said to me, "My parents never told me anything of my physical body."

There are many young people ruined in their early life, because their father and mother did not look after them. They are in animal bodies, and they have to be educated when young, so the spiritual will be the commander over the animal.

The people do not take time enough to bring their children up and cultivate them. They should train them to be truthful. It is more essential to teach children the practical part of life than book learning, because it is easy enough to get book learning if they behave right.

I have published a book of Inspirational Messages, "The Hell and the Heaven," which I will send to any one who wishes it, for Two Dollars.
1896

THIRD
ANNUAL
CONCERT

OF THE

Preston Orchestra

December 24th.

Compliments of Prof. D. C. Smith.

There is in souls a sympathy, with sounds,
And as the mind is pitch'd the ear is pleas'd,
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is struck'd within us, and the heart replies.
—Cooper's Task.
The following named persons have been or are at present members of the orchestra:

- Miss Ethel L. King
- Mrs. E. C. King
- Mr. W. F. King
- Mrs. W. F. King
- Mrs. Warren Green
- Miss Hazel Green
- Master Lee Green
- Miss Mary Pool
- Miss Emma Tupper
- Miss E. McConathy
- Mr. D. Dieneen
- Mrs. D. Dieneen

- Mr. T. J. Cottle
- Mr. W. Appleton
- Mrs. W. Appleton
- Mrs. M. J. Mowbray
- Mr. W. M. Howard
- Mrs. W. M. Howard
- Mr. Henry Heidorn
- Mr. Dell Blood
- Miss Adda Blood
- Miss Phobe Bowers
- Mr. Bert Bowes
- Mrs. Joseph Zahner

Music resembles poetry; in each are numerous graces which no method teach, and which a master hand alone can reach. — Pope.
Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

Census Records:

City/County/OtherDirectories:
Langley's San Francisco City Directory, 1868-1869; 1870; 1874; 1875 (San Francisco: Langley Publishing Co.).


Kingsbury's Directory of Santa Rosa City and Sonoma County (San Francisco: Kingsbury Publishing Co., 1903-1904).


Voting Records:
Great Register of Voters, Sonoma County, 1875, 1892, 1896, 1898.
Newspapers:
Cloverdale Bee (Cloverdale, CA).
Cloverdale Reveille (Cloverdale, CA).
Crescent City Herald (Crescent City, CA).
Healdsburg Enterprise (Healdsburg, CA).
Healdsburg Tribune (Healdsburg, CA).
Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, CA).
Russian River Advertiser (Guerneville, CA).
Russian River Flag (Healdsburg, CA).
San Francisco Chronicle (San Francisco, CA).
San Francisco Daily Examiner (Santa Rosa, CA).
Santa Rosa Daily Republican (Santa Rosa, CA).
Sonoma County Tribune (Healdsburg, CA).
Sonoma Democrat (Santa Rosa, CA).
Sotoyome Scimitar (Healdsburg, CA).

Books and Manuscripts:

Eddy, Mary Baker, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (Boston: 1889, 1898, 1906).


Mowbray, Mary S., "My Memories, 1949" [Photocopy], Healdsburg Museum, Healdsburg, CA.

Rindge, F.H., The Best Way (Los Angeles: By the Author, 1902).

__________, Can You Read Your Title Clear to a Mansion in the Skies (Los Angeles: By the Author).

__________, Happy Days in Southern California (Los Angeles: By the Author, 1898).


White, Ellen G. and James, Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing Co., 1890).
Preston papers. Healdsburg Museum

__________, “Creed of the Free Pilgrims Covenant Church,” (Cloverdale, CA: By the Author, n.d.).

__________, The Hell and the Heaven, (Cloverdale, CA: By the Author, 1902).

__________, “Price list of Medicines and How to Use Them,” 1903.


Program, Third Annual Concert of the Preston Orchestra, 24 December 1896, [Photocopy].

Letter, Mary White to Emily Preston, 7 July 1878.
Letter, F.B. Ward to Emily Preston, 31 March 1879.
Letter, L.M. Preston to H.L. Preston, 2 November 1879.
Letter, Julia Lewis to Charles Lewis, 21 February 1886. [Photocopy].
Letter, Emily Preston to Charles E. Blake, M.D., 26 November 1888. [Photocopy]
Letter, A.E. Holland to Emily Preston, 10 February 1904.
Letter, Celia Andrews to Emily Preston, 7 June 1904.
Letter, Susie Evans to Emily Preston, 24 October 1905.
Letter, Carrie Preston to Emily Preston, 18 April 1906.
Letter, Cynthia Preston to Emily Preston, 18 July 1906.
Letter, William Cubery to Emily Preston, 6 December 1906.
Letter, May Knight (Mrs. Fred) Rindge to Emily Preston, 23 September 1907
Letter, Mrs. Leroy Dibble to Emily Preston, 28 December 1907
Letter, Mrs. O.J. Zeiller to Emily Preston, 5 April 1907.
Letter, Robert Williams, Jr. to H.E. Crabb, 20 July 1907.
Letter, Mrs. Leroy Dibble to Emily Preston, 28 December 1907.
Letter, Rhoda Rindge to Joseph Zahner, 22 June 1912.
Letter, Rhoda Rindge to Joseph Zahner, 4 August 1922.
Letter, Julia Lewis to Charles Lewis, [Photocopy]
Letter, Alice Elmers Theuer to Lisa and Edwin Ellis, 23 March 1978. [Photocopy]

Deeds, Sonoma County Recorder
19 May 1875, Book 56 of Deeds, 408
17 July 1876, Book 56 of Deeds, 410
22 March 1877, Book 65 of Deeds, 314
15 November 1886, Book 103 of Deeds, 60
21 December 1888, Book 104 of Deeds
3 November 1893, Book 151 of Deeds, 238
3 April 1900, Book 190 of Deeds, 627
24 June 1902, Book 196 of Deeds, 608
24 June 1902, Book 196 of Deeds, 610
18 February 1904, Book 209 of Deeds, 395
15 July 1904, Book 214 of Deeds, 141
26 May 1911, Book 282 of Deeds, 2
8 December 1939, Book 492 O.R., 105
22 October 1943, Book 593 O.R., 105
18 July 1966, Book 2227 O.R., 23
21 April 1972, Book 2621 O.R., 748
11 March 1976, Book 3056 O.R., 158
3 July 1976, Book 3100 O.R., 758
26 January 1977, Book 3236 O.R., 939
10 January 1979, Book 3060 O.R., 466
31 July 1986, Book 4376 of O.R., 213
4 June 1984, Document #84-038725

Sonoma County Assessor's Office
Residential Building Records

Sonoma County Superior Court
Probate Register of Actions, Book 9, 29.
Probate, Emily Preston, #4629, 30 April 1909.

Other Public Records
Marriage Certificate, Hartwell L. Preston and Emily Burke, 30 May 1875, Oakland,
Alameda County, Book D, 261.
(Duplicate) Certificate of Death, California State Board of Health, Emily Preston, 22
January 1909, Cloverdale, Sonoma County.
(Duplicate) Certificate of Death, California State Board of Health, Hartwell L. Preston, 12
December 1889, Cloverdale, Sonoma County.

Sonoma County Landmarks Index, Sonoma County Landmarks Commission, 2000.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books:


(1848-1888)* (San Francisco: the History Company, 1888).


Munro-Fraser, J.P., *History of Sonoma County, California* (San Francisco: Alley, Bowen and Company, 1880).


Reynolds and Proctor, Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County, California (Santa Rosa, CA: Reynolds and Proctor, 1898).


SECONDARY SOURCES, PERIODICALS:

Baer, George B., "Cloverdale: the Orange Grove District of Sonoma County, California, the Home of the Olive and the Fig." (Cloverdale, CA: Cloverdale Reveille Printing House, 1888).


