



## **NEW EXHIBIT** **Nathaniel Smith:** **Mendocino Coast's** **First Known African** **American Resident**

Runs from March 1 – May 27, 2024

Nathaniel Smith arrived in Mendocino County in the 1850s and is believed to be the first African American to settle on the coast. His life story is revealed through photos, clippings, and artifacts in the Kelley House Museum's newest exhibit. Smith was at one time "known to every man, woman and child on the

coast." He was celebrated for his wit, good nature, and abilities as a hunter, fisherman, farmer, and ferry operator.

When Smith arrived in Mendocino in the mid-1850s, the area was home to grizzly bears and Pomo people, and the rivers and streams full of salmon. By the end of his life, locals already feared the consequences of overfishing, and grizzly bears had been nearly wiped out in California. Smith watched as the Pomo relatives of his wife and children were driven from the land.

As one of the few African Americans in a rural region of Northern California, Smith endured some of the typical mistreatment of people of color at the time, including the frequent use of a derogatory nickname. Despite the challenges, Smith succeeded in many professions, owned a home and land, and raised a family. This exhibition presents details of Nathaniel Smith's life set against the history of African Americans in California. Follow the path of Smith's life as he moved from his hometown of Baltimore, traveled the world on a ship, and eventually settled and made his life in Mendocino

County.



*This project was made possible with support from California Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Visit [calhum.org](http://calhum.org).*

LEARN MORE



### **SPECIAL EVENT**

*Nathaniel Smith and the History of African Americans in California*

Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>,  
4:00pm - 5:30pm,  
Cost \$7-\$10, students free

Join us March 23<sup>rd</sup> for two special guest presentations. Susan Anderson, Curator at the California African American Museum, will offer insight into the history of California's treatment of people of color, and Guest Curator Alexander Wood shares his research into Nathaniel Smith's life. Advance tickets recommended as space is limited.

GET TICKETS



### **WHALE FESTIVAL EVENTS**

#### **Whale Fest Cider and Cookies**

Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>,  
12:00pm - 3:00pm  
Enjoy Gowan's cider and cookies during Mendocino's Whale Festival. Admission to the Kelley House is free, but get tickets for the Festival's wine walk [here](#).

#### **Mendocino Whale War Exhibit**

March 1<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024  
Fri-Sun, 11:00am - 3:00pm

Did you know the Whale Festival started not as a party but as a war? Learn all about the Mendocino Whale War in a special March exhibit.

LEARN MORE

# A PEEK INTO THE PAST

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## HENDERSON BONANZA MINERAL WATER

On February 13, 1938, J. Albert Henderson died at his home on Little Lake Road following a stroke at the age of 72. He was born in New Brunswick, Canada in 1865 and, after his mother's death, he was sent to live with his aunt, Anna Jane Henderson Mann, in Mendocino about 1876. His father followed a few years later.

By 1888, Albert's father, George Henderson, owned 360 acres of land at the head of the North Fork of the Albion River. This property contains a mineral water spring, and George began selling his own soda water about 1889. Sadly, George died of stomach cancer in 1892, and the bottling business closed. Albert inherited the property but was forced to sell most of the acreage to pay off debt. The Albion Lumber Company purchased 280 acres of timber land, and Albert kept the house, some land, and the soda spring. Albert sold the rest of this property in 1896. [Read more](#)

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## ART STUDENTS VISIT

by Carol Dominy

On January 23, 1948, a group of photographers from the California School of Fine Arts

in San Francisco (now the San Francisco Art Institute) visited Mendocino on a field trip. The 19 art school students, three of them women, spent four days taking photos of Mendocino residents, buildings, and business interiors.

The group stayed at the Lazy Eye Auto Court south of Little River (today's Inn at Schoolhouse Creek). Most of them were former World War II service members who were using their G.I. Bill education benefits to study for their chosen profession. They were accompanied by their instructor Minor White. White had joined the faculty in 1946, and under his leadership, the school created the first fine art photography department in the US.

Photos from this trip were exhibited at the San Francisco Art Museum. In July, a portion of the exhibit was put on display in Mendocino at the Remedy Store on Main Street, where it received a lot of attention from the locals.

The Kelley House Archives houses over a dozen of the photos taken on this trip by William Heick. Heick served as a naval intelligence photographer in the Pacific during World War II. His career spanned seven decades, he produced over 200 films and tens of thousands of photographs, and his fine art photography was exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, DeYoung Museum, Seattle Museum of Art, and Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology at U.C. Berkeley.

[READ THE BLOG](#)

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## UPCOMING TOURS

Check our [tour calendar](#) for the most up-to-date list of tours and to buy advance tickets online. Tickets for all tours: \$25

*Historic District Walking Tour*  
Every Saturday at 11am and  
Tuesday at 2pm

*Haunted Mendocino Walking Tour*  
Tuesday, April 9th, 5:00pm

*"Murder, She Wrote" Walking Tour*  
Saturday, April 13, 2:00pm



[TOUR CALENDAR](#)

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## STORM CLEANUP

What a battering these storms have given us all! Like many of you, the

Kelley House suffered downed fences and falling tree limbs. We are embarking on work to save the cypress tree leaning over the pond and to replace the interior pond fence. We appreciate your donations of any amount. Thank you!

[DONATE](#)



## GRATITUDE

Thank you to everyone who donated in response to our annual appeal. Your support keeps us going! The following donations were especially generous so we'd like to show extra appreciation for those who made them:

- Carolyn Zeitler, our tireless volunteer archivist.
- Alida Morzenti, our garden benefactor.
- Sarah Nathe, our fearless board president.
- Adron Harris, our newest board member.
- Marion Bush, long-time supporter and former volunteer, whose story gave us a good laugh:

*"When we moved to Mendocino, we found out that Chuck was distantly related to Henry Meiggs, the notorious deadbeat, who took the money and ran to South America. You could say that Henry's distant cousin is only trying to pay it all back. Chuck would want me to do this on his behalf."*

[DONATE OR JOIN](#)

## IN MEMORIAM

A donation in memory of Deborah Louise Maxwell Boston was made by David and Susan Maxwell.

A donation in memory of June Lemos was made by Jain Lemos.

A donation in memory of Nannie Escola was made by Alan Escola.

A donation in memory of W.J. O'Donnell was made by Pat O'Donnell Weigel.

A donation in memory of Nicolas Chevalier was made by Peter and Lynn Chevalier.

A donation in memory of Carl John Peterson was made by Kimberly Peterson.

A donation in memory of Don Tucker was made by Pattie DeMatteo.

A donation in memory of Beth Ryan was made by Tom Pepper.

## IN HONOR OF

A donation in honor of Sarah Nathe and Deena Zarin was made by Mina Cohen.

**Research Center**

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