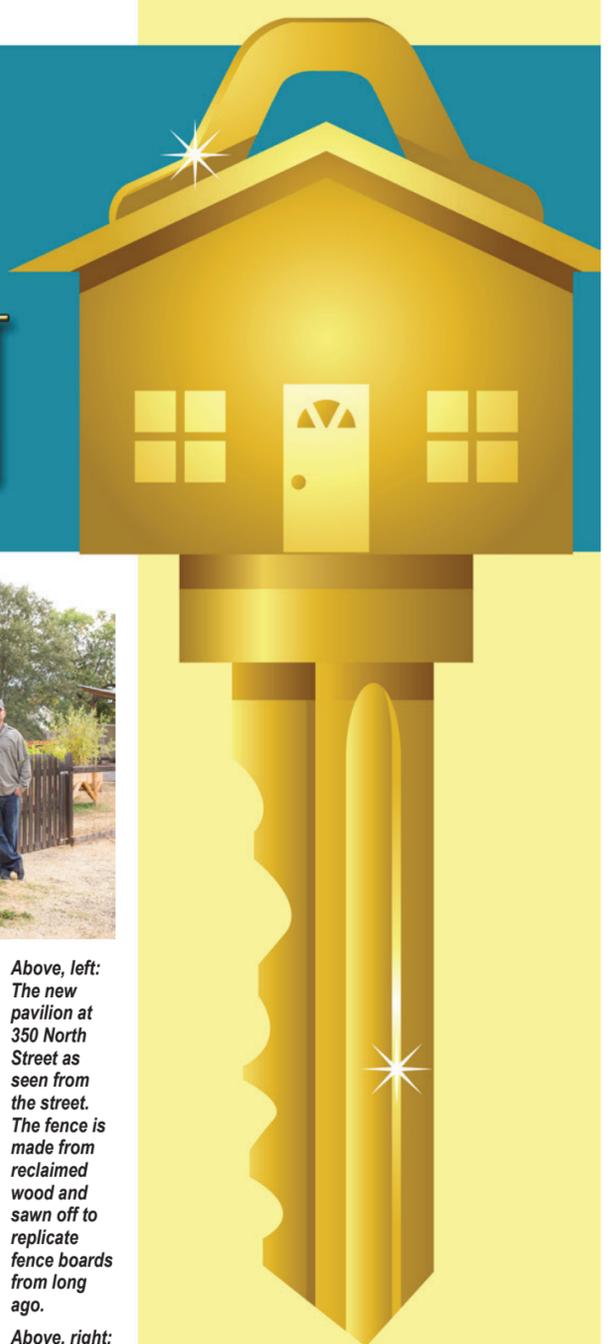


# REAL ESTATE SECTION



Above, left: The new pavilion at 350 North Street as seen from the street. The fence is made from reclaimed wood and sawn off to replicate fence boards from long ago.

Above, right: The Mentons in front of their raised bed garden; Joe, at left, Estok, and Laban.

At left: The front of the North Street Collective's new home.

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## Reclaiming History

Menton Builders restores Grandma Mavis' house using original materials

Photos by Ree Slocum

The house owned by Willits' beloved "Grandma Mavis" Bromaghim at 350 North Street was in disrepair when Natasha Hoehn from San Francisco purchased it in 2011. At the time of Bromaghim's death, the house and grounds had deteriorated, due to her inability to keep up with repairs.

Ree Slocum  
Features Writer  
[ree@willitsweekly.com](mailto:ree@willitsweekly.com)

"My father had maintained the house and passed away about 40 years before mom died," Bromaghim's daughter Kati Muhlhauser said. "Eventually the house was in such bad condition that you couldn't eat in the dining room any longer, because wind blowing through the cracks made plaster fall on the food!"

After their mother's passing, her children put the house up for sale. When Hoehn purchased it, she had a vision to make the home a place for artists in residency and a community space. And it has become the North Street Collective.

When asked why she chose Menton Builders to do the remodel, Hoehn said: "They have long roots in the community. [Menton Builders] are artistic craftsmen who're practical, with a sustainable orientation. They do high-quality work." Hoehn wanted to use as many of the original doors and other materials as possible. She went on to explain that the Mentons

have been working with Mendocino Community College in the Sustainable Building Program taught by North Street Collective program director Noel Woodhouse. The college program has interns and apprentices, and some worked on the North Street building project, gaining valuable experience in sustainable practices.

Estok Menton, the founder of Menton Builders, has a lifetime history of working with repurposed materials. As a lad growing up in Michigan, Menton learned the value of using old wood, driftwood, latches, nails and other materials he and his grandfather found. The young Menton lived with his grandparents most summers during his early life.

"[My grandpa] used to give me a can of bent nails in the morning and say, 'Straighten them out, and we'll build something tomorrow.'" His grandfather lived through the Great Depression when the family had few resources to buy new materials. He learned to be creative and resourceful, and through fun and hands-on projects, taught his grandson the value of using what's on hand, how to use them, and how to be resourceful

Read the rest of **North Street** Over on Page RE2

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Below, left: *Wasting nothing, the Mentons made one of the back doors with small end pieces of wood, with a gorgeous walnut center piece. Below, right: A new gas fireplace insert adds charm to a back room. The beautiful blue tiles are framed by old and insect-damaged madrone, milled and constructed by the Mentons. At right: The new deck is made with recycled plastics as well as reclaimed wood because of the easy upkeep on something that will be well-used.*



The rest of **North Street** | From Page RE1

in reuse and critical thinking. His sons, Laban and Joe, are partners in Menton Builders and utilize the essentials of what his father and great-grandfather learned — what is now called “natural” or “green building” and “sustainable construction.”

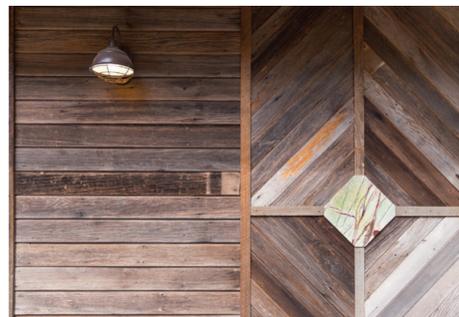
The Mentons’ use of reclaimed materials can be seen in every part of the 350 North Street house and outdoor gazebo. As you enter the house through the original front door, you’re met with one of Grandma Mavis’ beautiful, handmade stained glass windows. It’s in a floral motif of complementary colors with a delightful surprise with her use of the bottom of a Ball jar as one of the flowers’ center. The stained-glass panel was found by Menton in the back part of the house as it was being torn down. Menton’s son, Joe, fashioned a frame for it out of wood from their materials yard in Ukiah to hang as a greeting.

The house-wide use of redwood paneling on the lower part of the walls begins in the entryway. The redwood is from the back of the house that was falling down. The Mentons saved the good wood, re-milled it at their workshop in Ukiah, and used it as a design element throughout the remodel.

Looking down the hall from the front entryway and through the refinished bedroom door, one sees unusual blue-and-white sliding closet doors found by Menton in the trash on a construction site. The original sliding hardware at the top of the doors gives them an industrial flair.

If you turn right after walking through the front door, you’re in the old living and dining rooms. They were separated, but are now one room. The ceiling that was falling apart (as mentioned by Muhhauser), now uses old, but solid, beams to support and keep the ceiling from sagging. A large projection screen is hidden between the beams, which can be used for presentations, movies, or as a room divider for students or groups using the multipurpose house.

The back of the house was torn down — the reusable materials set aside for the projects — and rebuilt with two



Above: One of the original redwood doors kept in place for the back bedrooms.

At right: This stained glass panel was found in the back of the house and given a new frame.

Below, left: Most of the house’s beautiful and practical kitchen is new. Below, right: Shelving made for the North Street house by Laban Menton.

Photos by Ree Slocum

bedrooms and a full bathroom for interns, plus a laundry room. There’s shelving in the hallway made by Laban Menton from reclaimed wood found at their Ukiah shop. On it is a variety of nests, some natural and a few made by artist Noel Woodhouse. In the middle room is an inserted gas fireplace with beautiful madrone, milled and fashioned for the fireplace, framing the blue tiles. The ceiling in that room has an insert of reclaimed beams and a diagonal redwood design.

Some redwood that was stacked outside became the paneling throughout the house. Some of it was also used as decorative wood in the back door and the panels supporting the outside pavilion. “See the diamond-shaped panels of wood on the pavilion walls? Those were made as diamonds, because we had so much short redwood around!” Estok Menton declared with satisfaction. “We use everything,” he added. In the pavilion a variety of repurposed woods were used as roof support beams, then painted with a wash of reclaimed paint. They use the wash when it’s appropriate for blending a variety of wood colors.

Throughout the entire project, the Mentons designed and planned the remodel with Hoehn, combining their creative minds and working together to solve problems or create design elements. “This is what I love about this kind of building project,” Estok Menton said, and added: “It’s a process.”

The old house remodel was done in three phases that have lasted about four years. According to Estok Menton and Hoehn, it’s not quite finished.

In parting Estok said: “Everything was done with care all the way through. It just shows — that’s one of the funnest buildings we’ve built in a long time.”

Menton Builders does anything: new construction, remodels, renovations, and commercial, agricultural and historical building. Contact them at 707-468-8814.

For more information about the North Street Collective, visit [www.northstreetcollective.org](http://www.northstreetcollective.org).



At left: One wall panel with repurposed wood from the property, a new industrial light fixture, and a green tile.

At left, below: The inside of the outdoor pavilion with repurposed beams and supports made of different woods.

Below, right: Joe, at left, Laban and Estok Mendon stand in their workshop with their dog.



# Hanging up their Trowels

Sanhedrin Nursery closes doors after 36 years of business in Willits

Dave and Jenny Watts are trading their trowels for time with toddlers, as grandkids and family are now at the front of their minds.

The pair has run the mom-and-pop nursery shop at 1094 Locust Street for over 36 years and will be closing their doors, hopefully near the end of October.

“Well, we’re not leaving until it’s all gone and sold, the house included!” laughed Dave, “and that could take a while.”

The couple had been hoping that either or both of their two children, Michael or Suzanne, might move back to Willits and keep the tradition of the nursery running, but with both children married, settled in careers, and houses bought elsewhere, the time has come for the Watts to move south and be closer to their growing families.

“We’re going to miss our friends, customers and our community so much, though,” said Jenny. “But the time has come for new endeavors and for the property here



to change hands and hopefully be a great new business — another nursery or other business possibilities — for another family.”

Sanhedrin Nursery is clearing out all their plants and other products at 50 percent off until everything is gone.

“When we do leave,” says Dave, “we will be carrying with us fond memories of our friends and customers. The Willits

community has been good to us, and it will always have a special place in our hearts.”

The Watts said they plan to visit Willits often, and will look forward to seeing their friends and customers at their homes and community events — and they might just be proudly showing off grandkids there, too.

— Maureen Moore



Above: Dave and Jenny Watts “hanging up their trowels” and waving goodbye.

At left: The Watts at the front counter of the retail space at Sanhedrin Nursery. Below: The last days of the going out of business sale are happening now at the Locust Street nursery.



## KITCHEN & BATH WORD SEARCH

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COLUMN | Numbers by Nick

## Make sure your insurance is up to date

Neighbors, do me a favor, please – will you take the time to gather all your insurance policies so you can make sure your coverage is up to date?

This is not a pitch to buy insurance. It's a plea to make sure you are not underinsured or paying for insurance you no longer need.

Things to keep in mind as you review your policies -

### Health – It's the open enrollment period.

• Be certain to check whether your employer will add dependent coverage, or whether you wish to go to the open market for coverage.

• Be sure to price out the options.

• Do you need to price out plans for your company and employees?

### Life – You may have a life insurance policy or an annuity.

• Did you get married?

• Do you have a dependent(s) this year?

• Does your policy benefit allow for a smooth transition of your home to your spouse or heirs?

• Did you start a business?

• Did your business take on more assets? Liabilities? Did your assets increase?

• Is your business in more than one area?

### Homeowners – You may need more coverage with home upgrades or be eligible for discounts.

• Did you increase your mortgage?

• Do you need flood or fire insurance?

• Do you have adequate replacement coverage?

• Do you have a recent appraisal for your important items?

• Do you have a fire-safe for your policies, or have them backed up?

COLUMN | Real Estate Beat

## All boats didn't rise....

Why is there such disproportional racial disparity in wealth in this country? Other than the obvious – that those of Northern European descent came to North America in the 1600s and took over. "Non-whites" were looked down on, and things went downhill from there up to and including today. But here's the thing, we can look back as recently as the end of World War II, in the 1940s when Americans were coming back home to the USA, to see that all financial boats didn't rise together. Some were weighted down by racial segregation, in housing legal documents.

Virtually all subdivisions have a document called CC&Rs – covenants, conditions and restrictions. These documents contain the rules under which everyone who purchases or lives in that subdivision must abide. Every subdivision in our area has CC&Rs. Some of these subdivisions were created so long ago that many homeowners don't even realize that they exist.

In the 1940s after WWII ended, real estate developer Abraham Levitt and his two sons, William and Alfred, created four housing developments called "Levittown" in the eastern U.S. Even though the Levitt family was Jewish, their developments became the poster child for racial discrimination in housing. Even Jews were discriminated against, at the beginning, from purchasing in Levittown. But even more onerous, African Americans and other people of color were targeted.

Non-white citizens who gave their all for their country returned home to the U.S. to face the same old racist B.S. Many lost their lives, and their families were left with nothing except the despair of racist hatred, segregation and repression. The housing wealth-building mechanism was denied them. Housing appreciation built family wealth for many whites, but not people of color.

The Federal Housing Administration allowed and encouraged developers to segregate and discriminate. FHA even made it a policy to only make housing loans to segregated communities.

In Levittown sale and rental agreements, only members of the "Caucasian" race were allowed to purchase or rent. At that time, one could purchase a new home for as little as \$8,000.

The Levittown discrimination model became the model for housing developments all over the country including here in

• Did you obtain a HELOC?

## Car – New car or older car – tweak your policy accordingly.

• Did you pay off an auto loan?

• Do you still cover with adequate insurance coverage if the auto(s) are paid off?

### Small business insurance

• Did you start a business?

• Did you expand your business?

• Do you have more employees?

• Do you need "key person insurance"? A company can have an insurance policy on important employees. The purpose of key person insurance is to help the company survive the blow of losing the person who makes the business work. If that person unexpectedly dies, the company receives the insurance payoff.

As your assets / family / businesses grow, you want to stay on top of the insurability and protection of your accumulating wealth.

There is a great organization that has free resources to help you when buying insurance and making claims – it's called United Policyholders (www.UPHelp.org). As a full disclosure, I am on the board of directors and hold life and health insurance licenses.

UPHelp is in all 50 states, and is a first responder, alongside the Red Cross, that jumps to assist in disaster areas. UPHelp helps insurance policy holders navigate the daunting insurance claims process, and is an advocate for the insured. Check out the UP.org resources section – there are all sorts of tips and ideas to help you get the right plan(s).

Or get in touch with me. As always, I would be happy to help. Thank you.

*Nicholas Casagrande, EA, is an accountant and a financial advisor. His firm, NC Financial Group, is a wealth management firm serving individual clients as well as small-to-medium-sized businesses. Client work includes personal and corporate taxes, investment planning, insurance, and real estate. NC Financial Group's Willits office is located at 675 South Main Street; contact 855-240-6606 or nicholas@ncfinancialgroup.com (taxes) or Nicholas.Casagrande@Ceterafs.com (investments) for more information.*

Northern California and Mendocino County.

In 1948 the Ukiah Rogina Subdivision CC&Rs read: "No lots shall at any time be sold to anyone except an individual or individuals of the white race." In that same year the "Covenant of Building Restrictions Mendocino Gardens Tract" read: "That no lot or portion thereof shall at any time be used or occupied by any person not of the white or Caucasian race except in the capacity of domestic servants in the employ of a white or Caucasian owner or occupant."

In Levittown, Jews were eventually allowed in, but all others were "discouraged" from buying or moving in.

Here's the thing about wealth creation that I referred to. As the market value of those \$8,000 houses grew to \$40,000, then \$80,000, then \$120,000, and today, in the mid-\$200,000s up to over half-a-million, so did the savings and net worth of those homeowners grow. But the wealth of those citizens who were prevented from buying one of those homes didn't grow.

Those excluded soldiers and workers and U.S. citizens were delegated to slum housing as renters – or segregated, low-appreciation housing. Their dollars did not grow in value at anywhere near the rate of their "white" fellow citizens. Their legacy was, and still is, poverty in large numbers. You can't participate in or pass along wealth that you were never allowed to be a part of. That boat has sailed now.

Although such discrimination is now, at least officially, unlawful – the damage is done and so far little has been done to rectify it.

California code Article 2.12956.1 now reads in part:

"If this document contains any restriction based on race, color, religion, sex,

Read the rest of **Wealth** Over on Page RE6

COLUMN | How's the Market?

## What's this 'MLS' everyone's talking about?

Before I get rolling on my column, I want to let everyone know Realty World Selzer Realty has moved to the Steele Building at 390 South Main Street. We'd been looking for a new office for a while and are very happy with our new location. We'll occupy two-thirds of the space, with the remaining space occupied by Tapestry Family Services, Perry Hay, LLP, and massage therapist Janice Cinek.

OK, on to the business of real estate! I've referred to the MLS in previous columns, but I don't know that I've explained what it is and why it's so valuable, so here you go.

MLS stands for "Multiple Listing Service," and it is a system whereby real estate agents in a specific geographic area share information about all the properties for sale ("listings"). Access to the MLS is restricted to real estate brokers, and by extension the agents that work for them.

For each property, the MLS includes address, photos, price, detailed descriptions, disclosures, access information (so the Realtor can show the property), and more. The information's available online and, ideally, offers most everything a person would need to make a decision about whether to buy – but nothing can replace a personal inspection.

The MLS can also be used to match buyers with their ideal property by entering a wish list. The system will automatically notify Realtors who can then inform potential buyers when a property matches their list.

In my opinion, your real estate agent must be a member of their local MLS to provide you with the service you deserve. Without the MLS, they're working in the dark – offering you a narrower set of choices than you'd get with a Realtor who checks the MLS regularly for updates. In addition to listings, the MLS also includes data about recent sales, so your Realtor can accurately assess the fair market value of your home or the home you'd like to buy.

I really feel not being an MLS member is a disservice to the buyer and seller. Candidly, I see no advantage to these private programs because the MLS, when used as designed, provides the most information to the broadest audience. Also, with the traditional MLS, rules and a strict code of ethics have been designed to improve the relationship among all parties to make the entire transaction smoother and easier.

The MLS also feeds public and governmental online listing services. So, while brokers are the only ones who access the MLS, their willingness to enter all that data allows public sites like trulia.com, zillow.com, and realtor.com to be populated. "For sale by owner" (also known as FSBO) properties are not on the MLS, but nearly all other properties are.

Anote of caution when listing your home: if you've upgraded

Read the rest of **MLS** Over on Page RE6

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245 South Humboldt Street built ca. 1880

The two story house at 245 Humboldt Street dates from the time of the original community of Willitsville. It survived both the 1898 and 1901 fires that destroyed much of the rest of the original town, and came through the 1906 earthquake mostly unscathed. Beyond its significance derived from being associated with Willitsville, the house is also important because of the individuals associated with it. In 1885, it belonged to J.W. McCarty who, with S.C. Holman, ran the McCarty and Holman Blacksmithy and Wagonworks. By 1902 the house had

become the property of Samuel S. Baechtel, the first settler in the Little Lake Valley who came there in 1855 with his brothers.

The building at 245 Humboldt Street has been added onto several times. The original portion of the house is a one story low gable structure with the main entrance to the building. A low veranda runs the length of this structure and is supported by slender squared columns. The roof is trimmed with a box cornice, a sloped soffit and a plain frieze.

# Now and Then

245 South Humboldt Street



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The rest of **Wealth** | From Page RE5

gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, familial status, marital status, disability, genetic information, national origin, source of income as defined in subdivision (p) of Section 12955, or ancestry, that restriction violates state and federal fair housing laws and is void, and may be removed pursuant to Section 12956.2 of the Government Code."

As Eliza Doolittle said in "My Fair Lady": "Word, words, words. I'm so sick of words. Is that all you blighters can do?" We have a major dilemma in our great nation. We have legislators that keep creating more and more mechanisms to massively build and protect the wealth of a small percentage of the super wealthy, while the middle-class and poor are turned into the new working slave class. Look at how many hard-working Americans lost their homes in the past 10 years as the equity from their homes got passed along to the wealthiest few. Is that really what you want for your country, yourself and your loved ones?

Bill Barksdale has been a real estate agent in Willits for over 25 years. He can be reached at Coldwell Banker Mendo Realty Inc.: 707-489-2232 or [bark@pacific.net](mailto:bark@pacific.net).

The rest of **MLS** | From Page RE5

your home without the appropriate permits, government databases fed by the MLS may give you away. If the county has your property listed as a house with three bedrooms and one bath, but you are selling a three-bedroom, two-bath house, flags may go up.

If you're reading through this and thinking, "I don't want to sell my house right now, but I might be interested in becoming a Realtor," I encourage you to pursue it. I've been doing this for more than 40 years, and I cannot imagine doing anything else. Although it requires hard work and long hours, it also affords me the flexibility to schedule vacations when I like, attend my children's sporting events, and be in control of my own financial future.

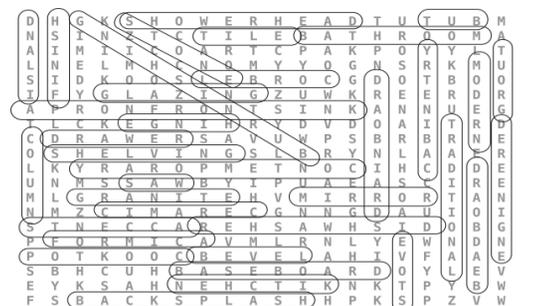
Most licensed agents can find a job within a day or two in almost any city in the nation. To be a real estate agent, you must pass the state exam to earn your real estate license. Then you must have the wherewithal to run your own business, even if you're working for a broker.

As with any startup, a new real estate business requires some capital. If you're like me, you enjoy food with your meals. Not only that, you prefer a roof over your head and clothes on your back. So, when you venture out into your new career as a real estate agent, you need to have the funds to pay for business expenses and living expenses until your commission checks start rolling in.

If this career path is of interest to you, talk to some people. Talk to Realtors here in Willits. Send me an email. For the right person, I can't think of a more satisfying career than real estate.

If you have questions about real estate or property management, please contact me at [rselzer@selzerrealty.com](mailto:rselzer@selzerrealty.com) or visit [www.realtyworldselzer.com](http://www.realtyworldselzer.com). If I use your suggestion in a column, I'll send you a \$5 gift card to Roland's Bakery. If you'd like to read previous articles, visit my blog at [www.richardselzer.com](http://www.richardselzer.com).

Dick Selzer is a real estate broker who has been in the business for more than 40 years.



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