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Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project

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Over the last 50 years, few places in the world could match the economic and cultural impact of California. Perhaps in no other realm is that more evident than in the state's primary cash crop: cannabis. From pioneering breeding techniques and the development of groundbreaking strands to a production volume that dwarfs every state in the union, California—and especially Humboldt County—has long stood as the epicenter of American cannabis. The wave of legalization in recent years has finally brought this important industry out of the shadows. In doing so, it has also opened the door to develop a true historical record on cannabis in the Golden State.

Initiated by GESA Chair Dr. Matthew Derrick, the Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project is a partnership with the California Cannabis Oral History Project, together seeking to take the first steps in creating that historical record by conducting in-depth interviews with the principal growers of the county's renowned cannabis industry. The project also partners with the 420 Archive, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of cannabis history, and Oral History Center at UC Berkeley, one of the nation's leading oral history offices. Through the firsthand accounts of the growers themselves, the interviews provide a detailed history of Humboldt's cannabis industry, tracing its origins, development, and evolution over the last five-plus decades. Such firsthand accounts offer important insight on topics ranging from cannabis culture and world-renown breeding techniques to the long fight against prohibition and changing market dynamics.

The Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project, as envisioned by Dr. Derrick, is also designed to develop HSU Geography majors into field-savvy, experienced researchers. Through interviews with growers and others who have played pivotal roles in making Humboldt world-famous for its cannabis, undergraduate geographers are invited to hands-on investigation and exploration of the histories of some of the more fascinating places and people in the county.

Research articles drawn from the project's first two oral history interviews grace the following pages.