A Brief & Amateur History of

JACK LONDON VILLAGE

by Jim Shere

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The Old Grist Mill

This photograph of the old mill was taken after 1856, when General Vallejo had sold it to Joshua Chauvet to be converted from a saw mill into a grist mill, and before 1864, when Chauvet had married and added a second floor for living quarters.

Introduction

When they had sold the old Victorian where my office had been located in downtown Sonoma several years ago, I dreaded the search this meant for another place to meet my clients. It is difficult to find the sort of setting that works well— a quiet, healing, private place, easy to get to and yet where noise can be made without disturbing others. Besides, office space tends to be, well, officious, and uncomfortable.

After several weeks of fruitless searching, Maria and I decided to take the day off, and went instead for a walk in the countryside near our home, a few miles north of town. There, without looking for it, we found it: a cabin made of barnwood on a creek, a half-mile from our home, remote and peaceful.

After settling into the old structure I began to learn about its history, and about the people who had been there before me. What follows here is a collection of various articles that were written as my exploration deepened, many of which appeared in a local monthly newsletter, the *Jack London Villager*. They were taken from interviews and research that eventually helped me to understand something about history being much more than stories about dead people.

History ends up at best as an on-going discussion of the dynamic relationship that we have always had, and will always continue to have, with one another, and with the world in which we live. This interactive dynamism changes us, and changes the world that changes us.

The careful reader will notice that these stories of Jack London Village will themselves change from time to time, as new facts were discovered that contradicted older ones. I make no apology for this: an amateur does things out of love and, not being professional, professes nothing. I write this history simply for the love of the many stories that have been woven together to create this place, and must be forgiven for being— like a lover— sometimes blind.

And just as these stories have changed over time, and just as we have changed, our dreams, it seems, become changed even as they become realized. Reality itself is changed by the realization of our dreams. This is the exhilarating mystery of life, and the life lived here at Jack London Village.

The Presence of the Past

Moving northward from the inlets, and from the lagoons and the estuaries of the bay, a gentle mountain range gradually rose long ago to rest along the western edge of the savanna. Occasional stands of valley oak were grouped haphazardly, like small herds of grazing animals across the valley floor towards the hills in the east. This was the watershed of what later came to be known as Sonoma Valley.

And yet, long before man was here, life was here. The broad blue skies, the lush deep green forests of redwood and Douglas fir along the flanks of the low rolling mountain range, and the grand golden stretch of wild grasses that bent with the wind in waves across the broad floor of the valley toward the distant eastern hills astonished those first Europeans when they at last arrived in our valley, almost two hundred years ago.

Father Altimira had been sent by the Church to establish yet one more mission in the great chain being strung northward along the *Camino Real* toward the menacing Russian presence at Fort Ross. When he first entered the valley Altimira felt he had come to Eden, and wrote passionately, eagerly, in his journals about the wealth of flora and fauna that he saw, the large herds of trusting native animals, and the great stands

of noble trees, just waiting to be put to good use by these new people.

The little mission was established in 1823, and the people who had lived here thousands of years were gathered up under the direction of the Church while the land was cleared and prepared for crops to be planted and harvested. For ten years the pueblo of Sonoma grew steadily at the foot of the Mayacamas range, at the edge of the plain, several miles upstream from the marshlands of the bay.

In time the heroics of discovery and occupation began to give way to the changing politics of a burgeoning pioneer society. No longer supported by a distant Moscow, the Russians left California; and in 1834 young General Mariano Vallejo was sent from the Presidio to oversee the closing of the missions, and the settling of the Valley by adventurers from far across the mountains and plains to the east.

Stories have been told about the origin of the name Sonoma. General Vallejo popularized the legend that, in the Suisun language of the people that lived nearby, the name describes the way the moon appears to rise as many as seven times over the jagged peaks of the mountains to the east, as one travels along.

It was probably from this legend that the place became known eventually, with the help of Jack London, as the Valley of the Moon. However, Vallejo's rather mischievous son Platon told of another Suisun meaning for the word "sonoma": that it meant "big nose" and referred to a local chief who had been born with that remarkably distinguishing feature.

But the Suisuns were only distant neighbors to the east of the Miwok; and before the Miwok had come into this valley some three thousand years ago, the Wappo had already been here some 10,000 years. In the language of the Wappo "sonoma" was a generic term for any village. The last fluent speaker of Wappo had said that it referred to the valley as an "abandoned camping place".

Indeed, much of what has been here has now long gone on. Ninety percent of the native people died of smallpox by 1820; the remainder were attached to the mission. The last elk in the valley was killed in 1850, and in 1852 the last grizzlies died— a mother and her cub, at the hands of Joseph Hooker (a local rancher who later served as a general for the Union forces in the Civil War). By 1865 the last pronghorn antelope was gone.

Soon after the mountainside was deeded to him by Lazero Peña on December 4th in 1839, General Vallejo built a lumbermill, with a waterwheel that was powered by an overshot flume at the confluence of Asbury and Sonoma Creeks six miles up the valley from town— though at that time of course these waterways had no names. By the end of the century, the entire mountain range was fairly completely harvested, although stands of second-growth redwood can still be found in places.

A deed for the mill and the surrounding acreage from Vallejo to Joshua Chauvet is dated June 1, 1861, although it seems Chauvet had arrived in the valley as early as 1853. Some say he took possession of the mill in 1856; perhaps the transfer was not entered legally until 1861. I have read that Chauvet had first arrived in San Francisco in 1850 by ship from Le Havre, and quickly went to the goldfields of Mokelumne Hill, where he briefly operated a bakery.

He wandered around a bit after that, carrying with him— wherever he went— the precious millstones he had brought with him from France. When Chauvet took over the lumbermill he sent for his father, François, who had remained behind in France, and began the work of converting his lumbermill into a gristmill. The stones he had brought with him may still be seen standing outside the mill.

There is a very early photograph of the mill, and though it looks quite different and the surrounding landscape seems

confusingly changed, it is the same building, at a far different time. The landscape of the world has been changed by the gradual erosion of time since that photograph was taken.

As I begin putting the fragments of history together for this little book, a picture of how Jack London Village came to be what it is today is just beginning to take shape. In the future I hope to set down the stories that I find contained in the buildings there— an accumulation of stories that give the place, for me, its meaning.

The Train Stops at Chauvet's Winery

On Saturday February 17, 1883, the following note appeared in the *Sonoma Index*: "Mr. Price, the photographer, took a picture of Mr. Chauvet's wine cellar including the train and engine, General Valejo [sic] and several other persons on Thursday of last week. Quite a number of Sonoma people were among the group."

When I first read this I thought to myself, "I will never find that photograph", but the very next day Arthur Dawson from the Sonoma Ecology Center stopped by my cabin with a copy he had discovered in their archives. If you look carefully, you can see the windows of the mill in the distance, looking much as it does to this day.

Joshua Chauvet's Winery and Cellar

This 1887 photograph of the Chauvet winery was taken by Carleton Watkins from the hill above the creek, in what is now the Sonoma Valley Regional Park. The stone cellar built in 1881 is prominent in the foreground, with the older winery building just to the right. The mill is hidden by the trees farther to the right.

A Walking Tour of JLV

A half-mile south of Glen Ellen on Arnold Drive you will find Jack London Village. General Vallejo had built a sawmill here in 1839, soon after his arrival in the valley, to make lumber of the redwoods and fir that grew plentifully at that time on Sonoma Mountain.

The millwheel was powered by an overshot flume at the confluence of Asbury and Sonoma Creeks, and the lumber produced helped build the first homes in the area. The old building still stands, although it has gone through many changes over the years.

Joshua Chauvet bought the mill from Vallejo in the 1850s, after most of the trees had been harvested. He converted the sawmill into a gristmill, using the millstones he had brought from France; the stones are now on display near the front door of the building.

Much of the equipment that had been used down through the years may be found on display throughout the area, including the still Chauvet had shipped around the Horn

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This article first appeared in *A Self-Guided Walking Tour of Downtown Glen Ellen*, edited by Bob Glotzbach and published in 2006 by Regeneration Resources, Sonoma CA.

when he converted the mill into a winery in the 1870s, and the old steam pistons that were driven by the boiler he had put in the basement of the mill.

The original road may still be seen where it runs alongside the stream, above the broad decks that replaced the general store and stagecoach stop when they burned down in the 1970s. The long low wooden building close by the old road was the original stable, and the oddly-shaped cabin that stands between the road and the stream was a bin for holding grape stems during the crush, during the early part of the 20th Century.

In 1913, five years after Chauvet's death, Felice Pagani purchased the winery, which he was able to keep operating throughout the Prohibition. His son Charles built the great cinderblock building in the early 1940s to replace the stone winery that had been built in the 1880s; foundations of the old stone building can still be seen in the parking lot just south of the cinderblock building.

The carriage house and sheds, where Chauvet and Pagani had kept the wagons and equipment that they used, still stand across Arnold Drive with one of the last great fermenting redwood tanks from the winery. Just to the north of them, across Asbury Creek, the large white house Chauvet had built as a wedding gift for his son Henry in the 1890s still faces the old mill.

On the opposite bank of Sonoma Creek, a paved trail follows the old railroad that had once served the region. The trail is a gentle ramble that goes on through the regional park a mile or so toward the highway. Footpaths, of various levels of challenge, climb the hills to circle Lake Suttonfield nearby. There are many fascinating and rewarding discoveries to be found during a day's exploration of the area, with easy parking, pleasant places to rest, and several opportunities for leisurely eating.

In My Cabin in the Village

My office is an old cabin built into the base of a tall bin at Jack London Village, a historic set of buildings just south of Glen Ellen here in the wine country of Northern California. The building has been used as a studio of one sort or another for many years, I'm told. Originally it was part of a winery that had been established during the Nineteenth Century, one of the first in the Valley of the Moon. The cabin was put in much later, sometime during the early 1970s, I believe.

The structure itself was built by Joshua Chauvet or by his successor, Charles Pagani, as early as the 1880s or as late as the 1940s. It was designed as a bin for collecting the unavoidable byproducts of winemaking. As the wine was being made, the stems and pressed grapes were sent over by a trough from the main building for temporary storage. Eventually, the resulting pulp would be emptied into carts waiting below, and then returned to the vineyards as compost for the following year.

In describing the building for my clients, I wrote the following explanation of how it can be seen as emblematic of my general take on life: "As with any historic building, this old stemhouse brings a rich accumulation of meaning that asks

in turn to be lived with deliberately, and conscientiously. Such houses are structures that provide a conscious relationship with nature, rather than appliances that would protect us from nature to make life 'safe'. As in any aspect of the examined life, we may make no assumptions. No lines are straight, no angles are truly square, and no surface is really level. The wood is old and uncertain, and the glass can be thin in places: please watch your step, and trust your weight against nothing."

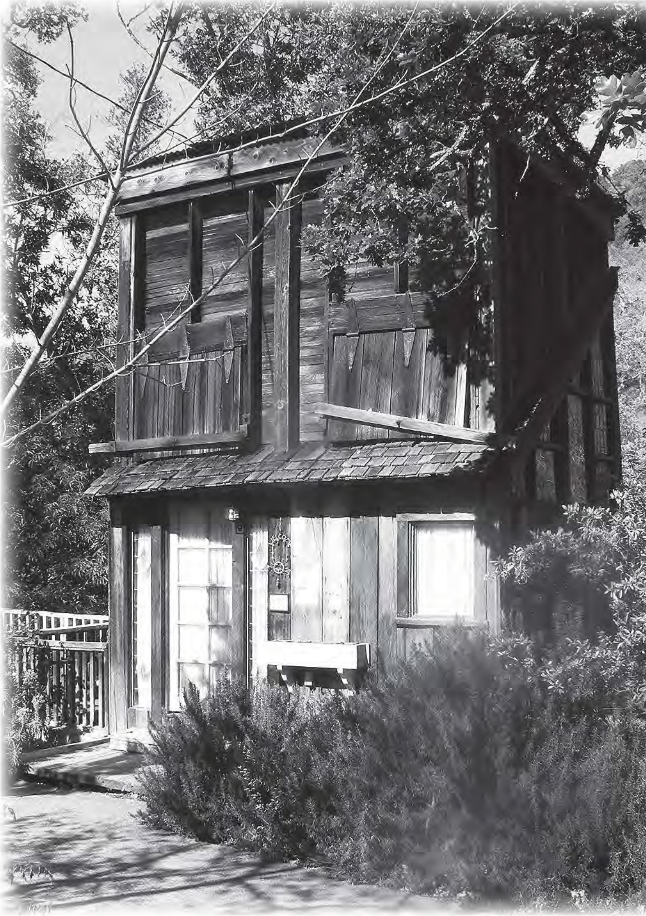
From these thoughts the idea of a book about the village is now beginning to take shape. The focus of my research and writing is upon the Tower, and upon the people whose dreams have been played out there: upon the stories of the lives of the artists and the artisans whose work had shaped the building, as well as how the history of the building itself had shaped and sheltered their work. I want to write especially of the inspiration and the resolve, the hopes and the inevitable compromises that always instruct an innocent idealism in the inescapable facts of life.

A fellow who once lived there told me that businesses have always struggled to survive in the Village because of a Miwok curse on the land, put there by the original people of the valley when the Europeans first arrived. My take however is that nature will not simply grant our wishes, but rather challenges us to work hard if we would realize our dreams—and that our dreams are only a first tentative design of what must eventually take place in our lives as our destiny, and, as much, the destiny of the land in which our dreams take place.

I recall being struck by a description of the vitality of this place— perhaps the healthiest region in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. The extensive wilderness of the Mayacamas range along the eastern side of the valley, and the square miles of undeveloped land that reach from Annadel Park down to Sonoma Mountain along the western side, are

connected by a great regional park that provides passage for all the great and small native animals that still inhabit the region. And the Tower stands at the center of all this activity, where pools of water form in the stream beneath my cabin, and where the animals come to gossip and argue in the evening.

It is a large project that I have in mind, reaching from the specific story of the Tower towards the epic encounter of human enterprise with nature's demands. I plan to learn who used the building when, and to interview each of them to bring their stories, their dreams, and their work to life. Architecture will remain the consistent theme as the effort and design of the structures that we build to house our dreams, in a world that teems with a natural and difficult, wonderful life.



The Tower

In 1969 a stained glass artist built this cabin into the base of an old bin, which had been constructed for holding grape stems during the crush back when wines were still made here. This peaceful, rustic place is where I work, and where I rest from my work.

Joshua Chauvet, Pioneer Entrepreneur

When he first rode into the Valley of the Moon in 1856, Joshua Chauvet took one look at the played out sawmill Vallejo had built some seventeen years before, and immediately recognized the great opportunity he had been searching for.

The enormous forest of redwood and Douglas fir that had once covered the mountainside was gone now, harvested and milled into lumber for building homes. Vallejo had little use for the mill now, and was happy to arrange something of a lease with option to purchase for the young Frenchman and his venerable father, François.

Joshua had arrived in San Francisco some six years before this, with thirteen copper *sous* in his pocket and dreams of gold on his mind. It had been a difficult sea-voyage of seven months around the Horn from Le Havre, and he was eager to get on to the motherlode to try his hand at mining. A tough, demanding childhood had accustomed him to hard work, but that first season was, as it was for most, a miserable disappointment.

The bread Joshua baked for the other miners, on the other hand, proved a far better return for his efforts. His first bakery was in Mokelumne Hill, and quickly became very successful

before he moved on to opening other bakeries in Jackson and Sandy Bar.

But flour was quickly increasing in cost to as much as $120 a barrel, while his bread sold for only $1 a pound; so Joshua sent for his father, a millwright and miller still living in France, asking him to bring the necessary equipment, including the two grindstones that stand guard at the entrance to the mill today.

The two men had wandered around the towns and cities of the region for another year or so, looking for a good place to set up their grist mill; they finally found it here at the confluence of Asbury and Sonoma Creeks. It took eighteen months to get fully into operation, but happily their hard work met with eventual success.

Records show that Chauvet *fils et père* were shrewd businessmen as well as hard workers. As other pioneers arrived to settle the valley they began to function as agents, bankers, and developers, establishing the infrastructure needed by the developing community, including a water system and a brickyard. By 1861 the final purchase of the mill from Vallejo was recorded, including some 500 acres of vineyard, and their place in the valley was firmly established.

In 1864 Joshua married Ellen Sullivan, a large and rowdy woman from Ireland who loved her drink. He built a second floor above the mill for his mother-in-law, and with the birth of two sons, Henry and Robert, a multigenerational family began to take shape.

Stage coaches on their way to and from Santa Rosa began stopping at the general store that had been built next to the mill, and the entire valley was quickly settling down to doing a routine business.

While the grist mill continued to operate the Chauvets also began producing wine and— after a state-of-the-art copper still was brought from France— brandy. But this latter proved

to become the downfall of poor Ellen. Stories of her drinking exploits began to circulate, and Joshua could not leave on business without locking up the winery first.

One time he had no choice but to leave a barrel of brandy outside, so he hoisted it up by ropes into a tree beyond her reach. As soon as he was out of sight, however, Ellen brought out the family rifle and fired a neat shot right through the barrel, catching the stream of brandy in buckets and pitchers and drinking her fill.

Another time, after having had a sufficient amount to drink, Ellen discovered that the millrace had sprung a leak during a heavy rainstorm. She crawled up into it and sat upon the leak, apparently believing that her ample body would stop the loss of water; unfortunately, she contracted pneumonia in doing so, and soon afterward she passed away.

A wooden winery was built about that time nearby the mill and store, and while the boys were looked after by a Chinese father and son (each of whom were named Moon) their own father and grandfather tended the various family enterprises until 1881, when François quietly passed away. With his death the grist mill closed down, and Joshua began focusing upon the production of wine.

In 1885 a grand three story cellar was constructed near the wooden winery. Constructed from native stone by Chinese labor, the cellar was considered an architectural marvel of the time, and an indication of what great things could be expected of the young wine industry.

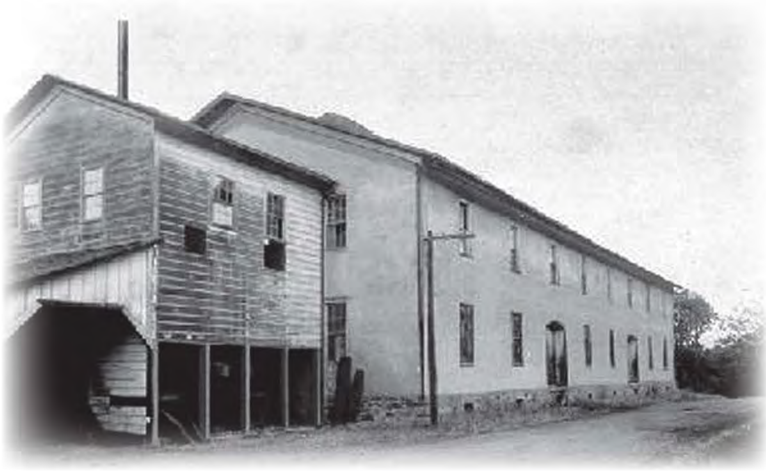
Times were quickly changing; Chauvet shifted from using the primitive waterwheel as a source of energy to the more modern technology of steam power. The railroad replaced the stagecoach line; and when a specially-built railroad spur was constructed across the creek from the cellar, Chauvet's wines became distributed nationwide, gaining recognition and gathering awards.

Henry went away to college to study business, but Robert remained behind to work with his father while becoming captain of the local baseball team. He took after his mother and, sadly, died fairly young of pneumonia— again, apparently from exposure while inebriated, this time in the creek below the mill.

In 1893 Henry married Annie Lounibos, the daughter of a business associate of Joshua's. The young couple was offered a choice between a tour of Europe and a new home and, perhaps because everybody else still lived in the family compound that had built up around the mill, they chose to have a great mansion built for them across the new road and at some distance. The home stands there to this day.

While grandchildren began to appear Joshua continued to pursue his several business enterprises aggressively, including a vigorous battle in the courts with his one-time tenant and new upstream neighbor, Jack London, over water rights. A new century had begun, with new challenges to be faced as the small settlement became the bustling town of Glen Ellen.

There is a photograph of Joshua in front of the home he had built for Henry, and although he was by now in his 70s he looks fit and self-confident, a man who knows he has earned the respect of the entire region. He died quietly May 22nd, 1908, at the age of 85, and probably very content.



Chauvet's Stone Cellar

This view of the northwest corner of the cellar was taken in 1911, from across an unpaved trail now known as Arnold Drive. Then it was simply referred to as the road to Sonoma.

Pagani's Winery & Fruit Distillery

This photograph was probably taken after Prohibition became repealed in 1933. The roofline reflected in the window may be that of the old stone building, which suggests that we are seeing the part of the original winery that became replaced by the cinderblock building in the early 1940s.

Back When Wines Were Still Made Here

Just about the time that Joshua Chauvet converted his grist mill to a winery, and brought a state-of-the-art brandy still around the Horn from his native France, a new era was starting up in California. Chauvet was one of the first winemakers in the valley, and when the railroads were built he made quick use of them to distribute his wines across the young nation.

In 1880 he sold 20,000 gallons of wine, but before he could sell the remainder the upper floor of the old mill collapsed, pouring the rest of his wine and brandy into the creek. This prompted him to build a grand three-story stone wine cellar following year, where our south parking lot is now located. He increased his production to 130,000 gallons of wine that year, and his reputation continued to grow; over the years he became a very prosperous and widely respected businessman.

After Chauvet died in 1908 his son Henry continued to operate the winery until 1913, when it was sold to Felice Pagani. Pagani was an Italian winemaker who had worked in the valley since 1885. He was able to produce wines and brandies even throughout the Prohibition I understand, though I don't quite understand how.

After Pagani's death in 1925, his widow and older son Charles continued to operate the winery and distillery, but when Prohibition was repealed in 1933 the name was changed to the Glen Ellen Winery & Distillery. It was Charles who had the great cinderblock building constructed in the early 1940s, featuring the innovative cement fermentation vats that now swerve as individual rooms.

Charles died in 1954, and although his mother Angela was able to continue running the winery with the help of his younger brother Louis, I suppose Louis was more concerned with his winery in Kenwood; and so with Angela's death at some point afterwards the old winery in Glen Ellen fell into gradual disuse. It was about this time that stories of Charles Pagani's ghost roaming the buildings at night began to be told.

When Charles Beardsley purchased the buildings in the late 1960s he renamed the complex the Jack London Mill and Wine Village, with an eye toward establishing shops, restaurants, and galleries. In time the name was shortened to Jack London Village, but the memories of winemaking were never left far behind.

Machinery From a Distant Past Nearby

As we walk about the grounds of our village, the presence of the past is easily felt and seen, especially in the equipment that can be found standing about quietly here and there.

They are the discarded artifacts of another time, and haunt our pathways today like mechanical ghosts, souvenirs of archaic technologies: waterwheel, steam engine and early electricity.

Charles Beardsley was the first to retrieve them from the creek where they had been jettisoned as unnecessary over the past century. It was his fine eye for historical significance that had first recognized the potential of the Village as a commercial destination, and so he well understood the value of these relics. They are, after all, the actual equipment that had been put to use by workers at the winery as far back as the 19th Century.

At the corner of the deck of my cabin, nearest the south parking lot, is a stemmer-crusher made of cast iron and sheet metal, with its galvanized sheet metal bin stationed nearby. Machines like this are still in use in wineries today to tear the grape berries from their stems and break them open.

Bunches of grapes were thrown into the hopper at the top, and as the stems and leaves were combed toward the waiting

bin the grapes would fall through the holes of the colander to be pumped out as pulp by a two-piston pump, which can be seen attached to the side of the machine. The entire sequence was driven by sets of gears that were powered by a belt-driven flywheel, probably using an electric motor like the one near my cabin door.

An older stemmer-crusher stands farther along, between the two small decks. Although it is made in much the same design, it has a wooden frame lined with sheet metal, and an older cast iron grinding mechanism under the wooden hopper at the top. From its structure, condition and design, I'm guessing it was used by Chauvet in the late 19th Century, and later perhaps by Felice Pagani, when he purchased the winery in 1913.

The presence of an assortment of steam pistons and pumps nearby help me to believe that this older stemmer-crusher was belt-driven by steam engines. The patent embossed into one of the pistons is dated September 27, 1887, so it seems Chauvet had shifted to steam power from the waterwheel sometime after it had caused the untimely death of his wife in 1876. A great furnace can be seen in the basement of the mill, with a boiler that would have generated the steam required to drive the pistons.

An odd-looking harrow-like mechanism lies next to the pistons, and I can't quite tell what it was intended for. It looks very much like a rudimentary sort of farming implement, similar to the harrow that I had followed in the fields when I was young as it broke up the clods of earth after the ground had been plowed.

Beyond the stair that leads down to the lower decks there's another curious machine. A platform with mounts for an electric motor is built into the front, and pistons on either side seem ready to be turned by a belt-driven flywheel fixed to one side. It could be some sort of corking device, or perhaps a pump, but the jury is still out on this one.

A few feet further on an old drive shaft rests on the ground all by itself. How it fit into the industrial scene can no longer be easily figured, but it seems to have been designed to step up and down the velocity of belts as they ran the equipment.

What is certainly a pump can be found across the path, hidden under the shrubbery below the outdoor dining area. The name "Jacuzzi Bros Inc" is clearly visible, which makes it an early 20th Century souvenir since the seven inventive Jacuzzi Brothers had not emigrated to America from Italy until the turn of that century. The pump sits on a cement platform covering what Alejo (our venerable *majordomo*) believes must be the original well that Chauvet had dug for his family.

At the entrance to the mill, under the stair leading to the second floor balcony, two millstones are on display. These are the very stones that Chauvet's father, a millwright, had brought with him from France in 1853 (give or take a year).

Pause a moment as you look at these stones and consider: they had been brought by sea around the Horn on a voyage that would have taken almost a year, purely on speculation that they would help establish a thriving business in the New World. The stones were carried from place to place about the small towns and goldfields of California until finally they were brought here a century and a half ago.

Down near the footbridge, a wine pump on its cart can be found by the waterwheel of the mill. I can easily identify it because I used one just like this for several years while working my way through college at a wine shop in Berkeley; in those days customers would bring gallon jugs to be filled from barrels that we kept filled using such a pump. The motor seems about the same vintage as the one at the door of my cabin, so I'm guessing this too was Pagani's.

There are many other pieces of equipment scattered about that date back to other times. Several basket presses (without their turnscrew mechanisms) can be found, and of course

there is the waterwheel and the grand copper still that stands in one of our shops today. Chauvet had brought this magnificent piece of state-of-the-art-for-its-time equipment around the horn from France, and used it in the making of brandies and fortified wines such as sherry and port.

The next time you consider any one of them, place your own hands where other hands would have grasped wood or iron, and think of the men (and women) who labored as hard as these machines, each urging the other on.

Chauvet’s Mill Stones

These mill stones were brought from France by sea around the Horn, on a voyage that would have taken almost a year, purely on speculation that they would help establish a thriving business in the New World. Then they were carried by wagon and horseback from place to place about the small towns and goldfields of California until finally they were brought here to Jack London Village in the 1850s.

The Old Stone Cellar

This is the south face of the old stone cellar as it appeared in the 1970s, before the name of the complex was changed from the "Glen Ellen Mill and Wine Village" to the "Jack London Mill and Wine Village", and before its eventual collapse.

The Collapse

Architecture is not simply the domestication of nature's structures in the service of man's dreams, and it does not take place only in the paperwork of blueprints, contracts, and county permits. Architecture is the running dialogue that grows between builder and nature, during which a building (noun and verb) emerges to breathe and, in its time, to pass away. What follows is a romanticized description of what may have happened, long before it should have, on such a day.

It must have been a terrifying sound in the quiet of that afternoon, a horrifying groan and rumbling across the way, below the hill where the architect stood overlooking the place where the building had sat for over a century— until that day.

The winery had been built by Chinese hands, shoulders and backs; they were skilled with stone, and done with building the railroad, and ready for any other labor. Joshua Chauvet had designed the great building and had directed their work, and when they were done the 19th Century California landscape was occupied by a new breed of architecture: great stone walls, three stories high, crowned and bound together by heavy timber.

Over the century that followed, the history of California winemaking unfolded in the Valley of the Moon. Year after year, vintage after vintage, men brought in the harvest, separated the grapes from their stems, and practiced the alchemy of an ancient craft. Sons steadily improved upon their fathers' skills, and in time the wines of Sonoma came to be known internationally. All through this, that great building crouched where it had been built beside the stream, patiently sheltering the wines and the labor of the workers that produced them.

The architect and his friend had discovered the great stone building some ten years earlier, abandoned now on a side road that once had been the only trail up the valley, before the highway was built a mile or so to the east. I've seen the photographs, and understand what they saw, and bought, and sought to preserve.

From what I'm told, the roof eventually needed to be repaired, as happens with all buildings from time to time. The roof is, after all, that part of the building most exposed to nature's weathering, as it shelters to protect what the walls surround to embrace within. The workmen were up on top that day, removing roofing materials and timbers in preparation for the repair. Somehow they did not realize that the joists and rafters they were removing, one by one, had actually held the walls together like a capstone, or the hoops of a barrel, ever since it's original design a century before.

I can imagine the nervous glances the workmen would have exchanged when they felt that great animal begin to tremble, when they began to hear the restless sounds come up from the belly of the immense structure, before they recognized the noise of shifting stone, and dropping timbers. I can almost see the architect up on the hill, who had been observing their progress from a distance, and almost feel his abrupt, remote despair as helplessly he watched the building crumple, crumble, and begin gradually to unravel, collapse,

and sink into the clouds of dust that rose about it from the ground.

The men would have exchanged shouts, leaping from place to place as great portions of the roof separated and came down with the walls. They rode the building down that day I am told, surprisingly unhurt by the fall from three stories up, stone and timber falling all about them, with them.

It must have been a most amazing sound, followed by the empty silence of a new, abrupt and permanent absence, a great hole left behind by the vanish of a grand building, remaining alone there in the sad hush of the afternoon.

The Old Stone Cellar, Later

This photograph of the stone cellar was taken just before it came down in 1983. We are standing at the side of Arnold Drive, now paved, looking north at the building's southern end, and the newer cinderblock building just beyond it.

Remembering the Invention of Jack London Village

When Charles Beardsley first purchased the old Pagani Winery in 1969, it had been vacant and neglected for more than a decade. By that time it was little more than a crumbling collection of old farm buildings that had been left behind on a country backroad, a mile or so from the highway. Armed with grant money provided by Lady Bird Johnson's interest in restoring the American Heritage, he quickly set about inventing Jack London Village, as it is known today.

Charles cut a colorful and somewhat eccentric figure, controversial, and commanding. With his partner Robert Fritschi he repaired the buildings and cleaned up the property, pulling jettisoned winemaking equipment out of the creek to set up along the pathways with signs to indicate their history. He was a veritable raconteur, and would give creekside lectures on art, philosophy, and what life was like here in (for him) the not too distant past. He eventually imagined into being a sprawling community of artists and musicians here, where galleries, shops and studios were established, flourished, and in time became replaced by others.

A few figures have stepped out of those earlier days to stop by my cabin and introduce themselves. Yvonne Giambrone-Martin showed me where her first jewelry shop "Lord of the

Rings" had been, on the south side of the mill's first floor in 1972. There was no deck there at the time she said, just a narrow walkway; she shared the floor with "Spoon River" and, later, "The Waterwheel" —restaurants that had occupied the mill in those days before Juanita.

You can't talk about those days at JLV without eventually coming around to the grand and legendary muumuu-clad proprietress of "Juanita's Galley". Juanita lived in broad, colorful strokes that fascinated and dismayed many people. It was her habit, for example, to sneak up on unsuspecting customers and "earmuff" them by throwing her immense breasts about their heads in a suffocating hug from behind.

Juanita's food was honest and simple, and her prime rib cheap and good, but the health department did have occasional problems with the menagerie of animals that wandered among the tables: the monkey and the enormous pig in particular.

While Yvonne was talking with me about her memories of Juanita, Elliot Kallen stuck his head in the door and they immediately recognized one another, even after three decades. Elliot had been a part of Synergy, a musical cooperative that had built the recording studio in the old wooden building.

Yvonne and Elliot quickly burst into rapid check-ins about mutual friends and shared memories that they each took turns embroidering, correcting and reminding one another of who else had been in the village, and what else had happened. She remembered Van Morrison, and he talked about Norton Buffalo and Metallica. I, meanwhile, began dreaming about someday hosting a reunion here, with maybe an open mike. What a crowd!

A few days afterward I stopped in at Larry Brookins' studio, "Lost Art Stained Glass", out on the highway. Larry recounted the stories that he recalled, including the drives that Beardsley would take through the Village in his vintage

Rolls Royce. Fritschi would be driving in appropriate livery attire, and Beardsley would be sitting in the back seat in his finest grey suit, with his hands clasped together over the gold knob of his gentleman's walking stick, tipping his hat grandly to the passers-by.

Larry had built the cabin that I use as an office beneath the old bin in 1969 as a showroom for his work, while keeping his workshop in the basement of the mill. He moved into the general store after a while, which had stood where the decks are now arranged along the creek.

Tobi Smith's jams and jellies shop, where she sold what she made of windfall fruit garnered about the valley ("Aunt Nelly's Kitchen... Saints Preserve Us!"), had been in the general store just before Larry. She lived just above the stream in the basement just about where the lower deck was built after the fire.

An article appeared in the *Sonoma Index-Tribune* January 6, 1977, headlined "Fire hits London Village store". It told of the sad end of the general store and one-time stagecoach stop that had been companion to the mill since the 19th Century. One of the young men that tried to save the building that day told me how it had burst into sudden flame and roared like a blast furnace, having been composed of such old dry wood.

I've also run across a fellow who had helped build the decks afterwards, as a much younger handyman; he has since become a photographer in Marin whose landscapes are very well-known. It seems time always marches on, carrying us all along with it; those of us who remember have a sense of where, and why.

The Mill in Disrepair

This photograph of the mill was taken a few years before Charles Beardsley purchased the property in 1969, inaugurating the restoration of what came to be known as Jack London Village.

The Museums of the Past

Back in 1968 the Jack London Square Merchants' Association down in Oakland hired Russ Kingman to be their Executive Director. At the time, he wrote, "I had very little knowledge of Jack London. It was obvious that if I was going to handle the promotion of Jack London Square I had best know much more about the man."

And so Kingman began reading everything he could find by and about the author, and as his collection of books and memorablia grew he became increasingly inspired by London's vigorous vision and energy. "My office is a veritable museum on Jack London," he wrote to a friend; "someday I hope to have a Jack London Museum."

In early 1971 Russ met Charles Beardsley, who had purchased the mill and winery property from the Pagani family a few years earlier and was developing it as the Glen Ellen Mill & Wine Village. Under his direction small shops, historic displays, and small eateries were being established, and tourism was becoming encouraged. While visiting Jack London Square in Oakland, Beardsley discovered Kingman's extensive collection of Jack London memorabilia and, recognizing the opportunity, he persuaded Russ to set up a museum display for weekend festivities at the Village.

Russ and Winnie Kingman came up each weekend while still working in the Bay Area, until Russ finally told Winnie, "This is too much. Let's move up to Glen Ellen. If we can't support ourselves selling books, we'll get part-time jobs to supplement our income."

In July of that year Russ wrote, "I am either going to put a Jack London Museum in Glen Ellen or at the Square [in Oakland]. I have enough material for a 6,000 square foot museum but no place to put it. Since I have spent every penny I own to buy it, I have no money to start it." Later he decided the museum "would be in the old Chauvet Grist Mill. Jack spent much time in this old building so it would be a good place."

Soon afterwards "The World of Jack London" occupied the basement of the old mill, and the name of the complex was changed to the Jack London Mill and Wine Village. Sometime later, in 1974, Russ and Winnie moved the Jack London Bookstore across the street, where it remained for many years.

When the London-based beverage giant Diageo purchased the Glen Ellen Winery (the name of Pagani's winery) in 1993, a tasting room was established at JLV that included a museum of local history. Photographs taken of that installation in 1995 can be seen at the website for the architects that designed the tasting room and museum.

According to that website, "the architect's task was to create a casual, comfortable and functional visitors center from the historic collection of wood and concrete buildings... The history center, now a favorite Sonoma County visitor's destination, was created by linking five enormous vats, originally designed to hold wine, to form a rhythm of sandblasted concrete exhibition spaces."

In 1998 Glen Ellen Winery was sold to The Wine Group, and the tasting room and collection of historical archives was moved away from JLV to downtown Glen Ellen. A few years

later Navillus Birney Winery purchased that building, along with the museum, and established their own tasting room there on July 1, 2003. Their website described the archives as featuring "an expansive historic exhibit devoted to Glen Ellen's rich history. Included are numerous photographs and memorabilia of famed Glen Ellen authors Jack London and M.F.K. Fisher."

In 2007 that building was sold once again, and the archives were turned over to the Glen Ellen Historical Society, who brought them back to the village where they are back on display. The old photographs can be found in the hallway of the cinderblock, where they give a good idea of how our community has become what it is today.

History and Community

A dear friend recently drew my attention to how closely I have associated history with community. I can believe it: history and community are inextricably interwoven for me, warp and woof.

A community without a sense of history is composed only of neighbors that are strangers who simply reside next door to one another, and history without a sense of community is that boring subject we were all required to study in high school, with its endless lists of explorations, discoveries, battles, and treaties. Either one is without significance on its own, while each brings great meaning to the other.

The history that fascinates me here at JLV is not simply what may have happened before I arrived. Instead, I look into the faces of the people that I meet here at the village and ask myself "and where is *this* person coming from?" and "what lies behind *that* expression?" This is the living history that confronts me every day in my direct relationships with others, giving meaning to the days that I share with them.

In my practice as a psychotherapist I've learned that the past is always with us, whether we are aware of it or not. Buildings are not haunted, they simply enclose and shelter. It is ourselves that are haunted— either by our own indulgences

in nostalgia or by the ghosts of the past to which we are particularly vulnerable. Either way, this haunting represents an incomplete involvement with what has taken place, and an incomplete understanding of who it is we are.

Nostalgia denies the opportunity to be changed that a more conscious consideration of history can provide. It is a subjective and therefore prejudicial recollection of events and people, in a revisionist approach that intends to validate and support the opinions we already hold— an egosyntonic sort of narcissism that ignores what really happened when it contradicts our self-serving fantasies.

An example of indulgence in nostalgia often happens when I am driving along Stage Gulch Road. I remember that this was the way my great-great-grandfather Robert Crane had ridden with his brothers, after staying overnight with General Vallejo and listening to his advice to invest their earnings from the goldfields into California real estate, as soon as possible. It's a delightfully romantic story, a sentimental one that overlooks the warts and wrinkles of the way Americans came to our valley and claimed ownership.

On the other hand, there is the genuine haunting by ghosts of the past. The experience of being haunted is the dark side of nostalgia. Rather than exercising our imagination to revise the past by projecting self-serving stories, we find ourselves vulnerable to the environment and introject, that is, become subjected to invasions of negative, egodystonic narratives that we imagine are lurking there.

These are the uncompleted tragedies that continue to play themselves out today, like the forgotten childhood traumas that I encounter in my work in one form or another. I've heard the stories of indian curses on this land for example, and believe them— if I were one of them I'd have been cursing too. Those who are haunted by these ghosts have submitted themselves to these curses out of an unconscious guilt or shame that makes them emotionally vulnerable.

I am certain this is why the more indigenous peoples have learned to respect their elders, and why we should do so as well. A nomadic life will tend to lose these strands of cultural continuity and unravel, if they are not held and consciously braided for strength by ritual, tradition, and the retelling of old stories. As George Santayana had warned, “those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” And while this heritage is maintained, our community— our society— is therefore nourished, and can thereby flourish.

The study of history then tends to the emotional heritage that we must learn to care about, and to care for. At the same time, while accepting this heritage, we must continue the legacy by contributing the vision that we each bring fresh into the world— our own dreams of what can be. Doing this, we enter into a healthy and dynamic interchange with life; for as our dreams shape our environment, so our environment will shape our dreams.

According to a wonderful book titled *Wisdom Sits in Places*, there is an Apache tradition about the accumulation of human experience in certain sacred locations that can be accessed and appreciated by the sensitive observer. If this is true, Jack London Village is one of the wealthiest locales in the region, and we have much to learn from those who have been here before us. And, taking these lessons to heart, we also have a lot to give while being here— making history ourselves, for those who are yet to arrive.

Jim Shere was raised on a small farm in the countryside north of San Francisco, and he never traveled very far. After attending UC Berkeley throughout the 1960s he returned to Sonoma, where he has a private practice in individual and family counseling. Jim is married, and has four children and four grandchildren.

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