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CAPAY VALLEY

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Volume seventeen

greatercapayvalley.org

The Greater Capay Valley
Historical Society
PO Box 442
Esparto, CA 95627

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Pictures, Stories and Research to reveal and celebrate a very special place--the Capay Valley!

Focusing on the
Greater Capay Valley,
including the towns
and areas surrounding
and leading to Cache
Creek and up the
Capay Valley

As I sit here writing in the peak of the summer heat in the Capay Valley, I have a lot of attention on farming. Yesterday I drove through the Central Valley from Bakersfield back to Sacramento on Highway 99 and other side roads--it was 103F! Apparently, while I was driving, the *Sacramento Bee* had just delivered the Sunday edition with a feature on the drought's effects on that area--the plight of our farmers and the collapse of the aquifers as they resort to groundwater pumping to save their crops--many of which, just like ours, are Almonds! We had just been remarking on the juxtaposed desert areas with the lush green farm areas and wondering about the obvious different techniques farmers are applying to try to deal with their lot: drip lines in almond orchards next to hedgerows, moisture-retaining ground-cover--and all interspersed with bone-dry creek beds and canals. Of course, in our own special farm valley, which is as I wrote in the last issue, "naturally blessed with a river-sized creek, several feeder springs, fertile soil, and a unique climate," the farmers are having to be just as innovative; Cache Creek is a trickle and some wells in the valley are dry...in an area dependent upon—and celebrating—agriculture, *it is always something!*

At the request of readers after my last feature, this issue has more art inspired by the beautiful Capay Valley. Two here are from my private collection.

Above, the historic Duncan home, 1879, by my mother, Jean Monroe. While she painted one day, I wandered in and she handed me a canvas & paint saying, "Try Louie Marty's place" across from our new home at CR 23-85C; to the right, my 12-year old attempt.



Mom always thought everyone could be an artist— "Just try," she'd say.



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Special thanks to: my contributing hobby-ornithologist, Jim Hiatt in Hungry Hollow; the Gordon family; local historians Douglas Nareau and John Gallardo, as always, so generous; and certainly all my faithful subscriber-members, donors and advertisers! I couldn't do this without you! And a big shout-out to my printer-angel, Jane! AND Cris Rominger re-designed our website as a donation in her father's name, so see what she and her daddy Gene Rominger have done for us at our newly revamped greatercapayvalley.org

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by Editor, Elizabeth Monroe

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Yolo County Historical Society

Original art of the Capay Valley continued: when Douglas Nareau heard I was interested in seeing the Canon School restored, he gave me the charming black-n-white at top, which he composed while studying photography in 1988.



*Below is an older black-n-white Mr. Nareau took in the 1970s for his masters thesis on the history of the Capay Valley—see Works Cited



In 1972 this building entered the National Registry of Historic Places in Yolo County. The current owners have tried to keep it in good condition, but the bell is missing and a falling tree limb caused the front porch awning to be removed, and trespassing vandals have made it impossible to keep locked up--they just break in. Isn't it time this treasure was completely restored?!

The Historic Schools of Capay Valley

While doing research on the historic country schools of Capay Valley, I found a treasure at the Spring Lake School museum on the Yolo County Fairgrounds: oils done by our own Charles “Bud” Gordon, whose mother was of the early pioneer Stephens family. I got permission from his son Charlie Gordon to reproduce them in an article about the history of these lovely—mostly-gone—schools! For the ones he did not paint—or were not available for me to photograph—I have some precious old photographs from readers. Enjoy!

The Capay Valley school with the most interest to me, of course, is the one my siblings and I attended in the 1950s—in the same town where our grandmother Elvira Grey Duncan attended Langville School 70 years before—the *Capay School*. Below are some photographs that focus on this now-gone but grand and lovely school that sat in the town of Capay. *Jim Hiatt recently found some old photos of his Hungry Hollow mother’s, Gayle Goodnow-Hiatt, whose family also attended, and shared them for this article. See below:*



Above, *Capay School* by Bud Gordon; at right is the Memorial to the old *Capay-Langville School* which is all that is left of it in the town of Capay—with the old school bell that called us all to class in the morning! After recesses, we were summoned by a small hand bell rung at an open window by teacher, Mrs. Owings.



Above, circa 1920s, Jim writes: *Mother’s brother---Uncle Art Goodnow--- is in back row, 2nd in from far right. I believe that of the two lady teachers, the one on the right is Aunt Edna Zentner. Art and Mother both had their aunt Edna as their teacher. You can see more of the kids than the building, but the picture’s still a good one. Is the tree on the right a Black Walnut or an Umbrella Tree? We’ve had both here, and the Umbrella trees had very dense foliage. Sucky, though; Grandma swore she’d never have another...Jim*
[I’m remembering that tree and many others on the property as black walnut—we kids spent many an hour cracking nuts with rocks—yum!]

The memorial reads: *The Capay-Langville School 1874-1980... unified with Cadenasso School in 1926...* NOTE: the original school in Capay was *Langville* and the original school in Cadenasso was the *Capay School*—historical research is such a challenge and adventure! When the valley schools were unified in 1961, the upper grades were bussed into Esparto to finish at Esparto Elementary; and all Valley kids had always gone to Esparto High School.

Up the Valley...



Left: Bud Gordon's oil of Rumsey School; & below it the school in 1973.

Right: 1920 Rumsey School kids, courtesy of the Lloyd Family
The old school is a private home now in Rumsey. It was originally called *Occidental* and located between & serving both Guinda & Rumsey. (Dist: 1876-1961) [see vol. 16]



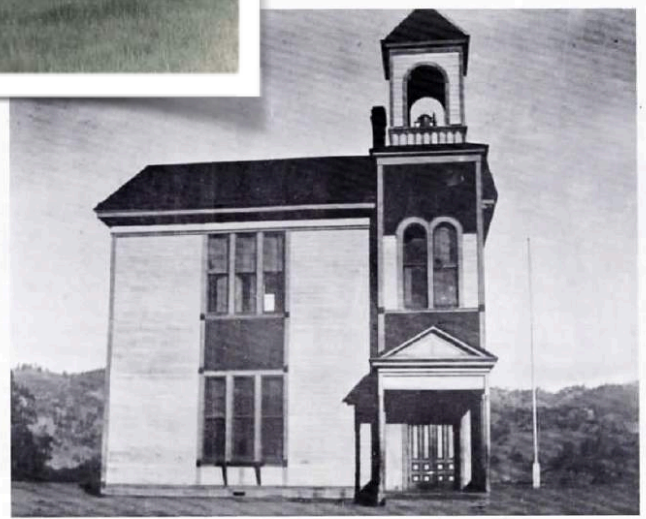
The undated Cadenasso School below may have been built in 1890s, but the original school house was built around 1866. Courtesy of Bob Taber

As a private home

Guinda Schools: at right: *may* be Summit School* east side of Cache Creek; below it is the Indian Industrial School; directly below that is Guinda School of 1891; and directly below is the Guinda School of 1918.



Photos courtesy of: Douglas Nareau, Todd Gettleman, Marilyn Lloyd, & YCHS



Guinda School built 1891



...and in the surrounding area: Hungry Hollow to Fairview and Dunnigan Hills...



At left, the site of the *Monday School* in Hungry Hollow on CR 88 off of CR14. Built by Samuel L. Monday. Many families in this area had followed African-American pioneer Basil Campbell to California and settled near here, so many of the students were African-American. The valley schools were never segregated, but proximity determined the student body. Below it is a picture the Yolo County Historical Society believes is the school. Its location appears on the 1900 wall map of Yolo County. Sam Monday was a white pioneer who settled in the same area in 1868 on his 160-acre parcel and had two daughters: Anna would marry WE Parker and Hattie would marry C Scott, both local pioneers to the greater Capay Valley. NOTE: In the 1850s Mr. Monday made several crossings to CA, bringing livestock and eventually a wife, Harriett Gramen, from their birth-state of Ohio.



At left: *Fairview School* and students in about 1900, courtesy of Faye Mast, whose ancestors lived near it and attended this school in the far north end of Hungry Hollow on CR 85 between roads 10 & 11. Below it, at left, is Bud Gordon's depiction.



At right: the building we believe was the *Haight School* and below it a typical school outhouse, which sits next to this so called "German School" once found on CR 85 at CR 14, now at the Fritz Durst Farm, where his ancestor, Oscar Durst, moved it.



Left: *Langville School*, circa 1879, by Jean Monroe. Many Hungry Hollow students attended school in the town of Langville/Capay



Esparto—where all the area kids attended High School. The school districts were unified in 1961, at which point the students from surrounding area schools were bussed to Esparto to finish grammar and high school.



Left: this historic photo, courtesy of The Yolo County Historical Society (who I believe had it from David Herbst) shows both the 1891-built Esparto High School at right, (originally the grammar school)—and to its left the “new” grammar school. Note the two outhouses sitting between the buildings. Esparto Union High School District was founded in 1892 [called Escalante 1890-1895]



As the Esparto High School monument shows, the original high school district was founded in 1892, when high school started in the grammar school built in 1891—the second oldest high school in Yolo County after Winters—and a newer building was built in 1923. Much of that building burned in 1939 and the Art-deco building seen here was a WPA project to replace it.

...& areas surrounding Esparto: Madison, Lamb Valley and northeast of Esparto across Cache Creek

The charming acrylic at right is signed just “Alice” and looks very much in the style of Alice Garrison, local artist —so I tracked her down to confirm! It depicts the still-standing, renovated Clover School out on CR19 east of CR 87, northeast of Esparto & Madison. When it was renovated, locals were asked to bring anything they had that would represent the old school, and several original items materialized, —including the old black boards! The school is often open for visitors, similar to the Spring Lake School in Woodland.



Left: Mountain School of Lamb Valley (District: 1875-1943) in a watercolor at Spring Lake School—without signature.

Directly above: Bud Gordon’s oil of the Gordon School (District: 1865-1951); the family tells me this first pioneer is not of Bud Gordon’s family line—pure name-coincidence!

Above left: Madison School (District: 1894-1950) Steve German Graphics





VALLEY STUDENTS—These students of Cadenassa School, class of 1915-16, posed for the camera. The school later merged with Capay-Langville School in the 1920s. The merger brought new ethnic variety and vitality to the school. The class members above are: back row, from left—Alyce Kingsbury who was the teacher, Thorton Russell, William Luck, Glenn

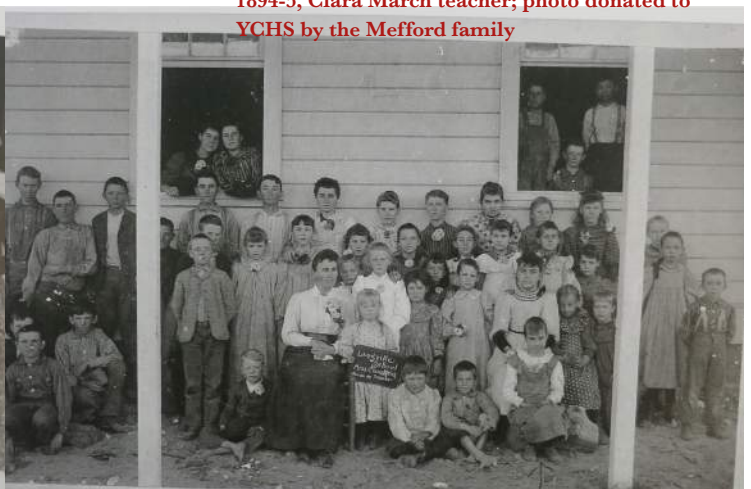
Richardson, John Howard and Cleo Perry; middle row, from left—Billie Bowles, Elwood Nurse, Gerald Thompson, Ralph Luck, Nina Thompson, Helen Russell, Veda Fowler, Neva Fowler, Ashley Nurse, Lowell Russell, Eddie Metzger, and Claude Thompson; front row, from left, two unidentified girls, Violet Clark, and Mae Denny.

As local historian Eftimeos Salonites put it, “Students from many different ethnic, cultural and socio-economic background had attended the Capay-Langville School throughout its long history—thus contributing greatly to the life style and enrichment of Capay and its school.” When it was announced the beloved Capay school would be demolished, the locals were welcomed to come “take a piece” of the school and my parents made sure all 4 of their kids had something to remember it by—mostly involving pieces of oak flooring our clever mother turned into art.

The original Langville School in Capay was built in 1874 and the newer building we fondly refer to as the *Capay School* (sadly demolished because it was not “earthquake proof”) was built in 1914 [see page 3], adjacent to the old school—so there was continually a school on this site from 1874. The new school had a solid basement foundation 55’ long by 50’ wide with a 10’ ceiling, with windows on all sides, providing shelter in foul weather for student recess and recreation. The furnace in the basement sat on a 12” slab of cement and kept the basement warm as well as the classrooms above. The floors were solid oak and the walls were plastered; the two main classrooms were divided by huge parlor doors, separating the lower grades 1-4 and the upper grades 5-8. The doors were often opened to include the whole school—and often the community—in dances and educational pageants, especially at Christmas. There were also two ‘study rooms’ and a kitchen for daily hot meal preparation. Of note is that the old building was moved to Esparto to become a movie house and later a recreation hall for one of the churches. Also of note: Capay School was one of the first school districts in the county or state to “unify,” becoming the Capay Unified School District. Cadenassa district (in 1928) did as Center (1875-1899) school did, they eventually unified with Capay and sent adjacent students there. Eftimeos described the original Langville school as “a beautiful white building (below and as art on page 5)—partially surrounded with a Victorian-type veranda,” with daily attendance of about 40 students from grades 1-9—there not yet being a high school in the area.



1890-91, including my own grandmother, “Grey” Duncan



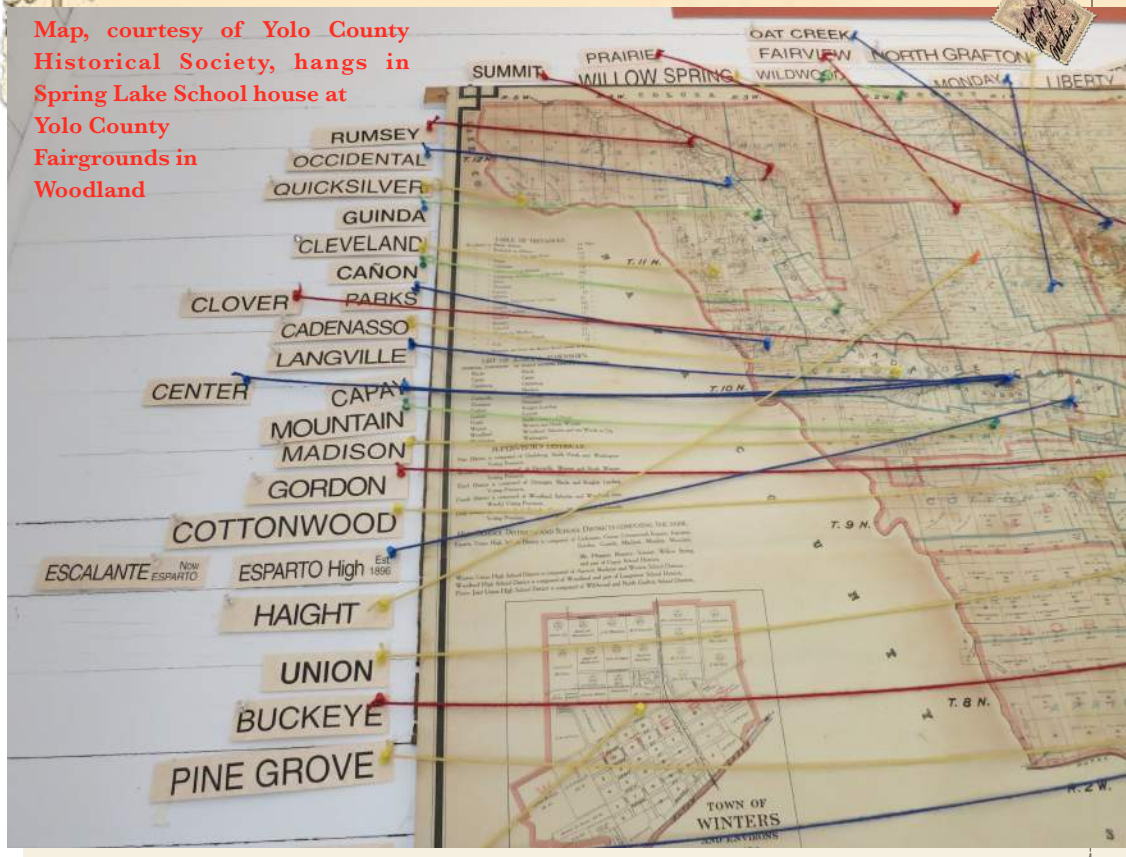
1894-5, Clara March teacher; photo donated to YCHS by the Mefford family



7. In 1919 Superintendent of Yolo County Schools, Miss Harriett Stoddard Lee, wrote about a *School System Unsurpassed*: in a county where the total public school teachers in 1909 was 81, we now had 110; enrollment went from 2403 to 2646; graduations went from 166 to 214. She also mentioning many of our western Yolo schools in particular: Esparto had just built a 4-room grammar school for \$20,600 and the Esparto high school had just completed an “auditorium, the basement of which is so arranged that manual arts and domestic science are taught here.” Adding vocational training and the manual arts and domestic sciences were all the rage and Esparto and Winters high schools were “fully and excellently equipped for instruction” in all. Further, Esparto high had “agricultural departments, bringing girls and boys close to the soil. The Esparto system was established under the Smith-Lever act and receives part of its support from the government...(and has) up-to-minute commercial departments with many of their products holding positions at ranking salaries.” And she goes on to say, “Guinda” claims one of the “most up-to-date 2-roomed school buildings in the state” and Madison district had built a new 1-room, “one of the most complete little buildings in the county.” Miss Harriett S. Lee was an early female superintendent of schools in Yolo County, and she made sure she sought out college-trained teachers, like herself; one was our own Alice Marsh

—who not only taught for years at Esparto High School, but went on to be an early female principal-superintendent of that school. Until this time, most teachers attended only “teacher training” after their proscribed 6-8 years of schooling—but times were changing! With Miss Harriett S. Lee’s encouragement, in 1919 Miss Marsh, single-lady school teacher, traveled from her home in Colorado, with her college degree and credentials, and settled in the town of Esparto—with a promise of top salary!

Map, courtesy of Yolo County Historical Society, hangs in Spring Lake School house at Yolo County Fairgrounds in Woodland



And the educational system in the small schools was “progressive.” Most often the instruction was “differentiated” —even before we “invented” the term! For instance, at the Capay School of my youth, if a teacher found that you had learned your numbers or could read, she simply bumped you up to the next level of reader or math book. Sometimes she just moved you to the next grade—by moving your seat to the next row!



Historical Research is Never without Controversy Some of the Schools, Locations and Dates are contested...

YOU BE THE JUDGE! —OR HELP US GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT BY CONTACTING *THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY* AT EMONROE@GREATERCAPAYVALLEY.ORG

For instance, the Hayes family descendants of pioneers who helped build and attended the Summit School tell me there never was a photograph of the school in *the east hills* of Guinda, at the *Summit*—even local historian David Herbst says he has never seen one. *BUT* Jeannette Molson, whose mother Addie Logan Molson was also a descendant of Summit pioneers, received from her mother a picture postcard with what she claimed was the Summit School. I have published this picture in prior issues and assumed that that was that—but immediately heard from others this was doubtful! When I asked members of the Yolo County Historical Society, they said, “If board member Jeannette says so, that is good enough for us.” *BUT* when YCHS let me tour their Spring Lake School to do some research, I found the very same school building on their wall—labeled *Esparto Grammar!* Compounding the problem is that across the room on another wall, and in a file photo they shared (see page 6 of this article), they have yet another, very similar building labeled the *Esparto Grammar!* *BUT* while it is the same basic architecture, it is 2-stories, not one! OK, I am laying out the pictures here for you to help me determine what is what...



As you can see in the top-left photo of students and staff—listed as *Esparto Grammar*—this matches the building to the right, clearly showing it as 2-story. The other one labeled *Esparto Grammar* appears below—sadly, none of these photos has dates! While the architecture is very similar, they are not the same—but the one directly below is an exact mirror-flipped image of the one at lower left, the postcard photo of the supposed *Summit School!*

The description of the Summit School from Ada Merhoff’s book, *Capay Valley, the Land & the People, 1846-1900* does cause one to question whether the school

at right could be *Summit School*: “the frame building with its full length porch along the elevated east side...” Additionally, George Hayes recently insisted that there was always a tall, old tree standing next to the site—there are no such trees seen here—and son Doug said Uncle Al, family historian, claimed no photos existed...



And then there is Monday School...

As far as we know, there was only one Monday School in the Monday District, so we are mystified as to whether these are all of the same building... We also believe the Monday School stood on CR 88, just south of CR 14—considerably west of what is now Zamora! But some of these students do indeed have Zamora surnames, like Weiss, as well as Hungry Hollow names like Foster. Hmmm... and if our facts are correct, there should have been a more culturally diverse student body...



Submitted by Jack Potter

Note: Edith Heidrick's name—more on her later, as she was once instrumental in collecting data on schools and getting Clover School renovated.

Monday School teacher Miss Sweeney with students Elsie, Wilma, George Weiss, Lester and Grace Foster, Alma, Albert, Tillie Hermle, Sophia Hansen, Ward Williams and Fritz Blicke at the closing of the school year in April 1905. Submitted by Edith Heidrick

*As you can see in the photo below, **Monday District** is on the sign, though the caption says it stood near Zamora between 1880-1900; note the photo directly at left is 1905 but seemingly in much better shape...*

Compare these photos to the one at lower left from YCHS—both lower buildings would appear to be the same one...



In any case, we found a lovely description of some events that took place at this tiny country school, taken from the *Daily Democrat's* 1996 column, *From our Files 100 years ago — 1896*: “Monday school district is in Northern Yolo County, and is a few miles west of Blacks Station. It is sustained by a thrifty, progressive, and enterprising population and is in a prosperous condition. The people of the neighborhood are anxious to promote anything intended to benefit the community...The school needed an organ and hit upon the plan of giving an entertainment for that purpose...was given in the school house...150 persons were in attendance and a handsome sum was netted...The literary and musical program consisted of songs and recitations in which the pupils acquitted themselves with great credit...a splendid supper was served

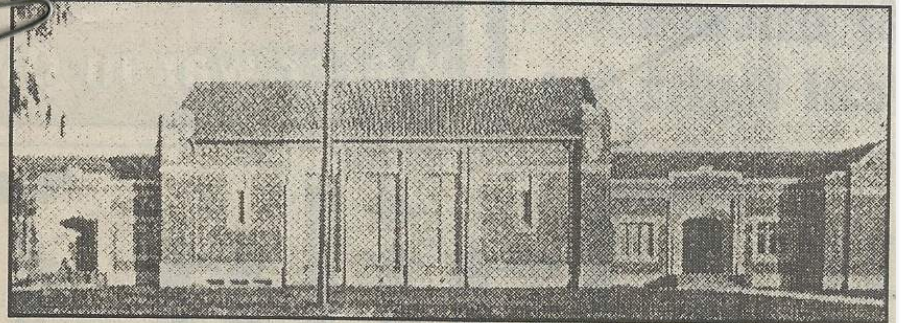
at midnight. The menu included chicken, turkey, salads, cold meats, relishes and all the delicacies of the season. Upon the conclusion of the program the floor was cleared for dancing, which was kept up until a late hour.”

District School west of Black's Station near what is now Zamora sometime between 1880 and 1900. Submitted by Edith Heidrick

Two photos, above and at top, were scanned from the book *Reflections of Woodland and Yolo County* by Ted Dixon. The one at left was courtesy of YCHS files.

School-related Misc:

When I began the project of our western Yolo County historic schools, I was given boxes of news clippings and old photos by readers—often without dates or reference to which paper—but here they are; hopefully they will tell a story of their own...



Esparto Union High School in 1926.

Submitted by Joseph T. Keehn

Not all are strictly in greater Capay Valley, but they add to our own “school story”—like Hesperian College, Yolo County’s first college, and some of the founders of which are Capay Valley pioneers! And our other “local heroes like:

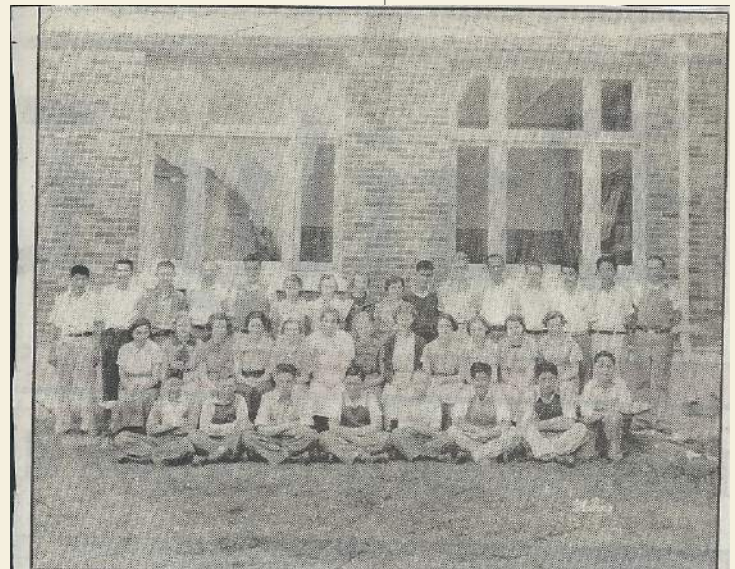
The Esparto Union HS above was built in 1923 to replace the wooden 1891 school and was largely destroyed by the fire of 1939 (see page 6)



Alice Marsh served as teacher, principal and then principal’s assistant from 1919 until 1959, officially retiring at age 70. When she arrived in 1919 at 30, Esparto’s population was less than 100 and her high school students were few. In 1927 she became principal and the graduating class totaled 15.

Below, the same brick building is seen in 1937 before the fire—much of this brick wing survived the fire...

Alice Marsh Hall at EHS was named in her honor and she remained in Esparto for most of her adult life—dying at 100!

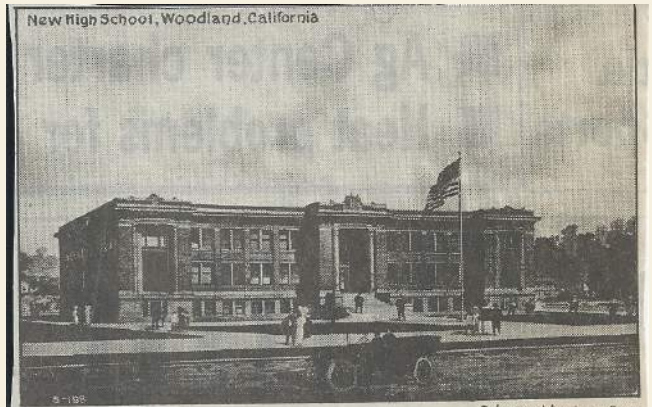
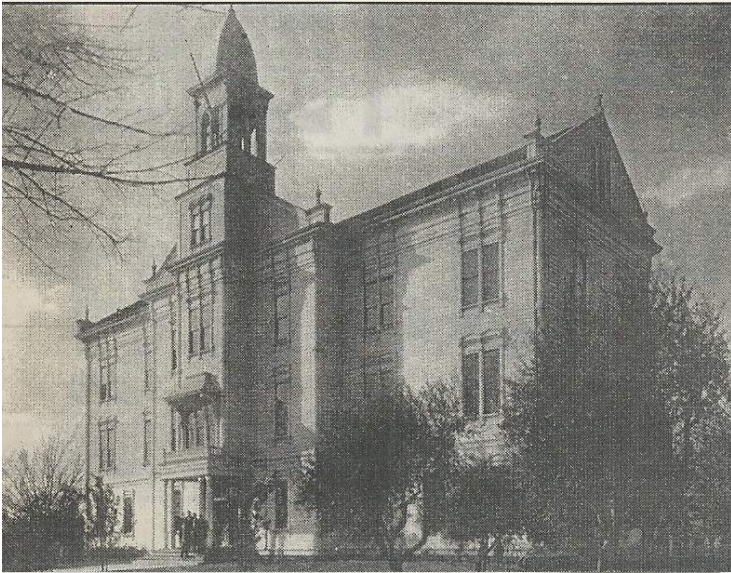


The 1936-37 sophomore class at Esparto High School when Alice Marsh was the principal.

Submitted by Mervin Dibble

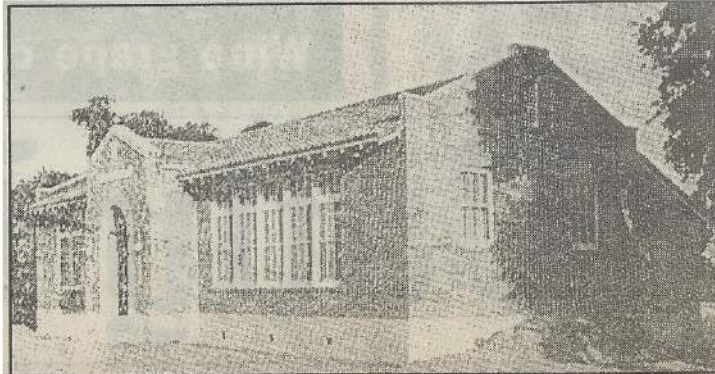
BLANCHE HAWKINS English, Lat'n, Physical Training	FACULTY	ALICE MARSH Commercial, Algebra, Music
MARtha GALCHUTT Home Economics, Drawing	LEE R. SWITZER, Principal History, Physics, Geometry, Manual Training	RICHARD WEENER Agriculture, Athletics

Beginning in 1859, local founders of Woodland, who wanted it to become the Yolo County seat, met to discuss getting a private college in town. Among them were John D. Stephens and William Gordon, A. Griffith, John Hoppin, and others. They pledged the money and after a few abortive attempts, were able to open the Hesperian College doors the same day as Abe Lincoln's Inauguration!



Submitted by Jerry Dyer
The magnificent new Woodland High School building, designed by W.H. Weeks of San Francisco, built in 1913, on the property deeded to Woodland High School from Hesperian College on Feb. 12, 1897.

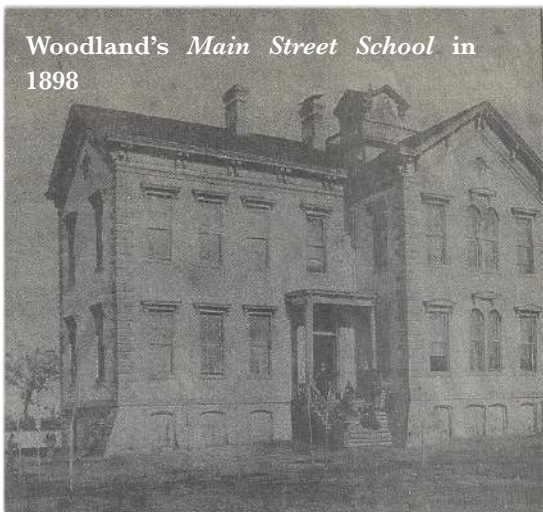
Top left is the original Hesperian College, housing the first Woodland High School, seen here in 1909. Later, a new Woodland High would be built on ground deeded from Hesperian in 1897, seen above.



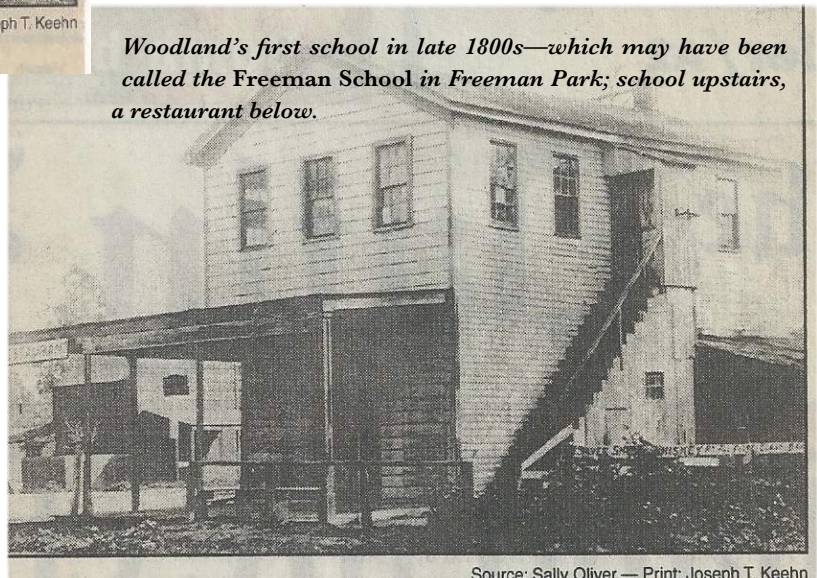
Woodland High School in 1926.

Submitted by Joseph T. Keehn

Eventually, many pioneers' children would attend Hesperian—like my grandfather James Wm Monroe, who would go on to be sheriff of Yolo County from 1911-1939; and Yolo County School Superintendent Harriett S. Lee. It was more of a high school by today's standards, so some would go on to other colleges and universities, often for business, ag or teaching.



Woodland's Main Street School in 1898



Woodland's first school in late 1800s—which may have been called the Freeman School in Freeman Park; school upstairs, a restaurant below.

Source: Sally Oliver — Print: Joseph T. Keehn

And who attended all these fine schools?

LOOKING BACK -- WITH PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY READERS...

Well, just about everyone I came “home” to research—early pioneer families! I am currently collecting information, photos, genealogy and stories from more historic families from the greater Capay Valley and as I researched the schools, their family names just kept popping up, of course: Hayes, Mast, Farnham and Gladney are currently in my headlights, so those names especially caught my attention! From the photos and news clippings shared by those families and others, I have several related to the schools to share. At right is Clover School in 1938—including Darrel Hayes and Owen Farnham. Darrel still lives near the school on CR 19 and I just met him at his 90th birthday party in Rumsey, where we made a date for an interview. And then there was Gessie Mae Jones Hayes, whose name appears on everything! Whether music or news related—or the making of wedding cakes for locals! Darrel’s sister is Dolores Neilson, whom he insists is the best one to talk to about their history. And then there is his cousin George Hayes, who just shared their mutual 90th birthday celebration last Sunday, so I was able to chat with this old family friend and set up an future interview with George, as well. The Farnham family is currently collecting material for me to write an article and custom-create a family video for them, as are the Gladneys. And ever resourceful Faye Mast Brannan continues to provide delights—so when I was given a news clipping of an interview with Ruth Mast at 93 years old, talking about her career as teacher at Clover School beginning in the 1940s, I was delighted! These bits and snippets are all going to come together nicely—in the next issue! Stay tuned!



Submitted by Gessie Mae Hayes

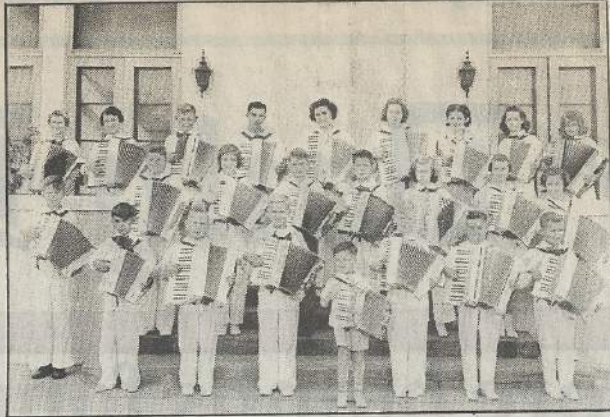
The 1938 graduating class of Clover elementary school, located on County Road 19 in Yolo County, L-R: Vernon Horgan, Darrel Hayes, Robert Whitcomb, Owen Farnham. Their teacher was Alice Relmers who now resides in Sacramento. Horgan now lives on Road 17, Hayes on Road 19, Whitcomb in Paradise, and Farnham lived on Road 24 until his death in the 1980s.

Below: Darrel Hayes, William Petty and George Hayes all turned 90 this year! Celebrated by family and friends on Sept. 28, 2014, in Rumsey, they are all descendants of Capay Valley pioneers.



Immigrants came looking for a Better Life--

HISTORICALLY AND NOW, THEY HELP DEFINE THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY



Submitted by Joe Keehn

A group photo of Mrs. H.L. Woolworth's Accordion Band in front of Elks Hall on Bush Street, Woodland, in 1939. Among those pictured are Gessie Mae Jones, Phyllis Marconi, Lloyd Cannon, Al Carrion, Josephine Bacchini, Jane Frazier, Virginia Neal, Annie Hanke, Mary McGrew, George Carrere, Colleen Stetler, Wilfred Nelson, Bill Wirth, Bob Armstrong, Howard Peterson, Clarence Schaupp, Robin Nichols, Eugene Scholtz, Floyd Duncan, and Perry Skinner (identification was not available for everyone in photo).



Above, Ruth Mast, at 93, telling her story to the Daily Democrat in the 1990s, how in the 1940s she was asked to teach at Clover School, a few miles from her home. She took night classes to earn a credential and taught up to 17 pupils in 1st-8th grades, separating students by ability, not grade level: "I worked on the ability level each child showed. The superintendent thought that was just super."

GESSIE MAE JONES HAYES — I WISH I'D KNOWN HER! Many I have talked to over the last 6 years have said, *It's too bad you didn't get here in time to interview Al Hayes; Gessie Mae;*

_____—*you fill in the blank!* But I went off to have a life outside the Valley, just like my mother insisted, and when I came back, I had a whole world to discover—what an amazing place and people and stories! Sometimes I am lucky enough to hit on “the one with all the historical knowledge,” but other times I just make great discoveries—and new friends! I have been welcomed into homes and hearts and told grand stories in the process! And, often, I meet ghosts of those who went before and I *do* wish I had met them, but I am getting to “know” them anyway—through those who did know and cherish them!

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I look forward to writing about Gessie and more about the Hayes and Mast families—and many more! I will take a break from the quarterly journals at the end of 2014 to get the hardcover book done—a compilation of all 18 journals I have written so far—and a few other books I am working on about this area, and to do more research. I will keep collecting and will keep the website updated with discoveries, so if you want to see another family or story included, please let me know at emonroe@greatercapayvalley.org. And please continue to renew your membership for the occasional newsletter I will mail out! The reduced rate is just \$25 per year—see last page or greatercapayvalley.org for details!

Of Our Year-round Birds

Say's Phoebes & Black Phoebes:



Our two Phoebes are year-round birds, but could be thought of as Winter's answer to our Kingbirds [see volume 16] which fly away in fall and leave us with Say's Phoebes and Black Phoebes—which, other than coloration, are roughly similar in size, habits, flight patterns, and behavior. Phoebes are fundamentally here year-round, but are not as vocal as our Kingbirds, and in general they are not as numerous. We're nearing the end now of our Kingbird time of the year, and they're the most numerous birds we have. During August, they are much quieter vocally than earlier in the year, so if you're as used to the giggling, chuckling calls throughout the day, when you walk outside now,

something seems missing. It's like Kingbirds know their time of leaving until next year is close at hand. When they're gone, they're gone quickly. Holding their niche until early next April or so are the Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) and the Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*).

Presenters at *The Center for*

*The Black Phoebes
on this page were
photographed by
Jim Hiatt on Cache
Creek at Low Water
Bridge in the upper
Capay Valley in
August, 2014.*



One exception to the similarities between Kingbirds and Phoebes is a similarity Phoebes have with Swallows: mud nests. Phoebes build a nest much like that of a swallow, but in addition to under bridges, against cliffs and rock outcroppings, they also use the underside of a roof of a home, garage, out-building, barn, and so on—see the photos here taken under my house eaves in Hungry Hollow.



Phoebes are an ashy-sooty black on the upper parts, and white on the under-parts. Both Phoebes are very people-tolerant, and will allow a slow and careful approach. Neither is an urban bird, just like their Kingbird counterparts. Both are nearly exclusively insect eaters, though in the winter both will eat berries as well, and according to my "bird bible," *Birds of North America*, Blacks have been known to dive for small fish, like mosquito fish or minnows (*Gambusia affinis*); I'd love to see this sometime!

They are also the near-opposites of the Kingbirds for vocality. Calls are very infrequent, and quiet and two-or-three-noted with both birds, like "Pee-urrrr," and "Sit-see" and "Tee-hurrr" "Si-see" and the like. 3-noted calls can be used during courting or in fending off rivals. They are territorial only to a small degree; unlike Kingbirds, these won't be found chasing hawks, owls, and so on. They're just quiet little "keep to themselves" types. A pleasant surprise to me a week ago was to be up at the Low Water Crossing above Rumsey, when I got pictures of two of the Blacks on the same rock, seen on the opposite page. Good to know they're that far up the Capay Valley—and I saw several while I was there. I also saw Bald Eagles and two Little Green herons in same trip; both are a treat to see.





*Left: White-crowned Sparrow, taken from *The Birds of North America**



Right: Yellow-crowned Sparrow, photographed by Jim Hiatt in Capay Valley


We also have Sparrows in Capay Valley and Hungry Hollow this time of year. I wanted to treat two in particular which involve childhood memories with me: the White-Crowned and Yellow-Crowned Sparrows. We have a number of others, like the English Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow, to name two—perhaps at another time I can do a fuller coverage of these, as they are also trademarks of our area.

As a youngster, I had a fascination for sounds of nature, including the calls of these two little sparrows on cold & foggy evenings at Grandma Goodnow's ranch in Hungry Hollow. As the sun was going down, and as the light was fading, these little birds (large for sparrows) would begin to gather in brushy areas for the night. The callings and twitterings would become more intense as they came together in the evening as one called to many: "PEEP!" or "DINK"—both sharp and loud. Several would form a chorus of sorts in this, calling all their friends in to roost. During the daytime, the calls are somewhat varied, along the line of "Der-dee-DEE-DEE-dur!" or "Dee-dee-DEE-DEE-DEE-dur!" If only you could compose these into music, somehow. Hearing and enjoying enough of these little pronouncements have their way of imprinting themselves on your mental "hard drive of memories" and they're not easily forgotten, if you're a devotee like me: I'd be thinking, "Ohhhh, this was such fun to hear these little ones again, but now I've got to get back to homework. One day, one day..." Well, now I am retired to Grandma's ranch and get to enjoy them at will!

These are a gregarious little lot, and a good translation of these peeps and twitterings would be something like "I am here, you are there; we are all here." That saying came from my old CSUS Ornithology Professor when we talked about it after class one day. His was quite a distinctive name: Miklos Deserios Francis Udvardy was world-renowned. He loved personal anecdotes of these things and it was an effective part of how he taught. Hungarian by origin, he migrated here as the old Soviets were coming in to "liberate his country" in the 1950s.

These two sparrows are not identical all over, as the name should imply. The heads are distinctive in color: the Yellow-Crowned with a yellow stripe on the crown of the head & a black bar below that, across the eye, and then gray below that; where with the White-crowned, a white stripe instead of yellow, then a lower white bar again, and then a black eye bar, the head with these being the more distinctive of the two. Below the head they're similar in size, but the color differs a little more: the WC has a gray and brown breast/abdomen, with white bars and spots on brownish wings. The YC body is pretty much the same but without the white spots on the wings. You can see this in the photo above right—this Yellow-crowned beauty had just survived a near-lethal encounter with a kitty-cat in my yard, and had a damaged wing, which was why I was able to get unusually close for exceptionally good shots. At left, since the White-crowned aren't here currently, this photo was taken from *Birds of North America*. Before the early 1960s, when Woodland was 1/5 of its current size and a good part of the area west of West Street was tomato fields and general countryside, many more of the *rurally* species could be found there: Acorn woodpeckers abounded, along with Juncos, Creepers, Owls, and even pheasants.

Nesting is usually on or near the ground, made of bowls of coarse materials, with 1-3 broods a year being the norm. Food is a varied plate, with insects, seeds, spiders, berries, and even grass.




Birds and Bunnies in Flux—this drought doesn't help!

It's always something in farming! When I asked a few farmers how they were dealing with the drought in Capay Valley and Hungry Hollow I hear many are putting in drip lines and drilling deeper wells to save and access water. The cost for deeper wells and more high-powered pumps is formidable and the water is finite, of course, so many are turning to drip lines to conserve at the same time. You would think that would be a purely good idea—but there is always something, as I said! For instance, the local birds—not to mention the rodents and insects many of them feed on—have come to depend upon the overflow water from irrigated fields and orchards and the bushy habitat agriculture provides. Change the water delivery system or the water-thirsty crops and you change the habitat and the animals have to adjust. We have already seen the changes to populations like pheasant when someone had the bright idea to introduce wild turkeys from the East, since our indigenous turkeys were all hunted to extinction: the eastern turkeys have flourished in the habitats once used by pheasant, so we have lost one species and gained another—ahem, somewhat less lovely and considerably more destructive, but just as good eating, I hear! And then, of course, farmers have used chemicals for decades and while it is not always provable, the guess is that we have lost other species due to loss of feed-insects and egg shell thinning, etc. Not all farmers would agree with this assessment, of course. Jim Hiatt and I have had this debate on a few occasions and our resident birder has this to say: *"I'm not at all sure why, but some Falconiformes (Hawks, Owls and Eagles) have been in a flux state for some years, now. When I was younger we had Kestrels/Merlins (Sparrow Hawks to 'us'sens', as Mother would say) by the score and everywhere. Then, for a decade or so you rarely saw one. Now, twixt this year and last, they are not only here again but all over the place! Was it pesticides as some claimed? Not too likely, I would think: I worked for Grower's Air two winters in the early 1980s and although we were using some nasty stuff then, like paraquat and so forth, we've used nothing like that in the past 20 years [and the County looks to cite those who do otherwise] but even then, today's stuff is SO much better, biodegrades so much quicker...if insecticides were to blame, we wouldn't have water bugs in our ditches—or skeeters, and Mosquito Control is still in business and we still have WNEE (West Nile Equine Encephalitis) and that's carried by the Culex tarsalis skeeter, and those still abound! I'm just glad these birds are back! White-tailed Kites, sadly, have done the opposite. They were near extinction in California 50 years ago and are now down to 50 pairs. Supposed to be—but never proven—due to DDT and the resultant bug loss and egg-shell thinning, but if that were true, it would have affected all other species that eat bugs, and their numbers didn't dwindle. We haven't used DDT—even for tree-holing (to get Aedes ventrovittis, the tree-hole mosquito, like in olive tree holes and so on)—since 1962. Marsh Hawks (Circus cyaneus)—also called "Marsh Harriers"—have never been in danger in my life time. And all the others---Rough-Leggeds, Prairie Falcons (old-timers called 'em "bullet hawks"), Harris Hawks, and so on have never been in trouble, numbers-wise...wouldn't they have been affected?"*

And of all critters most prone to pesticide effects, the Buzzard (or Turkey Vulture) should have been the MOST vulnerable, as they are the most "end-consumer" we have, since all the carrion they eat would have the poison build-up—and there have been no recent reportings of Vultures "calling in sick" that I know of! Exactly the same holds true for Horned Owls--another end-consumer.

And as for the near extinction of local Jackrabbits, Cottontails and Pheasants, I primarily blame the Coyotes! Seeing in the infra-red at night makes Jacks and Pheasants too easy a prey. And there are fewer sheep in this area any more, so coyotes began depending on the local bunnies and birds. But with no water in the canals or ditches, the rodents and birds diminish and the coyotes come in closer to the farms and ranches in desperation—my barn-cat population has been dwindling as a result!"

It's always something...



A History of Drought: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future

http://agwaterstewards.org/index.php/practices/irrigation_management

<http://calclimateag.org/a-history-of-drought-learning-from-the-past-looking-to-the-future/> by Adam Kotin and Dru Marion on February 3, 2014; [I paraphrased, here, their article I included in volume 16.]

Most of us remember the drought of 1976-1977, but California has often endured water scarcity throughout its history, and each occasion has brought its own challenges. Out of those challenges have come valuable lessons, and as the current dry spell becomes more severe it is worth remembering--and learning from--the state's long history of unpredictable weather fluctuations.

Settlers' accounts of the area are laden with odd conclusions based on the extreme conditions present at the time of observation. For example: a dry Sonoma was declared entirely unsuitable for agriculture in 1841. The Sacramento Valley was written off as "a barren wasteland." Much of the Central Valley was just a great "inland sea" during the torrential floods of 1861-1862, when Sacramento could be traversed only by canoe, then drought-stricken two years later in 1864.

By the early 1920s, those California farmers who did irrigate

relied mostly on groundwater and flowing river sources, along with some smaller reservoirs, which sustained them just enough through the dry years. The decimation wrought by the 1924 drought encouraged more widespread interest in irrigation systems, along with investment in bonds for larger systems to store water and transport it to where it was needed.

The Dust Bowl droughts of 1928-1935 stoked a desire for water-moving and storage on an even grander scale, and saw the design and construction of the federal Central Valley Project system of canals, pumps and aqueducts. Later, the multi-year droughts of 1947-1950 and 1959-1960 (as well as some extreme floods in the intervening years) helped to justify investment in the State Water Project, which irrigates the Central Valley and keeps taps flowing in Los Angeles.

Then came the 1976-1977 drought. At the end of the 'wet' season in 1976, rainfall levels were at 65% of the norm, reservoirs were depleted, and there was little to no Sierra snowpack to speak of [sound familiar?]. Fears were confirmed as 1977 rolled in and marked one of the driest years on record. Forty-seven of California's 58 counties declared a local drought emergency, making them eligible for relief money on both the state and federal level.

This article led me to research what our local farmer-ranchers had to say about the droughts in the late 1800s. Mary Elizabeth Franklin was a young girl living on a farm west of Woodland (before marrying and moving to the Capay Valley in 1879) and she recalls the 1864 drought like this: *"1864 was one of the hard years I remember; there was no rain that year and people were hard put to get along. I remember that we children left nothing on our plates—there was enough, but we were not given more of a helping than we needed—nothing was wasted, not a crumb. That was the year that my father [Ben Franklin] and his brother drove oxen and covered wagon up into the mountains to get food for the stock—rain had been more plentiful in the mountains and there was hay for the oxen and work for the men in haying. Grandmother and I made the trip home by star. Farmers in Yolo county drove their stock into Lake County that year for feed over along the coast. I remember them telling that the Lake county folks didn't min them driving in their stock, if only they would leave their squirrels at home—but the squirrels were hungry too, and they had to move to other pastures, too!"*



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*“Downside of water conservation is just no water around here for wildlife—except for the parts of Cache Creek where some alfalfa tailwater ends up in pockets in the creek—and meaning that the Coyotes come right up to my chain link yard fence as they smell the rubbermaid tub of water I have for the barn cats! They bark just like your pet dog would—and this close, the whining is **very loud!** Several cats have gone missing, too—less wildlife means less for coyotes to eat...”*

Jim Hiatt

Drip Irrigation: not one gallon of water left as “tailwater”—can't get more efficient with our life's blood than that! Same with all other tomato farmers out here—and we have square miles of them, now! Most local farmers have done as we are likely to do: retrofitted/upgraded their wells by having lowered the pumps in their casings and added bigger pump motors to offset lowered ground water tables. At the end of July, our water table at the well casing was the lowest it's been since 1977. So, we'll be more ready should times get rougher here...” wrote Jim Hiatt when he sent me these photographs taken recently in Hungry Hollow.

I recall when my dad needed a well at our new home south of Esparto and called Ol' man Roy Hayes to witch the well after a drilling company had come up with two dry holes—amazing an successful!

Jim Hiatt had his own family story about the great drought of 1864—with some interesting side notes:

"Great Grandpa Phinn told the tale. He apparently went by both "John" and "Phinn," as I have correspondence with both designations. Used to say, 'Awww, Hell, nobody can spell "Phineas," so just call me John.' He also shortened the then-Germanic spelling Goodenough" to Goodnow, as the former rendition was 'a waste of damn good ink'. He had his last son, Raymond, when he was 61, but seeing as how Great Grandma Ellen was 24 years his junior, making her 47, she had longer to be a Mama than he did a Papa. Willie, their 4th child, and Raymond both died of Diptheria, at ages 9 and 8, respectively--many things common and deadly then that nobody's concerned with now. Anyhow, seems that somewhat similar to now—and perhaps even more so—they were going through a multi-year drought (droht? drott? drawt? draught? draht?--awww hell, 'tweren't rainin' for waaay too long, no matter what creative spelling you see in the old-timers' notes!) Anyway, with the Goodnow Canal not yet having been constructed, a party of farmers took buckboards over into the bypass, present day Conaway Ranch area, and cut and baled tules—right in the middle of Malaria country, then! Skeeters and gnats were just god-awful, then, but in spite of all that, they brought the baled tules back to give the cattle something to eat—which they begrudgingly did—but presently that ran low, too. In desperation, they drove the cattle up the crick bed [Cache Creek] up Capay Valley, so's they could drink along the way, clear up into Lake County, to see if they could find vittles for them up there."



The Coyote scat shown by Jim Hiatt above is filled with grain. In desperation, they will eat grain—as well as barn cats and family pets! Lambs are especially vulnerable, so ranchers have increased their use of dogs and llamas—and shot guns! Mountain lions have also been seen more frequently of late, coming down to the creek and canals, but finding little water or wildlife...

Another “extreme weather decade” was that of the 1890s. Severe winter storms of 1895-1897 caused disastrous flooding, followed by prolonged hot, dry winds in 1897, and then *the drought of 1898* followed severe frosts and even snow. Wheat and orchards were so damaged many farmers gave up and left the area. But in the last 2 years of that decade, spring rains brought relief to those who stuck it out. The railroad company [which built the Vaca Valley-Clear Lake line up Capay Valley in 1888] was encouraged enough to build a rail spur across what is now county road 85 to a gravel bed on the Duncan Brothers’ property to extract gravel from the creek bed. Severe weather and the Depression would eventually lead the railroad to reduce their service up the valley, eventually stopping it all together [see volume 7].

NOTE: today you can still see the Capay Depot sitting at an odd angle due to this old spur. The old depot was moved to this spot in the 1930s from the far west end of town and has been so renovated it does not look like the depot—but it is! TGCVHS would like to put a plaque here and return a replica depot sign to the building—stay tuned! Today, it is owned by John Foster of BZ Bees; it is a rental and the tenants sell his honey at a stand out front—check it out and enjoy some local honey with your history!


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Mary Elizabeth Franklin married Wyatt Godfrey Duncan in 1879 and moved to Hungry Hollow and describes the agriculture in that area so that it is easy to see that our current farming practices have changed to much more water-thirsty crops, like alfalfa, tomatoes and orchards, than the grains and mostly dry-farming practiced in this flat, dry area when the early pioneers began arriving in the mid-1800s; *“When I came here there are practically no orchards; wheat was the main crop, besides livestock. There were no tractors or electricity; everything was done by horse or mule power...most of our grain crop fed the hogs; there were lots of sheep, too. Stock to work the farm, besides the cattle, hogs and sheep raised for market, used much of the crops we raised on the ranch...the tractor and the motor have changed farming methods, but one thing has not changed: hard times come to this modern civilization just as they did in the olden days and today’s people are even less prepared to face hard times than our ancestors. This year does not compare with 1864 for real struggle to get along...new ways are probably better than old ways, but they are not proof against hard years.”* As told to the *Esparto Exponent* in 1931.

Of course, drought was not the only thing that affected our farming throughout the last 150 years in Capay Valley. The Great Depression, and its many causes—including Midwestern drought—also meant our local farmers had less distant markets for their crops and the relatively new train running up the Capay Valley had less to carry. In the last issue I wrote about the Lloyd family and an article the family shared with me from *The Daily Democrat* quotes Benny Lloyd this way: *“The care-free life changed drastically, however, in 1929. The Depression devastated Rumsey’s way of life,”* Lloyd recalled. Farmers depended on sales of apricots, peaches, cattle, barley and wheat, which were transported to larger cities by trains. As the Depression crept into the Capay valley, the railroad could not afford to run. *“‘The price of fruit went to Hell,’ says Lloyd. ‘There was nothing to run on the train, so the railroad went’...He began working six-hour shifts for Pacific Motor Transports building what are now highways 16 and 20, getting paid \$3.50 per day. ‘Times were hard. There were no jobs. There would be eight to 10 men just sitting there at the PMT office waiting for jobs’.”*

Ironically, when midwestern crops diminished with the Dustbowl, our valley crops would have demanded a better price, but a nation with no money meant the markets were scarce—it’s always something!



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emonroe@greatercapayvalley.org

At the end of 2014 I will stop publishing the 24-page, full-color journals for awhile. I need time to publish the hardcover book, *The History and Stories of the Capay Valley*, a 400-page compilation of all 18 journals I have produced so far. I also have 3 other books on this area I am working on and a lot more historical research to do—in addition to working on a series of short stories set in The Capay Valley. In the coming year, I will continue to research, interview, and collect photos and stories—as well as write! For the member-subscribers, I will mail out 3-4 shorter newsletters during the year to share historical Valley gems with you, and I will keep the website updated with ever new finds! I encourage all of you to keep the stories and history coming my way! I ask you to continue to support this work by subscribing, but at the newly reduced rate of just \$25 per year. TGCVHS will also continue to raise funds and interest for historical plaques and the restoration of our few remaining buildings—like the Canon School!

from: TGCVHS
PO Box 442
Esparto, CA 95627

September 2014

Volume Seventeen

I am currently pre-selling three books that are near completion:

The History and Stories of the Capay Valley will be out in hardcover in January 2015, retailing for \$200 but on pre-order sale now for \$175

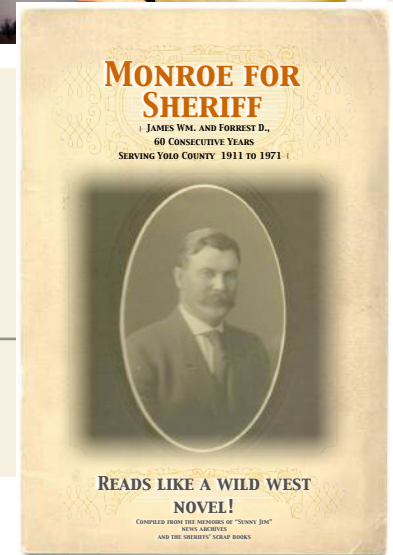
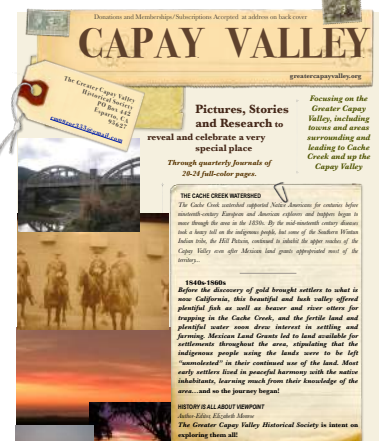
The Birds of Capay Valley will be out in February 2015, a compilation of the bird articles I published for the last 4 years in the journals

Monroe for Sheriff, 60 Consecutive Years Serving Yolo County, 1911-1971 will be out in the summer of 2015, a compilation of James Monroe's published memoir of 28 years as sheriff and his son Forrest Duncan Monroe's sheriff department scrapbooks of the next 32 years—as well as their historical backgrounds and the people they knew in Yolo County.

Check out: greatercapayvalley.org and on FaceBook: *The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society*

The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society: PO Box 442, Esparto, CA 95627 vol 17

The History and Stories of the Capay Valley
A compilation of 18 Journals from January 2011-December 2014



BY ELIZABETH MONROE

2017-2018

The Birds of Capay Valley

As featured in the Journals
for The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society 2011-2014



RESEARCH, PHOTOGRAPHS AND WRITING BY ELIZABETH MONROE AND JIM HIATT
— 6th generation pioneer descendants of Capay Valley-Hungry Hollow