

# CAPAY VALLEY

January 2011

Volume one

[greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org)

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

## Pictures and Stories to tell a history of a special area.

### THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY

#### THE CACHE CREEK WATERSHED

*The Cache Creek watershed supported Native Americans for centuries before nineteenth-century European and American explorers and trappers began to move through the area in the 1830s. By the mid-nineteenth century diseases took a heavy toll on the indigenous people, but some of the Southern Wintun Indian tribe, the Hill Patwin, continued to inhabit the upper reaches of the Capay Valley even after Mexican land grants appropriated most of the territory.*

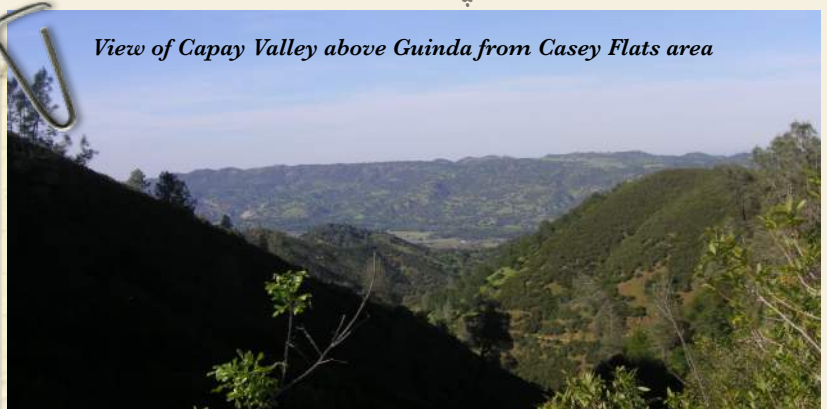
#### Overview with Timeline

##### 1840s-1860s

Before the discovery of gold brought settlers to what is now California, this beautiful and lush valley offered plentiful fish as well as beaver and river otters for trapping in the Cache Creek, and the fertile land and plentiful water soon drew interest in settling and farming. Mexican Land Grants led to land available for settlements throughout the area, stipulating that the indigenous people using the lands were to be left "unmolested" in their continued use of the land. Most early settlers lived in peaceful harmony with the native inhabitants, learning much from their knowledge of the area.

*Continued on page 4*

*View of Capay Valley above Guinda from Casey Flats area*



*Guinda Bridge over Cache Creek*



*Above: East of Guinda*

*Left, Cache Creek  
west of Guinda,  
taken 2011*



## Contents: by Elizabeth "Betsy" Monroe, editor-writer

### PAGE 1 -- CONTENTS AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CITATIONS

**Page 1-4** -- Contents; Introduction by Editor; *Dad* poem honoring *Tom J Monroe*, *Hungry Hollow Cowboy*, by son Tommy

**Page 5-8** -- Historical Timeline of *The Greater Capay Valley* area, including *Hungry Hollow*, north of Capay

**Page 9-10** -- Colorful Character: Sheriff "Sunny Jim" Monroe

**Page 11-13** -- 8000 year History of Wintun/Hill Patwin tribe in the area

**Page 14-15** -- African-American enclave on the Guinda Summit

**Page 16** -- Almonds

**Page 17-18** -- Local "Character" George

Coburn; *Georgie* poem by Tom Monroe

**Page 19-20** -- *Rancho Canada de Capay*, Mexican Land Grant and controversy; hand-drawn map of Greater Capay Valley and pictures of Capay Hills

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**Branding Party at Capay's Road Trip Bar and Grill: Celebrating the reopening with local livestock brands and old barn boards.**



Capay Valley from Rumsey Grade January 2011



Hungry Hollow Cowboys 1958:  
Tom J Monroe and son Tom J

## HISTORY IS ALL ABOUT VIEWPOINT...

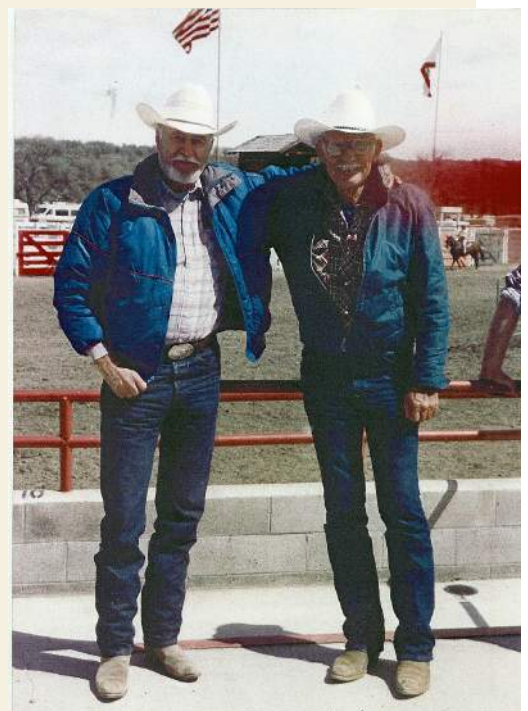
Editor, Elizabeth Monroe

The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society is intent on exploring them all!

Hello, Capay Valley! It is good to be “home”! A fourth-fifth generation Hungry Hollow girl, I am beyond delighted to have finally come home to roost—and to re-acquaint myself with this beautiful and special area I have always called “home.” This is volume 1 of a proposed series devoted to that area I call *the greater Capay Valley*, including the nearest towns and areas like Hungry Hollow to the north of Capay. This way, the material I am collecting will be made public as it comes to me. I came back to the area recently to research and write about it and found such a wealth of intriguing history--and support and enthusiasm--that I decided to share it with the public through *The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society* journal and eventual website.

Since my original focus was on my own family history here, which goes back to the mid-1800s and the Rancho Canada de Capay land grant and the

portion of it purchased by my great grandfather, “Doc” Wyatt Godfrey Duncan and his brother, I will start with that. It is my intent to do research and write about the local history, especially focusing on the “first pioneer families”--because they gave me my connection to the area--but also the people calling this home long before those arrived, and the many arrivals since! To that end, I am in the process of getting non-profit status as *The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society* and have as my goal several projects: audio-visual history interviews leading to short stories of the area; an eventual companion book to Ada Merhoff’s book, *Capay Valley The Land & The People 1846-1900*; as well as a local history of the following years; a re-publication of the memoirs of my grandfather, “Sunny Jim” Monroe, Yolo County Sheriff for 28 years, wild west years complete with murders, gun fights in our small town streets, bank robberies and bootlegging raids! It is my hope to publish a 20-page periodical every two months with the pictures and history as I collect it toward my final goal--a way to get the history out for all to see. I hope to make this an

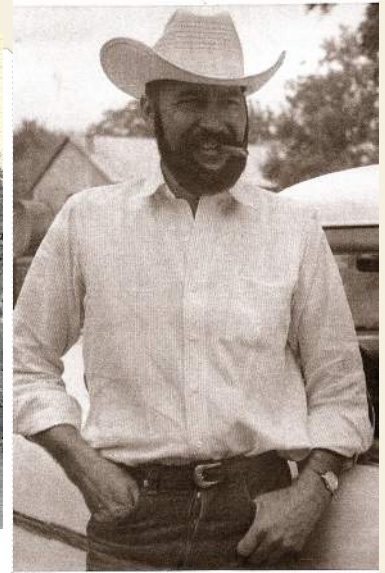


Tom Monroe -- a Hungry Hollow Cowboy through and through -- with Gene Rominger, farmer and life-long friend, attend the Stony Ford rodeo in the 1990s.

Continue on page 4



*Duncan-Monroe home in Hungry Hollow in its prime; oil painting done by Jean Monroe from an early photo; home completed 1879.*



*Top right photo: Tom Monroe in 1950s Esparto Beard Contest*

interactive forum--complete with a web-site and interesting supportive links to other websites--and to thereby inspire many "old timers" and locals to share their stories with me--and with you as well. I am also writing and collecting poetry and short stories of the area, some of which I will feature in this periodical. And, eventually, I hope to finish a novel which I have been working on for several decades, *The Ranch*, about my grandmother growing up north of Capay, over Cache Creek in the historic old Duncan home, built in 1879 and still standing regally to this day.

Like any place, the Capay Valley's history is rich with viewpoints! To do research on the area and then turn that into stories of the place, it is important to include as many views and stories as possible, so it is my intent to make this an interactive forum for just that. So, please contact me at the number or email included on each page--to offer your own stories and history, or to add to or correct anything I get wrong!

Since this is leading to my own family stories, I will start with what I have--and also do honor to my too-soon departed father, *Hungry Hollow Cowboy* Tom J Monroe, who loved this place above all others:

November 14, 1918 -- February 2, 2003

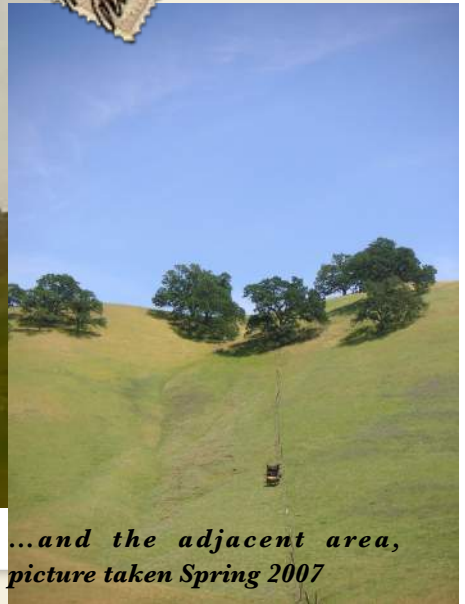
### *Dad*

I shut my eyes  
 into my past.  
 Horses hooves running through the  
 back pasture,  
 Cows crying for lost calves.  
 Squirrels race across a dirt road.  
 The wind whispers to me on the bank  
 of the cottonwood creek.  
 The rumble of an old jeep,  
 a tall slim man,  
 with a blue-eyed dog making the bend.  
 Eyes well up at drifting back.  
 Why have I come here? What do I seek?  
 Hang my head to tears on  
 dirt-stained boots,  
 Thinking of precious lost roots.  
 Then through the dust he was gone,  
 Gone before I could say goodbye.

*Tommy 2007*



Tom J Monroe's brand is now featured with many others at the **Capay Road Trip Bar and Grill**: *T-lazy-J* is near the front entrance. The restored tavern has a rich history of its own, which will be explored herein at a later date. Tom took his 6AM coffee there most mornings with other farmers and ranchers before starting a long and labor-intensive work day running cattle and sheep on the Monroe Ranch--in his family since the mid-1800s.



**Turkey Camp on Duncan-Monroe Ranch: settled in 1850s; picture taken 1970s...**

**...and the adjacent area, picture taken Spring 2007**

**1840s** In 1842 the Mexican government granted William Gordon two leagues of land (the *Guesisosi grant*) on both sides of Cache Creek from the current Madison area to about the current Fliers Club area. From there the *Rancho de Jesus Maria* reached to the Sacramento River. In 1846 the nine-league *Rancho Canada de Capay*, extending from the western edge of Gordon's grant through the north end of the Capay Valley, was granted to the three Berryessa brothers. Livestock production became the principal economic activity of rancheros and their followers.

**1850s -- 1860s**

In 1858 the land speculators Arnold and Gillig purchased 13,760 acres of the Berryessa grant and began to subdivide the land into parcels of 200 to 3800 acres. Gillig planted grain, grapevines, and fruit trees northwest of Langville (the present community of Capay) and established the county's first winery in 1860. Other speculators, Rhodes and Pratt, each took title to 6800 acres in the northern valley and began to sell parcels to settlers. Scattered ranches and tiny settlements developed along the primitive road leading to the quicksilver (mercury) mines in the canyon country to the west.

**1870s**

Livestock and grain farming were the mainstays of the region's developing agricultural economy, although several small vineyards and orchards offered promise. The Orleans Hill Winery in the Lamb Valley area southwest of Esparto gained recognition until disease destroyed its vineyards. Several small schools were established in the Capay Valley. After the Central Pacific Railroad established a line from Elmira in Solano County to Winters in Yolo County, five investors incorporated the Vaca Valley and Clear Lake Railroad in 1877, planning to extend the line north from Winters to Cache Creek and thence through the Capay Valley on to Clear Lake. Although financing for the line was not soon secured, the line was completed to the new town of Madison in 1877, where the railroad was to curve west toward the valley. Most of the village of Cottonwood to the south was moved to the new town, which became a center for grain shipping.

Today, those calling themselves "First Families" are proudly descended from pioneer settlers who now claim 4-6 generations in the Greater Capay Valley.

But while they generally shared the area peacefully with the indigenous Winton tribe since the early to mid-1800s, they certainly were not "first" families in the area. A long and rich history of the native people is being done--some of which and will be covered herein and over the next volumes.

**1880s**

In 1887 several San Francisco investors incorporated the Capay Valley Land Company, composed chiefly of officers of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The company planned to divide several large land holdings into 10- to 40-acre parcels for fruit farming and to establish town sites along the length of the coming railroad. That same year local farmers formed the Rumsey Ditch Association to build and operate an eight-mile irrigation canal (later shortened) from Cache Creek above Rumsey to the vicinity of Guinda. In 1888 the new town of Esperanza (renamed Esparto, after a native bunch grass, in 1890) was laid out, and railroad track was laid up to Rumsey (named for a local landowner) at the north end of the valley, with the first passenger train running in July. At the terminus of the railroad were railroad sidings, a manually operated turntable, a section house, and a 23-room hotel. Guinda had a house for the section supervisor and a bunkhouse for workers. In 1889 a three-story hotel was completed in Esparto, featuring gas lights, a pressurized water system, and electric bells. (The hotel was damaged in the 1892 earthquake but repaired; after a succession of ownerships, the building was torn down in 1935.) Postmasters were appointed at Guinda (the Spanish word for the wild cherry tree), and Rumsey, and Langville was renamed Capay.

**1890s**

The Guinda store (seen above right) was built in 1891, the Guinda Hotel in 1893 (torn down in the 1990s). Both were busy and successful during their early years, and the Guinda Hotel supported a popular bar until the 1950s. A substantial two-story elementary school building was erected at Guinda.

**Guinda School, seen at left in 1970s, was built 1918.**

*Photo courtesy of Douglas Nareau*

**Guinda business district seen in 1973: Hotel, Store and Post Office**



Fruit packing sheds began to operate in Guinda and Rumsey, making daily seasonal deliveries to two trains with ice cars. Other land company plans were short-lived. A community four miles west of Capay called Cadenasso (after local landowners) never really developed, and six miles to the north a colony near Tancred (named for a hero of the First Crusade) lasted only until a hard frost killed many of the young fruit trees in 1896 and the colony went bankrupt. Tancred had a post office from 1892 until 1932 but never became a functioning town. In 1893 Yolo County's second high school was established in Esparto. In the early 1890s a single-wire grounded telephone line between Guinda and Rumsey was laid and a phone placed in a store in each town, to be used by the public when the stores were open.

**The Century Turns: 1900s**

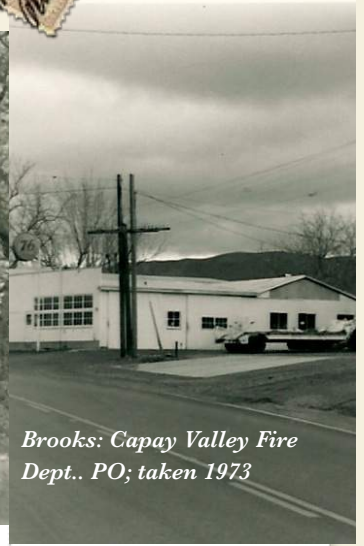
In 1900 the population of the Capay Valley was recorded at 1,381. Rumsey residents built a hall for a local women's group about 1903, and Guinda built a community hall in 1909 (now the Western Yolo Grange Hall). The small band of local Wintun Indians was relocated from its old village site northeast of Rumsey to a federally purchased rancheria on the other side of the valley. Later, in 1942, some of the band moved to a new site near Brooks, while others moved to Colusa County. Plans to extend the railroad through the Rumsey canyon were abandoned.



Top 3 photos courtesy of Douglas Nareau, taken 1973.



Canon School in 1973; founded in 1868; burned and rebuilt 1880s near Tancred



Brooks: Capay Valley Fire Dept.. PO; taken 1973

## Hungry Hollow--north of Capay

In 1864, John P. Goodnow, then a miner, went into the foothills of north-western Yolo County to prospect for gold. He stopped at a place known as the John Parker Ranch. Nearby was a large pond of water which gathered from the rainfall of the winter. After Mr. Goodnow mined there for several months his water supply failed. He did not find any gold. He left the place and called it "Hungry Hollow" in his discouragement. Early Hungry hollow farmers included Charles Stoll, James Bandy, John Foster, The Gable Bros., Mr. Goodnow and John Gordon. Later ranchers included Wyatt Godfrey "Doc" Duncan and his brother Bill.

In 1868 new settlers came to the area from Minnesota with their families to farm. These pioneers, mostly Germans included George Herman, Fred Mast, Fred Schroeder, Fred Schultz and John Zimmerman, [eventually followed by many more German farmers]. In 1869, Mr. Goodnow raised his first crop of wheat. "He took ten sacks of it to a mill in Sacramento and during his stay in Sacramento he took in the state fair. While he was seeing the exhibits he came across the wheat display. He asked the fair managers if that was the best they could do on wheat. The manager said yes, and asked if he could do better. Mr. Goodnow said he could, and went to the mill where his large spring wagon

## Rumsey Hall seen in 1973 prior to extensive renovation



Wedding party at Capay Depot above in 1902:

James Monroe-Elvira Grey Duncan wedding party prepares for honeymoon departure to SF.



*Duncan home today, built 1879 -- site of many early pioneer picnics in its surrounding Thousand Oaks area*



*The Carriage Barn*

**Iconic barn on Duncan-Monroe Ranch as it appeared in 2007; now owned by Paul Smith.**



stood with...ten sacks of wheat and took them down to the fair. He stood his wheat at the side of the wheat already there and was awarded the first premium. When the people asked Mr. Goodnow where his fine wheat was raised, he replied in "Hungry Hollow." After this the farmers who lived in that vicinity got better prices for their grain than other farmers could. When neighbors heard this they kept enlarging the district until it came to be pretty close to what is now Zamora."

which German and English was taught, and a Lutheran congregation worshiped, presided over by Rev. Chas. Waelhte.

Seen above, The home built by Wyatt Godfrey "Doc" Duncan and his brother Bill in 1879 still stands just northwest of the Capay Bridge in Hungry Hollow; the ranch is still in agriculture and cattle.

According to an April, 1890 article in the Woodland Democrat, the area's farmers had "accumulated wealth, built great barns and nice residences, planted orchards and vineyards and are the possessors of happy homes." The Germans had a school, Foster's school house, in



**At left, an old Hungry Hollow school house as it appears today, sits on Fritz Durst's farm on County Road 85 between roads 16 and 14. It is believed to be the Haight or Foster or "The German School" that originally sat at the northwest corner of CR 85 and 14, later moved here by Fritz' grandfather.**



# Local Color: Sheriff “Sunny Jim Monroe”

excerpts from the Memoir of James William Monroe, Sheriff of Yolo County from 1911 until 1939  
in honor of the 100 year anniversary of his becoming Sheriff for 28 consecutive years.

## GUNFIGHTS, BANK ROBBERIES, MURDERS--FIRST IN A SERIES

A colorful character, James William Monroe, referred to as “Sunny Jim” due to his jovial and accepting personality, married a “local girl,” Elvira Grey Duncan of Hungry Hollow, in 1902. Soon afterwards he followed his adventurous heart to the Yukon Territory in search of gold before returning to his ranch in Hungry Hollow. He later ran for political office, leading to a stint as sheriff for 28 years. During that time, he covered much of the greater Capay Valley, and in the memoir published by the Daily Democrat newspaper at the end of his career, he tells some interesting stories of those times.

According to an article in the SF Chronicle, Dec. 28, 1952, “When Yoloans speak of “Sunny Jim,” they are referring to James W. Monroe, Yolo County’s Sheriff from 1911 to 1939.

“Probably no one, Yoloans say, has ever come closer to the Hollywood version of a Western Sheriff than Jim Monroe, sombrero, handle-bar mustache and all. A barrel-chested man with muscles of steel and a heart of gold, he was equally at home with bankers and bums, farmers and forgers, merchants and murderers. ‘He was never afraid, never hard, never mean,’ one Yoloan recalled, ‘He understood men. Even the most hardened offender

and the most desperate thug respected him.’”

Excerpted from the Daily Democrat’s 1938 Memoirs of James Monroe gives a good example of this:

### Gruesome Murder

“A lot of people will remember W.P. Rice, city marshal of Winters in 1912...

“Late one night, the marshal was summoned to the Vaca house. Neighbors told him that ‘Joe Vaca is at it again...and he’s acting something terrible.’

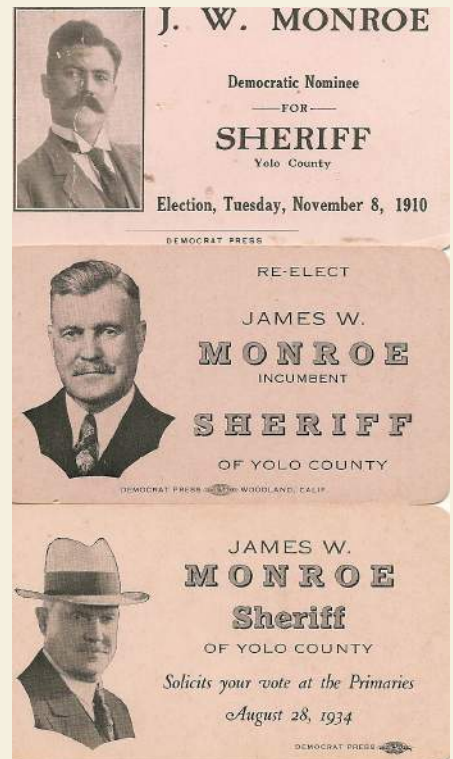
“His heart filled with anger and pity, Rice went to the door. Vaca was sitting in the room with a shotgun across his lap. His wife was sobbing in the darkness of the poorly lighted little cabin.

“‘What’s the trouble about, Vaca?’ the marshal asked quietly. ‘Don’t you think you’d better put that gun down and...’

“Vaca snarled like an angry animal. The boom of a shotgun was his only reply.

“The charge tore great holes through the officer’s body. Marshall Rice died...

Informed, Sheriff Monroe responded: “‘The town is seething, Sheriff,’ I was told. ‘Everyone liked Rice. They’re all clamoring...you know what that means’.”



“You bet I knew. I streaked out of Davis like a Man o’War colt, and made it to Winters in what was nearly record time in those days.

“The situation had not been exaggerated. A few cool-headed citizens were holding back the mob. But their authority was weakening every minute. The mob was beginning to push and shove. A low hum arose...and angry, dangerous, menacing hum that has been the *death hymn* for many a man.

"I joined the calmer citizens, I had to talk fast...and I did. I told them that justice is the only guardian of us all, and if we violate her, we cannot expect her protection.

"Law is the only thing that protects you fellows from crime like this,' I said. 'If you make a mockery out of the law, you are defeating your own ends. Don't worry about Vaca. He'll get all that's coming to him.'

"They calmed down a bit, and I persuaded them to return to their homes.

"My promise was not unfulfilled. Vaca drew a life sentence, and died in prison."

Back to the SF Chronicle's account:

"Sheriff Monroe sped to the scene of a murder...and found the slayer had barricaded himself in a cabin, threatening to plug anyone who dared approach. Monroe, sizing up the situation, started walking alone toward the cabin.

"Don't do it, Jim,' a friend urged. 'Bosh...the fellow knows me. He won't refuse to listen to what I have to say,'

"As he came within earshot of the cabin, he called out: 'Hello in there! This is Jim Monroe. Heard you were in trouble...come to see what's the matter. Come out and talk to me.'

"That you, Jim?" said a voice from the cabin.

"Sure. Come on out."

"Anyone with you?"

"No, I'm alone."

"There was a moment of silence, then the door opened and the murderer stuck out his head. He saw that the crowd had remained at a comfortable distance. 'You know you have to face the music, old fellow,' Monroe told him

quietly. 'So don't make any more trouble, or make it worse for yourself.'

"The killer thought it over. 'I know that you'll see that I'm dealt with fairly, Jim...I'll get with you.' And he did.

He tells many more stories much like it, but to get a better picture of the man, I should back up and let him introduce himself as he did with his memoirs in 1938.

#### **"My Early Days--Aiding the Law to Defeat the Noose**

Telling your own story is a harder job than you'd think. Sure you know it better than anyone else. And you like to remember the wild old days, the spitting guns and angry men and violent words.

It's fun all right enough spinning yarns like that to your grandchildren.

But to tell it to a newspaper...that's a lot harder. You get a funny feeling that you're assuming more self-importance than is your due. Now I know that what I've done is just what every old-time sheriff did. And what would they think of me, if they knew I was going to put all of it in print?

#### **The Good Old Days**

The editor talks about "old-time residents of Yolo County who will be interested in reviewing the past" with me. He talks about the "younger generation who'd like to know some of the highlights of the earlier days."

That sounds all right to me.

Well, I know most of the "old-time residents" he talks about, and if my yarn reminds them of the good old days, I'd like to tell it.

The same with the youngsters. I liked to read about Washington and Jefferson and Aaron Burr when I was a kid. Just for the flavor of the times that have gone. So if they get any pleasure out of this...

Sure I'll tell my story. For the old residents. For the kids. For anyone who might get a kick out of it.

So here goes..."

*To be continued in future volumes.*



*Above: James William Monroe, born in the Buckeye district near Winters in 1867 to John T. Monroe and Sarah Ellen Campbell, poses for his first portrait as Sheriff in 1911. Earlier, he ran a butcher shop in Capay and ran cattle in the area. Meeting "Grey," a local girl, he courted her and wed her in 1902. Later he seeks gold in the Yukon Territory; serves as Supervisor in 1908; and then runs for sheriff of Yolo County, serving for 28 years. His eldest son, Forrest D. took over and served as sheriff for 32 years--making the Monroes sheriff for 60 consecutive years. The Yolo County Detention Center is named in their honor.*



# A Multi-cultural Valley with a History of Integrated Schools, Inclusive Attitudes--and Several Thousand Years of Tribal Habitation.

While it is never without conflict when one group's existence in an area is interrupted by another's, it is unique for the cultures to somehow find a way to co-exist to the point they did--and do--in the Capay Valley. The local indigenous people of the Wintun Tribe have a rich history in the area of several thousand years—that is only now being fully explored by the tribe—and I can't presume to tell it. But I would also not ignore it in favor of my own ancestors' history, here—beginning in the 1850s, I am aware we were the *invaders*.

Needless to say, when the colonial-minded Spanish and Mexicans claimed the land for themselves, and then granted it to others who sold it to American settlers—all *invaders*--they brought with them the well-known diseases and disruptions that led to loss of life and much of the culture and the traditional livelihood. The conflicts between the expanding US and the Mexican government led to more disruption to the culture as it was adapting—closely followed by a flood of American and European settlers. There is a wealth of information of this more current activity, but I will try to give an overview from several source documents--filling in more history on the earlier period as that becomes available. But for now, here is what we know: by the mid-to-late-1800s, the different cultures had begun to settle in together and build farms and ranches, towns and schools--and to intermarry and send their kids to integrated schools. A unique situation that became a long tradition in the area.

**First, an overview of California Indians:**  
**Source:** *The Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, Frederick Webb Hodge. 1906, Bureau of American Ethnology, Government*

*Printing Office. NOTE: Many of the opinions herein stated have been disproved in recent years.*

At the time, the document stated: “The Indians of California are among the least known groups of natives of North America.” This is a robustly non-native perspective, obviously—they were only unknown to the *invaders*, but well known throughout the area by other tribes.

“Those along the coast south of San Francisco were brought under Spanish missionary influence in the latter part of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Some tribes, however, were not known [to outsiders] even by name until after the discovery of gold and the settlement of the country in 1849 and subsequently.” While this document states that “The Californians were among the least warlike tribes of the continent and offered but little resistance, and that always ineffectual, to the seizure of their territory by the whites,” there are documented battles against white settlers and Mexican forces in archives. They obviously struggled to maintain their lands under various occupying groups.

“Comparatively few of them ever lived on reservations. The majority lived as *squatters* on the land of white owners or of the Government, or in some cases on land allotted them by the government or even bought by themselves from white *owners*.” The people still lived, and continued to live as close to their ancestral villages as they could, no matter the ownership.



*Geological wonders high above the Capay Valley*

**Scientists all over California study and marvel at the many wonders of this area. One such is the apparent creek bed miles above the Valley at Cortina Bluff. The hot waters from the area called Wilbur Springs at the upper end of the valley have a unique sheath bacteria not found anywhere else.**

5  
 14 Apr 1973  
 1973  
 October 13



Seen above: Guinda area "Indian School" for adult vocational training was above Guinda to the west. All photos taken 1973 by Douglas Nareau



Old Rumsey School

Above, Rumsey School -- seen 1973 -- still stands today, as a private home.

"Their number has decreased very rapidly and" by 1930s about 15,000 survived "as compared with perhaps 150,000 before the arrival of the whites." The exact numbers in the Capay Valley are not yet known for certain.

While this document goes on to say, "The native population of California was broken up into a great number of small groups...often somewhat unsettled in habitation..." this view is today highly disputed, claiming that they were among the most settled people anywhere, living in harmony and balance with their environment for thousands of years... "within very limited territories, and were never nomadic," according to the tribe.

"The dialects of almost all of these groups were different and belonged to as many as 21 distinct linguistic families, being a fourth of the total number found in all North America, and, as compared with the area of the state, so large that California must probably be regarded as the region of the greatest aboriginal

linguistic diversity in the world." Of course we now know that other groups such as those in Papaua New Guinea join American aboriginals in being a source of original languages and culture.

The 1906 Handbook goes on to say: "The groups in which they live are very loose, being defined and held together by language and the topography of the country much more than by any political or social organization; distinct tribes, as they occur in many other parts of America, do not really exist. The small village is the most common unit of organization among these people." Today we know there was a lot of trade, and on the border lands people spoke several languages.

"Houses were often of grass, tule, or brush, or of bark, sometimes covered with earth...over the greater part of the state a raft of tules was the only means of navigation" though log boats were used in the south. "Agriculture was nowhere practiced..." is a much disputed opinion

**Valley area schools were generally integrated; attendance was more driven by locale: generally a 4 mile walk from home. Photo groupings of students bear this out throughout the area: students of all races and "classes," stood together as friends and neighbors-- just as they do in this area today. Following the 4-mile rule, the valley towns--and schools--are approximately 7-8 miles apart.**

today; according to a tribal source: *crop tending was practiced all over the area. In fact, land management was done in an intensive way in most areas. Wild crops were maintained so they multiplied and provided rich gathering grounds for Tribes and individual families.* This was certainly the case in the Capay Valley. Deer and small game were hunted, and there was considerable fishing; but the bulk of the food was vegetable. The main reliance was placed on numerous varieties of acorns, and next to these, on seeds, especially of grasses and herbs. Roots and berries were less used.

*Below: Capay Valley from Cortina Bluff, or Rumsey Grade*



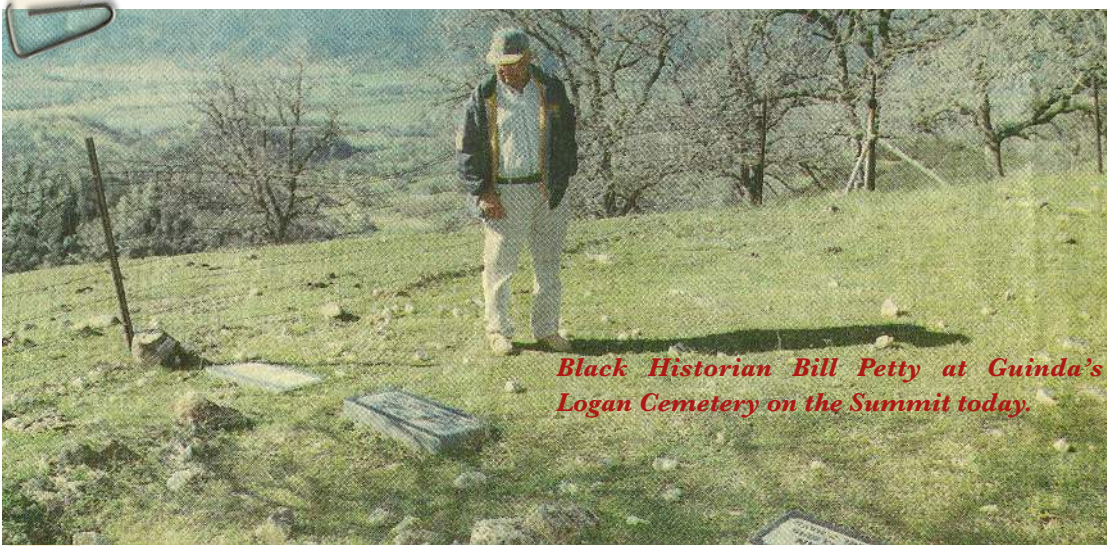
“The mythology of the Californians was characterized by unusually well-developed creation myths...Their ceremonies were numerous and elaborate as compared with the prevailing simplicity of life...One set of ceremonies was usually connected with a secret religious society; another, often spectacular, was held in remembrance of the dead.”

Of course we know very little about the cultural ceremonies of the Patwin and are only now learning what they themselves would say about the history that was written about them by others. In my effort to learn more, I also went to *Search for your Ancestors* on [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) and found this about our local Capay Valley tribe:

Patwin, signifies "person" in their own language. The Patwin formed the southernmost and most diverse dialectic division of the former Wintun (or Copehan) linguistic family, now considered part of the Penutian stock. Location: On the western side of Sacramento Valley, and extending from San Francisco Bay to a point a little south of Willows, occupying both sides of Sacramento River from a few miles above its junction with Feather River to the northern boundaries of their territory.

Subdivisions, or "Tribelets," and Villages (As given by Kroeber 1932): Pertaining to Capay Valley Hill Patwin, from south to north: South of Cache Creek, tribelets were known by their villages: Suskol, Tuluka, Ulato, Topai-dihi, and Liwai-to, for instance. Moso was the tribe nearest the current town of Capay. Of note, per CH Mirriam in 1929: “Kopā’ (Kope), were in the broad fiat part of Capay Valley near Brooks; and in 1932 Kroeber has Hacha 3 miles below Capay. Kisi, a village upstream on Cache Creek, may have been a tribal center. Significantly, Imil, a village apparently in a tribal territory near Guinda, was recently reclaimed by the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation as one of their properties; and Sūya, a village half a mile north of Guinda; as well as 16 additional inhabited sites. Today, a tribal school in the Capay Valley is endeavoring to keep the history, language and culture alive.

**In Cortina Valley, a Wintun-Patwin Indian Rancheria in the late 1800s, there were wooden as well as tule-thatched structures. Patwin villages were all along Cache Creek in the Capay Valley and beyond. The valley floor, now Highway 16, and other roads formed a busy trade route for thousands of years.**



*Black Historian Bill Petty at Guinda's Logan Cemetery on the Summit today.*

*Clarence Van Hook hopes to eventually use his part of the old Rancho Canada de Capay land grant as a multi-cultural retreat, celebrating the diversity in the valley, especially the unique Black American Enclave represented by the Guinda area. The old Ribbs ranch cuts across Highway 16 to Cache Creek and claims one of the oldest barns in Capay Valley.*



**HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENCLAVE IN THE VALLEY**

*Before statehood and even after, since California was a free state, there are enclaves throughout with sizable early pioneers of African Descent. One such area is the Guinda area in the Capay Valley. Local Black Historian Bill Petty explains that the Guinda area has a rich history of being well integrated from the beginning of early settlements. Many of the blacks settling in the area were never slaves, while others were freed after settling in the area. One of the most common names was Logan, with many descendants still in the area today. Another valley pioneer of interest Basil Campbell. Given his freedom by the Stephens family, he went on to buy available sections of land that eventually led to his being the largest black landowner in the area of the Dunnigan Hills between Hungry Hollow and Zamora. And in the Capay Valley, the summit or the hill had a mixture of races, all attending the local school and some of them joining in marriage. Some interviewees considered poverty the early commonality. Early Summit family names included: Logan, Hayes, Simpson,*

*Longrus, Benham, and Zacker; some White, some Black. The 1896 census showed close to 25 school-aged children in the area, a figure to remained constant into the 1900s. August Simpson became a Guinda barber, becoming the first Summit resident to work down in a valley business.*

**Summit School**

*As the community on the summit grew, so did their concern for the education of their children. Albertine DuBois had been providing informal schooling in the early 1890s. The Pace family had a sheep ranch in the East Side hills and the neighbors met at his sheep camp by a big spring, where students had been taught by Mrs. DuBois, and discussed a proper*

*Below, Summit School - postcard photo courtesy of Jeannette Molson, inherited from her mother, Addie Mae (Logan) Molson, who grew up on the Summit.*

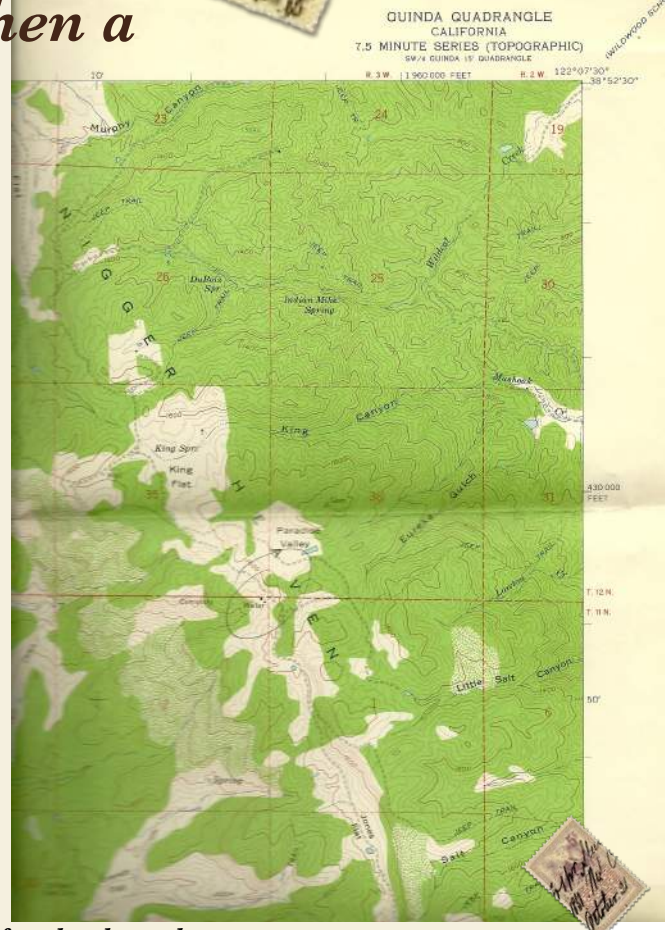


*The Summit School: 1895 to 1912, is no longer standing.*

# A Community is Born--and then a Proper Road and School ...

school. After the next census showed enough potential students, the supervisors approved their petition for a school district, called "Summit." On an acre donated by non-resident Vanaleen Scofield, and with lumber bought with county funds, free local labor created the Summit School "on a slope up from a small flat...and in July 1895 Albertine DuBois came with her two little girls Pearl and Birdie to teach a class of 11, the usual attendance. Along with others, her husband Joe and his brother Bill from Guinda worked on the frame building with its full length porch along the elevated east side."  
**SIMPSON GRADE**

A community up on a hill needs a reliable road. A local summit family, Charles and Harriet "Hattie" Simpson would give them one.  
 Green Berry Logan's sister-in-law Harriett lived in Oakland. Later Harriett (Hattie) Emily Logan met and married the barber Charles Simpson. They moved to a homestead of 160 acres, filed in 1890, on the summit, near Green Berry Logan's homestead. By 1896 Charles was successful with fruit and nut trees due to a good well dug in 1893. Hattie was a skilled dressmaker, sewing for local Guinda families....Seeing the importance of contact with Guinda, he laid out a road from



the ford at the end of Forest Avenue to switch-back to the 1,200 foot level...at the west side of King Flat. Worked on for several years, it proved its value in the summer of 1894 when it acted as a barrier to a forest fire and was always referred to as the 'Simpson Grade'. Today, Doug Hayes, descendent of another early settler, George Hayes, keeps that road open and passable for all the families to have access to the summit, the Logan Cemetery, the Summit School site, and the various homesteads and properties--at his own expense. He was honored recently at the 9th annual Black History Celebration in Guinda for this generosity.

Much more will be forthcoming on other early families, such as the Hayes family, in future volumes. Many of these families still live in the area and join the tribe descendants and "new comers" (those arriving in the last 50-100 years!) in keeping the valley alive and vibrant.

Not all History is pretty. While it is rightfully considered inappropriate today, there was an area on a summit above the town of Guinda that was once commonly referred to as "Nigger Heaven"—even appearing on county maps as such.

There are some today who claim it was dubbed so by the pioneers who settled there, many of them of African Descent, while still others, direct descendants among them, claim this is a bit of "revisionist history"—perhaps to help focus on just celebrating the history of the racially integrated and cooperative nature of the area, while softening the distastefulness of this blemish. The geological survey maps until the 1970s still carried this place name. At that time, a movement (headed

up by historian Bill Petty) to have it expunged succeeded in removing it from maps. Since that time it has commonly been either referred to as *The Hill*, *The Heaven* or *The Summit*, but what is most significant is the rich black heritage of this area--and the fact that the summit and school were integrated, as were the other schools throughout the Greater Capay Valley area.

*Guinda now celebrates its unique Black History, as well as that of the nation, the second Saturday each February.*

# An Agricultural Valley Celebrates Itself:

## ALMOND FESTIVAL, HARVEST FAIRES, BLACK HISTORY DAY, FOOD AND WINE PAIRINGS, MUSIC, ETC.

*Most famous and long-lived is the Almond Festival--NOTE: if you're a "real" local, Almond has the "I" knocked out of it!*

### *History of the Annual Almond Festival*

The Capay Valley Almond Festival began in 1915 and has been a Northern California tradition. The only five town event in Northern California, the festival is a showcase of the Esparto/Capay Valley Region. It began in the fall after the harvest and moved years later to the spring, in order to show off the lovely blossoms. Of recent years the festival has received large amounts of rain and wind and this year the festival moved to the month of March.

The Almond Tree is the most mysterious nut tree and is mentioned in the bible in the book of Numbers 17:8. Its crop is very valuable to our state and California is the only place in North America that grows almonds commercially. A \$2 billion industry, more than 6,000 growers devote an estimated 530,000 acres in the Central Valley to almonds — California's largest tree nut crop — in a stretch of land extending from below Bakersfield in the south to Red Bluff in the north. For more information about almonds and recipes go to [www.almondboard.com](http://www.almondboard.com).

The Capay Valley Almond Festival traditionally included the towns of Madison, Esparto, Capay, Brooks, Guinda and Rumsey. Entertainment, crafts, good food and fun for all members of the family are provided. It

is a wonderful time to see the beauty of the whole Capay Valley and to meet many of the wonderful people who live and work in the area.

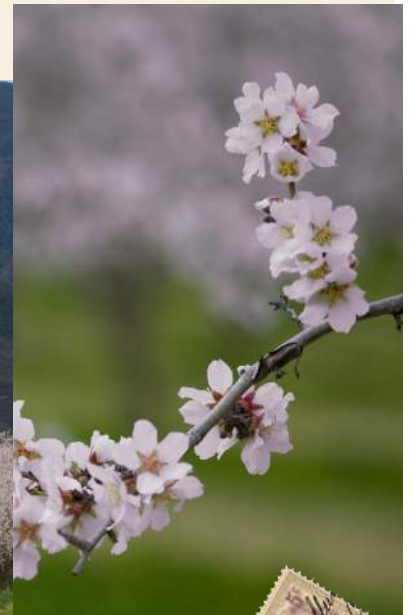
### *Queen Pageant*

The 2011 Almond Queen Dinner is now being held at the Newly renovated Western Yolo Grange in Guinda.

### *Courtesy of:*

*Monique Garcia*  
Esparto Chamber of Commerce  
16856 Yolo Avenue  
PO Box 194  
Esparto CA 95627  
530-787-3242

visit website for this & other events:  
[www.espartoregionalchamber.com](http://www.espartoregionalchamber.com)



Greater Capay Valley Historical Society, PO Box 442, Esparto, CA 95627 vol 1

*Rhonus tempor placet.*





IT IS THE SPECIAL “CHARACTERS” THAT GIVE A COMMUNITY ITS HEART--

ITS CHARACTER, ITS STORIES AND LEGENDS!

Each volume of this journal will explore just such colorful people from our past and our memories...

One such beloved character was George Gilbert Coburn, August 11, 1869--September 23, 1960; buried in the Capay Cemetery with his sister Lucy and mother Mary E. Coburn, he lived much of his life working on the Duncan-Monroe Ranch, a lifelong bachelor, standing in as “grandpa” to many of the Monroe kids and a dear friend of Elvira Grey Duncan-Monroe all her life. “Grandpa Georgie” to us, since we had never met our legendary grandfather, sheriff “Sunny Jim” Monroe; feeding us on stories of Grandpa’s many adventures, local Indian folk remedies and stories, Robert Service poetry he knew by heart: There are strange things done in the midnight sun by the men who toil for gold...He sat in his old age on a hard chair in the yard of the Monroe Ranch and captured us with his ever-present cane as we ran by, tempting him; reciting poetry, making us acorn rings,

smelling of cigars and “tobacci juice”--and offering us a “chaw of tobacci,” which we always tried--and coughed and spit, much to his devilish delight! Georgie meant Ginger Snaps with “ant trails”--and occasional ants!--and white popping corn from his own garden, popped in his iron skillet in bacon grease, and always a great story about the ranch life we missed and our grandfather, who was bigger than life to us.

When he got cancer in his 90s in 1960, Mom brought him home to live with us so she could care for him--it was one of the most memorable times of our cherished childhood in Hungry Hollow! The smell of cigar smoke in the house when he joined Dad for the Friday Night Fights on our rarely watched Boob Tube in black and white. Such an event, we all sat on the floor by their wooden chairs, mesmerized by the fights and their constant jolly banter. Mom sat there

smiling and enjoying them as much as we did. She bathed him and cared for him until the last--and he never stopped making her laugh throughout it all! In her twenties, he must have been like a grandfather to her, too--certainly family to all of us. Dad had known him all his life. I am doing genealogy research on his family as I do the same on my own--curious about this man and his family who lived out their lives on The Ranch and left such a meaningful legacy with us. By brother has become quite the poet in his later years, and I include his tribute to Georgie on the following page...

NOTE: Ignoring doctor’s orders, Georgie played shuffle board at local saloons with old friends, smoked his stogies and chawed his tobacci, and drank his whiskey until the end: “It’s what kept me alive this long,” he would claim, “an’ it ain’t goin’ to harm me anymore now! It’s not what you do, but how you do it.”

**For us, he will never be “gone”!**

*George Coburn beside Cache Creek 1950s, Monroe Ranch*



*“Grandpa Georgie” has Christmas with the Tom and Jean Monroe kids in Hungry Hollow about 1958*

Greater Capay Valley Historical Society, PO Box 442, Esparto, CA  
vol 1



### Georgie

*His silver hair was under a hat.  
When you are little, you never think about things like that,  
It's just how he always looked.*

*Baggy pants, suspenders--and that hat.  
He had lived long, years of life on his smiling face.  
Being in his 80's and 90's in the 50's, just getting by was  
enough.*

*A two room cabin with a wood stove was where he hung  
that hat.  
"George's House!!" We couldn't wait to get there.  
A box of Ginger Snaps were always waiting.  
A twinkle in his grey eyes, he was always glad to see us.  
We were his family, so late in his life, these four little  
kids.*

*Summers were long and that garden down by the canal  
was his joy.*

*A great garden it was with squash, corn higher than his  
head  
And more watermelon than we could eat.*

*Wooden ships with paper sails made with an old knife  
And magic hands to cross that imaginary ocean kept us  
busy  
While he watered his garden.*

*Giant Oaks shaded his cabin with acorns all around,  
Big fat ones, which that knife and those hands  
Would make into promise rings for us.*

*Sitting with him and his old grey cat is so far away now,  
But just a second away in day dreams.*

*I don't go back much, time forces change  
But it is still part of who I am, what we four are.*

*I would be nice to stand in his shadow one more time,  
It won't happen, but we haven't forgotten.*

*Ginger Snaps, paper-sail ships, and acorn promise  
rings,  
We've just moved on and he's gone!*

*By Tommy 2006*

## RANCHO CANADA DE CAPAY: TO UNDERSTAND THE PIONEER SETTLEMENT OF THE AREA, IT IS IMPORTANT TO GO BACK TO THIS 1846 MEXICAN LAND GRANT

Once again, history is all about viewpoints. In the view of the settlers, this area was ripe for the plucking in the mid-1800s. To the Mexicans who still claimed this as part of Alta California, the land grants of many thousands of acres to single owners was a way to control it for Mexico. To the Wintun tribe, it was a place they called home for 8000 years and that was being invaded and taken from them.

Ada Merhoff tells it one way in her *Capay Valley, The Land & The People 1846-1900*; while Eftimeos Salonites tells a somewhat different tale in his *Berreyesa, The Rape of The Mexican Land Grant Rancho Canada de Capay*; and the Wintun tribe would have a very different tale of invaders and colonialists--raping the land in their own ways, destroying a culture in the process.

But the facts of the land grant and the US claim to California that followed shortly thereafter are pretty much the same: In 1846 Mexican governor Pio Pico of Alta California granted nine square leagues--over 40,000 square acres--to three Berryessa [today's accepted spelling] brothers, and included the whole Capay Valley, originally called Canyon of the

Rio de Jesus Maria and later Cache Creek Canyon. According to Mexican law, they presented their petition along with a "diseno," or detailed map of the entire area. "The Act of Jurisdictional Possession" was how Californians then established boundaries to their land.

According to Ada Merhoff's book, in 1847 the Berryessas sold 7.5 leagues to Jasper O'Farrell for \$3000. In 1849 the remaining 1.5 leagues of the original nine-league grant were "given" to Jacob Hoppe by separate agreement with the Berryessas. According to other sources, the Berryessa brothers were falsely jailed, at which time O'Farrell took the land, later paying to make it a "legal" transaction.

In 1846 the US Navy seized Mexican military outposts in California, declaring it American territory, leading to the July 1848 Treaty of Peace signed in Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico, where the US paid Mexico \$15 million for an area that contained Texas, New Mexico, and Alta California, comprised of California, Nevada, Arizona and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

Title to all grants made prior to July 1846 were subject to US review. The Gwin Act of 1851 was an attempt to make Mexican land

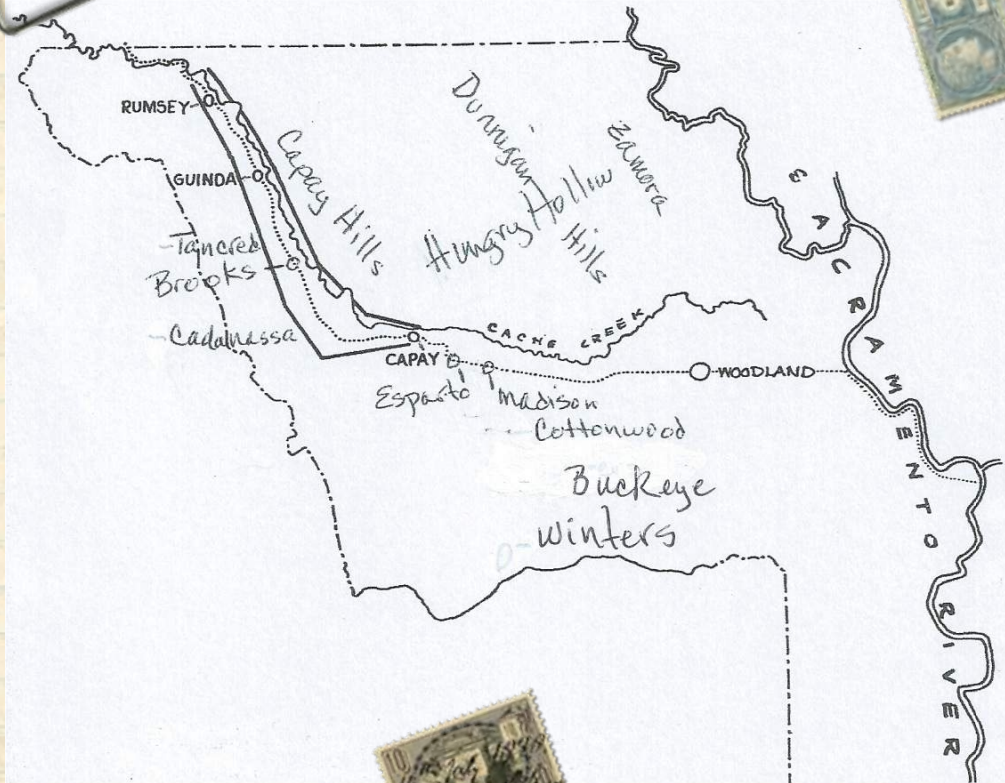
grants available to the public, ignoring a major provision of the Hidalgo Treaty. American settlers wanted access to these lands just as they had in other parts of the US--leading to many years of land and boundary disputes--which in some cases continue today as old early ranches are sold and title searches uncover controversy and even squatters' rights claims.

The subject is covered in much detail in many sources, including the two cited here, but the focus in these journal volumes will be on the early ranches and farms begun on these lands beginning in the late 1840s through today. Many of the earlier settlers' families still live and farm or ranch in the area, while others have sold to the original "settlers"--the tribal descendants--or to "newcomers" arriving in the last 50 years. The revitalization of this unique area is the work and cooperation among all these groups.

Future volumes will cover the current occupation and uses of the area and the efforts to keep it unique and special, while revitalizing it and changing with the times as needs be. While Eftimeos Salonites felt that the "true pioneers of the valley" were the "vaqueros and the Indians of the Canada," his final claim on this subject would hold true for all the pioneers who have settled here since: "They all regarded and shared the valley with dignity. They might well have said, with understandable pride... 'This land is our land!'"

*The Greater Capay Valley:*

former Mexican land grants: *Gordon-Guesisosi* from Madison toward Woodland and the *Rancho Canada de Capay* from Madison to Rumsey; and the *Hungry Hollow* area north of Capay; *Winters*, *Madison* and *Esparto*, local towns feeding into the valley.



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**CAPAY VALLEY**

FROM:

THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PO Box 442  
Esparto, CA 95627  
[greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org)



*Left: Not-so-typical snow dusting on the Hungry Hollow-Capay Hills, Jan. 1, 2011*

*Above: Typical Hungry Hollow sunset over the Capay Hills Dec. 2010*