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CAPAY VALLEY

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Volume four

greatercapayvalley.org

The Greater Capay Valley
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Well, what'll it be this time? I made a great discovery at the Yolo County Archives recently that determined that this volume would cover the largest bootlegging operation in the nation--in our own

*Pictures, Stories
and Research to
reveal and
celebrate a very
special place.*

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



Guinda in the Capay Valley! So why not cover the history of wine in the area, too? And then cover the area's current wine industry, of course--seems fitting. And while at the Archives, an article about Capay Valley's old-time Lowrey family had me on-line with old Esparto classmate, Dr. Tim Lowrey, now professor of botany at University of New Mexico, asking for their genealogy. Then, a reprint of a 1930s article in the Woodland Record-Mail led me to wonder about the ubiquitous black walnuts--were they all native or brought from back east, planted by pioneers? [Find out in volume5!] And what about all these sunflower fields? Their heads now drooping instead of facing the sun as it crosses the sky. Each volume grows from similar questions and serendipitous occurrences--a fun process!



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Vestiges of the Southern Pacific Railroad's Vaca Valley-Clear Lake Line still exist in the Capay Valley, though the trains and tracks have been gone for decades. Above, the RR bridge at Poppy Creek can be seen from Highway 16, but the site below, on private property, marks the former track line across County Road 82.



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Monroe family friend, Amy King, stands at the top of the former Monroe Ranch in 1973, overlooking the S-curve in Cache Creek in the Capay Valley; the flat farm land seen in the distance is now the Yocha DeHe Golf Course, seen below in a picture taken on March 20, 2011 when Cache Creek had flooded hole 14.



HISTORY IS ALL ABOUT VIEWPOINT...

Editor, Elizabeth Monroe

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

When you look around the greater Capay Valley today, you see a variety of crops that did not exist here in decades past, sometimes orchards and vineyards where dry grain farming used to rule--and sometimes where vintage oaks and wild oats used to grow among other native plants. In the over-half century I have considered this "home," I have seen many changes--some that hurt and some that excite. The problem with having grown up here is that you get used to seeing the land through your childhood memories, and you find it hard to see the same *beauty* in an orchard or vineyard that someone who did not know the land before sees. But I try to remember my father's words, "As long as it stays in agriculture, it's OK." And then I try to apply that optimistic view to other changes--like a casino and golf course! If I consider how the Wintun Nation is intending to be "good stewards of the land" it helps--especially when I imagine what their ancestors felt about the arrival of our pioneer ancestors! It may not always be easy

to accept such radical change, but as long as we all work to keep this special place *special*, I try to be optimistic! As in the pictures

above, in those below the *before and after* can be dramatic: as part of the former Duncan Ranch went from oaks to *ripped* for an olive orchard, it was disheartening—but I am trying to see it as a *productive orchard someday...*



Above, the old Wyatt Duncan Ranch before *ripping*; below after *ripping* for an olive orchard on the current John Scully property.



Above, Cathy Monroe looks at an ancient Oak felled for an olive orchard on the old Wyatt Duncan Ranch



The History of Wine in the Greater Capay Valley



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...

When I decided to write about the infamous bootlegging operation and raid in Guinda in 1926, I thought it would be a good time to explore the history of wine in the valley and look at how it is flourishing today. While the many vineyards are often tucked away where they might not be seen by a tourist or even a local traveling our small highways and back roads, sometimes the vast vineyards surprise one, looming for miles amid dry grain fields--like the RH Phillips vineyards in Hungry Hollow's Dunnigan Hills. Formerly the Giguere Ranch, I remembered it as rolling grain fields, and in the late 1980s had the surreal experience of driving through some of the first vines in the area, mile after country, back-road mile. The brainchild of John Giguere and his family, the successful winery

sold to Constellation, along with the popular labels such as Toasted Head, and John and his wife

Lane went on to begin again near Zamora, now serving Matchbook through their Crew Wines label. [See the listed web sites for more on the Giguere family and the fascination with "toasted" heads and "matchbooks"--interesting pyro-story!!]

Today, events like the annual Taste of Capay and the Gala at the opening night of the Yolo County Fair remind us that there is a very wholesome wine industry in the area. The Taste of Capay is a celebration of over 300 patrons honoring the local farmers and vintners each fall, hosted in one of the lovely venues in the valley. Renowned chefs from the sponsoring Yocha DeHe Resort and Casino prepare a gourmet meal using local produce and meats that patrons then pair with local wines. The Fair Gala event offers wine tastings, amid other booths offering



Above, Dunnigan Hills: vast vineyard seen in the distance on the former Giguere Ranch; more historically typical dry grain field in foreground.

Go to:
<http://www.crewwines.com/>
Matchbook site

And an interesting take at:
<http://onerichwineguy.blogspot.com/2010/07/matchbook-ready-to-set-fire-to-wine.html>



tastes of their wares. Capay Organic, the event venue hosting the Taste of Capay this year, is also holding a wine tasting event in September. But with all this local celebration of the wines, many still do not know that this valley became well known for its viticulture in the mid-1800s.

Historian Douglas Nareau, currently re-writing his

history of the area for The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society, writes: "In 1858 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



Above: Capay Organics' venue site for this year's Taste of Capay event and the new Capay Crush event. www.capayorganic.com
www.farmfresh toyou.com

Capay) and established the area's first winery as the Capay Valley Winery, in 1858 on the Adobe Ranch. This ranch, (later occupied by the Peterson family in the 1970's) was under the proprietorship of John Gillig and supervised by Nicola Cadenasso.

In 1861, the Capay Valley Winery was awarded a gold medal as the finest winery in the State of California.

In 1860, two years after the founding of the Capay Valley Winery, the Orleans Hill Vineyard was established. Located at what is now the southern end of Road 83A in the Lamb Valley area west of Esparto, it gained recognition until disease destroyed its vineyards. The vineyard featured Orleans grapes and flourished for over 25 years. Carl Stobel and Jacob Knauth experimented with more than 60 varieties of grapes at the Orleans Vineyard. They concluded in 1869 that two varieties of Orleans and Reisling grapes were superior for wine making. In that same year, the Orleans Hill Viticulture Association was formed with Knauth as president and Stobel as secretary. By 1871, the association owned 850 acres, which produced 80,000 gallons of wine. By 1880, the vineyard had attained such respect that they were recognized by the Mechanics Institute and State Agricultural Society Fair. In 1880, Mr. Knauth was asked by Arpad Haraszthy, president of the



Left: Old Homestead on Capay Organic farm, which was once a Duncan-Zentner Farm.

Capay Crush, Capay Organic's wine tasting event Sunday, September 25, 2011 from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM: capaycrush.eventbrite.com

Grape stompin' fun, live music Boco Do Rio, an awesome Brazilian band, and Kelly McFarling. Wine tasting with six local wineries, kids' and art activities, harvest and stomp grapes, take farm tractor tours in a lovely farm evening atmosphere. Our local taco truck will be serving up fresh mexican food with our fresh organic produce. The farm is pleased to welcome Dr. David Block, professor and chair of the department of viticulture and enology at UC Davis. Dr. Block will give a short lecture during the event. At dusk, guests can gather around an evening bonfire and listen to live music from Boca Do Rio and Kelly McFarling.

Vineyards, Continued on Page 6

Vineyards, continued, including: 2003 appellation as an “American Viticulture Area”

State Viticulture Society, to present a report on the history of the vineyard and the diseases that affected it to the society. Shortly thereafter, the Orleans Hill Vineyard was purchased by Mr. Haraszthy from the Napa area. At that time the vineyard was the largest of Yolo County's six wineries, comprising some 360 acres—though some sources put it at 460 acres. Under Haraszthy, the vineyard continued to prosper, and at the viticulture convention of 1888, several Orleans Hill wines were rated as first quality. In the late 1880's, the winery started specializing in Tokay grapes. By 1888, this variety comprised 21 acres of the estate. In addition to vines the estate also included 600 Olive trees and several hundred prune, persimmon, almond, orange, lemon, English Walnut and chestnut trees, all of which produced extremely well.

Eventually, there would be 3700 acres of wine grapes and 6 wineries in the county before drought, pests, disease and the temperance movement and prohibition caused the viticulture industry to essentially die in Yolo County, until it was reintroduced in the 1980's.”

The first to grow wine grapes and establish a vineyard in the Capay Valley in a century was couple Tom Frederick and Pam Welch with their Capay Valley Vineyards in 1998. After a viticulture course at UC Davis Extension, they planted 15 acres at 13757 Highway 16 in Brooks, the old Wallace place. Making what they refer to as “customer-friendly wines...smooth and easy to drink,” Tom says, “You don't need to be a wine aficionado to enjoy them.”

Capay Valley Vineyards now shares a 2003 appellation as an “American Viticulture Area” with several other wineries, among them are Herren Vineyard-Rominger West Winery, Simas Family Winery, Yocha DeHe's Seka Hills, Taber Ranch Event Center and Vineyards, and the Casey Flat Ranch wine estate--with yet others on the way. And true to the growing trend of this special valley, eating and enjoying wines locally is important to the vintners.

**Passport Weekend
Event**

by *Roots to Wine* group

October 8th thru 9th

Hit the road in this first annual Passport Weekend tour, visiting participating wineries and tasting rooms for exclusive pourings such as vertical flights, library wines and barrel tastings; food and wine pairings; art; music; education; promos; special offers; and conversations with winemakers during crush. Smell the freshly pressed wine while hobnobbing with other wine lovers and makers from 10 to 5 both days.

Capay Valley vintners will be represented thus: Simas Family will pour at/with Capay Valley Vineyards; Seka Hills will be at the Yocha DeHe Golf Clubhouse; Casey Flat Ranch will join Root Stock in Winters--without the long-horn bulls!



For your passport go to:
info@rootstowine.com or
local Chamber of
Commerce.

Vineyards and
Texas Long-horns
-- Why not!?!
Capay Valley is
unique that way!



The Capay Valley has many microclimates, making each vineyard offering unique. For instance, sitting hidden up in Casey Flats above Guinda, the

had just experienced yet another Capay Valley wonder, “perhaps the most unusual vineyard in the greater Sacramento area”—complete with Texas longhorns!

Casey Flat Ranch wine estate has daytime temperatures similar to the Napa Valley, but unlike Napa and even Clarksburg, the coast and delta breezes do not reach the Capay Valley, thus the heat is retained longer here. Dealing with the microclimates and each vineyard’s particular “terroir” determines the varietal chosen. For instance, where Capay Valley Vineyards has great success with its Viognier—recently adding a popular sparkling Viognier—up on Casey Flats the Syrah has become “a star,” according to the article in the Sacramento Bee, June 1, 2011. As the article goes on to say, the “site includes a modest ranch operation, a nod to the area’s history.” On a recent hike up the unpaved county road to the water fall on Casey Flats (see volume 1) we came around a bend and face to face with amazing, though docile, “purebred Texas longhorns”— though at the time we did not know what we were confronting in the road. Having been raised on a local cattle ranch, I just calmly moved slowly around them, talking softly to a bull all the while, not snapping pictures until we had a safe distance—just in case. The Bee article clued me in: we



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Local Color: Sheriff “Sunny Jim” Monroe

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

SHERIFF INDICTED BY THE FEDS DUE TO BOOTLEGGING OPERATION!

A colorful character, Yolo County sheriff for 28 years, James William Monroe, referred to as “Sunny Jim” due to his jovial and accepting personality, returned from the Alaskan gold fields to his new wife, “local girl,” Elvira Grey Duncan of Hungry Hollow, in 1904. He went back to ranching in the Capay Valley, and as he put it, *“I bought stock, shipped grain for the Southern Pacific, and opened a butcher business in Capay. That last move proved to be a good one. It fitted right in with the stock business and gave me what amounted to a monopoly on supplying all nearby towns with fresh meat.”*

Later, he becoming a county supervisor for two years, and then sheriff for the next 28 years--a career that reads like a wild west novel! One series of adventures came from the fact of several locals owning and operating personal stills up the Capay Valley--which prior to Prohibition was not such a concern, but afterwards he needed to “bust” them up and be vigilant about bootlegging operations.

When I, his granddaughter Elizabeth Monroe, began interviewing Capay Valley old-timers, I often heard a story about how he would contact his constables and say, *“I hear there is*

a still up there and I have to come up and bust it up--I had better not find one!” Many people took great glee in recounting this common knowledge, but somehow no one ever mentioned the little detail that at one point he was indicted by the feds for having allowed the largest bootlegging operation in the nation to set up in Guinda! That one I stumbled upon at the Yolo County Archives! In a newspaper account by a descendant of the Swete family, whose small ranch was bought by “suspicious characters” in 1926, the amazing details of the operation and its bust were followed by two brief news accounts of the indictment of the sheriff and several others (whose names were not given) for possible “complicity,” and the eventual

dismissal of the case by the feds. Well, you can imagine my surprise and excitement! I immediately went back to the same people who had regaled me with stories about stills and asked why they had not mentioned this little event! For the most part they, too, were surprised, but a couple did say that now that I mentioned it, they did recall hearing that there had been a huge bootlegging operation and bust at one time--but they had not heard about the indictment! I was as delighted to get more “stories” about the event as I was about the fact that I had a piece to share that they had not known--who does not like to score a coup?!

So, here is how it all happened:



Above, Young Jim Monroe, slaughtering hogs in Capay, early 1900s.



According to John A. Swete in an article for the Sacramento Bee printed on December 26, 1976, the morning of October 29, 1926 was very special, indeed. *"A convoy of cars carrying the sheriff, his deputies, federal agents and a 20-man raiding party hired by the government from a private agency, wound its way up the dusty, washboard road to Guinda."*

When I recounted this part of the article to locals, I was given several different "legends" passed down over the intervening years. Several speculations had to do with the fact that when the raiding party finally got to the Swete farm, no bootleggers were to be apprehended. One was that the sheriff, none other than "Sunny Jim" Monroe, had arranged for road work to take place that very day to slow the convoy's progress, and another was the fact that a low flying airplane was seen swooping over the farm--an attempt to warn the bootleggers? In any case, the raiding party found an amazing set-up--just no one to arrest. Mr. Swete goes on to tell, *"At 1PM the next day, dynamite blasts began and continued for five hours...as lawmen destroyed the largest bootlegging operation ever discovered."* In Guinda!! *"Saturday afternoon brought streams of onlookers in model-T Fords and other vintage cars out to witness the destruction...of what Prohibition agents believed to be 'the principal source of illicit liquor coming into Sacramento County,'" perhaps also supplying*

San Francisco, Salt Lake City and "points as far east as Ohio."

For the Swete family, it all started when two strangers came to their Los Altos home in a Dusenbergs in 1926. Giving the names Mr. Singer and Mr. Avery, they offered to buy the relatively small family ranch [about 50 acres surrounded by other, much larger farms and ranches on the bank of Cache Creek, north of the main valley road]. Well secluded, it suited their needs, they said. Though the family had not ever considered selling, the offer of 1/4 of the purchase price was offered up front, a \$24,000 downpayment, and they would move the Swete's personal effects for free.

Unfortunately for Mr. Swete's uncle, who happened to be in Guinda visiting friends, when the dynamite explosions began, he hurried to the ranch, only to be hand-cuffed and interrogated--the only one to ever be "taken into custody" for the affair.

In addition to claiming that the raiding party put on quite a show, apparently to impress the gathering onlookers, Mr. Swete claims that the only one who tried to calm the raiding party and salvage any of the Swete's property was James Monroe, saying, *"the popular sheriff of Yolo County...the agents would have burned the remaining part of the house"* but the sheriff *"convinced them that continued destruction was unnecessary."* He also paints an amazing picture of the operations itself:

"...so large and complex it is almost unbelievable that in a period of five months it could have been secretly set up and supplied with materials, and could be producing at peak capacity, unsuspected or unreported by the valley residents." Well, the federal government must have thought the same thing, because they eventually chose to investigate the "popular sheriff" and 15 others! And to hear some locals who were living in the valley at that time, it would seem pretty suspicious, indeed. Peggy Wood tells that her father-in-law talked about hearing trucks rumble in and out of the valley in the middle of the night, presumably hauling syrup in one way and liquor out the other. After the raid, he realized what he must have been witness to, but didn't think to report it at the time.

But while their coming and going was heard by some, their attempts to hide the actual operation was ingenious. *"No new buildings were constructed nor were the exteriors of the buildings modified in any way...The main ranch house was composed of 21 rooms forming a T" and some of the ceilings were removed and basements dug deeper to accommodate the 40-foot vats, but the rest of the house was left intact, used for testing and housing workers. Quite clever was the camouflage of "the smokestack of the steam power-plant--located in the brick summer kitchen about 30 feet from the main house--was led up to a height of 40 feet through a huge black walnut tree, effectively screened from view."* The used mash was dumped *"directly into Cache Creek about a*

quarter mile away," using 6-inch irrigation line. *"The packaging of the alcohol also showed ingenuity. The raisin syrup" from San Joaquin Valley came in 5-gallon cans packed in boxes and the liquor was shipped out in the same cans and boxes--thus looking innocent raisin syrup.*

"It is doubtful a more suitable geographical location or building arrangements for a clandestine moonshine operation could be found. In 1926 the Capay Valley Road dead-ended at Rumsey six miles north of the ranch. It was remote yet readily accessible to the valley road network. With few exceptions, the only people entering or leaving were the inhabitants. The road was dusty and rough in summer and a muddy mess in winter. The ranch buildings were shielded from view on all sides by big walnut, oak and



Con't on page 10



Bootlegging Bust, con't:

eucalyptus trees. Rolling hills and an almond orchard, extending a quarter of a mile in all directions, further secluded the operation. An alarm system was installed on the private road leading to the house, which would alert an armed guard stationed about halfway between house and main road.” The valley’s only phone service was a party line and the house had no phone at all.

While Mr. Swete describes the trucks used in the operation as the most modern to be had, the dirt roads in and out of the valley and ranches were a challenge to any car or truck of that time.



However the bootleggers made their get-away, they were never caught. But some locals had a heyday ransacking the ranch after the raid. No efforts were made by the feds to control the taking of saddles, harnesses, tools and equipment because they believed it was the property of the bootleggers. They were unaware that only a down-payment had ever been paid and the property still belonged to the Swetes--and “no one sued the government for anything in 1926”--certainly not in a bootlegging case!

Well, after all this I came up with my own theories. It was pretty common knowledge in my family that my paternal grandfather the sheriff was probably more annoyed by than supportive of Prohibition--especially since Prohibition in Woodland started in 1911, the year he was elected to his first term, not in 1920, when Prohibition became a national law. You see, in 1911 women in California got the vote and their temperance movement voted to close saloons immediately! But while neither that Prohibition nor the federal one “allowed” the use, making or distribution of beer, wine or hard liquor, it could not stop it all together. This was pretty common knowledge at the time and I can imagine that the county sheriff felt it necessary to turn a deaf ear to some of it--especially up in a secluded valley where the locals were mostly just providing for their own use? And even after the 21st amendment repealed Prohibition, these practices were un-taxable and uncontrolled, so “illegal,” but continued--and “the raids on illicit liquor sellers continued,” according to Larkey and Walters in *Yolo County Land of Changing Patterns*. But that would not necessarily change the sheriff’s personal attitude. A family story is that when my mother’s family arrived in Woodland from Missouri in the early 1930s and her father, professional gambler and saloon keeper, Charlie Polk, *[seen in photo at right in his Woodland bar in 1930s]* had no problems with the sheriff’s department. Both “Sunny Jim” and then his son, Forrest D., he claimed never caused him any trouble, always treated him fairly--and came by for a friendly drink from time to time. When my mom came home one day at 18 to say she was dating Tom Monroe from the sheriff’s family, her father gave her his blessing.

So, whether the sheriff and other locals were “complicit” or just showed benign neglect, the indictment of at least 16 locals, including the sheriff, claiming they were involved in operating and distributing liquor from a warehouse in Emeryville that came from Guinda, was dismissed in 1927.

I recently compared notes and theories with Guinda’s Mike Bloom, the grandson of Dick Bloom, the Guinda Constable at that time, and we agreed that we may never know the whole story, but, boy, there sure is a great story in there! From quiet, secluded Guinda in the Capay Valley to Jack London’s Oakland-Emeryville docks--who woulda thought?!



Above: Charles Wayne Polk, in his Woodland bar, The Past Time, in the 1930s

Constable Dick Bloom on Ol' Red



While Richard Bloom acted as Constable of the north end of the Capay Valley during Sheriff Monroe's tenure--and had some exciting stories to tell about that time--his true calling was farmer.

***The Richard Bloom Family:
counting their Lowrey ancestors,
7 generations in Capay Valley, today***



Above: Dick Bloom at right--with Bonnie and Clyde, perhaps?

Constable Dick Bloom was a farmer, first and foremost.



Constables were like "deputies," but made only a stipend, not a real salary. At the same time, Wilbur Cline served as a constable in the Esparto area and Herman Hartwig served in the Madison area. Also old families in the greater Capay Valley, they all had great stories to tell about the times--but also had other occupations as their main focus. When the sheriff or public had a problem in the area they covered, they got a call on the local, private party-line phone and they went to represent the sheriff's office. According to Mike Bloom, descendant and current owner and farmer of his grandfather Constable Dick Bloom's farm, often times a call to his grandfather was a complaint about a still or drunken brawl, and though prohibition reigned in Yolo County and later in the nation, ordinarily the offenders were treated fairly lightly--sheriff department policy, since most of the stills were privately owned and for personal use, only. I guess it is no wonder the feds were suspicious as to the sheriff department's "complicity," or at least lack of action when there was a much bigger and more offensive moonshine operation in Guinda!



The Yolo County Jail, The Monroe Detention Center, is not only named for the 60 Consecutive

years of Monroes as sheriff between 1911 and 1971, but they have dedicated rooms to the constables as well.

They are all named Richard...

*If you have done any genealogy research, you may know that the habit of families duplicating names can cause great confusion in archived records. In the case of the local Bloom family it is no different: In all generations, there is a Richard: Richard Henry begat Richard Henry (Constable "Dick"), who begat Richard Norman ("Dickie"), who begat Richard Michael ("Mike"), who begat Richard Allen ("Allen") Bloom. And then you have intermarriage among other old-time families and the various last names can add to the confusion. Both the current Blooms and Lowreys are descendants of Nicolas Marion Lowrey (1836-1905) and Mary Eliza (Hensley; abt 1849-1894), originally from Tennessee, both buried in the Cottonwood Cemetery. In the case of the Blooms, daughter Ida Florence married a Wright, with whom she had daughter Charlotte May, who married the first Richard Henry Bloom (a German-American from Wisconsin) in 1906, and they had the second Richard Henry (Constable "Dick") in Tancred, CA, starting the Bloom dynasty in the Capay Valley. I assume Ada Merhoff did not include them because the first Bloom arrived just after 1900 and her book is titled: *Capay Valley The Land & the People 1846-1900*, but counting their Lowrey side of the family, the current Bloom family is 7th generation descendants--and to keep all those Richards straight, they often go by their middle names!*



Nickolas Lowrey 1836-1905

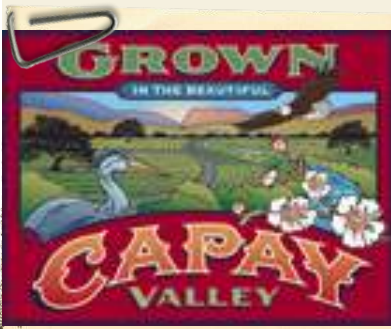


Eliza Lowrey -1893

The Lowrey family genealogist speculates the Hensley and Lowrey families met in the county where both Nick and Eliza were born, Cass County, MO, as the families farmed side by side. The couple married in Sonoma County, CA in Analy Township in 1865 when Eliza was about 16, and Nick was a stock runner. Moving to Madison in Yolo County, Nick tended bar before finally moving to the Rumsey area of the Capay Valley in 1891. There he quickly developed a productive farm on the north side of Cache Creek with his 6 younger children at home and the two eldest, married daughters, Olive and Ida, living nearby.



Eliza with daughters Olive and Ida Florence, whose daughter Charlotte May would marry the first Bloom in the Capay Valley, Richard Henry Bloom in 1906.



It is always interesting how intertwined the families of the valley were...When Mike Bloom mentioned how his

*family had farmed adjacent to the Harry Everett farm and worked in almonds with him, resulting in a renewed direction for their farming, he also mentioned that this same Everett family was well established and spread out in the Amaranth and Guinda areas, and a small portion of their farm was sold to the Swete family--that same ranch where the largest bootlegging operation in the nation was busted up in 1926! Ada Merhoff's **Capay Valley The Land & The People 1846-1900** covers a great deal about the Everetts and Swetes on pages 224-228, so I will only reference the highlights here. The PG Everett family bought up 160-acre parcels during the 1880s, and by the 1890s they owned over 1000 acres of sheep grazing hillsides and 1200 acres within the former Canada de Capay Grant. Portions would be sold off over the years to other families, but PG's two sons, Lewis, married to Mae Chadbourne of San Jose, and James, married to Elizabeth Hughes remained to farm the area. Lewis was a county surveyor living in Woodland for awhile and as such was hired by the county to "explore the feasibility of a railroad to Lake County." In 1887, unlike other farmers, the brothers chose not to sell land to the railroad, but cleverly allowed only a right-of-way for the tracks over their land, arranging a convenient **siding** (short connecting track) to what they called Amaranth.*

While Lewis and Mae Everett left their land to their son Harry, James and Elizabeth Everett sold the original homestead in the Tancred area, a sale that eventually led to the FCB Swete family of England buying the original PG Everett homestead. The original house had burned, but there was a mature orchard and the family built extensively and added to the orchards. After the bootlegging raid [see article on Sheriff Monroe] the Swetes sold the ranch to Henry Anton Louia and wife Vera (Beneto)--whose daughter Betty married Dick Bloom!

Today, Mike Bloom and his wife, Esparto Elementary School secretary Deborah Stateman of Sacramento, run Bloom Ranch "Natural Nuts and Snacks" with the help of their son, Allen. Mike explains that while he does not claim "organic" he tries to grow and market the most natural nuts, vacuum sealed right after harvest to protect their freshness "with the customers' families in mind."

go to:

www.bloomranch.com

Watch the video on how they harvest almonds on the ranch. When asked about the history of farming on the old Bloom place, Mike says "We farmed everything but row crops; nuts, grains, milo, cattle, sheep, pigs and dry farmed wheat." They were near the Harry Everett farm, home to the valley's first commercial almond huller, and after they worked with Mr. Everett in the 1950s, the Blooms moved mostly into nuts. Mike tells how Mr. Everett invented the fully-adjustable Air Leg design to make hulling more efficient, but he did not patent it, so the Almond Growers Association adopted it and growers still use the principal today. Mike has further perfected the process himself--and he does patent it! Mike's father first leased and then bought the Everett place and the old huller can still be seen there today, surrounded by ancient almond trees of an earlier variety.



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The Lowreys of Capay Valley...

Descended from the pioneers Nickolas Marion and Mary Eliza Lowrey, as were the Blooms, the Lowrey presence in the valley is somewhat diminished today, but the Valley, especially Rumsey area, remember them well. One reason is that Nick's grandson, Lloyd, was California Assemblyman from 1940 until 1963, and his great grandson, Jan, was very active in conservation in the area, having a park named in his honor at his untimely death--see the feature on him in following pages.

Not all of their time was spent in valley farming. In 1896 gold was discovered in the Yukon and Alaskan territories, and in 1898 Nick's sons John, Dave, and Jim, joined the goldrush. In the early 1900s they worked a claim adjacent to James Monroe, future sheriff of Yolo County, and later came back to the Capay Valley, just as he did--to find the real gold!

Family stories abound, starting with Nick and Eliza's interesting neighbors: the Glasscock gang of horse thieves had their headquarters in the "mountains forming Cache Creek Canyon and it was not unusual for the Lowrey horses to be exchanged during the night for those of the famous brothers who needed fresh mounts." Another family story includes that of son John losing his eyesight and driver's license with age--but still daily driving the rubber-tired tractor to town to get the mail. Younger son Lester and daughters Olive, Clara and Ida Florence stayed in the area for many years, as did John, who fathered future assemblyman Lloyd, who with wife Helen fathered sons Lloyd, Jan and Timothy.

Another of Nick's sons, Earl Marion, married a local gal named Ethel I. Hambleton in 1908, and stayed in the area and produced Evan, who would bear the affectionate nickname of "Bucket" well into his nineties. Apparently the name came from his appetite: carrying your lunch pail to a one- or two-room school house in the early 1900s was not unusual, but due to his appetite, he carried a large *bucket* full of chow--and the name stuck. His uncles Dave and Jim lived together in a "bachelor cabin" most of their lives, and according to their mother, after their deaths the relatives chose to burn it down rather than clean out their immense "collections."



Above: Olive, Clara, Lester and Ida Florence Lowrey.

In 1994 "Bucket" Lowrey was interviewed by a local paper and made the observations that the Capay Valley was pretty diverse, even in the early 1900s: African-Americans, whites, native-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Chinese descendants of railroad workers, Japanese-American farmers all lived and schooled together. His father played in a racially mixed brass band in Guinda, "performing in venues all over the county." He also observed that when his mother "Ethel Hambleton, attended school there during the 1890s, the town had a two-story schoolhouse with two teachers and about 100 students." Guinda also had butcher shops, blacksmiths and a hotel--even its own newspaper, *The Guinda Independent*. By the time "Bucket" attended the school the enrollment had dropped to about 65.

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 *characters* from our past and our memories--our lives.



This is always one of my favorite columns--and one of the hardest to decide. Not everyone would like to be called a “character,” but certainly my readers have let me know they are delighted to read about some of the locals whose *character* has added much to the history and *character* of the greater Capay Valley. Sometimes these characters are obvious and sometimes they just seem to fall into my lap--like Jan Thomas Lowrey just did. While researching the Lowrey family and its long history in the Capay Valley, I became interested in someone who I knew only slightly growing up here. I attended Esparto schools with Jan’s younger brother, Tim--now a highly respected PhD of Botany at the University of New Mexico, and who was recently recognized by having the Herbarium at the U of NM named the “Tim Lowrey Lab” in his honor. But I didn’t know his elder brothers, Lloyd or Jan, very well--and now I can see this was my great loss! Jan’s name has come up often and with great admiration and fondness among the people I have been interviewing. I found that his work with the Cache Creek Nature Conservancy led to having them name *The Jan T. Lowrey Cache Creek Nature Preserve* in his honor after his sad and untimely death at 57 years old in 2006. And in researching his family I found this nut did not fall too far from the almond tree: his father, Lloyd W., former California Assemblyman from 1940 to 1962, was also interested in farming, water and soil conservation, as well as the rights of native populations. According to an oral history done by the State of California, Jan’s dad was a rancher and conservationist, belonging to organizations including the Grange, the Cattlemen’s Association, the California Wool Growers’ Association, the Soil Conservation Society of America, and the Society of American Foresters. He was quoted as saying the Lowrey Ranch in Rumsey “was known in those days as the old Colonel Pickens place. Colonel Pickens was with [General George Armstrong] Custer when Custer *destroyed himself and a group of men in the fight against the Indians.*” Because of the stories Colonel Pickens shared with the young Lloyd, he developed a sympathy for the plight of the local native valley tribes--and passed this sympathy on to his children. In the legislation, he was very active in Indian issues, feeling--as his own father had--that they “had been improperly treated by the white man. I tried to have my office be a meeting place for native Indians who wanted to come to the legislature to discuss issues and have questions answered.” When he was young, possibly a hundred Indians lived on a reservation just north of where he grew up. Even though their homeland had been there since pre-Columbian times, they were moved off the property by the Indian Service, who said the land belonged to his father John Lowrey. “My dad said maybe in American legal terms it was our property, but the Indians were there first. Rightfully it was theirs as long as they wanted to live there, it was theirs to continue as they had in the past. But, they were moved off and eventually that Indian civilization has almost completely disappeared. They’ve lost their culture guided by the hand of the white father, the Indian Service in Washington.” The Lowreys felt a responsibility to help.



Turns out as director of the Conservancy, Jan led the restoration of a 40-acre abandoned mine pit in Yolo County into a “Flourishing wetland system...a key component of the 130-acre property” now bearing his name: the *Jan T. Lowrey Cache Creek Nature Preserve*, [see picture to left and map below from the web site:<http://www.cacheconserv.org/programs.cfm?SECT=4>] including “wetlands, interpretive kiosks, a *tending and gathering garden*, nature trails, and observation platforms.” Jan’s political savvy helped him get the various aggregate (sand and gravel) producers along the mined stretch of Cache Creek to take responsibility for the mining damage and voluntarily contribute a portion of sales toward the cost of restoration. He also led UC Davis students and members of the Native American community in developing the *Tending and Gathering Garden*, a “natural resource gallery hosting plants native to the local watershed that have been used traditionally for basketry, fiber, food, and medicine, giving Native American cultural practitioners access to this precious resource.” As Jan had wished, schools also use this preserve in environmental education programs for students K-12 as well as at the University level.

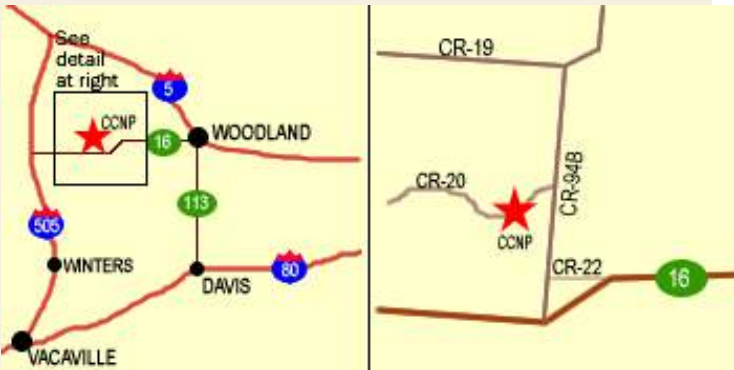
So, in many ways, Jan was following a long family tradition in his interest in “Indian Affairs” and conservation--and even politics, in a way.

Jan Thomas was born in Sacramento in January 9, 1949, attended Rumsey Elementary and then Esparto Elementary and High School before going on to attend UC Davis before enlisting in the US Navy. After 5 years in the Navy, he completed his higher education at Foothill Community College and UC Berkeley. After marrying Kathy Savino in 1976, they traveled throughout Europe before settling in Rumsey to raise three children. Working the family farm, and at Gordon Farms and Sagara Farms, Jan eventually joined the staff of Cache Creek Conservancy, becoming their executive director in 1999. He was also active in Landmark-Buckeye Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, and served as volunteer and commissioner with the Capay Valley Fire Department, on the Yolo County Planning Commission, as Fire Commissioner for the Rumsey Rancheria Fire Department, and was a co-chairman on the board of directors of *Capay Valley Vision*, a group created to better plan for the future of the valley.

But while that all helps me understand why his name was so often mentioned throughout the valley, and might explain why the “celebration of his life” was held on the Rumsey Indian Rancheria in Brooks, and why the CacheCreek Conservancy named a park in his honor, it only sparked my curiosity for further research.

It is, indeed, the *character* of such Capay Valley residents that give our special valley its *character*.

For more information on Lloyd and Jan, etc:
www.dailydemocrat.com
www.bioregion.ucdavis.edu
www.watershednetwork.org





NOTE: All sunflower fields shot in Hungry Hollow on Schaupp Farms by Elizabeth Monroe and Douglas Nareau; Schaupps' Aunt Frieda's 1920s vintage home is in the background at right.

Sunflowers.

Or, as the French would say, Tournesol, or the Italians, Girasole. However we say it, these magical plants, *Helianthus annuus* to be exact, turn their heads to follow the sun when they are young. They are practicing *heliotropism*, a function of photosynthesis. In case you were wondering. Obviously I was! So, I went to good ol' Wikipedia (and then checked with a botanist friend!) and found out why they seem to turn when new, but not later when the heads are flowered. Before flowering, the upper leaf of the seedling follows the sun all day, but after fertilization, their heads are too heavy.

An annual, it belongs to “the family Asteraceae (Compositae), whose flowers are grouped into heads of large dimensions.” Mostly cultivated for its seeds, “rich in oil (about 40% of their composition) the sunflower, along with the rapeseed and the olive tree, is one of the three main sources of edible oil.” Still, virtually all of the Sacramento Region’s \$50 million crop is grown for seeds, not their valuable oil.

Native to this hot and dry area, they not only do well here in the central valley, but they are now grown on about 40,000 acres in the Sacramento Region. Mostly these seeds are for large companies like Eureka and local Pioneer and Sun Field out of Chico, according to the Sacramento Bee article on July 16, 2011.

Living in the farmlands of Hungry Hollow, I have become fascinated by them, surrounded as I am by the ever-changing fields. The Bee article goes on to explain why the same field is not used more than once and why they are so far apart: the seeds from prior crops and the bees from other fields have to be kept away so they do not contaminate the current crops—a pollinating bee can travel about a mile, so the fields are carefully spaced.

My uber-farmer-landlord, Bob Schaupp, solved another mystery for me: why are there some rows plowed under between all the others? Well, it seems that once these rows of male flowers and the bees pollinate the more abundant female plants, they are plowed back into the soil, their job done. Ouch! Sorry, guys! But it is important to get rid of these plants before the wheat harvester-like combines come to take the target plants.

Happily, sunflowers are native to America, but the wild varieties are smaller than the giant hybrids that can grow up to 15 feet—or more! A symbol of many cultures, including Native American (Apache) in North America, the sunflower is also a favorite among artists—perhaps most recognized being oils by French painter, Vincent Willem van Gogh, one such seen at right.

<http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tournesol>



Above, the male row between female rows is obvious; below, the fertile heads are growing heavy with seed and drooping; bottom picture was artistically shot by Douglas Nareau—giving van Gogh an impressionistic run for his money!





DRAGONFLIES!!!!!!!!!!

MAGNIFICENT FLYING DRAGONS EVERYWHERE-- GOT TO LOVE THEM!! One of the most magical parts of our local summers is also among the most ancient of living creatures. There were no mammals or birds on Earth when it lived 258 million years ago. In fact, "it was the only flying predator of its time." They have not change all that much, though a fossil imprint collected in Kansas in 1903 by E. H. Sellards, of an extinct dragonfly—Tupus permianus—shows that "it did not hover like dragonflies do today. It does not have struts near the base of the wing that are needed for powerful hovering." Today, they obviously do fly and hover, but what most people do not know is that this phase is only for a few months in our local varieties and a sign of feeding, mating and then old age. The longest part of their lives can be measured in years, but in the state of a nymph or naiad living in bodies of still water. The great news is, they are busily feeding on mosquito larvae, but the bad news is that if you have standing water for dragonfly nymphs, you have standing water for mosquitoes!

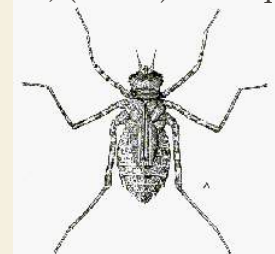
According to The Dragonfly Website at <http://dragonflywebsite.com/> (mostly a small site offering jewelry and "light" books...) "A dragonfly is an insect belonging to the order Odonata, characterized by large multifaceted eyes, two pairs of strong, transparent wings, and an elongated body. Dragonflies are similar to damselflies, but adults hold their wings away from, and perpendicular to the body when at rest.



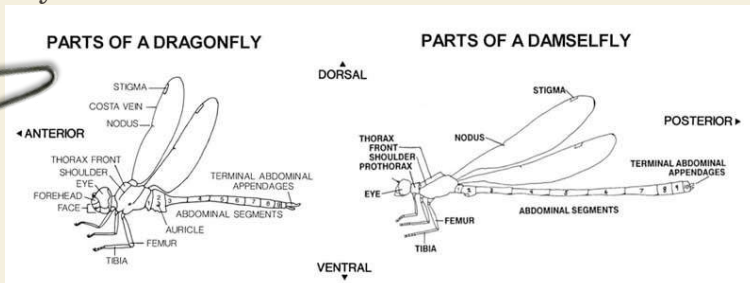
Dragonfly, above, with wings held perpendicular to body; Damselfly, below, with wings held along the body.



Dragonflies typically eat mosquitoes and other small insects. They are valued as predators, since they help control populations of harmful insects. Dragonflies are usually found around lakes, ponds, streams and wetlands because their larvae, known as "nymphs", (below) are aquatic.



Adult dragonflies do not bite or sting humans, though nymphs are capable of delivering a painful but harmless bite.



According to the Office of Public Affairs in Austin, Texas--a state with many varieties--the "larvae are tremendous predators. Dragonfly larvae can feed on newts, tadpoles, small fish and other aquatic life. It's not unusual for them to be the top predators in a pond with small fish.

Unlike butterflies, where the caterpillars can be easy to identify, dragonfly and damselfly larvae are difficult for the nonscientist to identify. Hobbyists can easily, however, try to draw the adult dragonflies and the larvae to their properties by adding backyard ponds and other landscape features with water."

Obviously, with all this farming and irrigation in the greater Capay Valley, we do not need to "create backyard ponds and landscaping" to attract them, but it doesn't hurt to know that they are beneficial and worthy of protection and encouragement. At the right I attempted to capture the many dragonflies hovering by this alfalfa on a typical irrigation canal, but they are not easy to spot. Still, they were everywhere--encouraging me to research them and find, much to my surprise, that they are in this magical flying stage for only a short portion of their lives, but it is what has helped them survive for millions of years: they are in a feeding frenzy when they are in these typical swarms and may wander miles from their original aquatic birth place in search of food and other bodies of water. That ability, and their hard-shelled bodies, is what kept these "dinosaurs" alive when others perished--adaptability!

And from <http://www.holoweb.com/cannon/dragonfl.htm> we get:

"Dragonflies are worldwide in distribution with more than 5,000 described species. There are about 450 species of dragonflies in North America. Adults are usually found near water but are good fliers and may range several miles. They are active during the day, and can be observed" in a feeding frenzy and hunting and mating: "Males of some species are territorial, defending their domain from other males who enter...Nymphs capture and feed on mosquito larvae while adults capture mosquito adults, among other small insects, while in flight.

Visit:

The Dragonfly Website at <http://dragonflywebsite.com/> and: www.utexas.edu/



and Office of Public Affairs, P.O. Box

Austin, Texas, 78713 and: <http://www.holoweb.com/cannon/dragonfl.htm> and: <http://kaweahoaks.com/html/dragonflies.htm>,



"Dragonflies and damselflies together make up the insect order Odonata. The Greek word "odon" means tooth, and the name here refers to the toothed jaws of these predatory insects. Fortunately for us, dragonflies and damselflies use their formidable mandibles on mosquitoes, midges, and other pest insects—not us!"

For those of you with a more scientific bent, try:

<http://kaweahoaks.com/html/dragonflies.htm>, A Beginner's Guide to DRAGONFLIES says that Dragonflies form an important part of Wetland wildlife and they play a significant roll in its general ecology. Of the various animal Kingdoms, including plants, animals, bacteria, etc., there is a common further division into just two kingdoms: Chordata, with birds and mammals, and Arthropoda, which includes dragonflies and other animals with external skeletons, invertebrates without a backbone. This means that, in order to accommodate their growth, arthropods must repeatedly shed one 'skin' and grow a new one. The life of a developing arthropod is thus punctuated by a series of moults, during which it is extremely vulnerable. In addition, since respiration cannot take place through their hard external surface, other methods of allowing the inhalation of oxygen have had to evolve.

Insecta. Insects form the largest single group in the animal Kingdom and can be defined as creatures whose bodies have three sections: head, thorax and abdomen, the central one (thorax) bearing three pairs of legs and, in most cases, two pairs of wings. One of the Orders within Insecta is Odonata - and these are our dragonflies!

Odonata. This is an Order of insects whose members are loosely known as 'dragonflies' and which contains two main Suborders: Anisoptera (dragonflies) and Zygoptera (damselflies), with the usual three pairs of legs, two pairs of large, delicate, membranous wings, and a long, slender abdomen. They breathe through spiracles (holes) in the abdomen. During their earlier, larval, stage, the insects live in water and breathe through gills. During both stages, odonates exhibit voracious appetites, feeding exclusively on small animal matter.



FROM:
**THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
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CAPAY VALLEY

August 2011 Volume 4



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