

**Featuring
Water and
Horses—a great
part of what
makes the
Capay Valley
Special!**



***Happy New
Year!!***

***Here's to a
Wet 2016!***

TGCVHS NEWSLETTER

The Capay Roping Club 1946 - Monroe Ranch

Photos from Bud Taylor; shared by his brother Jim Taylor



Subscriber/Member James Taylor recently found and shared these photos from his brother *Bud*—who is apparently one of the bronc riders, wearing a black hat. They hoped *maybe some of our readers could recognize a horse or a hat to identify some of the people in the photos*. More of this photo series can be found within and by going to our website: greatercapayvalley.org and on Facebook at: *The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society*



Hey, that sure looks like my father Tom Monroe on the buckskin horse riding pick-up!

And many of the people on the fence in the back pasture of the Monroe Ranch in 1946 are the same as in the more familiar photo at bottom (which is featured in volume 9, page 10 of the journals; page 178 of the book:

“The History and Stories of the Capay Valley”)

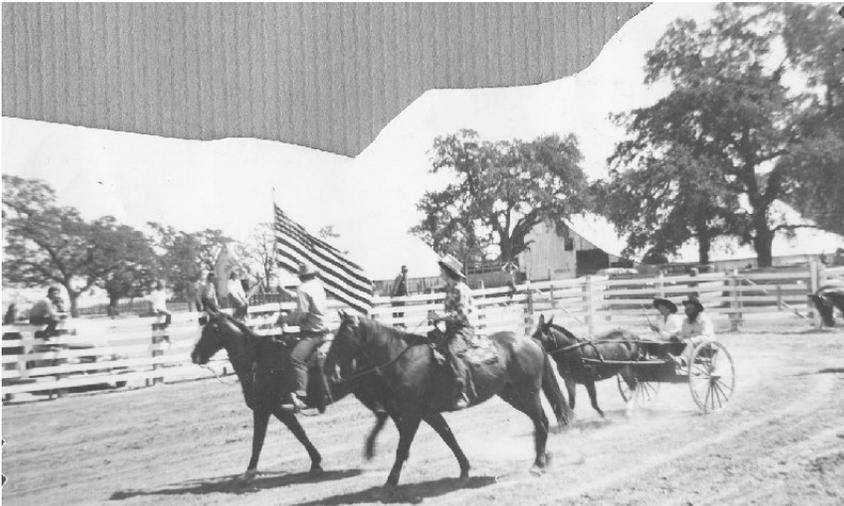


At bottom: I’m told that’s Benny Pritchett roping the calf. Notice the identical people and sitting positions in the photos above. I don’t know who took the photo at the bottom; it has been in our family archive as long as I can recall.

When I received the photos from the Taylor brothers, I was delighted to see the similarities—and perhaps id my father—and to note the location of the rodeo based on the position of the canal levee, the iconic oaks and barns.



Jim Monroe Ranch
Capay, CA
Mid 1940's

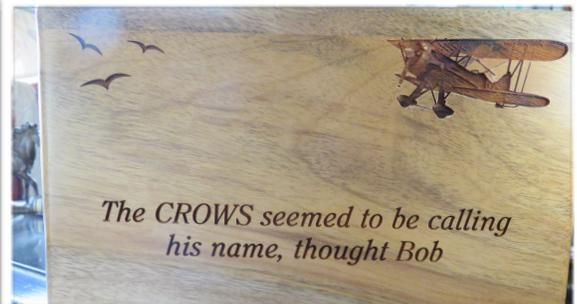


Rodeos at the Monroe Ranch just north of Capay on County Road 85 were a common occurrence in the 1940-50s. Cowboys, *The Capay Roping Club*, young steer riders, and local bronc riders drew an audience from all over Yolo County—according to the late bronc riding Pete Lopez, “On His Feet Pete,” who often participated (see our article in journal volume 9 or in the book “*The History and Stories of the Capay Valley*” and on our website at greatercapayvalley.org)



In case you missed it, that is someone literally “biting the dust” under the bucking bronc above (and in close-up above left). Also note the tree-line and the vintage cars: they are behind the Hungry Hollow Canal that runs on the west and north side of the portion of the Monroe Ranch that fronts CR 85 and the Zentner Ranch. Two youths are standing on the rise of the canal levee. Notice the temporary stand, loud speaker and chutes at the left.

This Fall-Winter 2015 issue is getting out a bit late due to several family issues—the most difficult being the loss of our youngest brother, Bob: Robert Wayne Monroe passed on to greener pastures and to ride the range with our father Tom Monroe and many beloved friends and family who have gone on ahead—like Gene Rominger, whose generous daughter Cris made this Memorial possible.



At left is the Oregon Myrtle Wood box that holds Bob’s ashes. The paraphrased quote is from a book by Jack Handey that Bob had been enjoying, “Deeper Thoughts,” and is appropriate because of Bob’s love of animals—and his special fondness for birds. He had hysterical stories about a crow he rescued, which recently kept us all laughing through a very rough time...he always could find the humor, even in the worst of times—or perhaps especially in the worst of times.

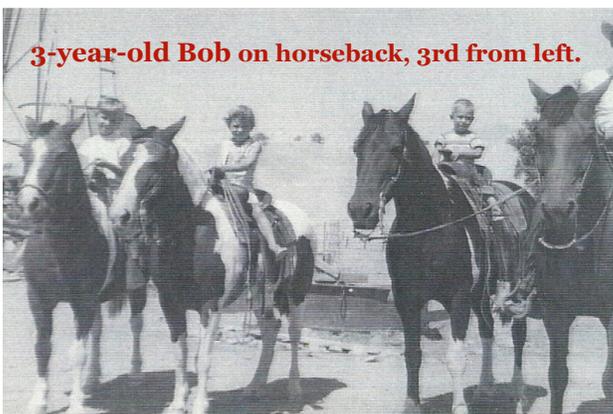


Above: the last photo taken with Bob’s camera: Jean Monroe and, as she called us, her Stair-step Kids, Tommy, Cathy, Betsy, Bobby; four kids in five years in Hungry Hollow. June 2015.



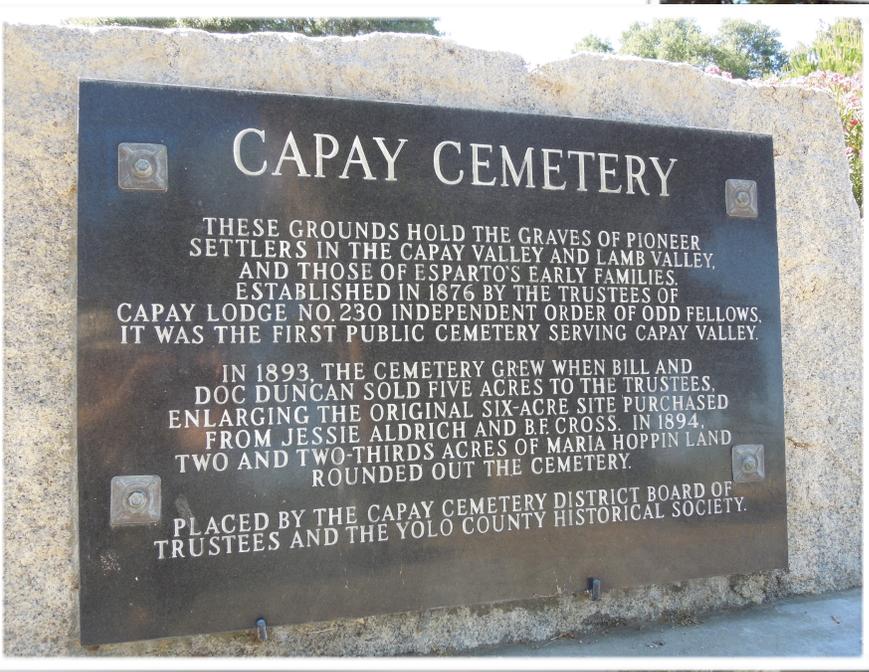
Bob passed away at home in Bandon, Oregon, surrounded by family and friends, September 15, 2015.

He asked that he be remembered to friends he grew up with in the Capay Valley, not seeing them often after he moved to Bandon, Oregon 24 years ago with his parents, Tom and Jean Monroe. Bob was an artist, craftsman, contractor, small-plane pilot and kind friend to many, especially the elderly, small children, and stray & wild animals. Bob was preceded in death by his father, Cowboy Tom Monroe, and leaves behind his mother, Jean, and siblings: Tom (Ginny) Monroe; Cathy (Doug) Stephens and their son Wyatt (Rachel and son Noah) Stephens; Betsy Monroe and her daughter Samantha (Tim) Woods. Bob talked often in the last years of his friends and many adventures and of his early years in Yolo County where his parents raised their four children in the Capay Valley, California, on



3-year-old Bob on horseback, 3rd from left.

the historic Duncan-Monroe ranch. Gregarious and kind and always funny, Bob loved people, but treasured his solitude. One of Bob’s favorite stories included a time he was running cattle in Yolo County in the 1970s and found himself with only his horse and dog on a hilltop watching the sunset and realized that not a soul knew where he was—he had never been happier. We warm ourselves with the notion that he and Dad—and so many others we have loved—now ride the ridge-tops in the Capay Hills and await us; as sister Cathy visualizes it, *The horses are saddled and the dogs frisk excitedly about in anticipation...they have just gone on ahead...*



Though we are inclined in our family to want *our ashes scattered in the Capay Hills*, we also wanted a family headstone in the lovely Capay Cemetery—so full of our pioneer ancestors and friends. Our plot is a Duncan Family plot my father inherited from his grandparents, *Doc and Mother Dunc* (Wyatt Godfrey and Mary Elizabeth) Duncan—whose headstone is nearby. A stroll through this old cemetery is a history lesson of the Capay Valley—and we are proud to be part of this Memorial garden to those who went before...

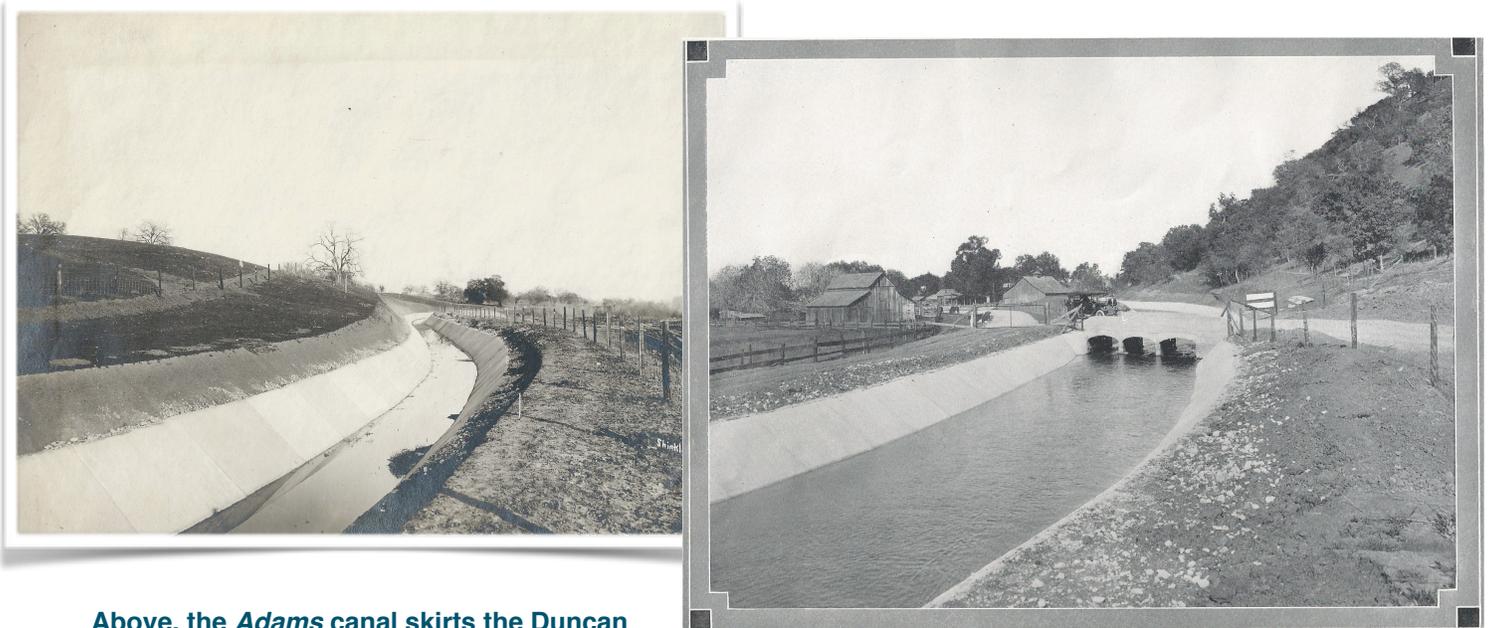
NOTE: visit the photo album for Bob Monroe on Facebook site: *The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society*

Another bit of history still standing and functioning in Yolo County is the Capay Dam and the irrigation canals built in 1913, diverting and delivering water to farmers throughout the county. Little did I know, Yolo Water & Power Co. originally built the diversion dam as a hydro-electric dam to provide power as far away as the San Francisco Bay's near-million residents—90 miles!



Left: new 500' Capay Dam in 1913, looking north to the Duncan Ranch from the Wood Ranch on the south. Then, it was the longest inflatable dam in the world—see our article in Journal volume 2; and page 34 in the book *“The History and Stories of the Capay Valley.”* Begun in September 1912, it diverted water into two main canals: *Adams* runs north along Cache Creek & *Capay-Winters* runs south.

Tom and Ginny Monroe like antiquing at estate sales and are used to delightful surprises, but some touch closer to *Home* than others. One such find was a booklet titled *Electric Power and Irrigation in California, Yolo Water and Power Co. Development in Lake and Yolo Counties, California, U.S.A.* Browsing through this *Bulletin No. 1 - May 1913* quickly revealed it was all about the Capay Dam and the canals of our youth. We grew up swimming in Cache Creek at and below the dam and in the canals: the *Adams* canal ran along our Duncan-Monroe Ranch with an offshoot across our back pasture, and the *Capay-Winters* canal ran SW of Esparto, behind our eventual home near Lamb Valley, on its way to Winters and Davis—and in it, as teens, we met up with friends all summer to cool ourselves in the canal. Farmers like our father diverted water from these canals to their crops—just as they had been doing since 1913, of course—but to us it was all about socializing and cooling ourselves in 100F+ summers!



Above, the *Adams* canal skirts the Duncan Ranch 1913 running east toward Hungry Hollow farms. Right, the *Capay-Winters* canal runs south of the town of Capay heading toward Esparto, Winters and Davis farms. Seen here in 1913, the road across the bridge is just graded, but eventually, in the 1930s, it would be the paved *State Highway 16* we know today.

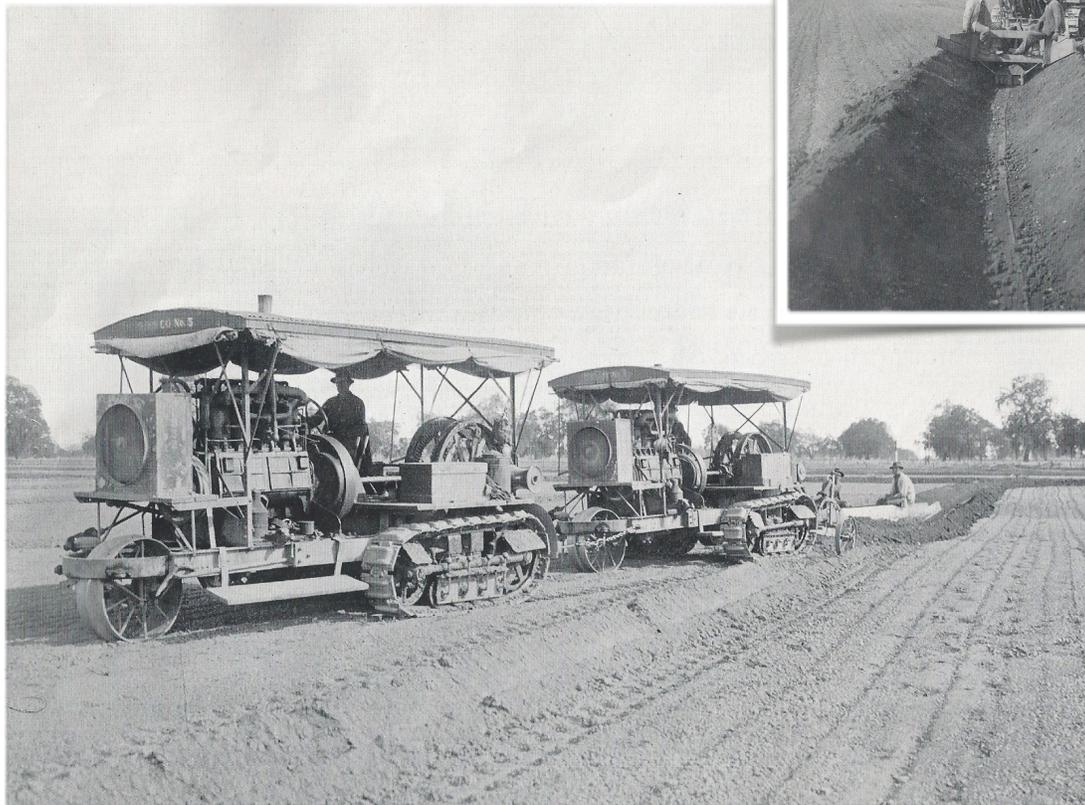
According to this bulletin, “*Construction of the Capay Dam was commenced in September, and finished in December 1912. The work was started at the period of lowest water and pushed with the greatest energy so that the main foundations could be laid before the winter rains and the consequent larger flow of the waters of Cache Creek set in. Cache Creek is called a ‘creek’ following the California custom of calling most waterways Creeks, whereas in winter it flows a huge stream of water which would be called a large river in most countries.*”

“*In beginning the foundations, batteries of pumps were first installed to divert the water—evacuations were made to Bed Rock for the entire length of the 500 foot Dam and then the forms and steel set and concrete poured. A construction crew of 200 men was kept on this work. As soon as the Dam construction was well under way, other crews were put to work on the various irrigation canal constructions and work pushed, so that by March 10, 1913, all of the main canals were tied into the headworks of the irrigation system and water turned in for distribution to lands under the first unit.*”

NOTE: “*Weather conditions in California, winter 1912-13, were mild and particularly favorable for our construction work. In fact so little rain fell generally over the whole State that much distress on account of drought has already been felt...landowners there have profited much through early delivery of water to their lands through the Company’s canals, while other sections of the State were dry.*”



Flood-irrigation was common in 1913: top left is alfalfa; above is orchards; at left is vineyards. Today, drip lines conserve precious water over these earlier methods. Farmers were responsible for plowing their own irrigation ditches from irrigation canals.



Above and left: sugar beet farmers using two *caterpillar* gasoline engine tractors pull a ditch plow to create one large furrow from a canal into their fields. Grain farmers did much the same. This method is still in use—though the tractors have certainly modernized!



According to the *Bulletin Number One of Yolo Water & Power Co.* the Capay Dam was not only a diversion dam for irrigation but “under the ultimate development of the project the water will be used first through the Power Houses for the generation of electricity and then distributed into the lands below for irrigation...” But it turned out that the irrigation was of paramount importance: “...careful analysis has shown that the most advantageous program for construction turns this order of water use around and embraces building, first, the primary unit of the irrigation development with the electric development following this...” —a development that never fully took place.

Published by: White & Co Bankers, 30 Pine St., New York; May 1913

The Bulletin also states: “It is to be remembered that Yolo County contains [in 1913] a larger single body of good land than any other county in California (to be exact, a total of 648,960 acres, over 300,000 acres of which are rich valley land subject to high cultivation.”
—But we knew that! This is a very special place!

TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIPS!

Send enclosed form w check today!

**From: TGCVHS
 PO Box 442, Esparto, CA 95627**

The History and Stories of the Capay Valley

Elizabeth Monroe

TO:

Don't forget to contact us for a copy of the new 440-page hardcover book! Check it out on greatercapayvalley.org or if you are a member-subscriber, your discounted rate is \$150— \$50 off the \$200 Retail price! Send a request and check to TGCVHS at the address above—and how you want the author to sign it!