

CAPAY VALLEY

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Volume Nine

greatercapayvalley.org

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



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

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

It's funny how the past and a sense of place affect some of us more than others. Raised--not reared, thank you, but *raised*, just like the cattle, the sheep and the horses that surrounded us--in the beautiful Capay Valley, I could never imagine calling any other place *home*. Oh, I left here and lived away, traveled the world and saw many a beautiful place others were delighted to call *home*--but I was homesick every day of my life! I look back now and see that every house I lived in was a failed attempt to recreate the turn-of-the-century homes of my dreams. Every place I tried to settle into came up short--chosen for the sound of a scrub jay or dove, a broad vista--or the smell of a cattle ranch nearby! Funny, no? When my family still lived here, I came home, often...and when they moved away, I continued to come--plotting, always, how I would someday come back to live. And so I have. And being *home*, I want to celebrate in this issue the grand old homes that have haunted my dreams and made every other place, well, just a *place*...no place like *home*.



The oil painting above was done in 1991 from a photograph of the Duncan brothers' new home in 1879, north of Capay and Cache Creek, just over the Capay Bridge--which did not exist at that time, of course. "Mother Dunc," Mary Elizabeth (Franklin) Duncan, was interviewed by a local paper in the 1930s about her adult life spent in this home--excerpts will be included in the next issue, volume 10.

Oil painting by Jean Monroe



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Special thanks to: Ray and Martha (Monroe) Donnenwirth; John Gallardo; John Martin and Sally Lewis of Inn at Park Winters; Bill Chapman; Brent Stephens; the Hulsman and Wood families; Patricia Harrison; the Lopez family; article contributor, Jim Hiatt; musician Douglas Nareau--and all the faithful subscribers and advertisers!

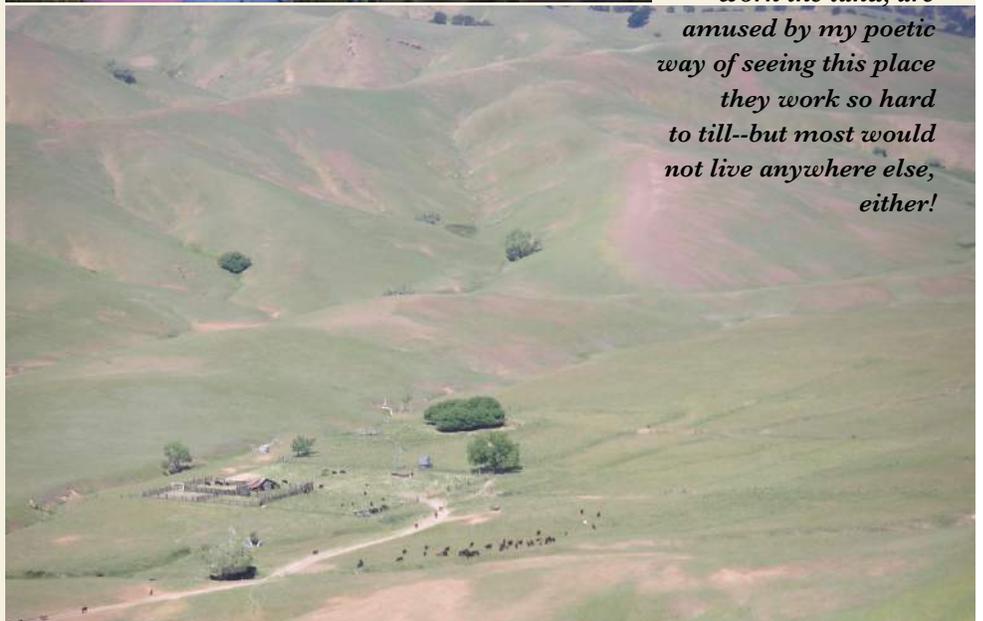
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The beautiful old homes and barns are only part of the appeal, of course. The views from the hill tops and across the vast farm fields, the amazing sunsets of Hungry Hollow--all of it called to me and it fills my heart with joy, continuously. Many of my fiends who did not leave, but stayed to work the land, are amused by my poetic way of seeing this place they work so hard to till--but most would not live anywhere else, either!



At top: I am sitting at the spot my brother Tommy always called the top of the world, the dogs and I look down on Hungry Hollow to the east and The Turkey Camp (above) to the west, as we rest for a moment on a 5-hour, spring-day hike on the old Duncan-Monroe Ranch. Current owner, Paul Smith, kindly let my sister Cathy (waving from Cache Creek at left) and me take the dogs for a 15-20 mile hike one April day in 2009--which turned out to be 90 degrees and required several cooling dips in the reservoirs and Cache Creek! Oh, and there were those two rattle snakes the dogs located for us--and those were just the two we saw! Ah, the Capay-Hungry Hollow Hills--just as we remembered it!



Historic Homes--Capay Valley Jewels!

The good news is there are many historic homes still standing in the greater Capay Valley. Bad news is there are too many to include all of them--there really needs to be a book on the historic homes left in Capay Valley! But I wanted to celebrate them all, and the people who built them, so I will feature a few samples and what I was able to learn about them. To narrow it down, here, I thought I would focus on some built before 1900 and still standing visibly from main roads--but I have broadened the scope to at least point out some built through the 1920s--there are so many of these lovely homes still standing in the area!

Below: lovely old home of Charles Rominger still stands on CR19--the original homestead of the Romingers in Hungry Hollow.



Below, left to right: the 1872 Baur-Hulsman home--the added porch and great upkeep disguise its early date; charming 1914 home of Peggy Wood.



While no one would call the modest, old house we started out in (below) on an old Fred Hamblet farm "a jewel"--least of all our mother!--we four Monroe kids loved it! To this day, the memories our parents helped us make there are among our fondest. Typical of the time, this cabin was cobbled together over the years from other existing cabins--dating from mid-to-late 1800s. Below, a 1950s birthday party with local friends, including, left to right: Me, Dudley Craig, my birthday-sister Cathy, Val Zentner, Teresa Hayes--not sure about the others--sorry!

In doing the research for this feature at the Yolo County Archives in Woodland, I realized--and lamented--the fact that the delightful book written by David L. Wilkinson in 2003 on the "jewels" in Woodland did not reach out to cover the houses built out in western Yolo County. Crafting a Valley Jewel: Architects and Builders of Woodland is inspirational and informative, none the less! [\$19.95. ISBN 1-892626-06-3 YCHS] But to get the information I needed, I had to comb through my families' archives, ask the expert guidance of the Yolo County archivists, and then reach out to the current owners of the houses--often descendants of the original builders of the homes, sometimes not.



Left: the Loren H. Taber home in Capay Valley on CR82, built about 1904-5--lumber delivered by train from Vacaville. Photo courtesy of grandson Robert Taber, whose family still owns it.



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Turn of the Century Homes of Capay Valley...



At right, this unique brick home was built in Capay [Langville at that time] on the southeast side of Main Street between properties of Jesse Aldrich and Doc and Bill Duncan by Lyman Nash in 1880. According to a newspaper quote found in Ada Merhoff's history of Capay Valley, this "fine 2-story brick building will be quite an acquisition to our unpretentious burg." According to current owner, real estate broker Patricia Harrison, local legend has it that Nash, who was manager of the Aldrich brick yard in Capay, "brought home a few bricks each day and built it brick by brick." He and wife Mary had two daughters there. Of note, the Nash property was later owned by Fred Wolber, well-known local carpenter-builder, who built the 1879 home for Doc and Bill Duncan [featured in this article] and may have built several others with a similar floor plan. I recall sleep-overs at the Covington home, (on the old Bandy Ranch, Hungry Hollow) farther north up CR85 from the similar Duncan-Monroe home. The mirror-image floor plan gave me many a deja vu moment--I even knew where the *secret stairway* was between the kitchen and master bedroom!

Also of note, those Capay Bricks: Jesse Aldrich had built a new kiln between the school and the creek in 1886 to make bricks—able to fire 200,000 bricks--"which manufactured building rather than chimney brick," per Ada's Capay Valley The Land and the People 1846-1900.

Happily, many homes in the area that were built by early pioneers around 1900 still stand and are visible from county roads--and they all have some interesting stories to tell! At left, the home of Charlie Schaupp, which he is completely restoring to its original state, can be seen on Esparto's main street: Yolo Ave/Highway 16. About 1889-1900 Charlie says it was built by his "maternal great grandfather, JJ Smith, who also built the first high school about the same time. That high school was torn down about 1923 when they built the brick high school. Smith was also minister of the Esparto United Brethren Church--which he may also have built."



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Turn of the Century Homes, continued...



LEFT: the home as it looks today, [also featured in volume 3 of this journal in 2011] this early Stephens Ranch home sits between Madison and Esparto south of Highway 16. Started in 1850 as an adobe, it was converted into a two-story home in 1854, enlarged in 1865, and expanded to this home in 1893. John D. and brother George D. Stephens not only farmed and ranched, but founded the Bank of Woodland--and founded a large clan of Stephens, many still living in historic Stephens homes and elsewhere throughout Yolo County. The ranch now includes the Historic Oakdale Ranch Event Center, while Stephens still occupy the home.



ABOVE: Parlor portrait was done in Woodland for John L. Stephens, then President of the Bank of Woodland. Pictured: John's wife Byrd S. Stephens with sons John Dudley "Dud" Stephens, former 3-term Supervisor of Yolo County, and brother George D. Stephens. The Parlor also is surrounded by the original Adobe brick.

LEFT: Today's owner, John D. Stephens, Jr., opened up and framed-in a wall section to reveal the original adobe, including grasses and horse hair, with plaster at the bottom; the wall plaque recognizes him as "owning and operating the oldest farm held by one family in Region V since 1852." BELOW LEFT, is a Chaise Lounge chair purchased by John L. Stephens for his office at the Bank of Woodland—the



upholstery was originally leather; at LEFT, the sitting-family room beams were re-purposed in a recent remodel from an old cow barn that blew down on the ranch in the 1950's



Below: This iconic Italianate/“California Box”-designed house sits on Highway 16, southeast of the Highway 505 junction. Begun in 1884 by Edwin Lawson, it was bought and completed by Christian Mast. Today it is owned by the William Maddocks family, who hope their descendants will include it in a future homesite. NOTE, below it, the interesting view it has facing north: this somewhat controversial modern “windmill,” stands surreally out amid the corn fields near the power grid... looking not a thing like those charming early California pioneer



Sacramento Valley

TED STRESHINSKY

Above, as featured in a Sunset book titled Beautiful California, c1977, photographer Ted Streshinsky*; and below (2012), this lovely Rominger homestead in Hungry Hollow is on CR14 at CR87--complete with tank-house and windmill. Owned by Mondavi Vineyards, now, it looks much the same today, sans windmill blades!

**Photo courtesy of Sue and her mother Helene (Rominger) Campbell who grew up here.*



windmills we are accustomed to--like the lovely ones at top and bottom right...



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The newest event venue at the gateway to the beautiful Capay Valley.

Above: south side of CR14 just west of Hwy505, once owned by Leroy Donahue...who owns it today? Can it be the old Basil Campbell place? Hmmmm more research...!



Elegant Queen Anne Victorian never looked better! Built in 1892 by George Washington Scott, her grandeur is more typical in Woodland than on a country road between Madison and Winters, but there she sits on CR26 just west of CR89. Recently restored in a Mansion-meets-Modern style typical of the villas-turned-inns in Tuscany, she is now the Inn at Park Winter, BnB and Event Center [also see back page].



According to records at the Yolo County Archives, the original owner, George Washington Scott, was one of the first American settlers in the Cottonwood area. Coming from New York in 1850 he started “a large grain farming and stock-raising operation...served on the Board of Supervisors from 1864-66” and spent \$18,000 of his own money to help build the rail line roadbed for the Vaca Valley-Clear Lake Railroad through his area. “By 1879, Scott owned 1,879 acres and 1/2 interest in another 8,000 acres. At the time of his death in 1912, he and his wife were the owners of 14,000 acres”--and this home reflects their success! [Find more history and a photo album on our website: greatercapayvalley.org]



Greater Capay Valley Historical Society
Poolside with eastern view





Inn at Park Winters keeps and integrates much of the original landscaping and the historic out-buildings into useable space for the Bed-n-Breakfast and events: the beautifully restored tank house now features a bedroom upstairs and full kitchen downstairs. [Some photos courtesy of the Inn at Park Winters; others by Betsy Monroe]



Most recently owned by the Farrow brothers, who spent many weekends restoring and maintaining the house and grounds inspired by French countryside gardens and the historic aspects of the home.

Rafael Galiano, a real estate broker in SF with many renovation projects under his belt, joined with John Martin, who was already working in the hospitality industry, and Summer Rodman, an old friend in Florida, and the trio

jumped at this opportunity to restore it with an eye for details that would delight visitors to this country home in the greater Capay Valley. Seen at left are: Rafael, Summer, John.



The George Washington Scott home, now the *Inn at Park Winters*, was sold several times over the years. The longest tenure was the Marco family. Since I attended Esparto High School with their granddaughter Terri Giraldi and her future husband Rosendo Sanchez, I asked them to tell us about the family and share any pictures they might have--and got a bonanza!

Rosendo had this to say: *"Terri's grandparents, Santiago (Sam) and Maria Marco, bought the property in the late 1930's or early 1940's. Both emigrated to America from the Basque region of Spain and married around 1918. To us they were always Mama and Papa. Papa raised sheep and ranched in the Esparto-Winters area most of his life. Terri recalls that two other families owned the ranch before her grandparents bought the place, possibly the Rice family...[my note: daughter Elma Scott had married into the Rice family of Dixon]."*

Mama and Papa had two children, Nieves and Teresa, and raised sheep, feed and crops on the 400 acres. Betsy, Papa even did some business with your grandfather, Sonny Jim, the Sheriff! Teresa married Arthur Giraldi in 1945 and they moved into the Ranch and had a daughter, Terri, in 1949. Teresa and Arthur later divorced but Teresa and Terri continued living at the Ranch. Terri vividly recalls Mama cooking meals for all of the ranch hands who gathered at the big kitchen table to have some wonderful Basque meals. The workers lived in two little houses that were on the property and the sheep wagon that was used when the sheep used to be moved in the hills to different grazing areas. Some of the workers were nephews of Mama and Papa and went on to raise their own families. Just part of our grand melting pot of cultures. One of the workers, Placido Sagundo, still lived in one of the houses in his 'retirement' since the Ranch was the only home he ever knew until he died in the early 1980's.

While the house was huge, most of the time was spent in the big kitchen where a heating stove was added along with the TV and Mama and Papa's rocking chairs. It was also Terri's job to get the little jug of red wine that was at the top of the stairs to the basement and pour one small glass of wine for Papa every evening before dinner. I remember that! The tradition continues...but I have to pour my own wine.

Christmas and Thanksgiving was always a time for the family to gather. Joe and Nieves Espigares would bring their kids Nancy and Linda, and Teresa and Terri soon had me tagging along. Cooking in the kitchen filled the house with all those wonderful smells and then all would gather for dinner at the dining room table (which is now in our home) and all would be stuffed.

Terri's grandfather, Santiago, died in 1971 at the age of 88. He was working in the orchard doing some pruning and came in for lunch complaining of a headache. While the dishes were being done after lunch, Papa peacefully went to sleep in his rocking chair in the kitchen.

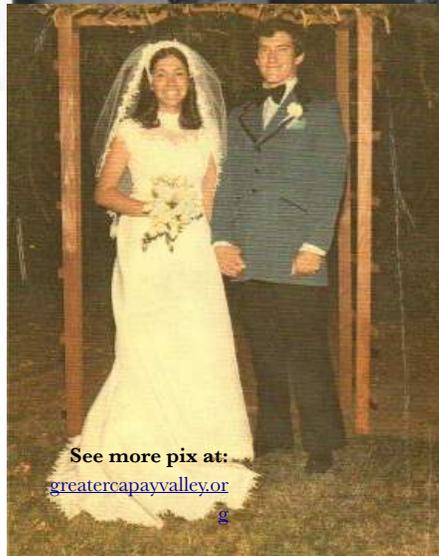
Terri and I were married in the front yard under the giant fir tree, possibly the first wedding at the Ranch, on August 17, 1974, and we had our reception on the east side of the house. Joe Espigares gave Terri away and Terri's bridesmaids were Nancy Espigares Damman, Annie Pearson Lowrey and Susan Scribner Brock. Mark Wolinski was my best man.

Mama died in 1977 at the age of 79 and never lived to see our kids, Amy and Ryan. Our kids were old enough to enjoy time at the ranch with the "new" Mama, Teresa, who continued to live at the ranch alone until the mid-90's when she sold the house and 200 of the 400 acres to the Farrow brothers from Stockton who began the dramatic remodeling of the ranch to what it has now become."

Historic Homes -- Continues on Pg 12



ABOVE: Teresa Giraldi with infant Terri, et al, in front of the always-red painted entrance stairs. **BELOW:** Terri sits in front of one fireplace, Christmas 1956. **BOTTOM,** The first wedding at *Park Winters*: August 17, 1974. Terri Ann Giraldi weds Rosendo Sanchez in the front yard. *"We worked for weeks getting the yard and house ready for the wedding and we had the reception in the yard on the east side of the house. It was a wonderful summer evening and good food, music and dancing was enjoyed by family and friends."*



See more pix at:
greatercapayvalley.org

Rodeos and Cowboys!

Many of our early pioneer-ancestors came to California in the mid-1850s for the golden ore, but eventually turned to a different kind of gold: grains and cattle and sheep. This area was covered half the year in the golden oats that gave this state its nickname "the Golden Gate" even



Jim Monroe Ranch
Capay, CA
Mid 1940's

Benny Pritchett is roping the calf.

before the gold rush. It wasn't hard for these settlers from farm and ranching backgrounds to see the agricultural and stock-raising potential--someone had to feed those hungry miners still struggling in the muck and the towns springing up all around them! And where there are cattle there are cowboys, and where there are cowboys there are rodeos--and horse races!

The locally familiar photo above was taken on the "Monroe Ranch" in the 1940s. A corral was built behind the homestead in the area we always called "the back pasture," but that was formerly called "The Duncan Grove"--and before that "Thousand Oaks." Rodeos were held there regularly throughout the early 1950s--continuing a long tradition of community picnics and social events held at the then-Duncan Ranch.

Established in the 1850s by brothers Wyatt Godfrey "Doc" Duncan and his brother Bill, a portion of this large ranch was bought by Doc's son-in-law, James Monroe, after he became sheriff of Yolo County from 1911 to 1939. Jim married Doc's daughter Elvira Grey in 1902, and their son James William, Jr., with his wife Lucille (Nurse), took over as ranch manager in the 1930s--continuing to live in the house where he was born in 1910, the old home built by his grandparents in 1879. A cattleman himself, Jim continued the rodeos with his younger brother Tom, who also ran cattle on the Monroe Ranch.

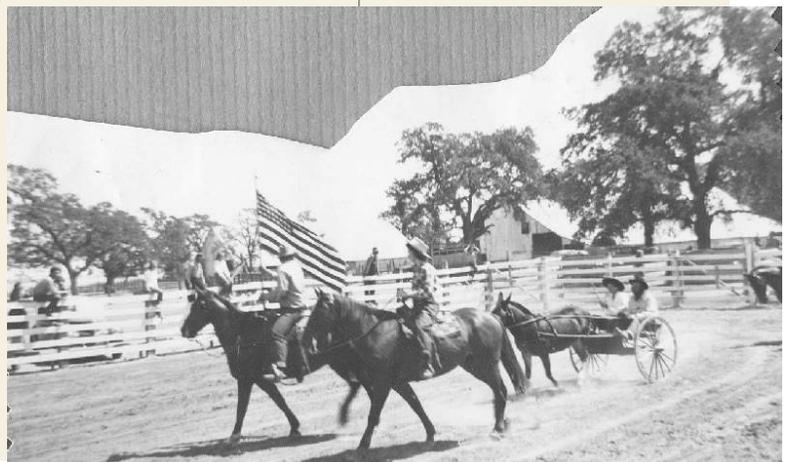
"On His Feet Pete"

Lopez - - Bronc

Buster! One participant at these rodeos was known for landing on his feet after riding "anything that would buck"!

"On his feet, Pete" Lopez—perhaps you have heard of him? A local cattleman who loved to ride a buckin' bronc and earned the nickname from his...

Pete's Story continues on Pg 11



“On His Feet Pete” Lopez, continued...

appearance in many a local rodeo in the years when they were still a common occurrence in the Capay Valley. When I interviewed him recently at 89 years old, I asked him about this nickname and he chuckled and admitted he “liked to ride anything that bucked!”...and often *did* land on his feet! His parents came from Mexico and raised Pete and his siblings near Winters, where Pete attended school. They lived at the west end of Winters off Road 128 and he worked for several ranchers as a young



man—including the Meagher family of Wragg Canyon in Monticello [near what is now Lake Berryessa], where he met his future wife, Ila Lucille Meagher, six years his junior. Since she was still in high school, she said she would have to graduate before she would marry him--so after his enlistment in the Army, he came back to claim her in 1946.

During the war, he spent much time in the Philippines, where he became a well-respected boxer. He was also decorated for his bravery, which left him wounded more than once. His superior officers took a look at his record and asked him to be a personal bodyguard.

Rodeos followed a nearly 100-year tradition of Social Gatherings at “Duncan Grove”/Monroe Ranch in the Capay Valley area: 1860s through 1950s.

Pete’s Story Continues on Page 15 --and at our website greatercapayvalley.org --including a video by Betsy, with original song: “On His Feet Pete” by Douglas Nareau!!

The following quotes are from a family narrative by Frank Duncan, who was born in the original house his father Bill and his elder brother “Doc” built; and from Ada Merhoff’s history, **Capay Valley The Land & The People 1846-1900**: On page 127 of Ada’s book: *“Horse racing was probably the earliest sports attraction enjoyed by the general public; since the early 1860s breeding farms were producing high quality animals to meet the demand of racetracks spaced over the county.”* [One was near what has been traditionally called “Brown’s Corner” at the west end of Woodland.] Referring to downtown Capay, Frank Duncan reminisced, *“There was a big race track that started right where that big oak tree stands in the upper end of town, and we were always having races there. It was the day of horses, and I can remember Doc Craig and John Nixon and Bob Benham racing there, horses and foot races too.”* And, according to Ada’s tome, the following quotes were carried in a local paper, *“The sporting fraternity of Capay indulged in a number of horse races last Saturday...the day was one of marked excitement.”* And *“Foot races were fast becoming an equally entertaining pastime, as challenges were exchanged between individuals as well as community teams...”* In the 1880s, Duncan Grove was the large clearing we called the “back pasture” where locals held an annual event: the Odd Fellows Picnic each April 25th, and other recitals, socials, Sunday Buggy Drives--and the frequent rodeos once the corral was built! Frank Duncan recalls, *“The band always rode to the grove in a big four-horse stage driven by Lane Duncan, and my father [Bill Duncan] always insisted that for the use of the grove the band should play when it passed our house.”* Quotes Ada: *“There were foot races, contests, cartwheels and somersaults, leapfrog and fiddle playing for dancing under the big oaks—and there were friends and relatives sitting on the ground on cloths or aprons to eat cold meat, home canned fruits and frosted cakes...gallons of lemonade...for some of the youngsters, there would be ‘the taste of ice cream for the very first time ever’.”* (Pg 134) Prior to the first bridge in 1884, Hungry Hollow people had to paddle or pole a big flat-bottomed ferry boat between informal docks when the creek was running high. After the bridge, the Duncan Brothers opened their grove to the locals for social gatherings, including *“reunion style get-togethers, holiday celebrations, and special events.”* (Pg 134) In addition to that, their land on the Capay side of Cache Creek offered a dance pavilion and shady spot in the southern part of the “grove” of Valley Oaks.



The Duncan Brothers' Ranch was featured in the De Pue and Company Atlas of Yolo County, 1879--the edition published the same year the brothers completed their home in Hungry Hollow, just north of Capay and Cache Creek. In the etching below you can see the town of then-Langville, [later, Capay, in 1888] in the left distance; the new home with original log cabin in rear; farming equipment for the 2000 cultivated acres of the over-8000 acre ranch.

The illustrated atlas and history of Yolo County, Cal. Containing a history of California from 1513 to 1850, a history of Yolo County from 1825 to 1880, with statistics of agriculture, education, churches, elections, lithographic views of farms, residences, mills &c., portraits of well-known citizens, and the official county map. De Pue & Company. 1879. Jos. Winterburn & Co., Printers, 417 Clay Street, San Francisco.

Author: De Pue & Company

Date: 1879

This historical cartographic image is part of the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com, a large collection of online antique, rare, old, and historical maps, atlases, globes, charts, and other cartographic items. [Read more about the Collection.](#) Or you can view the entire David Rumsey Map Collection in Insight.

Full David Rumsey Map Collection Catalog Record:

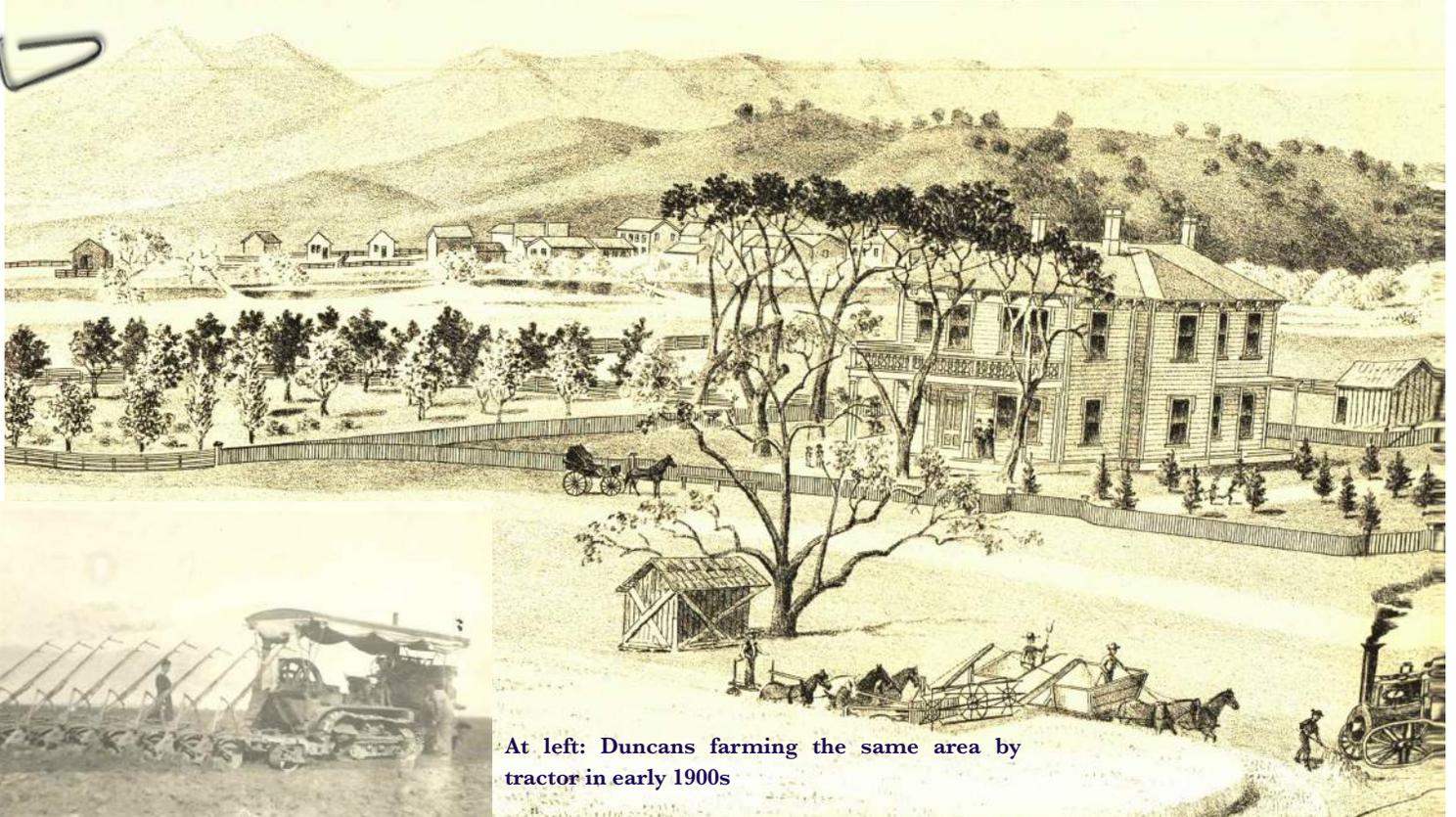
Author: De Pue & Company

Date: 1879

Short Title: Title Page: Yolo Co. atlas, history.

Publisher: San Francisco: De Pue & Company

Below, top down: family photos of the house in about 1900 [“Doc” and his son Wyatt, Jr. on the front porch]; and one from the 1950-60s.



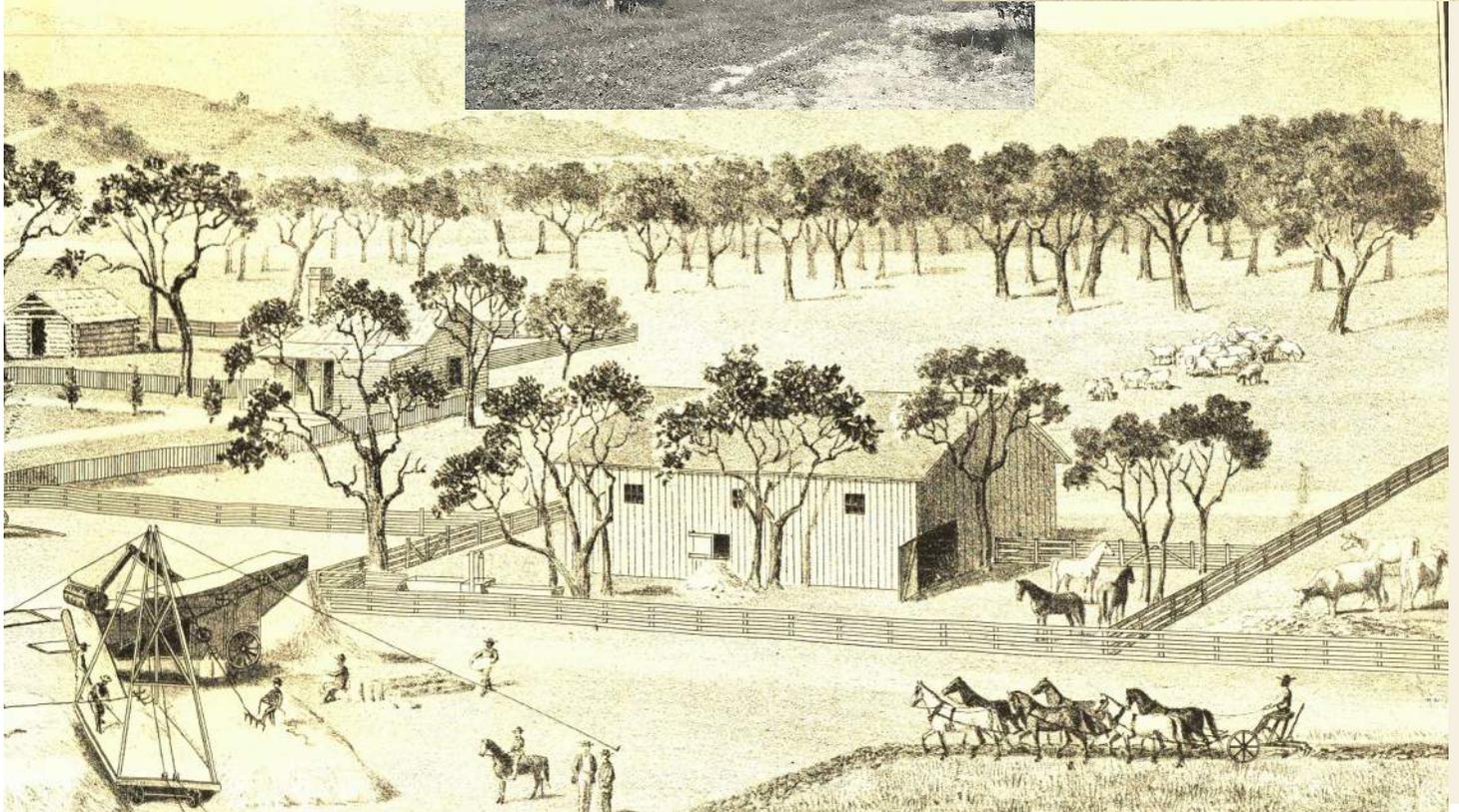
At left: Duncans farming the same area by tractor in early 1900s



Below, pictures from the 1950s of features depicted in the etching done in 1879. Note: original home [where Frank Duncan was born] below at left looks like the one below it in the etching, but the porch was later walled-in, creating a dine-in kitchen, seen in the later photo to its right. The 1940s photo of the barn shows the original one in the etching. At right, the Monroe-Donnenwirth kids stand above the ranch canal in the 1950s, facing the farmstead across the "back pasture" site of the rodeos and earlier social gatherings--by then, cattle had replaced the sheep of the 1879 etching.

Photos courtesy of Martha Monroe and husband Ray Donnenwirth. Etching from *De Pue Atlas 1879*, courtesy of Yolo County Archives:

226 Buckeye ST, Woodland 95695 530-666-8010 and www.yolocounty.org



The Duncan-Monroe Ranch...

The Duncan Brothers' home on county road 85 was never as *elegant* as the GW Scott home on CR 26, but more typical of the early pioneer homes in the Capay Valley. Visited and described by Bob Ogden for the *Woodland Record* in Nov. 17, 1966, we can take a peek inside, much as it had been since 1879. [The *Record* article contained some errors, some I will correct here--including the article title, calling it the "Wyatt-Monroe Home..."--what?! *Duncan-Monroe*, more accurately.] The facts:



Wyatt Godfrey Duncan and his brother Bill built it in 1879; James Monroe married Doc's daughter, Elvira Grey Duncan, in 1902 and took over ranch management in 1904--even though "Grey's" younger brother, Wyatt Godfrey Duncan, Jr., still lived at home. Over the years, "Sunny Jim" Monroe

a room dominated by a large marble fireplace [seen below] and big bay window [bottom photo].

bought up portions of the ranch, including the home and ranch barns along road 85. Wyatt Godfrey, Sr., died in 1915 and his wife, Mary Elizabeth (Franklin), in 1936, leaving the remainder of the ranch to her daughter, and about 3000 acres running along the west side to son, Wyatt Godfrey, Jr. Following *Mother Dunc's* death, Sheriff Monroe's second son, Jim Monroe, Jr., moved into the ranch home with his wife, local gal Lucille (Nurse), and two of their children, Nancy and Martha—having their third, Jim Monroe, III, while living in the home they would share for much of their adult lives. "Sunny Jim" died in 1939, and Elvira Grey passed away in 1974, but the Monroe family always continued



the tradition of welcoming the community to the ranch for social events, hunting, fishing, swimming—and even those rodeos, until about 1950!

Bob Ogden wrote: "On coming in the front door, the first thing you notice is the graceful stairway with its curved banister and turned spokes leading up to the second floor...On the wall...is a hanging painted by Mrs. Duncan many years ago [now owned by her great-great-granddaughter]. In the center of the downstairs hall is a hanging lamp that dates back to the days when kerosene was as common a household necessity as electricity today. Off to the side is a mirrored hall tree of hand-carved walnut...that stood a full seven feet tall and ended...with a curved holder for umbrellas, canes and walking sticks. To the right...is the parlor. Centered in the room is a...fireplace. Like the other two...the mantle is solid carved marble with a serpentine facing and top balanced with carved shield centered directly above the firebox. Since the parlor was reserved for special occasions of 19th century living, heating the room continuously was not considered necessary...this fireplace has a very small coal grate...coals were carried from the other, larger fireplaces. Farther down the hall, you enter the living room,

Above the mantle is a large mirror of early vintage with hand-carved columns and a gold-leaf gargoyle atop its finial."





Pete Lopez and Rodeos, continued...

Pete and his Lucille started life together at her grandparents' place in Wragg Canyon, where they had their son Howard. Later, when their second child, Candy, was an infant, they moved to the Esparto area. Pete took what he called "cowboy jobs" in his early years, and he and Lucille "worked and saved" to piece together properties, various homesteads, and cattle that now exceed 1000 acres and several hundred head of cattle—mostly Angus.

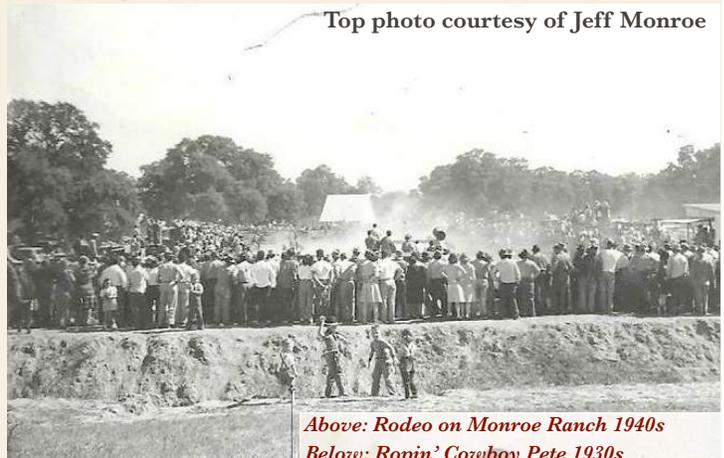
Most old-time locals would know Pete as I do, the man to go to when you needed anything done related to a horse. Not only did Pete break horses for the Monroe Ranch and many others, he could be counted on to "gentle" or train a broken horse with "bad manners and habits." He also bred his own quarter horses and trained them for use by local ranchers—great cattle horses! And then there was the mule training.

Both of his children are still in the cattle business in the area from the Hungry Hollow Hills to the Zamora area in the Dunnigan Hills—as are several of his grandsons. Daughter Candy followed her father to rodeos throughout the state and made quite a stir in her leather-fringed outfits, barrel racing at rodeos and fairs. Her father worked often for rodeo promoters like Cotton Rosser, who offered him a full-time job as livestockman for his shows across the country, but Pete chose to stay closer to home and his own cattle and horse business and family—but he still enjoyed riding as pick-up man and working the livestock at local rodeos like Stony Ford, Red Bluff, Marysville and others—like ours!

My personal interest in interviewing him was his frequent appearance in the Monroe Ranch Rodeos through the early 1950s. He explained he knew my father Tom and uncle Jim quite well from years of running their cattle with them on the Duncan-Monroe Ranch just north of Capay--so, naturally, he helped with the rodeos and enjoyed riding the broncs and bulls... "anything that would buck!"

Bottom left: even stationed in the Philippines in 1940s, Pete would find a horse to train. **Bottom right,** Wife Ila Lucille was no slouch, either--here she is helping with the calf branding in the 1940s.

Top photo courtesy of Jeff Monroe



*Above: Rodeo on Monroe Ranch 1940s
Below: Ropin' Cowboy Pete 1930s*



College-bound Margaret Stephens entrusts her horse to Pete Lopez:

[Referring to her father, Fulton Stephens, Sr.] "Daddy bought 'Pedro' from Roy Robinson for \$50 in 1951.

Including the reins that had his daughter's name, Margaret Elizabeth, cut into them. Pedro was my age, 11, at that time. Rode him until I went away to school in 1958. It was shortly after my departure that Pete Lopez took over Pedro. He was a quarter horse & had a brand burned into his flank. I don't remember the 2 letters, but I don't think they had any connection to Roy. I have no pictures of Pedro or any of the other horses. Wish I did. He tried to buck me off often but never managed. Carla Storz Taylor and I rode together at every opportunity. We used to cut through HR Craig's place--I remember Daddy making sure I talked to HR first. I Certainly loved riding in those days!"



See more at greatercapayvalley.org





Ol' Doc Thornton Craig, respected country doctor, tended the sick and delivered the babies of the Capay Valley from 1876.

As described in his biography in the History of Yolo County 1880, Dr. Thornton Craig "won a wide reputation for his medical knowledge, ability, and sincerity. He belonged to the County and State Medical Association....Born in 1845 at Glen Walter on the St. Lawrence River, Glengary, Ontario, Canada...he successfully passed the entrance examination at McGill University at Montreal and graduated in 1876 with a degree of MDCM." He came to the Capay Valley in 1876 and set up practice in the town of Capay. In 1884 he married local gal Lizzy Rhodes, born in the Brooks area in 1860. Very active in the community, he was a member of the Masons, and Knights Templar, and Odd Fellows in Esparto and Capay, and he and his wife also belonged to the Eastern Star in Esparto. The couple had three sons: John Milton in 1885, who would become a mining engineer, but eventually come home to farm for the family in Capay; Thornton, Jr., born in 1887, graduated from UC in 1913 to become a dentist; and Charles Westley, born 1893, also becoming a dentist after graduating from UC. Charles married Maurine Lucas and they would have two children, one being H. Rockwell Craig--whom we all knew as HR. Born in the Bay Area, HR and his wife Dorothy would come back to his ancestral home and settle in the Capay area, raising three



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sons, Scott, Dudley and Todd--all familiar names to my generation in this area. It was from Thornton's great grandson Dudley that I was able to collect pictures and priceless letters, beautifully hand-written by Thornton to his sons. I will be sharing some of those letters in volume 11. For now I need to say that it was reading recollections in Ada Merhoff's book of Ol' Doc Craig fording Cache Creek on his big black horse, black medical bag in hand, that really sparked my interest in coming "home" to research and write about the Capay Valley--there was just such a great story there! And when I thought about who he might be going to tend or deliver across the creek, it became a compulsion: just north of his home in Capay across the creek would have been my ancestral home, the Duncan Ranch--and my grandmother Elvira Grey (Duncan) Monroe would have been born there in 1883, and then having her first 3-4 children there while Doc Craig was practicing! Did he deliver her--and maybe her first son, the future 32-year Yolo County sheriff, Forrest Duncan Monroe, July 18, 1906?! Let's find out--Dudley tells me his paternal aunt, Eleanor "Kay" Friedman, donated the doctor's medical diaries to UC Davis and I intend to find them!

**Medical Practice of old...
things have changed a bit!**

**Beloved country doctor Thornton
Craig spent his adult life tending to
the people of Capay Valley
beginning in 1876 and would have**



been familiar with some of these “now-shocking” medications used in our not-so-distant past. Opium and alcohol for babies and “the vapors”? Heroin for headaches?! I have no idea whether he would have prescribed such common-at-the-time medications, but when a subscriber heard I was writing about Ol’ Doc Craig, she sent me these “of-historical-interest” pictures of turn-of-the-century drugs--in every sense of that word! I am researching this practice while I also look for Doc Craig’s birth logs to see which local babies he delivered--and will let you know what I find out! Dudley tells me a family member donated them to UCD medical department, so I have a lead...but in the meantime, I have found another family recollection of Doc Craig among my Duncan family archives. Thanks to local historian and fellow graduate of EHS, John Gallardo, I have a copy of an article-interview in the *Esparto Exponent*, July 31, 1931, vol.15, titled “Frank Duncan Tells of Boyhood Happenings.” My grandmother’s cousin Frank was born, like she, on the Duncan Ranch in Hungry Hollow and shared many interesting tid-bits, including this about Doc Craig: *“Doctor Craig...crossed that creek for years in all kinds of weather before the bridges were built. He used to have a saddle horse he called ‘Bald Hornet’, and together they swam that creek any time, at any point. You would see him ride by with his grip in one hand, headed for the creek, and you knew he had a call and that high water made no difference to him. It used to be the ambition of my life to have a horse like ‘Bald Hornet’.”*

The first Capay bridge across Cache Creek to Hungry Hollow was built in 1884, but even then the creek could pose a threat to the doctor’s crossings: *“The high water washed out deep holes in the creek sometimes. I remember once, about 1895, when Dr. Craig was driving two horses and a buggy--that was...”*



Doc Craig continued on page 22



Mallards--Puddling around in our fields and ditches!

The following contribution comes from our local amateur ornithologist, Jim Hiatt. Rather than pick his brain, I asked him to just compose the article himself--complete with great pictures!

The Mallard--Anas platyrhynchos, is likely the most common and well known among ducks in America, and is found pretty much throughout

North America. Even "Daffy Duck" was of this species---although real mallards don't go bouncing around yelling out "Woo-hoo, Woo-hoo, Woo-hoo!!!" Another common cartoon trademark saying of his was, "YOU'RE Despicable!" ...but enough of THAT! "That's all folks..."

They are also known among duck hunters as "Greenheads," though only the male has this feature, along with the white ring about the neck just below the green head and neck.

This is a lovely species, and is one of our larger ducks; the wingspan is some 3 feet. These and Pintails are the most prized among duck hunters--the meat is a little strong, due to the high oil content common for ducks, but making the meat very juicy. They have a greater longevity than is the case for most ducks [Birds of North America, page 62] living for some 25-30 years.

Most Mallards migrate away during the late spring, returning around August, but a fair number remain locally and live in the rice fields; or if in more open country, they live in areas with ditch-irrigation. These pix were taken in an irrigation ditch at just about Rds. 87 and 16. These, who remain locally, share this tendency with Canada Geese—I'm beginning to give some pet names!

These are very omnivorous, and eat pretty much everything that is not a plant while they are in the water; they are commonly found feeding in grain fields, where they will eat insects as well as fallen grain. Interestingly, the FEMALE is the one with the characteristic "QUACK-QUACK-QUACK-QUACK" given rapid-fire and usually are given in a series of 4-6 at a time. The male makes a rather "wimpy" sounding "raab--raab--raab--raab", and is usually uttered when an intruder or predator has ventured a bit too close.

During mating season in early spring, they pair off--after 3-6 males do "Blue Angels" versions of fancy acrobatics in the air, showing off for a single female also in the air. After a fair amount of this, she selects one and



Mallard-pair photo below courtesy of Wikipedia under File: *Anas platyrhynchos male female quadrat.jpg* All other pictures taken locally by Jim Hiatt



QUACKQUACKQUACK!!!!





they pair off from there. Once mated, she hides a nest site and has anywhere from 6-10 eggs. If you find the nest, she will rise from it, won't fly very far off, but will constantly circle—which ironically tips her hand (or wing!) that you've stumbled across her nest that she is trying to draw you away. Being ground nesters, they are very vulnerable to raccoons after the eggs, while the mother herself is a prime target for coyotes or foxes, which see meat like hers with their infrared night vision. The young are born "precocial," meaning that they're up and about right after hatching and follow Mom to a water source to learn to feed and swim. If you come upon Mom with 6-10 little ones, she'll put on the "broken wing" act in which she feigns a broken wing, and paddles and splashes in circles to draw you away from the little ones. The pix I took involved this very thing in progress. The green head, again, makes this species one of the loveliest, and also has a cobalt-blue rectangular area on the outside edges of the wings.

Old-timers also called them a "puddle" ducks. Like *Beatrix Potter's* Jemima Puddle Duck [most likely a Peking duck], they prefer ponds, canals and tule areas, as opposed to the Pintail, which is very much an open-water species. Happily, this mean highly-irrigated areas like ours attract them—lucky us!

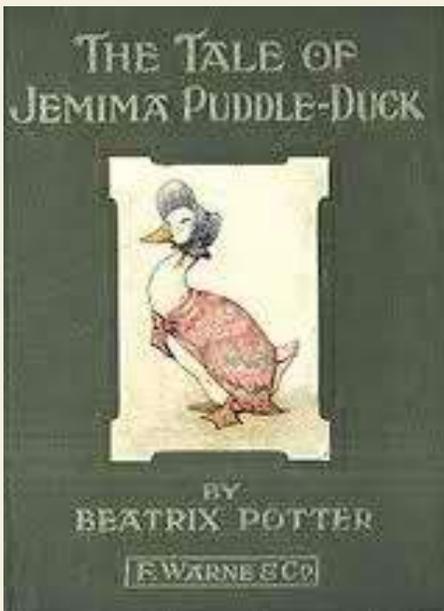
Jim



Mallard photos courtesy of Jim Hiatt.



<http://en.wikipedia.org>



Helen Beatrix Potter was an English author, illustrator, natural scientist and conservationist best known for her imaginative children's books featuring animals such as those in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, which celebrated the British landscape and country life...
[Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org)

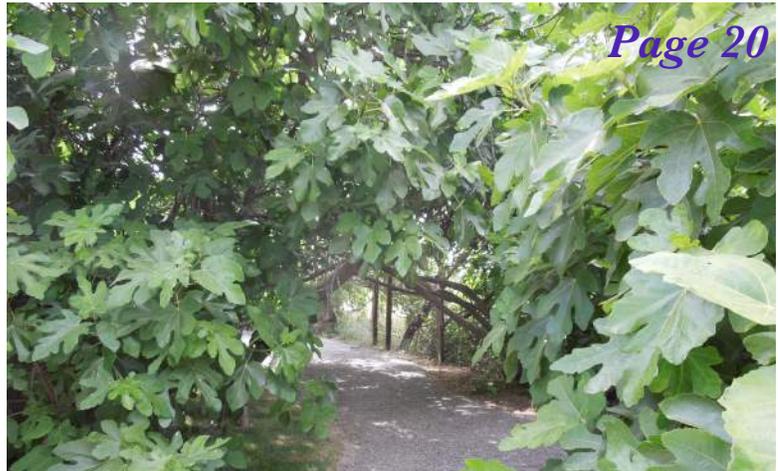
Born: July 28, 1866,
 Kensington

Died: December 22,
 1943, [Near Sawrey](#)

Spouse: [William Heelis](#)

CALIFORNIA FIGS

One of the delightful features of the Inn at Park Winters is the ancient fig grove seen here that they pruned out to make a magical, shady--and fragrant--spot for visitors.



Though we see them everywhere in the lush Capay Valley--often with old-growth olives on old homesteads!--they are not native. The "Common" or "Mission" or "Black" Fig was brought to California by Franciscan missionaries and planted first in San Diego around 1768, these Franciscana Black Figs—*Ficus carica*—became the main commercial variety until later surpassed by the Calimyrna or Sari Lopi fig. According to Wikipedia, "The Mission fig is a high quality fig variety. It produces both a breba and main crop, and is considered an ever-bearing variety when planted in the right climate. The breba crop is large. The main crop is medium sized. It is a dark skinned fig with a strawberry colored interior. The skin of the fruit often cracks when it is ripe. The tree is long-lived and grows to be quite large...cultivated since ancient times, it grows wild in dry and sunny areas, with deep and fresh soil; also in rocky areas, from sea level to 1,700 meters. It prefers light and medium...well-drained soil, and can grow in nutritionally-poor soil.



Of the hundreds of varieties of fig, California grows only about 6 types. The Calimyrna fig is brown, the "Black" fig is actually deep purple, as seen above.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_fig

"The biblical quote 'each man under his own vine and fig tree' (1 Kings 4:25) has been used to denote peace and prosperity. It was commonly quoted to refer to the hoped-for life that would lead many settlers to the American West."

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FIGS: *Wikipedia goes on to say, "The plant can tolerate seasonal drought, and the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean climate is especially suitable for the plant. Situated in a favorable habitat, old specimens when mature can reach a considerable size and form a large dense shade tree. Its aggressive root system precludes its use in many urban areas of cities, but in nature helps the plant to take root in the most inhospitable areas. Common fig tree is mostly a phreatophyte that lives in areas with standing or running water, grows well in the valleys of the rivers and ravines; saving no water, it has a strong need of water that is extracted from the ground. The deep-rooted plant searches groundwater, in aquifers, ravines, or cracks in the rocks. The fig tree, with the water, cools the environment in hot places, creating a fresh and pleasant habitat for many animals that take shelter in its shade in the times of intense heat.*

The flower is not visible, as it blooms inside the infructescence. Although commonly referred to as a fruit, the fig is actually the infructescence or scion of the tree, known as a false fruit or multiple fruit, in which the flowers and seeds are borne. It is a hollow-ended stem containing many flowers. The small orifice (ostiole) visible on the middle of the fruit is a narrow passage, which allows the specialized fig wasp to enter the fruit and pollinate the flower, whereafter the fruit grows seeds.

In the Capay Valley, we see many huge old trees and groves of Black Figs planted by early pioneers, but there are also some surprises among them!

At Capay Organic Farm Fresh To You, the Barnes-Barsotti family found an interesting tree at an abandoned Capay Valley house about 25 years ago and took branch cuttings to start an orchard of about 800 trees of "Capay Valley Candy-stripe Figs." According to Denise Junqueiro at the California Fig Advisory Board, "they are probably a rare variety called panache figs, also known as tiger figs." Turns out they are so "priceless" the farm was selling them for \$5/lb out here and they were being re-sold in NY for \$20/lb at one point! These specialty figs are often used in desserts and salads--and are much prized by gourmet restaurants across America!

www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/stories/2008/09/22/story9.html?page=all

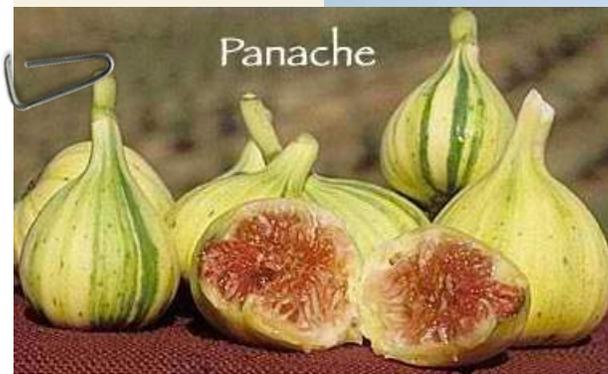


Photo at right:
Capay Valley Candy-
stripe fig orchard at
Capay Organic.



Like all fig trees, *Ficus carica* requires wasp pollination of a particular species of wasp to produce seeds. Seen above, this little wasp has a fascinating job! For more on them, go to: [Fig Wasps at](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fig_wasp)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fig_wasp

Interesting Notes taken from the noted wikipedia sites:

*Buddha achieved enlightenment under the bodhi tree, a large and old sacred fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*). In the Book of Genesis in the Bible, Adam and Eve clad themselves with fig leaves (Genesis 3:7) after eating the "forbidden fruit" from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Likewise, fig leaves, or depictions of fig leaves, have long been used to cover the genitals of nude figures in painting and sculpture. Art collectors and exhibitors often added these depictions long after the original work was completed. The use of the fig leaf as a protector of modesty or shield of some kind has entered the language.*

The Adventures of Doctor Thornton Craig continued from page 17...

after the bridge was built. The roads were muddy and he thought he could drive along the edge of the creek and wash the mud from his buggy wheels. But there had been a washout there and before he knew it he was in one of those deep holes; his horses swam out alright, but his grip washed out of the buggy. He went home and made one of his boys go back and dive in that hole until he found the grip!"

Now, to today's parents this may seem like child endangerment, but even when we were growing up in the 1950s on Cache Creek, we knew how to find those deep, cold holes--and spent many a hot summer day in them! Would I have sent my daughter born in 1982 to dive into those holes--unsupervised? Absolutely not! But it was a different time...The Craig boys I grew up with on Cache Creek learned to swim there just as we Duncan and Monroe kids did--kind of a family tradition, I guess! Frank goes on: *"When I was a boy there was no bridge across Cache Creek, and we learned to swim from necessity. We were as much at home in the creek almost as on dry land. My uncle McGlothlin then lived near where the gravel pit now stands on the south side of the creek and Rand Hamilton lived just across on the north side. There was a big, flat-bottomed ferryboat for all needed trips. If the young people wanted to go across the creek at night, one of us swam over and swiped the ferryboat, used it to ferry across, returned it to its moorings and swam back home."* Frank also explains that the road from Esparto used to go straight across to Hungry Hollow at that point, before they put in the dog-leg to the west that highway 16 follows today, running right up Main Street Capay, and eventually followed by the Vaca Valley - Clear Lake train tracks in the 1880s.

In the next issue I will be continuing the history of Doc Craig--and other medical practitioners of the area--hopefully including information from those birth logs! One other "practitioner" of great interest to me is Midwife-nurse Mary Frances Nicolson Gaither. She came to Esparto in 1886 and she and her husband Augustus bought two lots and built a large home--among the very few African Americans living in Esparto at that time. Her son was the first, as she says, "colored boy to graduate in Esparto and the second in the county." She would become well respected for treating people of all colors in the Capay Valley through the 1930s and I will be covering her story more, drawing from many historical records, as well as her own interview by the *Esparto Exponent* in 1931. Not only was Mrs. Gaither working with Doc Craig at times, but she has a very interesting personal story to tell about life in the Capay Valley, not unlike that of many of our pioneer ancestors--many of whom she tended!

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ANCESTRAL GHOSTS IN SLEEPY HOLLOW CEMETERY IN CONCORD, MA?

In my research travels I visit a lot of cemeteries and often find surnames of the early pioneers of the Capay Valley and wonder if they may be direct ancestors--Recognize anyone here, folks?!

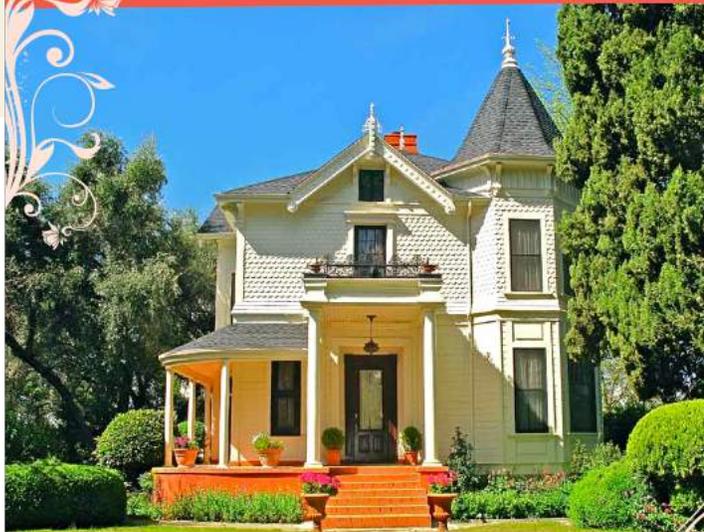


Elijah n Fanny Wood?
Eugene n Doris Clark?
Harold n Olive Moore?
Samuel n Eliza Parker?
Craig? Brooks? And there were lots of Munroes--back before we changed it to Monroe!





Photos courtesy of the Inn at Park Winters and Betsy Monroe. Above: old-growth olive tree towers over main house, which is also seen in the ad below and in photo at right, about 1900.



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