

Celebrating the History of African-Americans in the Capay Valley



Black HISTORY DAY IN CAPAY VALLEY'S Guinda celebrates its unique Black/African American History—as well as that of the national Black History Month in February—on the second Saturday each February at Guinda Grange Hall on Forrest Avenue behind the Guinda Corner Store. The brainchild of local musician Clarence Van Hook (seen on stage at left) and the late local Black Historian/Activist Bill Petty, it draws people from all over the country. Since the Gold Rush and statehood—since California was a “free state”—there are enclaves throughout the state with sizable early pioneers of African descent. One such area is the Guinda area in the Capay Valley. Bill Petty explained that the Guinda area has a rich history of being well-integrated from the beginning of early settlements. Some of the blacks settling in the area were freed slaves, while others had come as slaves and were freed while here. Come learn about this unique history, listen to speeches and multicultural music and enjoy the booths and presentations—and the great food! PotLuck—while it is not necessary, you are encouraged to bring a side dish or dessert to share; BBQ is catered.



Many African American Families Homestead on a Seventy Summit 1,200 feet Above Guinda. Beginning in the 1890s.

The first African-American settler in homestead in the Guinda area was Green Berry Logan, (seen in photo to left) moving his family from the Utterage area in the 1880s. Green Berry is buried in the Logan Cemetery up on the “summit,” a heavenly 1,200 feet above Guinda, which was at one time home to about 100 settlers. Once the Logan Private Cemetery, it is now leased on property left to the Hayes family, who keep his access open for descendants to this day.

As covered in prior issues, the settlers built their own school (seen at lower left), but eventually joined the other local students in the Grange School after 1912. Following after Mr. Logan was a barber/mason, Charles Simpson, who moved to the summit with his wife and daughter. These (followed) other Black families among them were the Humphreys, Logans and Barkers, related to local historian Bill Petty's family by marriage. And just like so many other families in the valley, there were several marriages between class, as seen to the left with Harriet Emily Logan Simpson (née Wickham) “Harri” and Green Berry's daughter-in-law and married Charles Simpson and started a family. Mrs. Simpson's death in 1912. Harri named Marjorie Wickham.

The second African-American homesteader to arrive in the area was Charles Henry Simpson, seen at left, and buried in the Logan Cemetery. As covered in volume 1 of this journal, he is responsible for the “Simpson Grange,” still kept graded and usable today by the Hayes family.

These delightful photos and stories of the history is courtesy of Jeanette Malone, descendant of the Logan family. Her grandfather, Alvin Alfred Logan Sr., was born to Green Berry and his first wife, Estelle Coffey, along with Green Berry's 2nd-wife, “Queen.” One son of the name, Alvin born to Green Berry's second wife, Mary Ann Die, again, whom he had married and had a family.

Jeanette also highlighted me about other families down in the valley: “The Boyers and Walker families had farms in Brooks and right outside of Guinda down the road from where my grandparents lived. German McChen had a business in Grinda, and my cousin, ...”

Check out greatercapayvalley.org for more

information on our unique African-American history in the greater Capay Valley. Herein are excerpts from the Journals written for The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society by Betsy Monroe



—with support from The Friends of the Yolo County Archives

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Celebrating the History of African Americans in the Capay Valley with Multi-Cultural and BLACK HISTORY DAY

Guinda celebrates its unique Black/African-American History--as well as that of the national Black History Month in February--on the second Saturday each February at historic Guinda Grange Hall. The brainchild of local musician Clarence Van Hook and local Black Historian, the late Bill Petty, it draws people from all over the country. Before statehood and after—since California was a free state—there are sizable enclaves throughout this area with early pioneers of African descent. One such area is Hungry Hollow and the Dunnigan Hills, where the “largest Black landowner in Yolo County at the turn of the last century” settled and prospered: Basil Campbell would be a magnet for many Black pioneers to follow. Many found their way to the Guinda area in the Capay Valley. Bill Petty explains that the Guinda area has a rich history of being well integrated from the beginning of early settlements. Many of the blacks settling in the Yolo County had been slaves, while others were freed after settling in the area. Come learn about this unique history, listen to the music led by musician Clarence Van Hook, and enjoy the booths and presentation--and the great food! Pot Luck--10AM to 3PM.

The first African-American settler to homestead in the Guinda area was Green Berry Logan, [see his and many other photos in our journals] moving his family from the Dunnigan area in the 1890s. Green Berry is buried in the Logan Cemetery up on the “summit,” a heavenly 1,200 feet above Guinda, which was at one time home to about 100 settlers. Once the Logan Private Cemetery, it is now located on property left to the Hayes family, who keep its access open for descendants to visit.

As covered in the 18 journals written by Elizabeth Monroe for The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society, the settlers built their own school [a rare photo of which is seen in the journals and in the 440-page book], but eventually joined the other local students in the Guinda School after 1912. Arriving after Mr. Logan was a barber/musician, Charles Simpson, who moved to the summit with his wife and daughter. There followed other Black families, among them were the Hemphills, Longrus and Hacketts—the latter related to local historian Bill Petty’s family by marriage. And just like so many other families in the valley, there were several marriages between clans: examples like Harriet Emily (Logan) Simpson [later Hickerson]: “Hattie” was

Green Berry's sister-in-law and married Charles Simpson and started a family. After Simpson's death in 1912, Hattie married Maryland Hickerson.

Of the many African-American families homesteaded on a Heavenly Summit 1,200 feet above Guinda, beginning in the 1890s, the second African-American homesteader to settle in the area, Charles Henry Simpson is buried in the Logan Cemetery. As covered in volume 1 of the Journals, he is responsible for the "Simpson Grade," still kept graded and useable today by the Hayes family. Many delightful pictures and much of the history is courtesy of Jeannette Molson, descendant of the Logan family. According to Jeannette: her grandfather, Alvin Alfred Logan, Sr., was born to Green Berry and his first wife, Lavinia Coffey, along with Green Berry, Jr--known as "Green." Only one of the nine children born to Green Berry's second wife, Mary Ann Dix, a part-Wintun Indian, married and had a family. Jeannette also enlightened me about other families down in the valley: "The Browns and Watkins families had homes in Brooks and right outside of Guinda down the road from where my grandparents lived. Carmen McClellan had a business in Guinda, and my cousin, Charles Simpson, grandson of Charles Henry Simpson," as featured in the 6th journal for The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society, the unique community of African-Americans in our Guinda began in the 1890s. See all Journals posted on the website greatercapayvalley.org or bound into the hard-cover book "The History and Stories of the Capay Valley" by Elizabeth Monroe.

Text is from:

BLACK HISTORY DAY

**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

By Elizabeth "Betsy" Monroe

From The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society

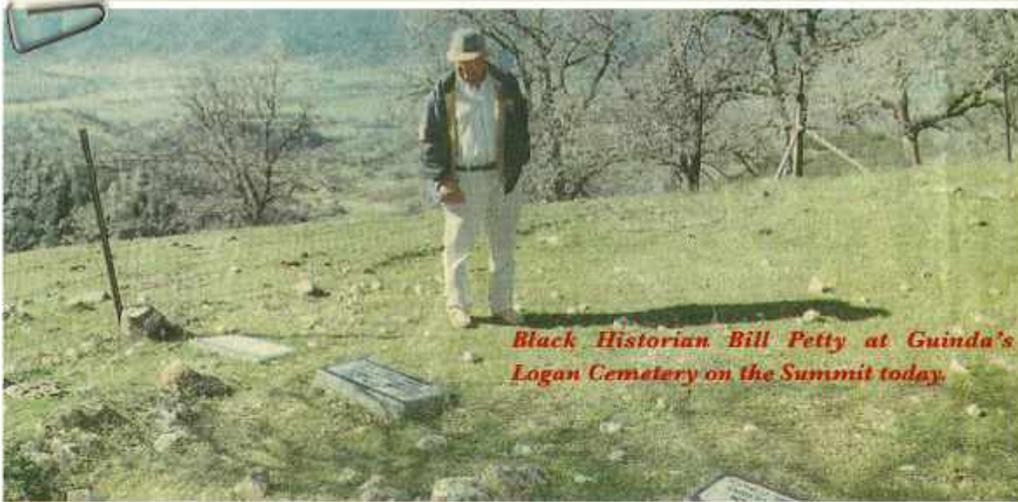
Check out our website: greatercapayvalley.org

And 3 sites on FaceBook under:

The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society

The History and Stories of Capay Valley

Annual Black History Multi Cultural Heritage Celebration



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

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



HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENCLAVE IN THE VALLEY

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

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

Summit School

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

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



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

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

school. After the next census showed enough potential students, the supervisors approved their petition for a school district, called "Summit."

On an acre donated by non-resident Vanaleen Scofield, and with lumber bought with county funds, free local labor created the Summit School "on a slope up from a small flat...and in July 1895 Albertine DuBois came with her two little girls Pearl and Birdie to teach a class of 11, the usual attendance. Along with others, her husband Joe and his brother Bill from Guinda worked on the frame building with its full length porch along the elevated east side."

SIMPSON GRADE

A community up on a hill needs a reliable road. A local summit family, Charles and Harriet "Hattie" Simpson would give them one.

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

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

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

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

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

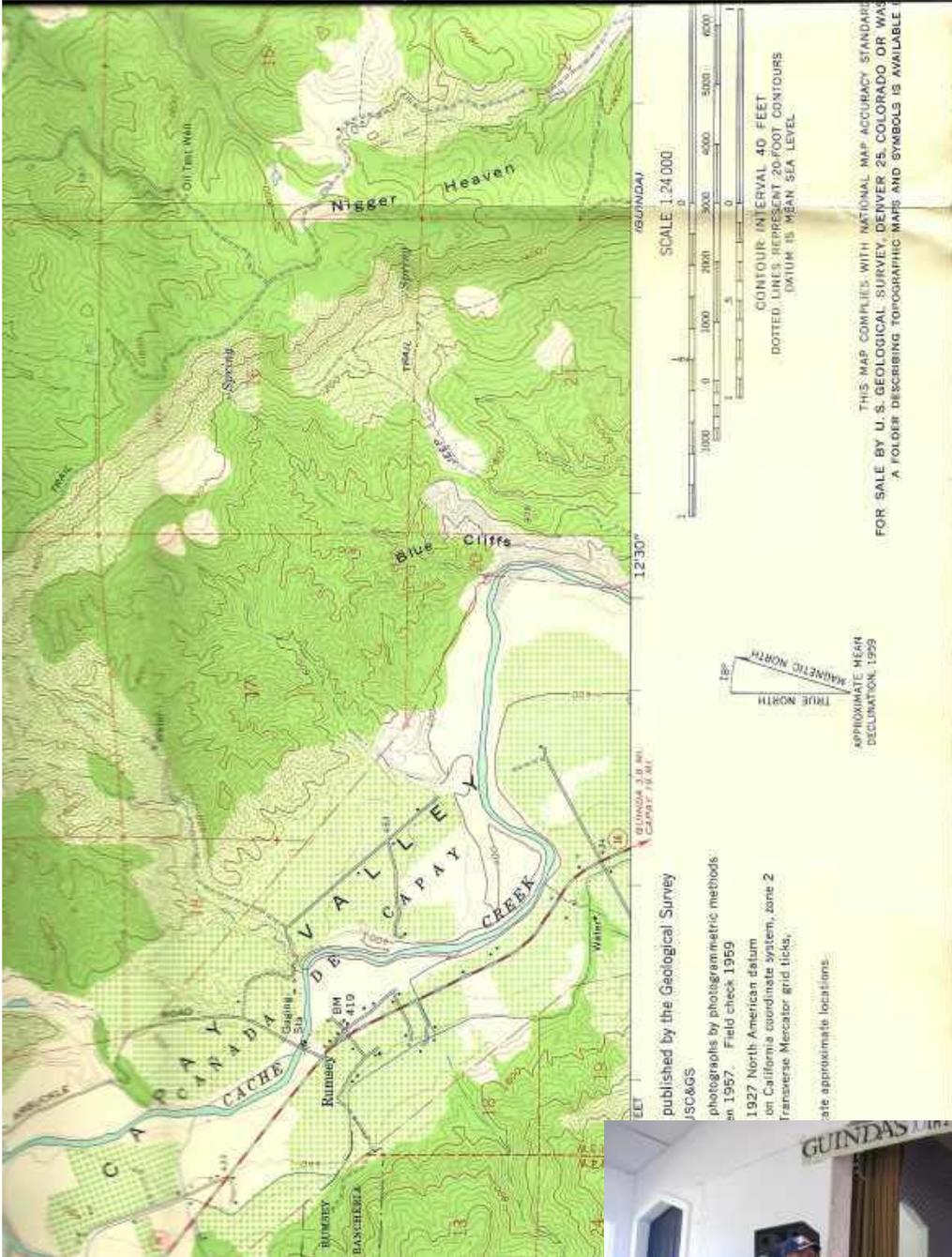


*up by historian Bill Petty) to have it expunged succeeded in removing it from maps. Since that time it has commonly been either referred to as *The Hill, The Heaven or The Summit*, but what is most significant is the rich black heritage of this area--and the fact that the summit and school were integrated,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

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

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

County Survey Map below; photo of Bill Petty presenting the Black History of the Guinda area at a Black History Day Celebration.



William Petty,

Capay Valley descendant,
historian and noted Civil
Rights Advocate!

When I returned to the Capay Valley and heard there was now an annual *Black History Day Celebration* in Guinda, I



hoped this would be a way to find the history of this unique area I grew up with but really knew nothing about. I contacted the founders, Clarence Van Hook and William Petty, and volunteered to come shoot a video of the next event in exchange for the history and stories they might provide for me—*what a brilliant move on my part!* Mr. Van Hook is a recent arrival to the area—a Texan and Blues musician—who bought property near Guinda and became fast friends with the Hayes family elder, Al. Learning of the unique history of the area and its historic Black community, Clarence set out to celebrate it. With local historian Bill Petty, he launched an annual celebration—alternately also referred to as *Multi-cultural Day*. See volumes 1 & 6 and videos on our website: greatercapayvalley.org

*I never know where this kind of research will lead! Having met Mr. Petty, I made an appointment to come interview him and I not only got the history of our Summit area, but found he is a fascinating—and important—personality in his own right. I made several trips to his home, resulting in two videos—one focused on our own Capay Valley history, and another on his personal importance to our own Civil Rights movement in northern California—and the nation! I grew up here knowing that while we had some racial strife in the 1960s, it was nothing like that of the rest of the nation—or even as restrictive as neighboring towns, even Woodland. My mother grew up in Woodland and made a point of this fact—but Mr. Petty helped me see it even more clearly, from the point of view of a *Black man.*

Photo, above: William Petty sits between Darrel and George Hayes, here in 2014 celebrating turning 90—all descendants of the area's pioneers. While the Hayes cousins were direct descendants of 1890 pioneers, Bill Petty's family arrived in the 1940s from the South, having family who married into pioneers on the Summit.

*Mr. Petty uses the term *Black* more often than *African-American*, and even uses the term *Colored*—I assume due to his 90 years hearing those terms more often. His father was a Civil Rights advocate in the South, a fact that put his family in harms way, but not until their house was torched did he choose to move his family to California, following relatives to our area. William Petty is of mixed race, so they were in even more danger in the South. But, as you will see, even here, while in less danger, they faced discrimination...



The first time I met William Petty, after hearing my last name and explanation of how I was related to the Monroes of Yolo county, he fixed me with that eagle eye of his and said, “I once sued your uncle for discrimination.” While taken aback for an instant, I quickly replied with a laugh, “Well, knowing my uncle, he probably deserved it! He and my dad did not share the same views on race relations—you would have loved my mother and father, Tom and Jean!” And from this start, Mr. Petty and I became fast friends and he opened his heart and trove of historic knowledge to me.

When I first started researching my own family roots, my dad warned me that I would find some things I would not be too proud of, but to remember never to be ashamed of who I was and to always remember to just be sure the same things did not happen on my watch! Well, he was right. When I learned that my Scots ancestors were historically *planters in Virginia*, it dawned on me that while it was never discussed in our family, we came from slave-owners. Many years later, thanks to ancestry.com, I was able to find early census documents to verify my supposition: slaves were listed along with the family members and white and Chinese servants. And through Mr. Petty, I learned about another mulatto of historical importance to our own area: Basil Campbell, who would become *the largest Black landowner in Yolo County*. While he came to California with the Stephens family, I wondered about his surname enough to do some digging and found that he was born as a slave to a mother owned by my own ancestor, JD Campbell, a neighbor of the Stephens family in Cooper County, Missouri...knowing enough about our slave history in this country to assume what only a DNA test would verify, just knowing about Basil’s ties to my own roots gives me a whole new appreciation for our tangled history. In my own family, obviously, there were some complex views on race relations, but my own parents were very clear about who we were and how we would conduct ourselves: *We are who we are and need only to look at ourselves in the mirror and not be ashamed of who we see looking back.* Thanks, Mom and Dad!

Now, back to William Petty! There is not room in this journal to do him justice, so I have posted a much larger article on the website at greatercapayvalley.org along with the videos, but herein are some locally interesting notes.

The first thing Bill and I discussed was the history of the unique and historic community of African-Americans in the Guinda area beginning in the 1890s [see journals 1 & 6]. He pointed out he was the one who fought to have the term *Nigger Heaven* dropped from the county maps in the 1970s. I said, “But as a historian, doesn’t it bother you that you have *expunged* history?” He admitted that after the fact he was kind of sorry—so he always makes a point of teaching about that historic place-name at the Black History Day Celebration, making sure the old survey maps are displayed on the wall of the Guinda Grange Hall, where the event is held, to illustrate his point.

Bill’s family came to Guinda, California in 1942, to settle in the Capay Valley near relatives who came to this area in the 1870s. Bill had run from a lynch mob in North Carolina for talking back to a White man—it was time to find a better life. But while Claud and Mae Petty settled on a piece of farm land near Guinda, there were no jobs, so Bill, who had served in the Army and married his school sweetheart Marie, moved with her to Woodland. There they found few jobs for *Black men* & only domestic jobs for *Black women*—and no one willing to sell them a home. So Bill began a long history of fighting for the rights of minorities, including women, in Yolo and Sacramento counties.

See more on page 21.



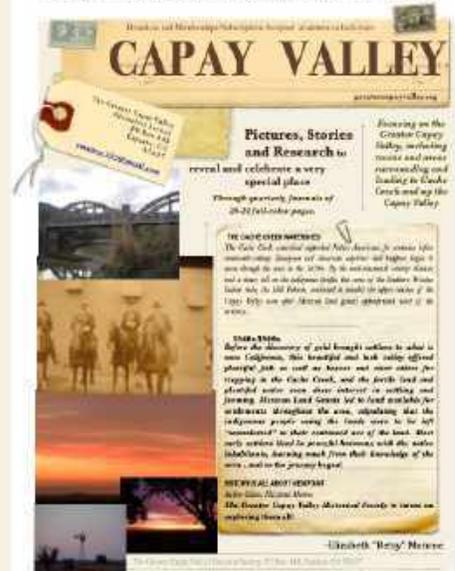
Continued from page 17: Civil Rights Activist, Bill Petty—one of our own! Among his many accomplishments and awards, one he is most proud of was accomplished in 1994: As past Master of the black Masonic Monument 74, he “and Doug Young, past Master of the white Masonic Lodge of Woodland, came together to lay the cornerstone for the Yolo County Central Library on Buckeye Street. This was the first time the white and black Masons had ever held a joint function. Now, after over one hundred years of being separate, we are one body and recognize each other equally,” Bill proudly explained. Bill served as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Most Worshipful Prime Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of California. Awards fill the walls of his home in Hillcrest west of Woodland—a home he built only after his light-skinned wife “passed” for white to buy the lot, as no one would sell real estate to a Black man in Woodland—as late as the 1960s! “The told me there were ‘restrictive covenants against selling to coloreds’.” With the lot legally in his wife’s name, the community was not too thrilled when he showed up to lay the foundation to the home he has had ever since. Among his many awards and accomplishments are: Equal Employment Opportunity official at McClellan AFB, for which he has the Air Force Distinguished EEO Award of the Year; the Aguila Unity Award (*Spirit of the Eagle*) the highest honor given by the Latino Community Council to a non-Mexican for his part in “responsible empowerment of the community”; Bill served as the first African-American on the Yolo County Grand Jury in the 1950s—and brought lawsuits against county officials for discrimination. Upon retiring from McClellan AFB, Bill continued his activism: as chief volunteer for the Yolo County Coalition Against Hunger and in 1973 he was appointed Yolo County Affirmative Action Committee to create the county’s first Affirmative Action Plan.

See more on the families in this and prior journals at greatercapayvalley.org—including Bill Petty and so much more!

I am currently pre-selling three books that are near completion:
The History and Stories of the Capay Valley will be out in hardcover in January 2015, retailing for \$200 but on pre-order sale now for \$175
The Birds of Capay Valley will be out in February 2015, a compilation of the bird articles I published for the last 4 years in the journal; \$25
Monroe for Sheriff, 60 Consecutive Years Serving Yolo County, 1911-1971 will be out in the summer of 2015, a compilation of James Monroe’s published memoir of 28 years as sheriff and his son Forrest Duncan Monroe’s sheriff department scrapbooks of the next 32 years—as well as their historical backgrounds and the people they knew in Yolo County; \$35
 Contact me at emonroe@greatercapayvalley.org to order.

The History and Stories of the Capay Valley

A compilation of 18 Journals from January 2011-December 2014





We have a unique and extensive history of African-American settlers in the Capay Valley area, especially in the valley town of Guinda. Celebrating this history, each second Saturday of February, the valley hosts Black History Day at the Guinda Grange Hall at 11AM. February 11th this year will celebrate not only the local settlers, but also the African-American experience, overall.

Most of you may know that since 1976 February is Black History Month, an observance of the history of the African diaspora in a number of countries outside of Africa. Observed annually in the US and Canada in February, it is also observed in the UK, but in October. In the US, Black History Month is also referred to as African-American History Month--and while it is not without controversy, mostly about whether a country ought to observe a month devoted to one race, it is an opportunity to focus on a history that weaves itself throughout our entire American experience, so we "historians" and teachers welcome the focus.

According to Wikipedia, "Black History Month was begun as Negro History Week by historian Carter G. Woodson in 1926. His goal was to educate the American people about African-American History, focusing on African-Americans' cultural backgrounds and reputable achievements." In that same vein, I want to "educate" the readers in the same way--but focus on our own rich local history.

As seen in this newspaper clipping, the Hayes family settled in the Guinda area along with many African-American families and felt themselves "above racism"--a point they celebrate to this day in the Capay Valley.

PARADISE FOUND



Alfred Hayes holds a muzzle-loading shotgun that his father, Roy Hayes, bought in 1895. The Hayes family and a black family headed by Green Berry Logan were homesteaders and good friends in Guinda in the late 1800s. The Charles Simpson family (inset) arrived in Guinda about the same time.

Story by
GREG THYRT

High in Guinda, homesteaders were above racism

The dirt road wound like a veil through the Guinda hills above the Capay Valley. On a wet day, a four-wheel drive vehicle would have a go of it on this dirt path.

Luckily, the day was dry and gorgeous. "Fun a little farther," said Bill Petty, 77, the guide. A little farther means about five miles to Guinda measurement. Driving through gages, pastures, washouts and mudding con-fused rows aside, five miles seemed more like 500.

Finally, the track rolled to a stop on a grassy point overlooking the Capay Valley. It was a view worth the drive. Cache Creek flowed down below, intersecting almond and walnut orchards. The roofs of farmhouses sat like dice that had been rolled on the green of the valley floor. Is this heaven?

"Here it is," said Petty, getting out of the SUV and walking to a small, walled fence area.

It wasn't much. Inside the fence were a few headstones and rocks. Nothing else. "Sis was all that was left of a small community that thrived just a 100 years ago. This little piece of loneliness was called The Summit by some and a more derogatory name by others. That name included a racial slur indicating that it was a "heaven" for blacks.

Why? Good question. Ask around and you'll get different answers. Some thought it was called that because of this small cemetery where black

homesteaders were buried; others suggest that it was what movie theater balconies were called back when blacks were not allowed to sit on the main floor.

Petty knows different. Petty is black. His relatives grew up in these hills perched above the tiny town of Guinda. His explanation of the now-derogatory name? "It's because they lived so good up here."

"They" are black families who moved to the hills above the Capay Valley in the 1890s to homestead. Green Berry Logan, who is buried in the small cemetery, was the first and most prominent black homesteader to arrive. He brought his family from Dunsmuir. There was musician/barber Charles Simpson who moved here with his wife and daughter. There were other black families, too. Like the Hacketts, related to Petty by marriage, the Homphill clan and the Lengris family.

They found the Guinda hills, at 1,200 feet, to be nirvana -- a place where they could escape from oppression, own some land and make some money. These weren't urban dwellers. They came from the farmlands of Missouri and North Carolina. Their parents had been slaves. Logan, for instance, had a white father and black mother. They were seeking paradise, and found it in the remote corner of 3046 County 11.

Yet it wasn't just black families in these hills attempting to eke out a living in land

See Paradise, Page 58



Bill Petty looks at the horizon in the Guinda hills, reportedly founded by the 1800s black settlers in this county.

William Petty, above, and Clarence Van Hook, below, are instrumental in keeping the Black History alive in the Capay Valley.



Above, Clarence Van Hook plays at a celebration of his good friend Al Hayes at Al's 90th Birthday, May, 2010, seen below with family and cake.



Many African American Families Homestead on a Heavenly Summit 1,200 feet Above Guinda, Beginning in the 1890s.



The first African-American settler to homestead in the Guinda area was Green Berry Logan, [seen in photo to left] moving his family from the Dunnigan area in the 1890s. Green Berry is buried in the Logan Cemetery up on the "summit," a heavenly 1,200 feet above Guinda, which was at one time home to about 100 settlers. Once the *Logan Private Cemetery*, it is now located on property left to the Hayes family, who keep its access open for descendants to visit.

As covered in prior issues, the settlers built their own school [seen at lower left], but eventually joined the other local students in the Guinda School after 1912. Following after Mr. Logan was a barber/musician, Charles Simpson, who moved to the summit with his wife and daughter. There followed other Black families, among them were the Hemphills, Longrus and Hacketts, related to local historian Bill Petty's family by marriage. And just like so many other families in the valley, there were several marriages between clans, as seen to the left with Harriet Emily (Logan) Simpson [later Hickerson]: "Hattie" was Green Berry's niece, she and married Charles Simpson and started a family. [After Simpson's death in 1912, Hattie married Maryland Hickerson.]



The second African-American homesteader to settle in the area was Charles Henry Simpson, seen at left, and buried in the Logan Cemetery. As covered in volume 1 of this journal, he is responsible for the "Simpson Grade," still kept graded and useable today by the Hayes family.

These delightful pictures and much of the history is courtesy of Jeannette Molson, descendant of the Logan family. Her grandfather, Alvin Alfred Logan, Sr., was born to Green Berry and his first wife, Lavinia Coffey, along with Green Berry, Jr--known as "Green." Only one of the nine children born to Green Berry's second wife, Mary Ann Dix, a part-Wintun Indian, married and had a family.

Jeannette also enlightened me about other families down in the valley: "The Browns and Watkins families had homes in Brooks and right outside of Guinda down the road from where my grandparents lived. Carmen





African-American History of the Greater Capay Valley, continued...

McClellan had a business in Guinda, and my cousin, Charles Simpson, grandson of Charles Henry Simpson, had a beautiful home right outside of Guinda. It was called, ‘La Hacienda de Guinda’. The Watkins and brown families lived in the area for many years--just ask the local folks about Walter Brown and Dave Watkins.”

Among other topics, Jeannette and I discussed the appropriate way to refer to *People or Families of African Descent*--her personal favorite. I have moved between Jeannette’s preferred term and *Black* and *African-American*, as it seemed appropriate to the writing--partly because many were not of pure African descent (Green Berry Logan being a perfect example, whose father was “white”) and partly because it is always troubling to to me to refer to a person by a skin color. If I have learned nothing else in my last year of genealogy and history research, *nothing is simple* and pure when it comes to our blood lines! One of my great discoveries has been my family’s possible relationship to Basil Campbell, “largest Black landowner in Yolo County” at one time. Most do not know his lineage, but might know he came to California as a slave to the John D. Stephens family. But as his last name implies, his roots lead back to a family named Campbell in Coopers County, Missouri--*my* family! Who his white father was I couldn’t say for sure, but he was born to a mother owned by James D. Campbell, neighbor to one of the other two original white settlers of Coopers County, the Stephens family--to whom he was sold as a young age. More on Basil later, but my point is, when you begin the search you never know what you will find--and labeling a person by a single “color” or race is simply *not simple*. Nor accurate!



Basil “Baaz” Campbell

Courtesy of Yolo County Archives

Speaking of nothing being simple: some in the Stephens family claim this commonly accepted picture of Basil, above, is actually his brother; and no one but I seems to feel the man standing in the middle of the Stephens harvest picture, below, in hat and vest is a visiting family friend, Basil Campbell--Any ideas out there??

Basil Campbell, landowner...coming to California with John D. Stephens in 1854, Basil and JD had an agreement that he would “work his way to freedom” within ten years. By 1861 he renegotiated and bought his freedom at \$700 for his remaining 3 years. During his 7 years, JD had been helping Baaz invest his money and he was worth about \$10,000.

In 1884, his total wealth was estimated at \$100,000...2000 acres of tilled land and 280 acres of untilled land, valued at \$51000, \$3100 in livestock as well as 66 acres of hay, 12 horses, 3 mules, 1100 sheep, 80 hogs; acres of wheat and barley and numerous commodities.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



BASIL CAMPBELL CONTINUED:

At a time when almost all Afro-Americans of economic prominence made their gains through mining, mining-related business or business enterprises, Campbell made his advancement through agriculture(3)."

Cited from:

1-San Francisco Examiner, 11-29-1884

2-US Census for 1880, Products of Agriculture in Yolo county

3-Delilah L. Beasley, The Negro Trail Blazers of California (LA, CA., 1919), 70-71

In 1865 Baaz was elected as delegate to the State Convention of Colored People and became vice-president; and in 1873 he was sent as state delegate to the National Colored Convention in Washington, DC.

By the time of his death he had wealth and respect among people of all colors in Yolo County.

I am grateful to William Petty and Jeannette L. Molson for much of this material and pictures. Jeannette's mother, Addie Mae Logan Molson was a dear friend of my father's and was a delight to know, a woman of great humor, common sense, talents and interests. She sang and played big band piano to make ends meet in college at UC Berkeley. Raised in Capay Valley, she married James T. Molson, who encouraged her to go back to college for her credential at Sac State College. She became the first African American teacher in the North Sacramento School District.

And among the many newspaper clippings I got from Mr. Petty, I would love to mention Benjamin Asa Longrus, who lived in Hannibal, MO, while Samuel Clemens was forming his ideas about slavery and race relations, and who came to California at about 20, settling first in the Winters area, his family having belonged at one time to Briggs and Ely families in that area--and once to Daily Democrat editor Ed E. Leake's family. It was an

article in that paper I used to get much information on Basil Campbell. And then there is Capay Valley midwife Mary Frances Gaither--but I will do her justice in 2012 when I write about Ol' Doc Craig of Capay, under whom she practiced.



And speaking of local enterprisers: the Hacketts of Guinda were a family I knew fairly well, growing up, but I had never met one of the eldest daughters of Roy Hackett. Her stage name was Shirley Haven and she worked with Eartha Kit; traveled with the Charles Brown band for years; was in the first all-black color movie, "No Time For Romance"; recorded a couple tunes with the Four Jacks; and was part of the first all-black USO tour--and while touring in Korea she adopted Anthony Stanton, giving him her married name, Holiday. she brought him back to Capay Valley to grow up with Roy and Bamma Hackett's kids. The Hacketts had been in the valley since the 1940s and William Petty's sister Iris met and married Roy, Jr., thus blending the Petty and Hackett families. My hat is off to the enterprising spirit of my Capay Valley "neighbors"--like the lovely Shirley Haven who, through her son Anthony, gave me permission to use the great ad photo of her, above!

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Basil Campbell came to Yolo County in the 1850s with his

“owner,” John Dickson Stephens, and John’s brother George Dickson Stephens, and became one of the largest landowners in this county before 1900. He would settle near the Stephens’ 8000 acres, amassing thousands of his own acres, mostly in the Hungry Hollow flats and Dunnigan Hills. In an article in the Daily Democrat in 1971, neighbor Bill Rominger recalls knowing Basil and takes the article’s authors Phillip Freshwater and local John Vannucci on a tour of “what used to be.” The photographs are by Vannucci.



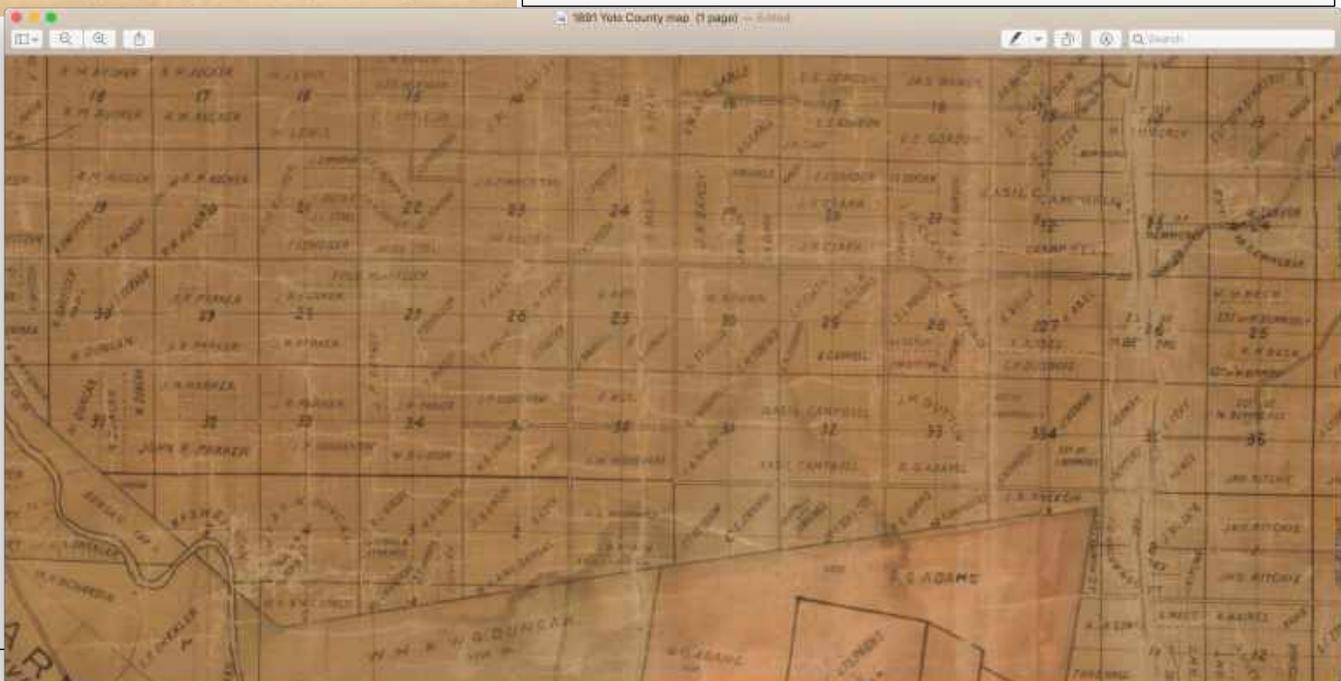
MOMENTO— The old machine shed on one of the first homes of the late Basil Campbell is all that is left to mark the home site.

OUR GUIDE — William F. Rominger led us not only along the roads of Hungry Hollow but also to homes now extant only in memory.



CAMPBELL — There beside that almond tree is where the fine two story white home owned by Basil Campbell, Yolo county’s first Negro settler, stood.

Some of Basil’s holdings would become what is today the Cache Creek Nature Preserve. Some claim that he was the *first* African American to settle in Yolo County, but at the very least he was one of the earliest and after his success, many followed. And while he arrived as a slave to California, a “free state,” the Fugitive Slave Law meant that a slave was still “owned” and must be returned to his owner if he “escaped,” until given his freedom. As he told it in countless interviews, John Stephens treated him “more like a brother and helped him invest” some of his wages until he could buy his own freedom in 1861. Some historians claim when he could afford it, he also bought freedom for his “slave wife” on the Stephens farm in MO, though he had remarried in CA. In 1865 he began buying land and livestock and by 1884 he was worth \$100,000—at a time when that was a fortune. Basil died in 1905 and is buried in Woodland Cemetery.



Basil Campbell remembered by neighbor William Rominger in the Hungry Hollow-Dunnigan Hills, con't.

We followed Mr. Rominger's pickup truck and paused on the road when he motioned for us to stop. We looked out where he pointed. No house now exists; the home burned down many years ago.

"The old man had a fine two story white house right there beside that almond tree," Mr. Rominger told us. "Oh, he was a fine old gentleman. Just the finest kind of a man.

"I bought the north 480 and John Hermle the south 480."

We stood for a few minutes, mentally erecting Basil Campbell's two story white house in the green swale by the almond tree, and then our host straightened up.

"You asked me where the Campbell hills are. Do you want to drive out into them?"

We got back into our car and followed the old pickup truck again, this time turning off road 14 onto a private road and waiting while Mr. Rominger opened the gate. It was a testament to his health and vigor (Mr. Rominger is more than 80) that it did not immediately occur to us (there were two young amateur photographers with me) that he might need help (and then when one of them did pop out to offer assistance, he was waved off. Mr. Rominger doesn't need any help!)

"We just run sheep on this land now," he said, when we stopped again at the top of the hills.

"The hills are too steep to plant."

"Mr. Campbell didn't farm this land, did he?" I asked.

"No," he said. "He leased it all out."

We stood for a few minutes while the two young men took pictures of the sheep who came running out to the feed troughs — surely that was why we were there, to feed them?

We looked out over the hills, half golden with dried grains and half chocolate brown where the disc had run through the earth. These inner hills, not seen from the public roads, have their own strange beauty, steeply rounded and quite symmetrically arranged.

"There must be many animals in here," I suggested. "How about fox?"

"Lots of fox," Mr. Rominger nodded. "Once in a while a coyote. And skunks! Too many skunks! They're good in one way, though. All over these hills you'll see little holes, not deep enough for burrows, just little pockets in the soil. That's where the skunk have pawed up

here any more."

I asked about birds and he told me, "Larks and doves have always been here. We have more pheasants now than we used to have."

The daylight was going fast now and our guide wanted to show us the other Campbell historical places before it was gone.

"Want to see where his (Campbell's) daughter and son-in-law lived?" he asked before the old pickup took off again.

We went back to road 14, watched the careful closing of the gate again, and followed as the pickup turned south on road 88. Now the whole character of the land changed; instead of being in the hills we were on a broad level plain. When the pickup stopped, and Mr. Rominger pointed to the spot where the former Lenora Campbell and her husband, Henry Hellack Williams, had lived when their seven children were born, there was nothing to mark the site.

I could imagine Lenora, the daughter of the famous Basil, getting into the family's fancy Pope-Hartford car, with its three foot high wheels. She had on, in my mental picture, a flowing white chiffon dress and was wearing her pretty hat for the trip in to Woodland. The year is probably 1911, and Ward Williams, who, in real life at the present time, lives in West Sacramento, is, in this dream sequence, an eager teen-age driver.

The reverie was interrupted by our guide, who wanted to show us still another home site, this time the one of Elijah Jennings, Basil Campbell's half brother, who took Campbell's old place when the two story house was built. This home site was reached by continuing out road 88 to road 16 and turning west. This time there were fig trees ("the figs were always good here") and a toppled over machine shed to mark the place where the home had been.

"I lived here six years myself," Mr. Rominger said. "My dad rented this place from Mr. Campbell. I was 18 here, I remember. Used to be an orchard here and there on that flat place is where the old mule barn was.

"This is where Mr. Campbell used to visit us. He'd come by in his buckboard and we'd run out to meet him. He'd sweep his hat off and bow so deep he'd almost reach the ground. 'I was just going by and I thought I'd just see how you are,' he'd say. Oh, he was such a fine man!

"Big man, he was, too. Better than 200

pounds. No, I don't know that he was any smarter than the rest of us. He was just a very saving man. Like all us farmers he was careful with his money."

You could almost hear the wheels of the buckboard and the trotting of the horse as the ghost of Basil Campbell flashed his warm friendly smile and passed on by.

We fell to talking then about Romingers — about Jacob Rominger, our guide's grandfather, who came to Yolo county from Wittenberg, Germany — "Oh, a long time ago; I don't know what year."

Jacob had two sons, one who didn't marry, and William's father, C. T., who had seven sons — and was the progenitor of all those Romingers in the Yolo county phone book; take a look under any of the cities in the county.

William was born in Plainfield and has been a Yolo county farmer all his life.

What is the biggest change he has seen in his lifetime?

"Oh, farming methods, as much as anything. We all used to use mules. We'd have six or eight mule teams and then on the big combines we'd run 30 or 32 head, Good big mules. Now, it's all dirty, greasy — and noisy — tractors.

"The combine would go from place to place. You'd board everybody. There'd be 10 to 12 at a table. The women were all good cooks. They'd really set a table.

"Now you never board anybody. They bring their own little sack lunches. They drive maybe 25 miles to come to work but they don't stay overnight.



CURIIOUS — The sheep came running to where we stopped in Campbell hills near Dunnigan.



PALMS — A line of palms marks the driveway to the home on Road 12-A owned by Mrs. Mildred Gigulere of Woodland.



CAMPBELL HILLS — These hills are interior to the public roads.

Many who settled in flat grain-rich Hungry Hollow and the near Dunnigan Hills were Germany dry-farmers like the Romingers. Other German names like Mast, Durst, Schaupp, and Goodnaugh also come to mind—and descendants of are still farming in Yolo County. Basil Campbell was not German, but a mixed-race man who came as a slave from Missouri with his Scottish "owners," the '49ers John D. and George D. Stephens, and was given the opportunity to work off his "slave-price"; and then was helped by the Stephens brothers—who would start the Bank of Woodland—to invest and grow wealthy: becoming the wealthiest African American in Yolo County before the 1900s. As one of the first blacks to arrive and prosper, many others followed him and were blessed with his assistance and advice. Some of them also appear as important early Yoloans in our history books, such as midwife Mary Gaither, whose husband knew Basil's brother, who had also come as a slave before the Civil War. Green Berry Logan apparently knew one of the brothers, too, for he first settled near them in the Dunnigan area before finding his way to be the first African American settler in the Guinda area of Capay Valley in 1890.

NOTE: see more on the Romingers and other German farmers of Yolo County in the book by this author: *The History and Stories of the Capay Valley*; or in her Journals and Newsletters posted on greatercapayvalley.org. Author Elizabeth Monroe is currently writing a book on Basil Campbell, which will be available on the same website—soon!

As seen in the newspaper article below, Basil Campbell factored greatly in the early history of Yolo County. Though there are a few errors in this article, the details are: Born to a slave mother and white father on the farm of James D [not G as noted herein] Campbell in Cooper County, MO, March 9, 1823; sold by James' widow to her neighboring Stephens family at 13 years old; in October 1853 John D. Stephens would buy Basil for \$1200 from the estate and bring him to CA with the agreement that Basil would buy his freedom at \$100 per year for ten years; which Basil did after 7 years in 1861; and then Stephens helped him invest; Basil married Rebecca Dalton in 1866 and adopted her daughter Lenora; Basil became involved in politics and activism; helped his half-brother Elijah Jennings become successful and many other blacks who later came to Yolo County; after Rebecca's death in 1891, Basil would marry Mary Jane Williams, his daughter Lenora's sister-in-law and Mary would become the executrix of his Will, Estate, Probate and Trial brought by his "slave sons," claiming a right to inherit, a complex trial that resulted in many useful documents for researchers. There is so much more to Basil's story and the *Shibley Walters Center for Yolo County Archives and Library Services* has been a great resource at: 226 Buckeye St, Woodland, CA 95695, (530) 666-8005. This booklet is courtesy of Elizabeth Monroe and The Friends of the Yolo County Archives. Basil Campbell will be getting his own book by Elizabeth Monroe—soon! Buy it on greatercapayvalley.org.

One Who Made A Difference

Mr. Basil Campbell: Grain farmer; stock breeder and rancher

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the sixth in a series about area residents who made a difference in the 20th century. Published the last Monday of each month, this series began April 24.

By JACQUE (REIMER) VAUGHTERS
Dorcasia staff writer

Basil "Baaz" Campbell was born in Cooper County, Missouri, March 9, 1823; a slave to James G. Campbell, whose widow, Mrs. Ellen, later resided with her son-in-law, Jefferson Maxwell, in Yolo County.

When 13 years old, in September 1836, Basil was sold to Joseph Stephens for \$700.

In 1837, Mr. Stephens died, and for some four or five succeeding years, the slave boy was put yearly up at auction, and his services for one year sold to the highest bidder.

One of those years, he was put upon the scales and found to weigh 151 pounds, and taking his place upon the auction stand, was bid off at \$151 per year, by Thomas Adams, a brother of D.G. Adams, of Yolo County.

In 1879, a son of the purchaser, T.H. Adams, was working a thousand acres of land in Yolo County, which he was leasing from the boy whose services, as a slave, his father purchased at one dollar per pound.

In about 1842, the estate of Joseph Stephens was divided among the heirs, and Basil had to be sold again, as he could not well be divided. Mrs. Catherine Stephens, widow of the deceased, purchased him for \$450.

In October, 1853, Basil was again sold, this time for \$1,200, to J.D. Stephens who later became a Woodland banker. The following year, Mr. Stephens came to California and settled on the south side of Cache Creek, bringing with him his twelve hundred dollar purchase.

Before leaving Missouri, an agreement had been entered into between the parties, to the effect that Basil was to work in California ten years for Stephens, and have his liberty at the end of that time. One hundred dollars per year, to be paid annually, was to be given to Basil during that time, and, if during the ten years, he had

Personal
Born: March 9, 1823
Died: December 22, 1906
Married: August 5, 1866
Life: Slave, Yolo County pioneer, grain farmer of extensive acreage, breeder and rancher of large herds of stock; State Convention of Colored People convention delegate.

money enough to buy his freedom in less time, Mr. Stephens was to name a reasonable price.

In 1861, "Baaz," as he was known locally, paid \$700 for the remaining three years of his time, and then was free. During those seven years, Basil had been investing his money in stock, and was worth, in 1861, about \$10,000.

In 1865, he commenced acquiring real estate, and by 1879, he and his wife owned 2,960 acres, worth about twenty dollars per acre on an average, and between five and ten thousand dollars' worth of livestock.

In 1865, Baaz was elected as a delegate to attend the State Convention of Colored People in Sacramento, being chosen as one of the vice-presidents.

He was married to Rebecca Dalton, a native of Tennessee, at Sacramento City, Aug. 5, 1868, and they adopted a child named Lenora.

In the official records of 1870, the Campbells were listed as general farmers, on one of but a few large Yolo County farms, 10 miles west from Cacheville, 16 miles northwest from Woodland; seventeen hundred acres of land, Division Three; six hundred acres in cultivation; value, twenty-five thousand dollars; capital invested, two thousand dollars, dealing largely in horses and hogs, with eleven hundred head of sheep; Fairview Precinct, Grafton Township; Post-office, Yolo.

In 1873, Mr. Campbell was again elected to the State Convention of Colored People, and was chosen by that body as a state delegate to attend the National Convention of Colored People at Washington, D.C.

The Campbell residence was in Woodland. Their farm was rented, as before stated, to T.H.

Adams — the Campbells living upon the proceeds of their accumulated wealth.

Baaz Campbell stated that he considered himself fortunate in his masters in those days of servitude; that he was always kindly treated; and that in J.D. Stephens he found a friend rather than a master, who gave him a chance in the world that few of his race had been favored with.

Elijah Jennings was born a slave to J.D. Campbell in Cooper County, Missouri, in March, 1834.

His mother's name was Hester, and his father, who belonged to another master, was named Jennings, and lived to see the Union army, a spy for whom he was accused of being, and died during the war that freed his race.

The mother eventually relocated to Woodland, supported by her sons, Baaz Campbell and Elijah Jennings.

Elijah was separated at the age of four years from his mother, being a gift to the daughter of his master named Rhoda, who had married Thomas J. Maxwell, later a resident of Yolo County, and he thus escaped the auction block.

He lived with the Maxwells in Cooper County, Mo., until the family came to California in 1856, bringing the slave boy under an agreement that he was to work ten years for his freedom.

On their arrival a special agreement was entered into under which he served seven years, and then commenced life for himself a free man, the parties contracting not having fulfilled their agreement.

He first invested in a cow, and afterwards borrowed fifty dollars of his brother Baaz Campbell, and purchased another cow.

He soon accumulated about two hundred and fifty dollars, and leased it for about two years at one and one-half percent interest, and in the fall of 1856 bought fifteen head of cattle and a colt.

In 1848, he purchased of Maxwell, for three hundred dollars, a ranch on Pato creek, but finding a scarcity of water, by sinking three wells, any one of which was over sixty-three feet deep, he traded it for a horse and ten head of young cattle.

He then took with C.H. Mor-



Basil "Baaz" Campbell

Courtesy of Yolo County Archives

gan one thousand sheep on shares of Mr. Campbell, when the dry-season of 1864 about ruined them financially. But, through the advice of Mr. Campbell they continued and finally came out something ahead.

In the official records of 1870, Jennings is listed as a "farmer, residence 10 miles west from Cacheville, 15 miles northwest from Woodland; one hundred and sixty acres of land, Division Three, all in cultivation; staple, wheat, value, three thousand five hundred dollars; West Grafton Precinct, Grafton Township; Post-office, Yolo."

He then entered into co-partnership with his brother, Baaz, and from that time prospered and continued to acquire wealth.

Mr. Jennings eventually came to own an undivided half-interest in eight hundred acres of land with his brother, besides four hundred and twenty acres individually.

Later his post-office address was listed in Madison, as his farm was situated only about seven miles northeast.

Owing to the peculiar location of Yolo County and the varied character of its soil, it was divided by nature into five sections, which were classed, in the official records of 1870, as five "divisions," when locating the many farms and speaking of their qualities.

These divisions were not made in such a manner as to include in one belt all land of equal value. The natural divisions were simply numbered.

There were farms listed in Division Two which, owing to their peculiar location, their adaptability to peculiar phases of agriculture, and for many other causes, were held at high figures and commanded them; while, on the other hand, there were farms listed in Divisions One and Three that were nearly worthless, owing to natural causes; still they were ranked in those valuable divisions because they came within the belts thus segregated by nature.

In Division Five occasionally were found small and valuable farms, but not in Division Four, which presented but little difference in soil throughout its

length and breadth.

The general description of Division Three, attached to both of the Campbell farms listed above, follows:

Under this head was classed the grain lands of the state, or that portion of the county lying between the foothills and the belt of swamp land. In it were included the valleys, such as were large enough to be of any note.

Where the grain lands joined the tules the quality of the soil was frequently very different from that which lay but one section further inland.

The African-American pioneers of the Capay Valley have been traced to Cooper County, Mo., Basil Campbell and his brother Elijah Jennings being two of the first to arrive in Yolo County.

A new start in a similar setting seemed to be what drew many African-Americans to settle in the Capay Valley near Gairds.

Although California was a free state, it discouraged minorities from staying. The homestead law specified a white male or female (as land owners) and excluded blacks. But local communities were often the enforcers of the law and skin color meant little in the Capay Valley of Yolo County.

A story of the Campbell family — large acreage owners, with a worth of more than \$100,000 in 1884 — circulated through African-American owned papers in the east.

African-American migrations from Ohio, Arkansas and Kentucky arrived with knowledge of the success of the Campbell family farming in the region.

Mrs. Basil (Rebecca Dalton) Campbell died of heart disease, in Yolo County Saturday Nov. 14, 1891, at age 72. Her attending physician was a Dr. Ross. Basil Campbell was reported to be quite ill on the front page of the Woodland Daily Democrat, Nov. 24, 1906. The cause of his death, a month later, is listed as asphyxia, in Yolo County Monday Dec. 22, 1906, at age 84 years, eight months and 30 days. His attending physician was the well-known Dr. H.M. Kier.

Many descendants of African-Americans who came to Capay Valley during the 1800s presently reside in and around Yolo County.

— Compiled and edited from "The Western Shore Gazette and Commercial Directory, For the State of California," 1879; "History of Yolo County," by DeFue, 1879; "Woodland Daily Democrat," Saturday Evening, Nov. 24, 1906, and Monday, Jan. 24, 1900, pgs. A1 and A6.