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# TGCVHS Newsletter

## THE GREATER CAPAY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ELIZABETH MONROE - August 15, 2021

Volume 1 of 2021

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**“The Yocha Dehe Tribe has put forward up to \$15 million in funding for the 28,000-square-foot center so far, which is set to break ground in October.”**  
By Carlos Guerrero [cguerrero@dailydemocrat.com](mailto:cguerrero@dailydemocrat.com)

According to this same article, RISE Executive Director Tico Zendejas says, “We were one of the only nonprofits, along with the Yolo Food Bank, that did not close our doors to the community...It was huge for our community to stay open.” RISE is “basically a one-stop-shop for social services in the rural communities,” Zendejas explained.

The total cost of the building could be around \$18-20 million. With \$15 million already donated, Zendejas estimates RISE only needs to raise another \$3 million. So far, they have raised \$200,000 on their own.

If interested in donating, you can visit their physical office or go to [healthycapayvalley.org](http://healthycapayvalley.org) for more information.

**What is happening in the greater Capay Valley area today? Well, RISE is *rising* anew—breaking ground in October on a 28,000sf health center in Esparto. According to an article by Carlos Guerrero in the Daily Democrat, “RISE, which stands for Rural Innovations in Social Economics, is a local nonprofit organization that serves the rural communities and has organized the delivery of social services to western Yolo County for over 33 years,” and is ready to build a complex, stylized in the photo to the left, in Esparto. He goes on:**

**“RISE offers a range of services, including preschool through senior citizen recreational programs and everywhere else in between.**

**They offer after-school programs for elementary and middle school, youth employment for the high school and young adults, a full mental health program, a food closet, and resources and referrals to other places that can help people if RISE cannot accommodate their needs.”**

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## Lindbergs Bar

Today, the space we all knew as Esparto's local *watering hole*, Lindbergs, is filled by the charmingly old-fashioned—and very much appreciated—ACE Hardware store. But from the late 1920s until the 1970s the Melvin Lindberg, Sr., family owned and operated a *tavern*—meaning that they served food in a small *lunch counter* operation so that families could come in together, and while the adults could use the barstools, the young ones could play pool and shuffleboard in the back of the large, cool, dark room—a refreshing break from the triple digit summers! At any time, youth were welcome to come through the front door of the establishment to buy candy at the end of the bar. Handy, since kids were often sent to the attached post office for the family mail.

On August 3, 2021, I had the delightful opportunity to talk to Tom Lindberg, whose father Melvin Axel Lindbergh bought the establishment with his 3 brothers—with his boxing winnings. Tom and his brother Mel began worked for their father in the 1950s and eventually took over the bar—and became well-known fixtures in the Esparto and Capay Valley area. According to Tom, their father Melvin boxed as a very successful light weight in the SF area under the name of Ray Campbell—because his mother did not approve of his boxing. Beginning by winning a watch per successful bout—which he could pawn for \$10; equal to his week' salary working for the Southern Pacific Railroad—he went on to matches at storied places like the Madison Square Garden, where he fought those who were rising to or receding from *Champion* status. While he never became a *champion* himself, the money was good and he was able to buy farm land out by the Capay Cemetery and a bar in Esparto with his 3 older brothers, Ed, Hod and Gene. Eventually, the Great Depression took its toll and the three elder bothers moved on, but Melvin married Nellie Powell—sister to Mary, the wife of his brother Gene—and continued to farm and run the bar, raising three children in Esparto and the Capay Valley area: Tom and twins, Mel and sister Nel, all graduating from Esparto High School.



Left: Tom behind the bar; and seated near left is George Coburn, and that's Gene Rominger leaning out smiling further back.



Top right: Mel behind the bar; not sure who he is serving...Andy Hill, John Gallardo informs me!



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## How the Locals Remember Tom and Mel Lindberg

As fixtures behind the Lindbergs bar—the very social gathering place in Esparto—most would say *Tom was the quiet one and Mel the gregarious one*. When I mentioned this to Tom, he chuckled and said that was about right. He also gave me Mel's phone number so I could see if he had photos to share, which led to another delightful talk, catching up on who is where today and remembering old times in Esparto. Mel informed me that he had just turned 90 on April 13, 2021—and could only talk for a bit because he had to get to the gym for his regular swim workout! Which reminded me of my first encounter with Al Hayes when I came back to do this research about 12 years ago: it was at his 90th birthday party at the original Hayes place above Guinda and Al was a font of historic knowledge and happy to share. And Mel mentioned Gene Rominger, which reminded me of my last conversations with Gene around his own 90th birthday: he was sitting in his house up in Stony Ford, CA, emailing me details about harvester photos I had asked to use in my writing—and straightening me out when I got it wrong! He wanted to know why I didn't have a website yet—a problem his daughter Cris would remedy soon after. I have now posted everything I have written on that website and made it free to the public at [greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org)—just the way Gene would have wanted me to do! In my conversations with Tom and Mel, other old-timers' names came up, too—many of whom spent some *quality time* in the cool bar catching up with friends. Tom and his son Mike laughed with me over the memory of Eddie Berg riding his horse right into the bar! And George Coburn in his 90s still beating all comers at pool and shuffleboard: *No matter how much he might drink, he never showed signs of it and his cheery disposition never changed*, to paraphrase Tom. When I mentioned two other names Tom would know—though they didn't frequent Lindbergs—John and Toy Hatanaka, it was to let Tom know I had just had the opportunity to interview them and write about their own history in the Capay Valley: Toy is in her 90s and John is turning 103 this year; they were remembered well and fondly. I am so blessed to have the opportunity to spend time with so many of our *old-timers*, so full of wit, wisdom and fond memories.

Once, when I stated this to Rosie Wanshop—who was herself in her 90s at the time—she responded, “Betsy, you are *also an old-timer*.” We both laughed as I realized I keep seeing these old friends as the adults and myself as a child growing up around them—but I am now older than they were at that time. The history and stories I am collecting are from our mutual past—what a blessing!

Welcome  
to  
Capay  
Valley  
Almond  
Festival

THIS SUNDAY,  
FEBRUARY 25  
Phone 796-3501

CLARA'S  
PLACE

Highway 16  
CAPAY

"Better  
You Catch  
a Cold One . . .  
. . . AND MEET  
THE GANG . . .  
WITH TOM AND MEL  
. . . . PARDNER"

We Hope You Enjoy Our  
Almond Festival and Will  
Visit With Us Again

LINDBERG'S

FOOD - TOBACCO - LIQUORS  
787-3513 Esparto

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**Back to the Lindbergs:** Another common memory we all have of Tom is his postal delivery style: Tom used his own car to deliver mail, sitting on the right side for window access to the mailboxes, steering with his left hand—something that always amazed and tickled me as a kid! As you may recall, the Esparto Post Office used to share a wall with Lindbergs, and Tom recalls many a joking conversation with the post office staff about him coming to work there. And, indeed, once he was married with kids, he was enticed to pass the postal worker exam and take over a route from George Story, Sr. The pay was better than tending bar, and it came with health insurance and a pension; so he worked out a limited schedule in the afternoons at the bar and ran his *Rural Route 1* in the mornings, beginning around 1953.

Prior to this, Tom and George Story, Jr., graduated from EHS together in 1944, after which Tom went on to join the Merchant Marines and served in Guam at the end of WWII. After this, he returned to tending bar for his dad—but the Korean Conflict meant he might be drafted, so he joined the Air Force; assuming that joining rather than waiting for the draft would give him more flexibility. He ended up teaching math to recruits in Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas—where he even taught math to his kid brother Mel, who had enlisted and would go on to serve in Korea in the Air Force ground troops. Later, Tom was moved to a new air base in Oakland, CA—where he also tended bar in the NCO Club, due to his prior bar-tending experience. After serving 3 years, Tom returned to Esparto and tending bar, followed later by Mel on his return from Korea.

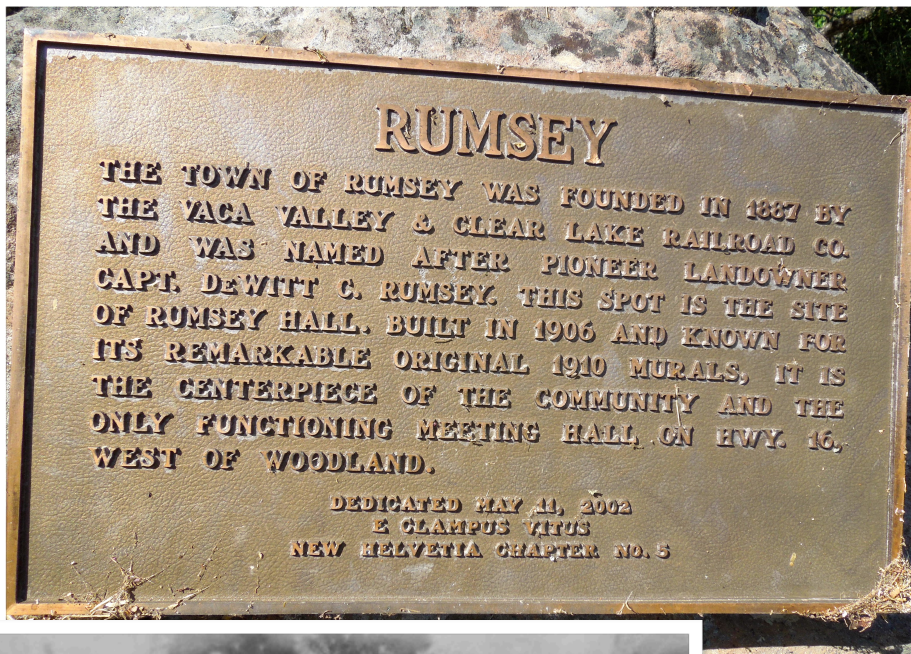
Tom and Mel would eventually take over the bar in the early 1950s and their parents finally had the leisure time to take a long-desired trip by sea from SF to England—via the Panama Canal—to visit her relatives. They did not make it to Sweden to visit Lindbergh relatives, because Melvin, Sr., didn't know who would still be living there. Her parents left after their first 3 sons were born there and Melvin was born in WI in 1890. At some point, the silent *h* was dropped from the Swedish name Lindbergh and it became the name above the bar in Esparto that we recall. Melvin, Sr., would eventually meet and marry Nellie Powell, whose family had migrated from England to Canada and then Portland, Oregon, and then California—where she had come to visit her newly-married sister Mary Powell Lindberg, and where she met and married Mary's brother-in-law, Melvin. They would go on to have 3 children and live out their lives in the Capay Valley area.

Their eldest son, Tom, would marry a local Capay Valley native, Betty Alexander, daughter of Claude and Irene Alexander, whose homestead was behind the “Bud” Gordon farm on the south side of Highway 16 just beyond the town of Capay—on the old road up to the *Signal Pole*. They would have 4 children, all attending Capay School before graduating from EHS: Tom, Jim, Mike and daughter Tracy. Once the Lindberg brothers sold the bar, Tom moved to Woodland—where he had continued his work for the post office, this time delivering mail in Woodland's *Rural Route 1*; and Mel moved on to the Napa area. Gone, but not forgotten.



## UP AT THE OTHER END OF THE CAPAY VALLEY— RUMSEY! A PHOTO ALBUM OF THE E F HASWELL FAMILY

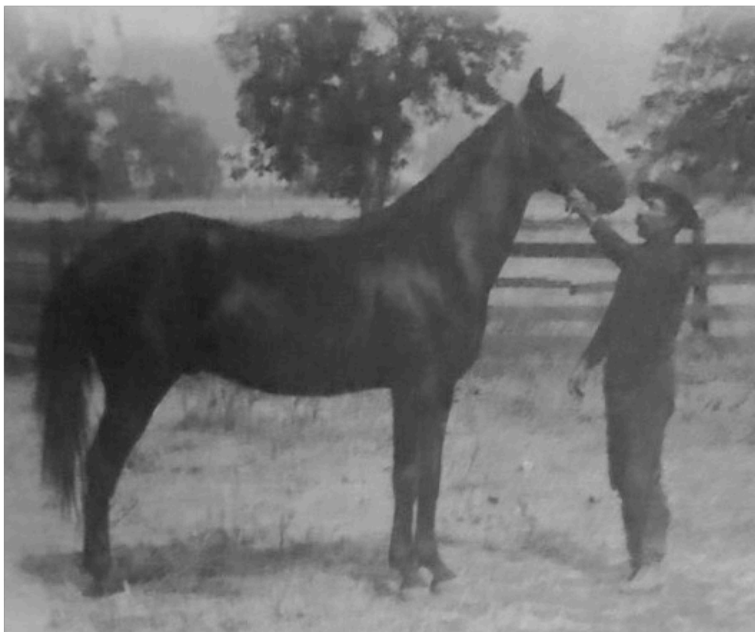
Recently, Kim Haswell, whose husband is Rob Haswell, the Great-Great Grandson to Edward Finley Haswell of Rumsey, contacted me through my website email and offered photos they had of the Rumsey area—and shared some history and stories I had yet to hear! For one, I'd never heard of the *Oak Villa Garage*, had you? Below is a photo I took of the plaque that sits in front of the historic Rumsey Hall, with information about the town and its naming. Beyond that are some photos she shared with information regarding them—enjoy!



**Top left:** Plaque photo taken by Elizabeth Monroe for Volume 11 of the Journals, which are found on website [greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org) and on page 226 in the first edition of her book *The History and Stories of the Capay Valley*.

Rumsey was founded in 1887, just as the Vaca Valley and Clear Lake Railroad Co. was putting in rails and depots from Madison to Rumsey, all completed in 1888; intended to continue on to Clear Lake, it never got beyond Rumsey. The town was named for early pioneer Captain DeWitt C. Rumsey.

Left: E F Haswell (1849–1938) in about 1880 with one of his prized horses, mostly used for riding and carriage transportation, not farm work. A well-known historic Rumsey family.





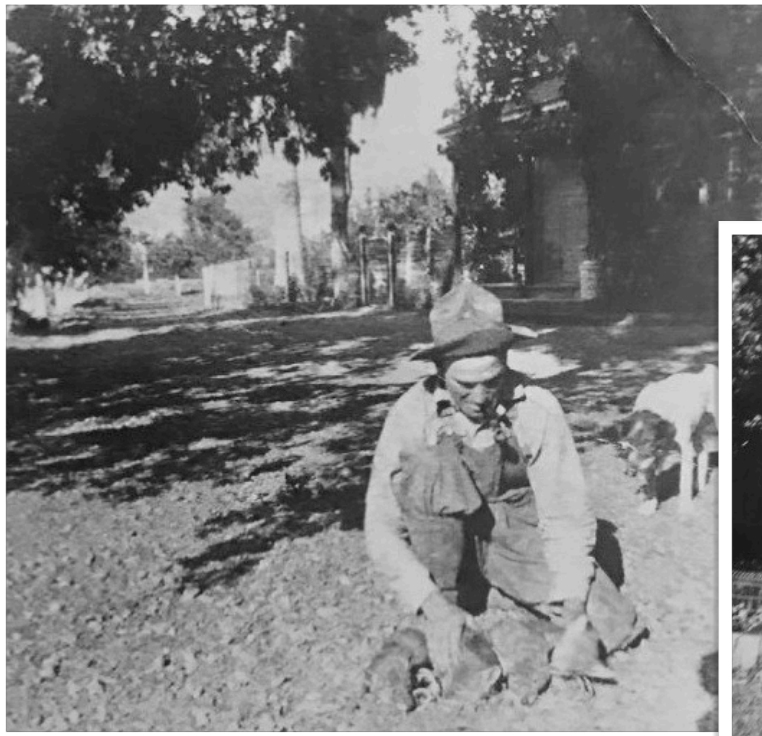
# Oak Villa Garage

E. F. HASWELL & SONS  
RUMSEY, CALIFORNIA

Auto Parts and Accessories; Oils and Greases True to Name; Oxy-  
Acetylene Welding, Brazing and Cutting; Vulcanizing, Blacksmithing;  
Engines, Windmills, Pumps of All Makes Supplied and Installed.  
(OVER)



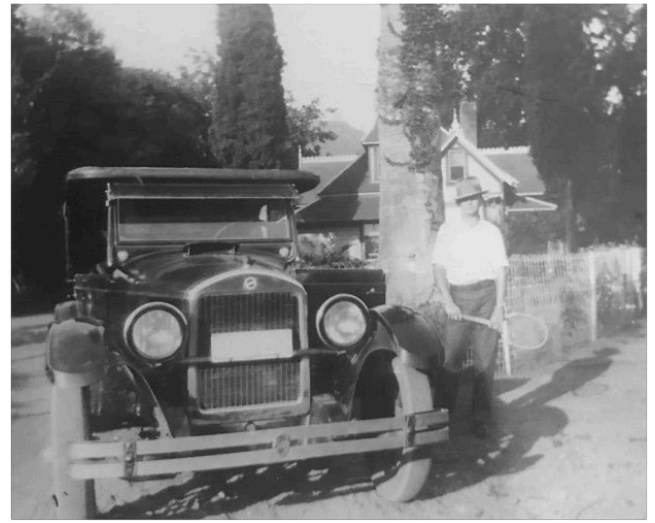
**Left:** Photo and news-clipping come from Rob and Kim Haswell, showing the *Oak Villa Garage* in Rumsey, owned by Edward Finley Haswell and sons. One of the sons was Russell, who donated the property that became the well-known and beloved *Camp Haswell* with its WPA-built Boy Scout Cabin, just beyond the town of Rumsey—and about which I wrote in *Journal Volume 16*, page 20; page 356 in the book.



**Photo at left:** Russell Haswell with coyote pups he caught about 1923. **Below:** Ruth Haswell Conover (1888-1970) in about 1913, daughter of E.F. & Lillie. Both photos show portions of the historic Haswell home.



## E F Haswell Family Photos



**Above:** EF's Grandson Wesley Ray Haswell; son of Russell Haswell; and father to Fred and grandfather to Rob Haswell, who shared these photos.

**Left:** the family at their holiday table

**Below:** At the Rumsey School, Grandson Wesley Ray Haswell, son of Russell, (1910-1972), stands in the 2nd row, 2nd from the right; at about 10 years old, so the family estimates 1920.





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## Yet Another *Historic Drought* in Yolo County: 2021

As I research and write about the drought we are currently facing, I went back to my Journal, Volume 16 from 2014, and am re-sharing this text I took from **yolorcd.org**: *Farmers and ranchers will have limited access to surface water for irrigation, and many growers will not be able to sufficiently and sustainably substitute groundwater. To better prepare for water shortages like this one, growers can adopt on-farm ‘water stewardship’ practices to optimize agricultural production, achieve economic savings, and boost ecological and human health benefits. What can farmers do? Below are a few on-farm practices featured in the **California Agricultural Water Stewardship Initiative(CAWSI)** online resource center:*

**Irrigation Management** [See also: [http://agwaterstewards.org/index.php/practices/irrigation\\_management](http://agwaterstewards.org/index.php/practices/irrigation_management)]: *Certain practices optimize water use when irrigating. Best management practices include, but are not limited to:*

*More efficient systems. Micro/drip irrigation can reduce water use by 30-50%.*

*Irrigation scheduling. Based on crop water needs, growers can use some combination of soil moisture monitoring, weather station information, and crop data as appropriate.*

*System maintenance. Regular inspections and upkeep improve the efficiency and uniformity of irrigation equipment.*

*Growers can also work with local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff to create irrigation plans and consult the NRCS Guide to Effective Irrigation Practices.*

### **Recycled Water:**

*Growers can use treated municipal wastewater, reuse agricultural runoff or tailwater from irrigation events, or even use household grey water or roof runoff for small scale crop irrigation.*

### **Soil Management:**

*Through proper soil management, growers can increase the water holding capacity of the soil, decrease erosion, and increase water infiltration rates. Stewardship practices include reduced tillage/conservation tillage, using soil amendments such as mulch or compost, and planting winter cover crops (though these do require winter rains to grow). Through these techniques, growers can build soil organic matter (SOM); studies have shown that for every 1% increase in SOM, soils can hold an additional 16,000 gallons of water in the top foot of soil.*

### **On-Farm Ponds:**

*When winter rains do occur, on-farm ponds capture and store rainwater for use later in the season. Ponds can also be used to store runoff or tailwater from irrigation events to be reused on farm. Penn State Extension estimates that one 2-acre clay-lined pond with an average depth of 7 feet can provide roughly 10 acre-feet of irrigation water when filled.*

*This is by no means an exhaustive list of on-farm practices. Depending on the severity of water scarcity, growers may even consider switching to more drought-tolerant crops or even fallowing fields. The feasibility and usefulness of each practice will also vary by farm. Growers should consult with local UC Cooperative Extension advisors, NRCS staff, Resource Conservation Districts or commodity groups such as the Almond Board or California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, for crop-specific water management advice during and after the drought.*

**Droughts alternate continually with Floods in this area of California**

Below: the flood of 1878 is seen covering the railroad bridge in Winters; photo courtesy of the Meredith Stephens Collection [see more in Journal Vol. 7, page 4 page 124 in the book]



I feel I must mention the *historic fire season*—which this drought isn't helping! I just read that the historic *Gold Rush Town of Greenville in Plumas County* was “mostly leveled” last night, August 4, 2021; just as all of Nevada County was evacuated after the town of Colfax in Placer County was evacuated, as well; then a fire in Placerville was contained, but then not contained, and then...I just copied this quote: “Of the 10 largest wildfires ever recorded in California, **six were within the past 12 months.**” As I look at the massive plumes of smoke in the hills that are filled with our early California history of Gold Rush pioneers and all those precious wooden towns, it is difficult, but I am going to try to focus on the **water scarcity issues in the Capay Valley area.** As I wrote in the Journal Volume 17, page 20; page 380-81 in the book, California has always had a history of drought years butted up against flood years. Recently, we had a flood year in 2012 that had Cache Creek lapping the bottom of the Capay Bridge and flooding over hole 14 at the Cache Creek Casino's Yocha DeHe Golf Course [Journal volume 2], but it was followed by a drought in 2014 so bad many of the historic Capay-area wells ran dry and farmers had to dig ever-deeper into their own farm wells, as well as put in drip systems where they had traditionally used flooding to irrigate. But this is not really new. Moving backwards in time, the drought of 1976-7, *one of the driest years on record*, followed an exceptionally wet rainy season in 1976: 47 of California's 58 counties had to declare *drought emergencies* to access federal funds. And because of drought-flood systems like this, we adapt: the 1924 drought led to investments in irrigation systems; the Dust Bowl drought of 1928-35 led to the Central Valley Project with its system of canals, pumps and aqueducts; and the subsequent droughts of 1947-50 and 1959-60 led to the State Water Project, which irrigates the Central Valley and moves water to Los Angeles. In 1841, early settlers' first observations—

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based on seeing only one swing in this system—declared *Sonoma too dry to ever farm* and Sacramento Valley was written off as a *barren wasteland*. Then, in 1861-2, the Central Valley was a vast in-land sea which had to be traversed by canoe—but it was followed with another extreme drought in 1864. My great-grandmother Mary Elizabeth Franklin Duncan wrote of that drought: “That was the year my father [Ben Franklin in western Woodland] and his brother drove oxen and covered wagons up into the mountains to find food for the stock...and some farmers drove their cattle to Lake County from Yolo County.” Jim Hiatt, currently living and farming on his family’s historic farm in Hungry Hollow, tells how in 1864 his Goodenough/Goodnow family of Hungry Hollow took buckboards to the Conaway Ranch area—which is now the Yolo Bypass—and in desperation cut and baled tule as stock feed. Later, they would herd their stock up the Cache Creek bed for water and grazing en route to Lake County. Another extreme weather decade was that of the 1890s: the severe winter storms of 1895-97 led to disastrous flooding, followed by prolonged hot, dry winds in 1897-8, followed by severe frost and snow—locally! The book *After the God Rush: Tarnished Dreams in Sacramento Valley*, by David Vaught, has excellent descriptions and facts on the cycle of floods and droughts that led to major water reclamation projects. He does not go into it, but the part Chinese laborers played in the creation of our Sacramento area water reclamation canals, etc., is a fascinating feature in the **California Museum**. [See pages 14-19 in this Newsletter]

**On February 3, 2014, I quoted this into my Journal Volume 16:**

“Last Friday, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced that no water would be delivered this year from the State Water Project to its twenty-nine public water agency customers--a first in the Project’s 54-year history. These deliveries help supply water to 25 million Californians and roughly 750,000 acres of irrigated farmland. DWR also announced that allocations to Sacramento Valley agricultural districts would be cut in half.” **Sound familiar?** Now, here is the headline in the *Sacramento Bee* on August 3, 2021: “California cuts off thousands of [San Joaquin and Sacramento] Valley farmers from river water as drought intensifies,” going on to say that California Ag represents the state’s “\$50 billion-a-year farm economy...but demand for water...is 3-16 times greater than supply in the Sacramento Valley.” Needless-to-say, this is all controversial, but I will let you read the article yourself, while I will go on to one I read today in the local *Daily Democrat* about our own **Capay Valley farmers**. The paper has added a great feature titled “**Focus on Capay**” and in the August 3, 2021 edition, Sarah Dowling interviewed one of the founding-owners of Full Belly Farm, a 400-acre organic farm between Guinda and Rumsey since the 1980s. Judith Redmond and her 3 founding-partners were interested in *socially responsible* farm methods from the beginning and have a keen interest in the current drought, COVID lock-down, and climate changes as they affect “people’s health and nutrition.” Regarding the drought, she is quoted as saying, “Releases from the Indian Valley Reservoir into Cache Creek only went for six weeks this summer—so many farmers that are used to relying on Cache Creek water will have to irrigate with groundwater now...that can put extra pressure on the groundwater aquifer...and heat events such as the one we are currently experiencing make the drought even worse as plants need additional water.”



## The Hackett family of Guinda, beginning in the 1940s

Recently, family members of the Hacketts of Guinda contacted me and helped create a backstory for this family so many of us recall. Unlike the earliest



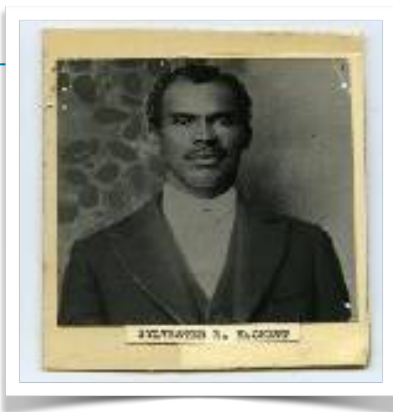
African American settlers to Guinda in the 1890s—the Logans and Simpsons, et al—the Hacketts came in the 1940s. But they have such a long and storied history in the California Bay Area that they are featured in the *African American Museum & Library* in Oakland. Most of us recall Roy and his second wife Bama and their many children, all of whom attended the local schools, and some of whom still live in the area. I will *sequel* in the next issue Roy's brother Tyra D and his son Tyra Bernell—who went by *Tyra B*—and their families. But for now, I will



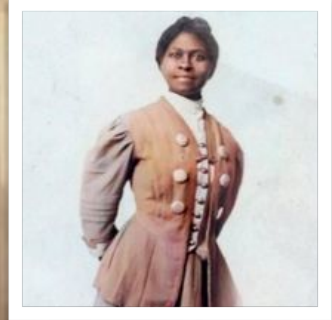
start with some backstory on these two families and work back to their pre-California roots. Roy and Tyra were descendants of Sylvester Hackett, who came to California with his brother James in 1885. Roy and first wife, Lillian (at left), had 3 children in the Oakland area before he remarried—a woman we all knew as *Bama*—and they had six children in the Guinda area. Among Roy's first children were Roy, Jr., Shirley—about whom I wrote in Journal volume 6, and seen below left with her son Tony Holiday in 1968, and in the center with her step-mother Bama—and Jacquelyn Ramona Hackett-Pitts (1928-1989), seen below, right. In the photo above left, Roy, Sr., is seen in 1973 with two of his great grandchildren, Jacquelyn's grandchildren: Adam and TJ—

who so kindly shared these photos and memories.





Left to right above: Matilda and her sons Sylvester and James. According to TJ: "Sylvester and James were among 12 brothers and sisters, all born in Wilkes, North Carolina, before and after Emancipation. Their parents were Orange and Matilda (Bryan Parks) Hackett. Matilda is listed as *Mulatto*. Orange was born on the James Hackett plantation and Matilda was owned by Col. Felix Bryan Parks. Sylvester and James came to California in 1885 to find a better life for their families. James was co-founder of the First AME Church in Oakland and a founder of the historic African American town of Allensworth. Ruth, one of Sylvester's daughters, and her husband Eugene Lasartemay, formed the Negro Historical Society of Oakland, which led to the building of the *African American Museum and Library in Oakland on 14th Street*.



Above in 1917: Sylvester and Marie Ada Hackett and family in Alameda; Roy standing left and his brother Tyra D standing in the middle; Roy and Tyra would come to Guinda in the 1940s and raise families there. Above to the right is a portrait of Marie Ada.





**Left:** Roy, Sr., and Bama—as many of us would remember them.

**Below:** Roy, Jr. and his bride Iris Petty—sister of our late, local Black historian William Petty, [about whom I wrote in several Journal volumes, including volume 18, page 16; page 400 in the book] As it turns out, this is not the first

connection between the Hackett and Petty families: they had a marital connection back in NC before heading to CA in 1885.

Roy, Sr., and Bama would raise in Guinda:

Cindy, Kenny, Bert, Bruce, Karen & Shandra; and Grandson Tony Holiday —who claims “there were also many others they raised!”

NOTE: Bama lamented to me in 2010 that all her family photos had burned in their house fire in Guinda—so, thank you, TJ, for reaching out to me!!



Clockwise from Left:

- 1) Bama 2011
- 2) Roy, Jr. and Iris
- 3) Jacquelyn's daughter Yvonne Shirli Grandberry, mother of TJ
- 4) Roy, Sr., with daughters Jacquelyn (our left) & Shirley (our right)
- 5) Roy and Lillian's 3, left to right: Shirley, Roy, Jacquelyn



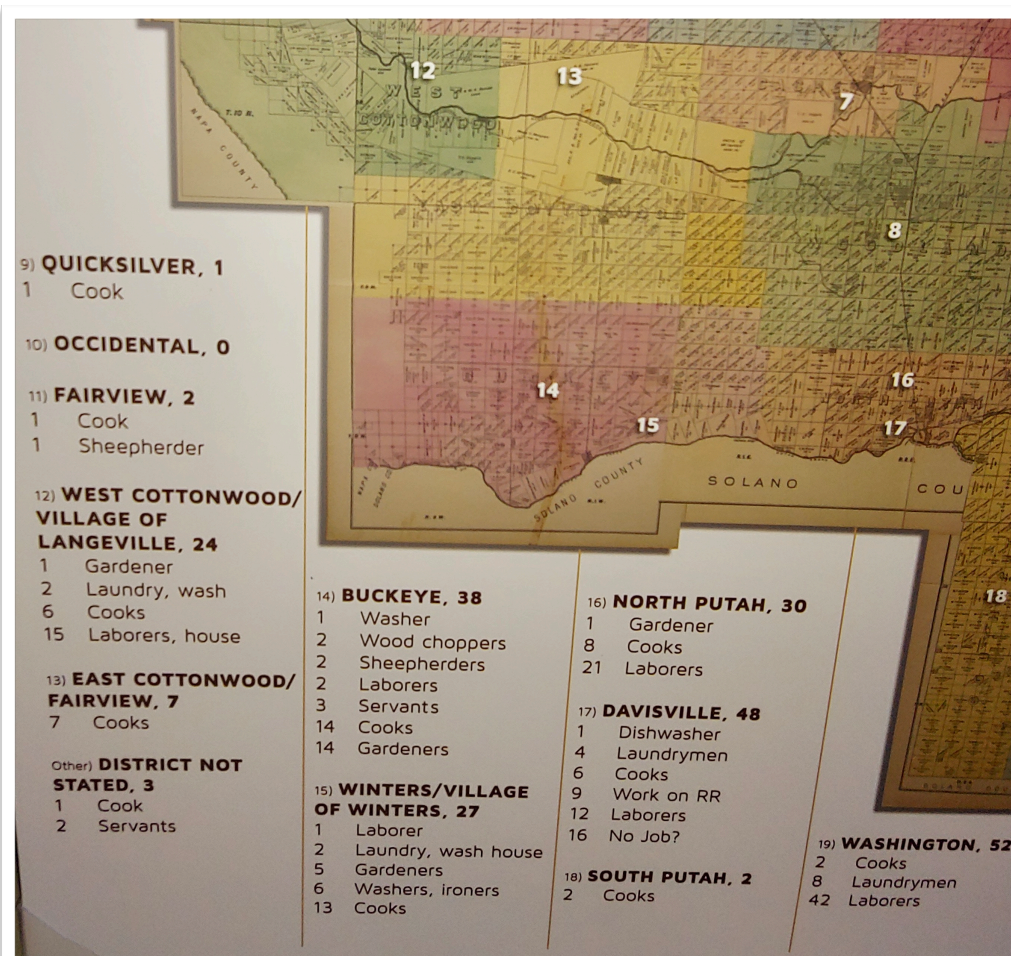
Photos and memories courtesy of TJ Jones Grandberry



## The History of Chinese in the Capay Valley

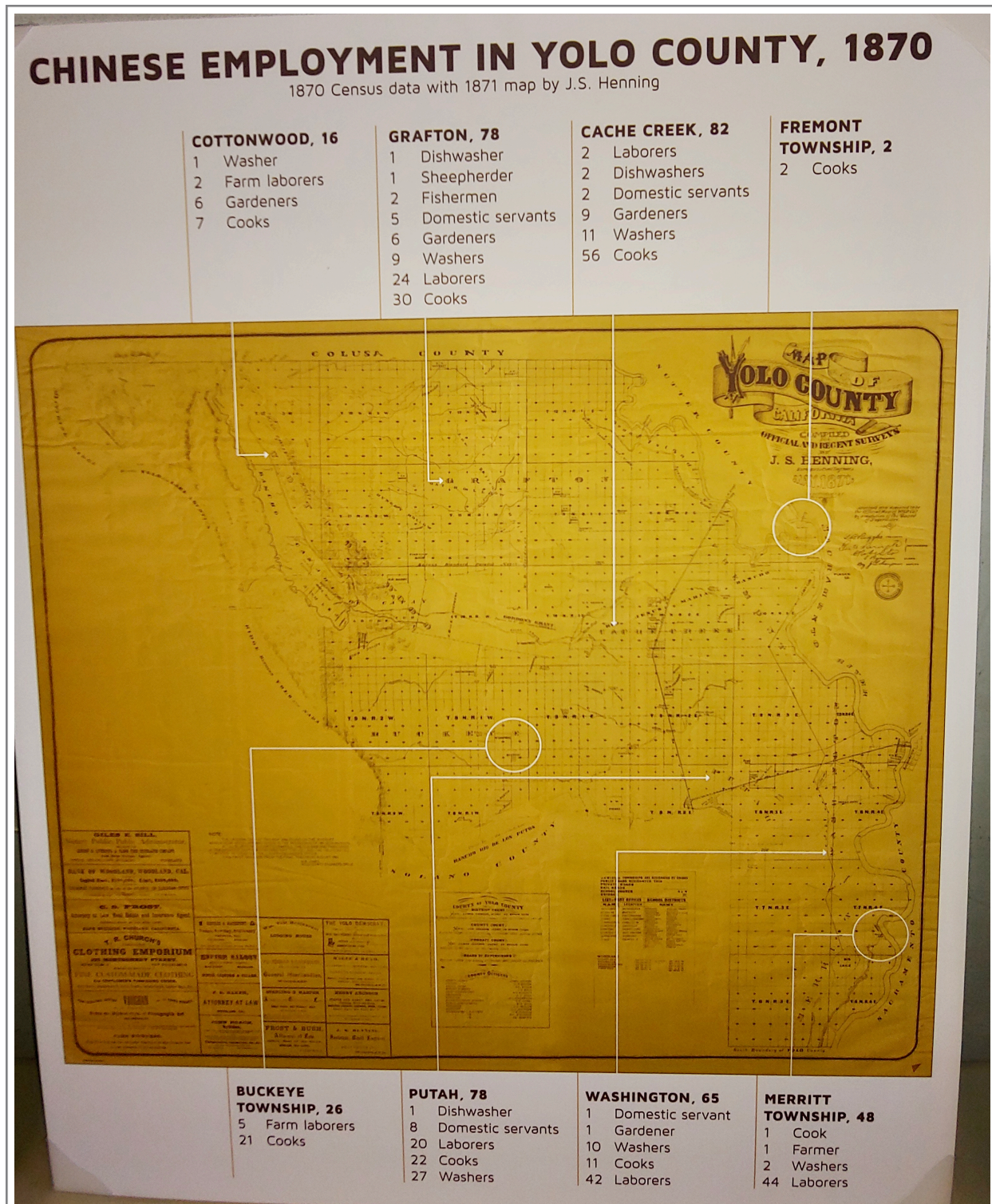
When I began this multi-cultural research of the Capay Valley, I knew that the Duncan household had had a Chinese cook in the early years, so I started looking for any information I could find of local Chinese. I found great information in the Census; in Ol' Doc Thornton Craig's pocket diaries, housed in the Archives under *Special Collections* at the UCD Shields Library\*; and in the early hand-drawn maps of Langville-Capay town. But what I was surprised to find is that no Chinese scholar-writer doing research on the Chinese of California had written about—nor even heard of—the many Chinese in the Capay Valley. So, I set out to do them justice as best I could. First, I did not find any Chinese names in the Capay Cemetery. So, I wondered where they all went. And speaking of names, the name/term *Ah* showed up on most names, so I had to get to the bottom of that—and found it is more like using “Mr” and not a name at all—but I also found out about *Paper Sons*, or *Paper Names*, explaining why so many had the same *sur* name, which meant individuals were almost impossible to trace after they left the Capay Valley: *Paper sons* were those with documents forged to show they had relatives already in the US. I can't do a thorough explanation or give the Chinese who lived in the Valley true justice, here and now, but I will reveal what I do know and will continue to try to do them justice as I continue my

research. A good place to begin your own research is at the California Museum in Sacramento—they have a great display on the Chinese contribution to California, not only to the railroad building that most of us had heard of, but also their contribution to our massive and essential water reclamation in this drought-to-flood prone area. I recently enjoyed a presentation on the History of Chinese in Yolo County—with a



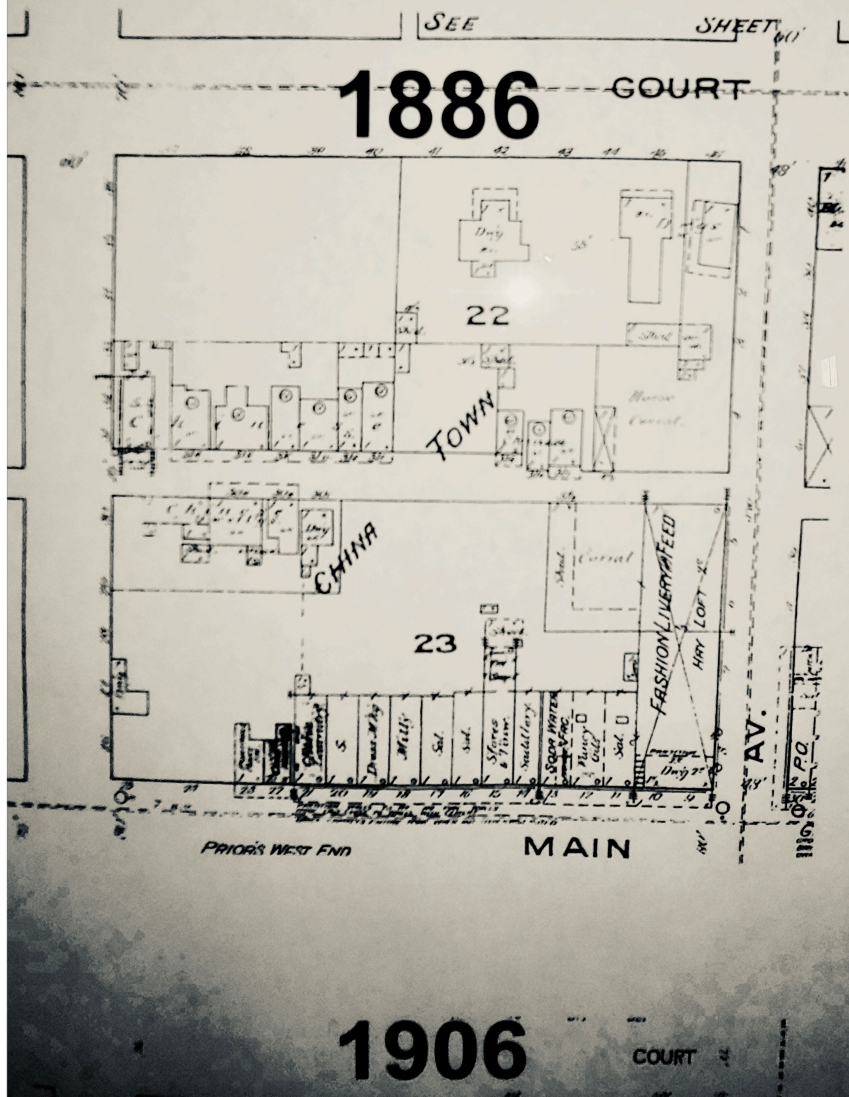


focus on Woodland's *Dead Cat Alley Chinatown*—by Kathy Harrymann, President of the Yolo County Historical Society, and found these useful map displays, which include information on the Chinese of each region—including Cottonwood & West Cottonwood/Langeville [sic—should read *Langville*], which includes Capay and the lower Capay Valley, where many Chinese lived and worked from the 1860s-1890s. Mrs. Harrymann found these maps at the *Shipley Walters Center for Yolo County Archives and Library Services*; 226 Buckeye Street, Woodland; 530-666-8005—call for appointments.





# DEAD CAT ALLEY, Sanborn Fire



As you can see from this portion of a *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, for 1886 - 1906, Woodland's Chinatown was between Main and Court Streets, and between College and Elm, but by the 1960s it ran from Walnut to Third Streets.

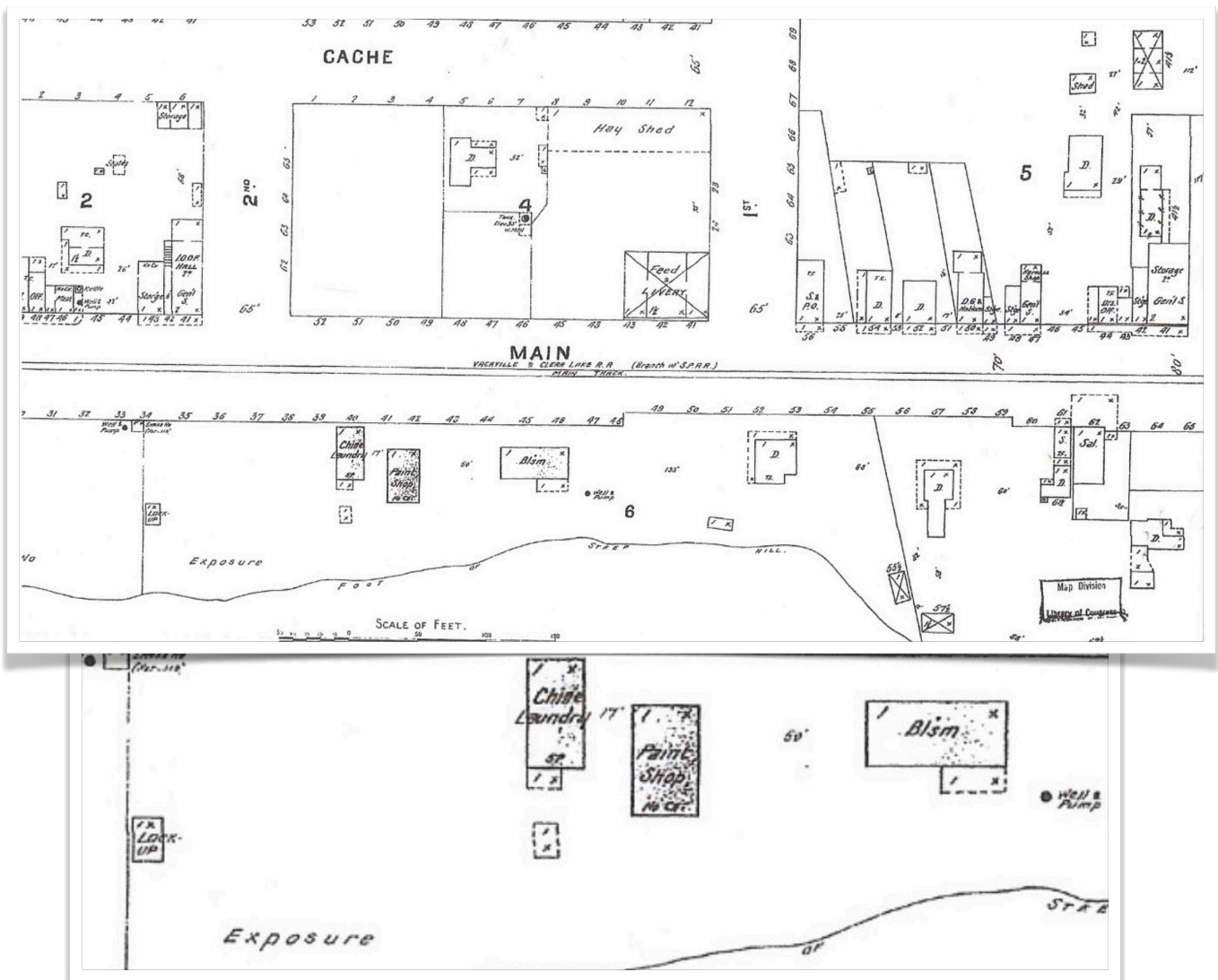
Historical documents show that the primary migration of mostly Cantonese Chinese to California was driven by the building of the Pacific Railroad beginning about 1863, which employed 12-16,000. But the truth is that many men had been "conscripted" as forced labor long before this by Western powers who had been doing business in China since the 1700s. But many did come to California for the Gold Rush since 1849—and some sources claim others were in the California area even before that. After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, many of these laborers migrated throughout the Sacramento

Valley in search of work and were employed to build levees along the Sacramento River—prone to frequent flooding and needed for irrigation. In the Capay Valley, they also helped build the Vaca Valley and Clear Lake Railroad that ran up to Rumsey by 1888. After which, they were employed to build local roads and canals. During this time, many were employed as cooks in pioneers' homes, while some had a large vegetable farm in Capay—as well as a Chinese Laundry. Many old-timers also claimed they had an *Opium Den* and even a *house of ill repute*...but, ahem, those did not show up on the hand-drawn map seen on the next page.



## The History and Stories of the Capay Valley Chinese

On the hand-drawn map below, you can see the *Chinese Laundry*, and on others the *Produce Farm* in the town of Capay. But I also came across interesting facts and quotes from early pioneers: In Dr. Thornton Craig's pocket diaries I found many references to treating Chinese men, sometimes in the "labor camp" at *China Peak*, which was 1,100 feet above and 2.5 miles north of Guinda—including one tooth extraction on May 11, 1883. And then Green Berry Logan in Guinda—who was born during slavery, but came to Yolo County in the 1890s and settled up on what we today call *The Summit*—was quoted as saying he hired Gin Lee and China Joe to clear land for him *on shares*; essentially becoming *sharecroppers* to a man who had chosen to leave the South rather than be a sharecropper himself. They used Gin Lee's seeds for planting and Logan left the care and harvesting of the crops to the Chinese, meaning that the Chinese laborers were in upper Capay Valley into the early 1890s, at least. Even later, the 1907 hand-drawn map by the *Sanborn Map Company* shows the *Chinese Laundry*—see below [and in Journal volume 15, page 18; page 331 in the book] full-page and blow-up below it:



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## A Brief History of Chinese Immigration to California

In 1848—the Chinese *Year of the Rat*—many Chinese men left war-torn, famine-ravaged Kwangtung Province in China’s Pearl River Delta to sail for the Port of San Francisco—in search of what they called *The Golden Mountain*. Though most were not planning to stay, but to make some wealth and return to China and their families, over 20,000 Chinese immigrants “settled primarily in two mining areas in Northern California: the Northern Mines on the American River north of Sacramento and the Southern Mines of the tributaries in the San Joaquin Valley,” according to a news clipping found at the Yolo County Archives: In 1849 there were 54 Chinese in California; by 1850 there were 4,000; and by 1851 there were 25,000; and by 1852 white miners insisted on taxing Chinese miners or denying them claims. Another news clipping at the Archives dated 1923 shows Anti-Chinese sentiment growing in the area of Sacramento and Washington [a town on the river across from Sacramento in Yolo County, now part of West Sacramento]; it being claimed too many Chinese were settling where *Caucasians* should be settling. Apparently, the Caucasian citizens did not want the Chinese to go away—they were helping the economy—but they objected to them being on the main thoroughfares: many “would welcome the invasion” because it may “advance the real estate values at some time in the future.” They just did not want them so *visible*—preferring them to be in their own *Chinatown*. According to author George Chu’s book *Chinatowns in the Delta: The Chinese in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, 1870-1960*, Chinese immigrants were gone from most rural areas in California, moved into Chinatowns in large cities due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882—the first law to exclude an immigrant group based on ethnicity—and the further restrictions aimed at Chinese in 1888 and 1892 and 1902; wherein farmers turned to other sources of farm labor “to fill this vacuum...first Japanese, late Hindu, Filipinos, and Mexicans.” The Angel Island Detention

Center was developed in 1910 and was designed to slow the flow of Chinese and other Asians. The waiting time could be up to 2 years in detention; whereupon you either were granted a *Certificate of Identity* or were

With the new transcontinental railroad providing faster access to Eastern markets, California farmers could ship perishable fruits and vegetables. Chinese became California’s migrant labor force, planting and harvesting strawberries, apples, hops, sugar beets, cabbage, grapes, and many other crops. Some used their horticultural skills to develop new varieties of fruit and rice.

Tired of low pay for hard work, some migrant laborers started their own truck farms, growing vegetables on small plots of land. Others joined forces to operate large, diversified farms. By the 1880s, Chinese were producing nearly two-thirds of California’s vegetables.



deported. In 1952 *The Immigration and Nationality Act Amendment* “abandoned the national origins system of setting quotas on ethnic groups.”

See also: *The Chinese in America, 1820-1973*, by William Tung, noting there were some Chinese in America in 1820; also *From Canton to California: The Epic of Chinese Immigration*, by Hoexter; Philip Choy’s *Canton Footprints, Sacramento’s Chinese Legacy*; and a series of reflections by local Will Weider in *The Daily Democrat* in the 1970s, focussing on his memories of Woodland’s

Chinatown on *Dead Cat Alley*.

I thank: Beth Lew-Williams, in the Department of History Program in Asian America Studies, Northwestern University for this information: Sucheng Chan’s *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1919*, which mentions Yolo County several times; and California Digital Newspaper Collection, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc>



Before Chinese laborers reclaimed it from swamp, land was selling for \$1 – \$3 per acre. By 1870, prices soared to \$20 – \$30, then to \$100 by 1875.

Much of today’s fertile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta used to be covered by water and tule marshes. Thousands of Chinese workers—using shovels, wheelbarrows, and sheer force—turned swamps into rich farmland. They labored in waist-deep muck to create a vast network of ditches, canals, dikes, and levees, often while fighting malaria and other illnesses.

Many of these laborers had been farmers in China’s Pearl River Delta. Staying on to work the land they had reclaimed, Chinese became 75 percent of the state’s farm labor force by 1890. They were key in making California the nation’s top agricultural state.

And thank you to the Yolo County Archives; and Yolo County Historical Society; and to the California Museum for the displays on these two pages [see prior footnotes].

Chinese immigrant communities were distinctive for the absence of women; just 3 percent of early immigrants were female. At least half of Chinese miners and railroad workers were married men, but most didn’t bring their families at first. Some couldn’t afford to; others felt it more important for their wives to care for family back home. Women who did come with their husbands often found life difficult, and some returned to China with their young children. Separated from their families, many Chinese immigrants lived as bachelors in California.



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## Sad Losses in the Capay Valley in this last COVID year:

Too many to list them all, of course, but several have shown special friendship and support during my time doing this research and publishing of the History and Stories of the Capay Valley in the last 12 years, so I want to mention them here, briefly:

Don and Gerry Warren (both 1930-2020), lost within weeks of each other; and now together in the Capay Cemetery and beyond for all time—just as they would have wanted it.

Richard Rominger (1927-2020), who supported my efforts from the very beginning, always coming by my book booths to check in and wish me well in my work—and his wife Evelyne still renews their Membership-subscription to the Newsletter.

Marshall McKay (1952-2020), long-time Chairman of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Tribe of Capay Valley, who encouraged the Tribal Council to let their Tribal Historian work with me as I tried to honor their thousands of years in the Capay Valley before Euro-pioneers like my great grandfather Wyatt Godfrey Duncan came to purchase parts of the old Mexican Land Grant, the *Rancho Canada de Capay*, as new settlements of the new US state of California; Marshall's trust in me will forever be appreciated.

Iola Duncan Tandy (1916-2020), one of my father's many *Duncan Cousins* of Capay Valley, who at 96 years old met with me at a 2012 picnic we hosted with two of her other *cousins* Mary Anne "Peggy" Stephens Wood (1921-2016) and Virginia Duncan Newcom (1918-2013)—both of whom were also lost in the last decade—to talk story and help me figure out my Duncan heritage in Capay Valley. All three of these *cousins* were a hoot to spend time with and I will forever feel that blessing.

Rosie Wanshop (1924-2021) passed at the age of 96 with her family at her side. Born in Oklahoma, she eventually moved to California as a young adult where she met and married Esparto-boy George Wanshop in 1949. Her beloved George passed in 1995, as have many of her siblings, but she leaves her brother Ralph Criner—whom so many of us know fondly. Rosie's name says it all: she was just so very rosy!

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