

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

“For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past.” – Walt Whitman

NEWSLETTER

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President's Notes

Well summer is upon us, as winter seems to never quit. I'm back as your new president. The society is strong with some new and old, as we have had a strong showing at our board meetings. January started off with John Stutz leaving as our president (via: now past –president) and Dick Marshall moving on from our board. A many thanks to them for volunteering their time. Our newest board member is Reuben Sanchez who grew up in the Courtland area. He is very excited to be our newest board member. After election of officers and board members in January, Charlotte Cameron presented a program of her book on the history of Thornton. In March, Mary Helmich gave a presentation of her new book “A Legacy in Brick and Iron”. For all train lovers this was a jewel as May 10th was the anniversary of completing the Transcontinental Railroad. Our May pot luck had Virginia Hemly Cabrera presenting a program on the history of the local pear industry including her family history. Changing our pot luck dinner to May turned out to be a success. Many thanks to John Stutz for getting us on Facebook and his expertise on setting up the speaker system and filming the program. This program is on YouTube.

The Delta has been designated as a National Heritage Area. We will be working with the area planning as they are now looking at forming some kind of format for preserving Delta stories, via oral histories. This falls right into our ballpark as our vice-president Maryellen Burns is a pro at working with historical storytelling.

As we move on, the Pear Fair is coming along with our new 2020 calendar to be sold there in the old Courtland Auditorium. We again will be sponsoring the historical display along with the friends of the Clarksburg Library. Without their fine collection of historic pictures it would be a tough go to have the display.

In September our program is slated to be Steve and Susie Swatt on the “Struggle for Women’s Political Equality in California”. Then in October we have a table at the Crawl in Sacramento. This is an event where one can go on tour of four historical collection sites. It is a free and is a very informative event and one learns how historical documents and artifacts are stored. Go to the website Sacramento Archives Crawl for more information about it.

A big thanks to all who have helped make our Historical Society a very good nonprofit organization. As usual we always need help in the resource center. Esther Koopman is our nuts and bolts of the center. Many thanks to her, as she has done a tremendous job keeping it open and active. If you can find free time to help please contact her.

Note: On June 24th at 6:30 p.m., there will be a book presentation at the Rio Vista Museum on “Hot Rods and Custom Cars of the Sacramento Delta” by John Callahan.

Thanks,
Tom Herzog



47th Annual July 28, 2019

Letters from Bill Hutchinson, Sr.
Presented by Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

Another letter from Wm N. L. Hutchinson written in June 1938 about asparagus production in the states of Oregon and Washington.

Walnut Grove, California
 June 18, 1938.

California Asparagus Growers Association,
 Walnut Grove, California.

I have just completed a trip through the Northwest and find that the State of Washington is really the only competitor as far as California is concerned of asparagus in the Northern states. Oregon raises a very small quantity of asparagus and the district which was the heaviest producer in years gone by was around Hood River. This land that was planted to asparagus has now been flooded caused by the water backing up from the Bonneville Dam. Practically all of the Oregon asparagus is shipped to the fresh market and the total tonnage in the state would probably not be more than 150 tons for the whole state.

The production in Washington is centered in the Yakima valley and is divided into the Sunnyside district with 2500 acres of asparagus; the Kennewick district which has 2000 acres and the Walla Walla district which has 700 acres. The big majority of this asparagus is young.

The cost of the land varies all the way from \$40.00 an acre up to \$125.00 and there are some acreages that are quoted as high as \$200.00. There is a new irrigation project being built by the Government called the Rosa district which will irrigate a large territory and in this district you are buying the water not the land. The Government has appraised all of the land in this district and the average price for the land would be around \$13.00 an acre, and when the district is completed which they anticipate will be in 1941, the land will be assessed at \$240.00 an acre for water. You have forty years to pay for this water right with no interest charges. This land is of no value unless you have water.

While dwelling on the amount of land that will be available for produce and which will be put under irrigation water in the Yakima Valley and eastern Washington when this project is completed and the Grand Coulee Dam is completed, there will be 3,000,000 acres of very

good land which will be suitable for raising nearly anything that grows. As I said before this land is of practically no value without water, but it is very fertile.

They use the Mary Washington asparagus and some of them say that they use the Martha.

The average size holdings of the growers there at the present time are from one to four acres. One large canner bought 1500 acres of asparagus and he has 320 growers. The average life of the bed from 15 to 20 years; some beds look good at 25 years of age. The cutting is done by day work by white people that live in the district and they are paid 30¢ an hour. The asparagus rows are planted nearly 4½ feet apart and the cutters generally, cut two rows at a time. The cutters put the asparagus in lug boxes and the lug boxes are either scattered around in the field or they have little two-wheeled carts which straddle two rows and the lug boxes are placed on this cart and the cart generally follows the cutters and the cutters go over and put the asparagus in the boxes. The cannery contracts are made on a 7-inch cut with 5 inches of green. When the asparagus is shipped to the market it is either cut 9 inches or 8 inches. The asparagus is taken from the lug boxes to packing sheds where the canning deliveries are graded and also the asparagus is graded and packed for the market. In those sheds the growers grade out the #1 asparagus for the canners and also the #2. The #1 is a very fine grade with tight head. The #2 is flowered and some crooks. Then anything that does not make these two grades is packed in crates and shipped to the markets in Seattle, Portland and Spokane. Very often, a grower will sell so many tons of asparagus to the canner and the balance of his crop is shipped to the market.

They were enjoying a very good market in the centers of population in the Northwest and their 9" cuts of good asparagus were bringing from 8¢ to 10¢ a pound and their ungraded, which the canner would not take, was bringing 5½¢ a pound. In each of these packing houses they are grading the asparagus in the #1 and #2 for the canner or the quick freezer, and also packing some in crates. They figure that this operation in their packing house costs them about 1¢ a pound and they estimate the total operating of cutting in the field, the grading and packing or whatever operation they are doing in their packing house, to be from 2¢ to 2½¢ a pound.

The asparagus, after being cut to a 7" length, is put in 50-pound fruit lug boxes, tips up, and is picked up by the buyer. Those fruit lugs belong to the buyer. There is one cannery at Walla Walla, another cannery at Sunnyside and a cannery at Yakima. The processors who are quick freezing haul their produce to the coast, to Seattle or to a plant at Hillsboro which is 250 miles from the producing area. Before the

asparagus is hauled to the coast in the trucks, crushed ice is put on top of the spears in the lug boxes and it arrives at the quick freezing plant 250 miles away in very good condition. The asparagus is picked up by trucks which assemble the asparagus at a central loading place where it is iced and then large trucks haul it over to the coast. The assembling truck charges \$3.40 a ton and the rate from Yakima to Hillsboro, which is the largest quick freezing plant, is 55¢ a hundred. The canner has a man ride on the assembling truck and look over the grade that the grower has made and also sees that he gets the asparagus that he bought, when the local markets are high. One canner purchased about one-half of the asparagus in the Kennewick and Sunnyside districts and he paid 5¢ a pound for the #1 and 2½¢ a pound for the #2s. Some of the smaller canners bought asparagus and paid from 1/4¢ to 1/2¢ a pound more than this canner. These prices are *F.O.B.* ranch.

They always cut the fields once a day and sometimes twice. In fact, they inspect the field in the middle of the afternoon in warm weather and decide whether they should cut it again that afternoon. Some years they cut and can or freeze asparagus as late as July 10, but the indication here was that they would have a shorter season than that this year. The 5¢ a pound which they are paying this year is the highest price that they have paid for several years. They started paying 3¢ a pound back in 1935 and it has increased to 5¢ a pound this year. One of the canners has a number of contracts out at 5¢ a pound for a five-year period.

The size of the spear acceptable is 3/8" in diameter measured 5" from the tip. As I said before, the grower grades his asparagus but this grade is inspected by the canner and must meet the requirements. However, the canning inspection is done on the ranch by the canner's employee and as soon as the canner has taken the asparagus away, he has accepted the grade that is in the boxes.

The canner packs green grass in practically the same grades as is packed in California. In the quick freezing plants, however, they pack three sizes: small, medium and large, and center cuts and tips. It isn't really a center cut because the asparagus that is put into the frozen pack is 5" long, and the butt that is cut off is not used. The asparagus that is put into the cuts and tips is the asparagus that has been graded out by the grower as the #2, and this is run straight through a chopper and put into cartons and frozen in that form. It is exceptional when a canner gets as high as a

60% yield. Most of them are getting from 50% to 55% yield.

The planting in this Washington district is on the increase, At the present time, there is in the neighborhood of 5500 acres and they anticipate an increase in planting of from 500 to 1000 acres every year. The growers, as a rule, are fearful of some large organization coming in there and planting out a large acreage. With the acreage that they have at the present time, they have a very nice deal because they are able to dispose of their culls and the amount of asparagus which they wish to ship to the fresh market at a very good price. They realize that with a large acreage they would not be able to sell their inferior grades at any price.

The labor wage in the canneries is mostly 40¢ an hour for women and 50¢ an hour for men. They are talking about reducing this wage 10¢ an hour in the Yakima Valley, but I do not know whether they will be able to do it or not.

Most of the canneries in the Northwest pack their asparagus with the tips up in the can and they have developed a conveyor belt that cuts the asparagus to even lengths which permits them to pack a tips up pack. This conveyor can be very cheaply installed and I think if the California canners would combine the process as used in Jersey with the process that is used in Washington they could make a much more economical pack in their plants As you remember, the Jersey grower, takes the asparagus to the canner the same length as the cutter cuts it. One canner in Walla Walla takes his asparagus to the cannery in this manner. This asparagus could be put on the conveyor belt in the canneries in Washington and cut to exact even lengths without using the molds and all the hand work that our California canneries use. I think asparagus is graded to size much easier after it has been cut to the same length. If we graded the asparagus after using the conveyor cutter that is in use in Washington, I think it would be a much simpler method than we use of grading before cutting. I am not a canning expert, but to a layman looking at your good canning plants in the Northwest, they certainly look like a much more efficient operation than we have in our California plants.

These growers in eastern Washington are

making a very good return on their investment. In fact, in the last three or four years since the canneries and quick freezers have come into the picture, it is the most profitable thing that is being raised in the Valley, and for this reason there is bound to be an increase in planting.

In the Sunnyside district and some small patches in other districts, some of the growers on small pieces have had yields as high as 10,000 and 12,000 pounds to the acre. However, those exceptional yields are very much in the minority and I don't think the average for the Sunnyside district, counting old and young asparagus, would be more than 4,000 pounds. There are a number of beds in this district that yield 7,000 and 8,000 pounds, however, but you must keep in mind on the yields in this district that the rows are planted 4½ feet apart. They fertilize very heavily with manure, putting on as high as 10 and 12 tons and some as high as 15 tons of manure to the acre. In the Kennewick district, their yields are around 4,000 pounds. In Walla Walla, their asparagus as a rule runs a little smaller and their yields a little lighter than in the Kennewick & Sunnyside districts.

The asparagus that is shipped to the fresh market is all packed in a loose pack with the exception of a few crates that are sent to the chain stores in the Northwest, and those are packed on special orders and put up in one-pound bunches and held together with two elastics. The asparagus is packed in the same kind of crate that California uses, with moss in the bottom and is then placed on a cement floor and water is turned on them, and the asparagus stands in this cold water for a period before going to market.

The wage scale in the asparagus packing houses is 30¢ an hour.

Those asparagus beds are irrigated every two weeks. Water is run down every other row. The cutter uses the dry row to walk on. On the next two weeks irrigation the other row is used for irrigation ditches. The centers between the rows are kept fairly well cultivated and if weeds start to grow in the lane that the asparagus is planted, a little dirt is thrown up, but the weed problem is negligible. I do not think any state in the union that raises asparagus has the problem of weeds that we have here in the Delta. The water that they use comes out of the Yakima River. It

is nice clean water and comes off the glaciers, and has no weed seeds in it.

Some 60% to 70% of the asparagus in the Northwest is frozen and some of their quick freezing plants, where they do nothing but freezing, are as large as our canning plants. At the time I was in these plants they quick freezing peas, asparagus and strawberries.

The canning season starts somewhere between April 15 and April 25. The canneries will start receiving asparagus in the spring as soon as the grower wishes to deliver, even though it is in very small quantities.

They have the asparagus beetle which attacks their asparagus and although they are not nearly as badly infested as the beds in the East it is quite a pest. They have chickens which they have in coops out all over the asparagus fields to eat the beetle. In many cases they do not find it necessary to dust to control this pest.

They raise a lot of the some produce that is raised here in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. Sugar beets in the last year have become a very important crop and their average yield last year was 15.6 tons to the acre with a sugar content of 15% to 16%. The district around Kennewick and Sunnyside has been in a deplorable financial condition and they are expecting asparagus and sugar beets to pull the district out.

The condition of the tips of the green asparagus, I think, is probably a little tighter than ours. However, it is very hard to judge in looking at deliveries at the cannery because the grower has already taken out all the culls and has divided the balance of his asparagus into #1's and #2's. The canner uses all of the asparagus that comes into his plant with the exception of the butt. The grower in Washington figures his cost to plant asparagus the same as it does in California, with the exception that they start fertilizing from the first year, and the difference in their expense in planting to ours is the addition of fertilizer. At the present time, they are getting manure delivered to their ranches for \$1.50 a ton, which as we know, is a very cheap price, but as more farmers start using this manure, it is going to become

scarcer and the price will be going up.

Most of these farmers farm their own ranches and they are small so that they and their families do most of the work. Some of the landlords have tenants which are there on a share basis of 50-50. The tenant plants the asparagus and furnishes the equipment. The landlord furnishes the fertilizer. The labor on these ranches generally live in the little towns, and I think if they had a large acreage of asparagus they would have trouble In getting enough people there to work the asparagus.

There is a large acreage of land up there in the Indian Reservation and some of this is very good. This has been leasing all the way from \$5.00 to \$10.00 an acre. This land has to be leased from the Government and the Government collects the money and pays it to the Indians. The Government does not allow long term leases in the reservation.

They have a situation, however, in all of these irrigated districts and that is of drainage, and a lot of the land has been ruined by raising the water table and not being able to get the water away. Drainage can be installed, however, because the rivers are below the level of the land.

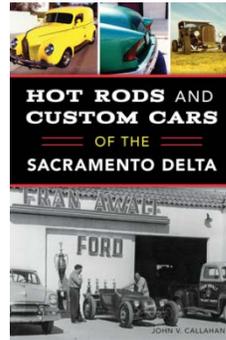
The asparagus industry in Washington is the same as it is in the other states that I visited. It is the most profitable crop that they are raising at the present time and the canners and quick freezers have made it profitable by coming in and buying the produce. I would estimate that there would be at least 10,000 acres of producing asparagus in Yakima Valley in the next three or four years. In other words, it would be practically double the acreage that is there at the present time.

Wm. N. L. Hutchinson.

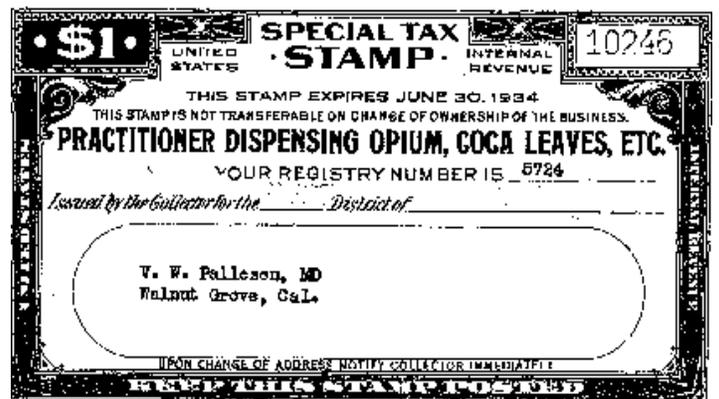
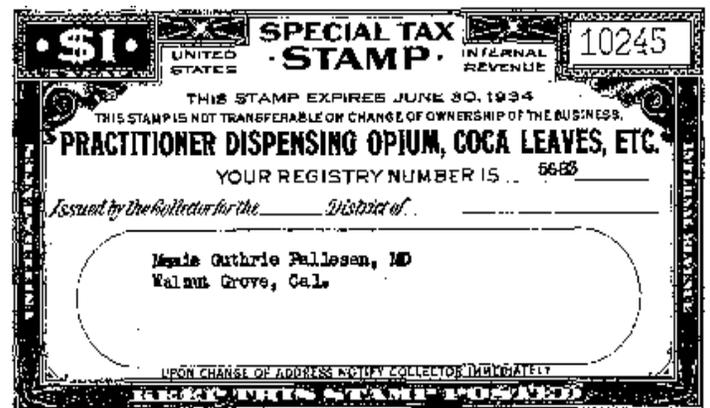


New Book

“Hot Rods and Dustom Cars of the Sacramento Delta” by John V. Callahan. Publisher History Press



Interesting Tax Stamps



PEAR COOKBOOK & 2020 CALENDAR

The "Pear Perfection" cookbook and "2020 SRDHS Calendar" will be available at the Pear Fair on July 28th. The Pear Cookbook is a one of a kind, as very few pear cookbooks have been produced nationally. The new 2020 SRDHS Calendar has new and interesting labels.

RESOURCE CENTER NEWS

Thank you for your historical donations to our resource center! We are grateful to have Nancy Rutherford, Linda van Lobel Sels and Barbara Damion as volunteers to record our items. We work almost every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and need people to enter data or to record new items. Please call Esther at 916-777-2227 to make sure she will be there and join the fun.

CONTENTS

President's Notes.....1
Pear Fair announcement.....1
"Another Letter from Bill Hutchinson, Sr.".....2-5
"New Book".....5
Interesting Stamps.....5
Resource Center News6
SRDHS Notices6
Welcome New Members6
Membership Form.....6
2020 Calendar preview and Cookbook order form.....7

INFORMATION

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society interesting and informative web site is srdhs.org. If you wish to email the resource center, the email address is srdhshs@gmail.com.

SRDHS 2019 SCHEDULE

July/August.....Summer Break
September 15.....General Meeting
October 18.....Board Meeting
November 19.....General Meeting
December.....Board Meeting
December Newsletter

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

We would like to thank all those who made memorial contributions to the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Jenny Keo from San Francisco
Bob & NancyJo Overmeyer from Walnut Grove
Kathryn Pelham from Walnut Grove
Gregory & Julia Robinson from Walnut Grove
Reuben Sanchez from Sacramento
Jean Yokitobi from Isleton

DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THIS GREAT PUBLICATION???

Then make sure you pay your 2019 dues -
Use this form or one of our handy dues envelopes

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
E-Mail: _____

- I'm paying Annual dues for the following year(s):
2019 2020 Other _____
\$25.00 a year for Annual Membership
I've enclosed \$150 to become a Lifetime Member
I'd like to register as an Honorary Member - Free to those members 80 years and older

Please mail this form with a check payable to SRDHS to:

SRDHS Membership
P.O. Box 293
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

NEWSLETTER STAFF

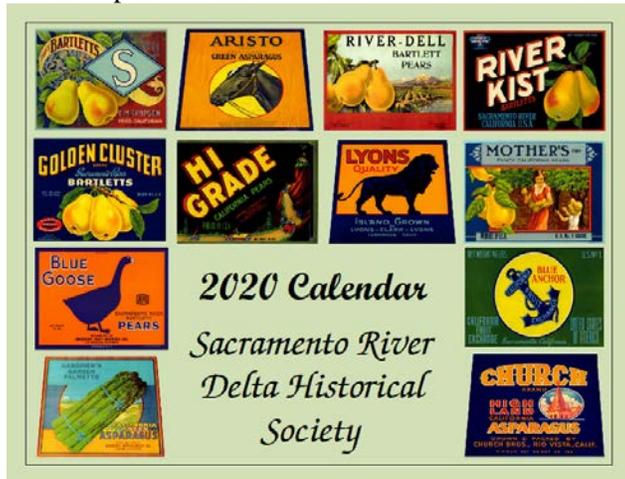
Editor.....Kathleen Hutchinson
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*The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society publishes the Sacramento River Delta Society Newsletter twice a year.

NEW “2020” SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR & PEAR PEARFECTION COOKBOOK AVAILABLE AT PEAR FAIR OR AFTER AUGUST 1st

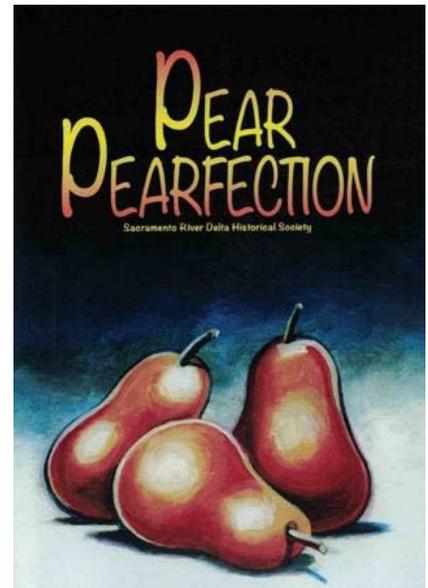
The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society’s Calendar for 2020 or Pear Cookbook may be purchased at the Courtland Pear Fair July 28th or at the Resource Center and at the Society Meetings after August 1st. You may also purchase the calendar or cookbook by filling out the appropriate form below and mailing it with your check to: SRDHS, P O Box 293, Walnut Grove, CA 95695

Here is a preview of the cover of the delightful 2020 Calendar representing more Labels from Jim Dahlberg’s Collection. Each month shows a different Label that has not been published before from his wonderful collection.



If you wish to have the cookbook(s) mailed please add the following postage:

- 1 Cookbook
\$2.50 postage
- 2 Cookbooks
\$3.30 postage
- 3 - 6 Cookbooks
\$7.35 for priority mail (2 to 3 day delivery)



The price for each cookbook is \$15 plus postage if mailed.

The price for each 2020 calendar is \$15.00 plus postage; 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 calendar price is \$10 each plus postage

If you wish to have the calendar(s) mailed please add the following postage:

- 1 Calendar \$1.75 postage
- 2 Calendars \$2.50 postage
- 3 - 6 calendars \$7.35 for priority mail

**Sacramento River Delta Historical Society
Cookbook Order Form**

Please send _____ Pear Pearfection Cookbook(s) @ \$15 each

Enclosed is payment in the amount of
\$_____ (include postage in total)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

**Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Calendar
Order Form**

Please send _____ 2020 calendars @ \$15 per calendar
____2012 ____2013 ____2014 ____2015 ____2016 ____2017 ____2018
2019 calendars @ \$10 per calendar

Enclosed is payment in the amount of
\$_____ (include postage in total)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____