



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 TROTT

High in Guinda, homesteaders were above racism

The dirt road wound like a coil 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. "Just a little farther," said Bill Petty, 77, the guide. A little farther means about five miles by Guinda measurement. Driving through gates, pastures, washouts and nudging confused cows aside, five miles seemed more like 500.

Finally, the truck 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, wire-fenced area.

It wasn't much. Inside the fencing were a few headstones and rocks. Nothing else. This 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 Dunningan. 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 Hemphill clan and the Longrus 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 this remote corner of Yolo County. Yet it wasn't just black families in these hills attempting to eke out a living in land

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Bill Petty looks at the headstone in the Logan family cemetery located in the hills above Guinda in Yolo 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.

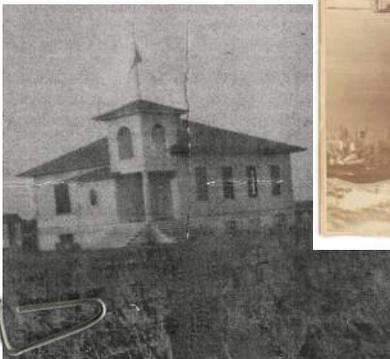
As covered in prior issues, the settlers built their own school [seen at lower left], but eventually joined the other local students in the Guinda School after 1912. Following after Mr. Logan was a barber/musician, Charles Simpson, who moved to the summit with his wife and daughter. There followed other 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...

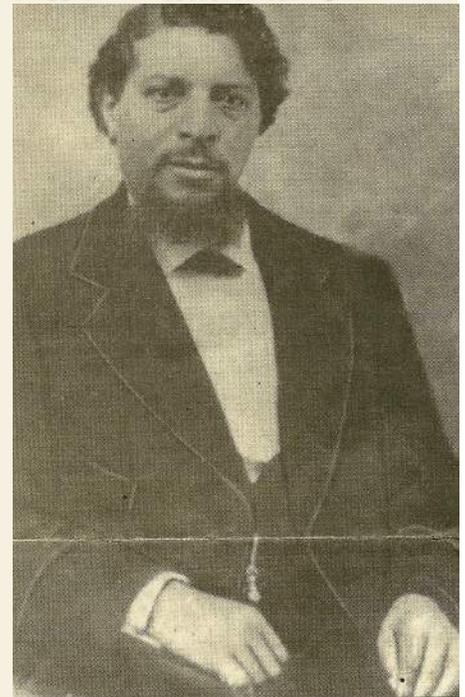
McClellan had a business in Guinda, and my cousin, Charles Simpson, grandson of Charles Henry Simpson, had a beautiful home right outside of Guinda. It was called, 'La Hacienda de Guinda'. The Watkins and brown families lived in the area for many years--just ask the local folks about Walter Brown and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

Courtesy of Yolo County Archive

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 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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