

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 six months have passed and a lot has changed. I hope you are all doing well in these troubling times. I know not getting out has been hard but hopefully it has paid off. I don't see our society doing any programs or functions for quite a while as we are a group of mostly senior members. Maybe we can come up with a virtual reality type of history program in our near future.

I'm been talking to Maryellen Burns about something we may be able to do. If you hadn't heard the Pear Fair is canceled for this year but we are still moving ahead with producing a label calendar for 2021 honoring Jim Dahlberg and his great collection of labels that he shared for the calendar. This will be coming out in late summer and we will let you know when they are available. We are looking for donations to produce it and if you wish to donate as an individual or business please contact John Stutz jstutz@ix.netcom.com or 530-219-4420 .

Our January meeting with the program Native Peoples of the Sacramento Region by Anthropologist David Stuart was excellent. Since then the coronavirus has forced cancelation of the March and May meetings and all our historical activities. The resource center has also been closed and all the activities at the Jean Harvie Center. We hope to be able to open the center in the summer time.

Thanks,
Tom Herzog



WASP

"Sloop Sunk.- We are informed by Captain Streckmire, of the schooner *San Pablo*, that the sloop *Wasp* struck a snag on Thursday night last, in Steamboat Slough, and in a few minutes filled and sunk. She was commanded by Captain Gerke, who, with the crew, succeeded in escaping to shore, although they were unable to free the small boat from the sloop. The *Wasp* was owned by the Captain and C. Clauson, and was valued at \$2400. She was loaded with cobbles and bricks, from Freeport to San Francisco, when the accident occurred."

1/16/1865, Sacto Union



2020 has been cancelled

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

The final letter from Wm N. L. Hutchinson written June 17, 1938 about asparagus production in California.

Walnut Grove, California
June 17, 1938.

California Asparagus Growers Association,
Walnut Grove, California.

After going over the various asparagus producing sections of the United States, I would like to try and sum up the impressions that I received. In the first place, I find that every asparagus producing section in the United States raises the tenderest and best flavored asparagus. Personally, after tasting them all, I don't see a whole lot of difference if they are all cut and processed in the same manner.

You will note that the wage scales in some districts are very low. You will also note that in the same districts where the wage scales are low, the production of asparagus is also very low. You will also note that where the production is higher, the wage scales are very close to those which we are paying here in California. I wish to bring this out because in reading my letters, I find that the thing that is most outstanding to people is the wage of 5¢ and 6¢ an hour that is paid in the South. You must take into consideration that the tonnages that are received in these various acres are on acreages of asparagus planted 4 to 5 feet apart. You will also note the expense of fertilizer in these districts. I think on a 4½ foot planting in California, we can get just as good tonnages without fertilizer as our competitive states can with.

I think the canners can put in saving methods in their canneries and I think the grower, by giving more supervision to the cutting of green asparagus, could get a little greener spear and in that way enable the canner to get a larger yield out of his purchase, and he in turn should be able to pay the grower more money if he can get a larger yield.

When you see the large quick-freezing plants in other districts, you can't help but ask why is California so far behind on this important product. There must be some reason for it but it certainly is not obvious because as far as I can see, we raise the

identical product in California that they freeze in the other states

I think the California grower is going to be very foolish if he goes on increasing his acreage to any extent. You certainly have a large potential acreage that is going to be planted and going to be coming into bearing in the United States in the next few years.

At the present time, we are practically the only white grass canner but I do not see any reason why other states can't cut white asparagus if they should take the notion. In fact, I know they can cut white asparagus practically everywhere because I have seen some growers who like the white asparagus to eat and they ridge it up for their own use. And, gentlemen, their white asparagus tastes just as good as ours.

We should give the matter of the yield that the canner gets out of his purchase very serious consideration and I think we should make the grade less severe and in doing this, would give the canner an opportunity to get a larger yield. Whether this is the right method to use in attacking the problem, I am not sure.

As far as our broken tips are concerned, that is something we should eliminate. They have been eliminated in all the other states and there is no reason why we can't practically eliminate them.

There is one point to take into consideration in comparing our contract cutting in California with the daywork cutting in the North west, and this is true of most of your eastern districts too, and that is that their season starts much later than ours and closes about the same date, and they get, in a lot of the districts, the same or greater tonnage than we do. For this reason, it is easy to see that they are cutting more asparagus per day and that it would be cheaper to cut when the cutter is cutting more tonnage every time he goes over the field. Another thing to take into consideration in the Washington territory is that during their cutting season they have longer hours of sunshine than we do. At this time of year, at 9:00 o'clock at night, it is quite light and with those longer hours of sunshine it is a little easier to grow green asparagus.

California has one advantage over all the other states in that our asparagus arrives on the market three to four weeks ahead of the large producing competitive states, and even though we had a disastrous shipping season this year, I do not feel discouraged about our fresh market. If the California asparagus arrives in good condition they will buy it in preference to any

competitive asparagus, and I think with 4½ or 5 foot plantings, we can have just as big a yield as any other state in the union Personally, after returning from this trip, I think I would just as soon raise asparagus in California as anywhere. And I think in the long run if we watch our step by cutting our asparagus properly and with operation from the canners that we can make it pretty tough for the other states, but I do not think we can accomplish this fact if we insist on cutting too much white grass and too much white on the green, and if we go on increasing our acreages by the same percentages that we have been increasing in the last three or four years.

You will note from my letters that the growers in every state are making more money out of asparagus than any other crop they are raising: The obvious result being an increase in planting in every state. The asparagus growers in some states are making more money than we are in California and I think the reason for it is that the processors are short of supplies, and in some districts when the canners and freezers take their supplies, it makes a good fresh market. If the growers continually increase their planting, this happy situation cannot last, and we should not go blissfully along planting large acreages and not paying any attention to other states.

Wm. N. L. Hutchinson



We are sad to announce the deaths of two of our elder members of The River Delta Historical Society.

Nancy Pettigrew Moser

July 29, 1915 - January 23 2020

Nancy Pettigrew Moser was born in San Francisco in 1915 to adoring parents, Percy Pettigrew and Laura Doe Pettigrew. When as a child she contracted tuberculosis, the family moved to Palo Alto on doctors' advice. She attended Castilleja School and then Stanford University, where she met lifelong friends Fritzie Kolster Michaels, Janet Richter Sullivan, and Joan Brandel Bowen. In the chemistry lab she also met her future husband, James Stuart Moser. They were

married in 1938 and had three children, James, Sally, and Robert.

At the end of the war, she made a long and perilous journey across the Atlantic Ocean on a munitions ship with her two small children to reunite with her husband on Bahrain Island, where he was working for Standard Oil.

After the war, they moved their young family to Walnut Grove, California, to join the family farming business, Darsie, Hutchinson & Pettigrew. She has lived in that community for 73 years. Her greatest heartbreaks were the death of her second child, Jimmy, at the age of 32, and the death of her husband 21 years before her. Family was her most treasured priority and feeding people exquisite meals was her favorite way to care for her many friends and loved ones. She was a civic leader and helped found the local Dr. Paul Barnes Community Park. She had a passion for books and started the Great Books chapter in Walnut Grove, and it remains one of the longest-running such groups in the country.

She is survived by two children, Sally Small and Robert Moser; seven grandchildren, John Small, Laura Moser, Mary Small, Rob Moser, Nancy Moser Abou-Samra, Kate Moser, and Sarah Moser; and

eight great-grandchildren, James, Samantha, Jonah, Ana Kristina, Lucy, Clayton, Lionel and Regina. She died peacefully at home on January 23, with her family beside her and listening to favorite songs. A memorial service was held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1 at Walnut Grove Community Church. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Dr. Paul Barnes Community Park, P.O. Box 1122, Walnut Grove, CA 95690, or to the Walnut Grove Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 41, Walnut Grove, CA 95690.

Frances McCormack

Died March 3, 2020 in Del Mar, California, age 102, only two months after Nancy Moser. She leaves her children Donald Armstrong, Jr. and Adlaide Armstrong of Parma Valley, San Diego County where they continue to operate the family ranch at Rincon Corner. Frances was a Southern Californian raised in Los Angeles and San Diego counties on McCormack Family Ranches. A lovely cultured woman with a hearty sense of humor. She was an accomplished pianist and watercolorist. Frances was one of the founding members of the River Road Art Gallery in Locke, California.

THE TULE SHOE

Two informative articles about a special shoe for horses plowing the Delta peat fields.

From the May 2015 Rio Vista Newsletter:

Artifact Spotlight

by Suzanne Goldberg

The Rio Vista Museum was founded in 1975 for the purpose of preserving the history and artifacts of Rio Vista for the people of Rio Vista and all visitors.

One of my favorite items in the museums the "tule shoe," a horseshoe designed specifically for the soft peat land that characterizes the Delta's agricultural environment. The fertile soil was formed largely by decaying tule reeds.

While the soil is extraordinarily fertile, it is also very soft and unstable, making it difficult for large work animals. Horses would become stuck, causing them to panic and thrash and sometimes injure themselves or the men working them. It fell to the Chinese immigrant workers to invent a shoe that would prevent this from happening.

The first rule shoes were made of ash planks, about 10 inches long and 8 inches wide with thick webbing made from woven reeds. These were attached to the horses' front hooves with special studs. The idea was to distribute the weight over a larger area, much like snowshoes. Once the horses learned to maneuver these awkward appendages, they could indeed work more efficiently in the soft peat. The design was refined, and an iron shoe, approximately 12 inches across, attached to a regular horseshoe, became the standard.

Interestingly, the Chinese have not always been credited with this invention. White celery farmers in southern California borrowed the idea for their "peat shoes," but it was the Chinese who originated the design, one of their many contributions to the development of the Delta's agricultural economy.

Make sure you take a look at this tule shoe and the other horseshoes on display the next time you visit the museum.

Note: An important source of information for this article was Richard Steven Street's *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* Stanford University Press, 2004



*From Locke and the Sacramento Delta Chinatowns
By Lawrence Tom, Brian, Tom, etc:*

In reclaiming land in the delta, the tule shoe was a critical element. It was invented by the Chinese in the late 1800s to compensate for the difficult farming conditions of the region.

The soft marshy soil of the delta was difficult for horses to work without sinking, risking injury to the horse and the workers. The idea was to disperse the weight of the horse in a similar way to a snowshoe. It was very successful and allowed for land to be reclaimed that would otherwise be unusable for agriculture.

The photograph shows a tule shoe.
(Courtesy of Locke Foundation.)



THE SURVIVORS OF THE original group of the 1947 post-war families that moved to the Walnut Grove area to farm and work in the community met last week for a reunion at the Darsie house. Pictured in original fashion



L to R: Mrs. Paul Barnes (Lucy), Mrs. Harvey Lyman (Jo), Mrs. John Bryan (Ruth), Mrs. James Moser (Nancy), Mrs. Russell Graham (Midge), Mrs. Donald Armstrong (Frances), Mrs. W.R. Darsie (Marily), Mrs. Hubert Brown (Fran)

Amalgamated sugar factories operated in 1931. One of those factories, "The Smithfield" Utah factory, closed permanently in 1933 and moved to Clarksburg California.

The factory was brought to Clarksburg piece by piece via railroad. The factory in Clarksburg began its operation on July 31, 1935. Amalgamated sold the Clarksburg factory to American Crystal Sugar Company in 1936. The American Crystal Sugar Company sold the Clarksburg plant in 1982 to the Delta Sugar Company. The Delta Sugar plant closed in 1993. The Yolo Shortline Railroad Company had a railroad that ended at the Old Sugar Mill and would have sacks of sugar loaded onto the cars to be transported. It took over a year of negotiations with Union Pacific to acquire the Shortline. It stopped running when the Old Sugar Mill closed in 1993. Plans were made to renovate the building and create a facility for wine tasting and a wine crush in 2000.

Renovations of the Old Sugar Mill building lasted a span of two years.

Reprinted from article: River News Herald August 20, 2014



HISTORY

The Old Sugar Mill was originally owned by the Amalgamated Sugar Company which was founded in 1897 in Logan Utah and is now located in Boise Idaho. Because of blight and drought, only four of



PEAR COOKBOOK & 2021 CALENDAR

The "Pear Pearfection" cookbook and the new 2021 SRDHS Calendar" will be available after August 1st. You and come by the Resource Center at Jean Harvie School on Tuesdays to purchase them (if we are allowed to be open) from 10:00 to 1:00 every Tuesday. Or send in the order form at the end of this newsletter.

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 can assist you in finding historical items at that time.

CONTENTS

President's Notes.....1
 Pear Fair cancelled announcement.....1
 "Final Letter from Bill Hutchinson, Sr.".....2-4
 Post-war memories.....5
 Old Sugar Mill5
 Resource Center News6
 SRDHS Notices6
 Welcome New Members6
 Membership Form.....6
 2021 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 or you can send a message from our website.

SRDHS 2020 SCHEDULE

July/August.....Summer Break
 September 15.....General Meeting
 October 20.....Board Meeting
 November 17.....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

Less & Liz Lyman from Walnut Grove
 Locke Foundation from Walnut Grove

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

*Then make sure you pay your 2020 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):
 2020 2021 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

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

NEW "2021" SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR & PEAR PEARFECTION COOKBOOK AVAILABLE AFTER AUGUST 1st

The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society's Calendar for 2021 and Pear Cookbook may be purchased 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 2021 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.



The price for each 2021 calendar is \$15.00 plus postage; 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 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 **Calendar** Order Form

Please send _____ 2021 calendars @ \$15 per calendar

____2012 ____2013 ____2014 ____2015 ____2016 ____2017____2018
____2019 ____2020 calendars @ \$10 per calendar

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

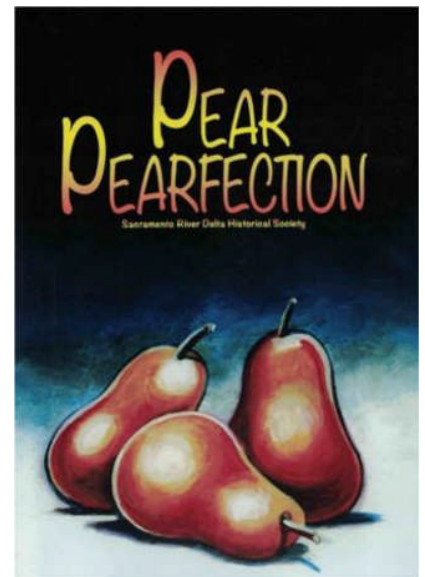
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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.

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 _____