

Spring Time  
in the Capay  
Valley!  
March-May  
2015



**BROOKS FAMILIES  
RUSSELL AND SMITH,  
ET AL**



**BASEBALL IN THE  
VALLEY**

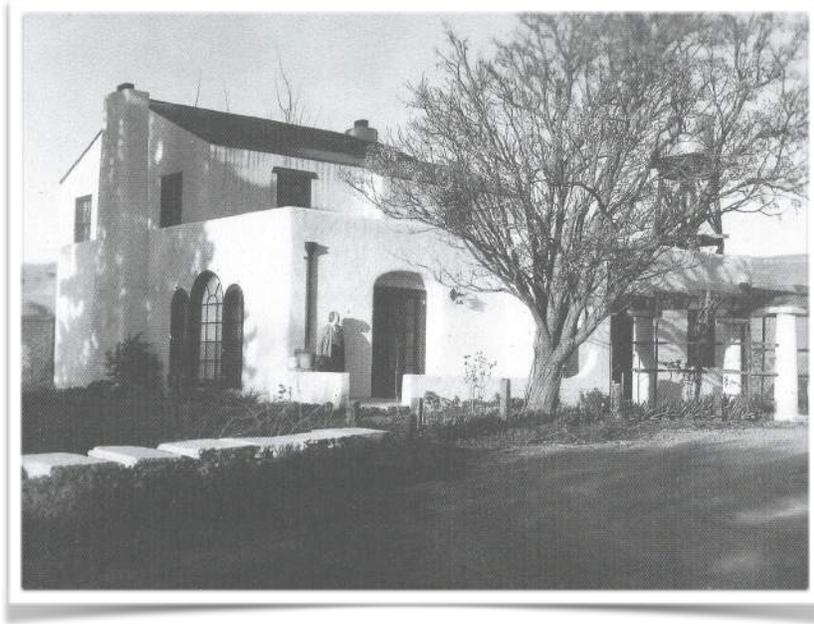


**Patwin - Wintun  
History in the Capay  
Valley**

# TGCVHS NEWSLETTER

## Capay-to-Brooks area on Official 1908 Yolo County Map





The above house was built in Brooks in the late 1920s by Henry “Earl” Smith for his bride, Janey. According to their granddaughter Robin Beck—who shared this photo and her family histories with me—Earl’s brother Willard brought in the first phone lines to go up the Capay valley, later sold to Andy Smith; and also helped found the Brooks fire department, bringing in the first truck; and established the Post Office in Brooks. Robin’s grandmother and mother, Janey and Wilma, respectively, were the phone operators for years. The house and phone company were later sold to another Smith family, no relation: Andy and his brother Ernie Smith. Ernie would run the Auto Shop while his wife Helen would run the Post Office and Andy would run the Phone Company [see volume 7, pages 10-11 of the Journals for The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society on [greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org)]

Robin’s paternal grandparents were Robert and Agnes Russell, also of Brooks. Their son Robert Milton would marry Wilma and “they would live a mile south of Madison for all 63 years of their marriage,” says daughter Robin, who would spend a good deal of her childhood in the Capay Valley—and was happy to share some photos and history with us.

***In 1954, Earl Smith wrote a 10-page report on the History of Capay Valley and another 10-page document giving all the names of all the early settlers up the valley, starting in Capay. When Robin mailed me a copy written in Earl’s own lovely cursive, I asked to transcribe some of it for our quarterly newsletters!***

## Keeping a Community Vibrant...

Below: the historic Felix Russell homestead near Brooks is now the **Capay Valley BnB** serving



the Valley as one of only two BnBs—the other is in Rumsey, the **Rumsey House BnB**. The only other accommodations in the Valley are at the Cache Creek Casino and Resort, also in Brooks.



[capayvalleybeadandbreak](http://capayvalleybeadandbreakfast.com)

[fast.com](http://fast.com)

New owner: Daniel Johnstone

Innkeeper: Jennifer Hall

## **History of Early Settlers in Capay Valley, by Henry Earl Smith, 1954**

*(This placement of early pioneers to the Capay Valley begins around 1875 in the town of Capay [then Langville] and go up the valley in order until reaching Rumsey. I have attempted to transcribe it pretty much as he wrote it, not correcting errors...I believe it lets us see how the towns and homesteads were laid out as they went up the valley...I will include text from Capay through Brooks in this newsletter, & finish through Guinda & Rumsey in Newsletter 3)*

*George Coburn, farmer, farmed grain east of Capay; sister Lucy Coburn became postmaster; William T. McLaughlon was grave digger for Capay Cemetery; George W. Tandy was saloon keeper, as were Chris Lautze and John Lang; Lyman Eddy kept livery stable; Thornton C. Craig, doctor and vineyardist; Alby, Ollie & Tip Collins were farmers & hay balers, lived on the Watkins Ranch 1/2 mile west of Capay; Wm. T. Moore, farmer and constable; Martin J. Lewis, dentist; Ed E. Perkins, hotel keeper; Wolf Levy and Sam Schwab, storekeepers; Frank Killian Butcher, west of town next door to Lang's saloon; Bill [and brother Wyatt Godfrey] Duncan north of town across creek was large grain farmer; Collis Watkins, farmed grain 1/2 mile west of Capay; Albert Pierce was a painter by trade; Ben Duncan farmed 1 1/2 miles west of Capay, house on one side of the road and barn on other; Lincoln Oil Well was bored on top of hills south of Ben Duncan's house & ranch; The Henry C. Howards farmed on creek on what was known as Upper Adobe Ranch and the Collins Bros on Lower Adobe, a large apple & pear orchard was on the ranch and old trees still remain [in 1954]; Peter Launer farmed two ranches 2 miles above Capay, one on south side of road and one on north side, the latter known as the Barrerel Ranch, in later years the place was used as a slaughter house by Arthur E. Nourse [who kept the family's original spelling while others in the family changed it to the more familiar Nurse\* seen below]. In this locality was three ranches all raising almonds and owned by three brothers: George, Loren and Harmon Taber; Harmon Taber has the largest almond orchard in Capay Valley...next to the Tabers is the R.O. Armstrong grain & almond ranches and the Rose and Mack Nurse\* ranches; the Joel Woods [sic—it is actually Wood] ranch lies a mile off highway in a canyon on west side back of Nick Cadenasso Ranch, now run by a son-in-law, Chas A. Fowler; on same side of road lies the Vincent Chamberlain Ranch of almonds & grain; the Sparks Ranch of several thousand acres, most all grain, lies the full width of the valley and was at one time the largest grain ranch in Capay Valley and was some years past farmed by the Neilson Brothers, Jim, Alex, Robert, John & Fred [see volume 18 of the Journal for TGCVHS at [greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org)]...in farming this large tract as much as five*

8-mule teams were used; at what is now known as the Richardson Corners Alfred, John & George Richardson lived and the Wm J. Bowles and Noble Clark families; ...the Joe Scharidon Ranch is located in a back valley on Cache Creek; after the Scharidons left the valley it was farmed for many years by J. H. (Jim) Cranston, cousins of the Cranston brothers of Woodland Hardware; the Billy Raymond Ranch of 160 acres is located at foot of Brooks Hill; the Brooks P.O. being on the 10 acres on southwest corner and adjoining the Dave Wolgamott Ranch of 100 acres; the Jeff Hutchinson, ?? Parker, John Woods, Mace Johnson, & Daniel Johnson, John Bowman, Nick Miles all live west of Brooks P.O.; and the Fred Horning, John Alexander, John Pritchett, Sam Pritchett, Wm. T. Parks top of mountain, all lie part way up the mountain west of Brooks; Muller was a partner in the Fred Horning Ranch; the Wm. Parks Ranch is located directly 4 miles west of Brooks P.O. on top of hill and was a toll road between Yolo & Napa counties; at the old Brooks cross roads the Brooks P.O. was established in 1884 and William Walker was first postmaster ...for 1st year; the John Winter Ranch reaches across the valley and at one time was listed as one of Capay Valley's largest ranches; the John M. Rhodes Ranch is located north of Brooks and for many years in the late [19]80s was farmed by Jim H. Cranston; the J.J. Smith Ranch lies across the highway at Brooks and is what was at one time the Jeff Hutchinson Ranch; Henry E. Rhodes Ranch adjoins it on the north; the Palmer Ranch lies northwest from Brooks P.O. and a mile off the present highway; about a mile north of Brooks in 1892 was established the Tancred P.O. and English Colony spreading from one side of the valley to other...a depot for the railroad...after the orchards came into bearing the cold & frost kept them from bearing and in a few years it was abandoned because people could not make a living...some of those owning last in the colony were A. W. Kelly, Fred Kelly Barnetts, Cecil Greathead, Ned Greathead, George Vrooman, Dr. Favor, Tom Merritt, E.H. Harrison, E.H. Radcliff, Ed. Vanstone...on the east side of the valley on the east side of the creek above Brooks was 200 acres of grainlands owned & farmed by Ed. Wanton and Leland Allens, and a small acreage of land owned by Biego Giovanetta; just north of Tancred was the Charlie H. Curtis Ranch, the Fred Smith and Henry Mergel; the Eckhardt Ranch and the William Blair Ranch; the Sam (Dog) Allen ranch...—and after these come the town of Guinda—to be continued in Newsletter 3!

**Henry Earl also wrote of his family's early days in the Capay Valley beginning in 1875.** Henry Earl Smith's mother was a Henry; Jacob Henry was born in PA in 1818 but died at Brooks in December 1900. He and his wife had 3 girls and 6 boys; one daughter, Emeline, would marry Henry H. Smith; by 1954 Henry writes they had all died, but sister Alma Henry Cranston (having married a local Cranston).

Emeline and Henry H. Smith would marry in 1868 and eventually have 3 boys and 2 girls, the last 3 of which—Henry Earl, Clyde J. and Willard F.—would be born in the Capay Valley. When Emeline and Henry first came to California, they settled in Tulare. Later, when they came to Capay Valley, Henry was penniless but his father-in-law Jacob had enough to buy 160 acres known as the Billy Raymond Ranch and on which now stands the Brooks P.O. on the southwest corner Brooks. The Smith family located on the Dave Wolgamot Ranch adjoining the Henry Ranch on the south. The hilly part of the Henry ranch, where the Brooks P.O. now stands, was heavily covered with chaparral, pines, oaks, and manzanita, all of which had to be cleared by hand. With no suitable place to build a house, they filed a “soldiers homestead” on what is now known as Smith Flat, open government land that two sheepmen, named Brandis and Rudolph, were getting for pasture without paying for it. The Smiths moved into a log cabin about 10 by 12 feet; one-room, one window, one door and a rock oven built outside to bake bread which was still standing in 1954! In 1880 the ground was prepared and all kinds of vegetables were planted in that spring—but with no fences, the sheep came in at night and destroyed much of it. Mrs. Smith and the two oldest children were building a brush fence to keep the sheep out when one of the sheepmen came around in back and set the cabin afire and all the Smith’s belongings were destroyed. At this time Henry H. Smith was not at home, as he was a tender on a stationary threshing machine in southern Yolo County near Davis, belonging to W.H. LaPue. Again, the family was destitute, but they were able to kill wild animals like deer, rabbits and hogs for meat and render lard from the hogs. They also ate quail and doves and had a cow for milk and butter. They cut bees out of the trees where they got honey to eat and sweeten their foods. But the hills were also full of bear and panther—which was proven when a bear broke two hives of bees open and stole the honey.

It was 4 miles to school: 2 miles by wagon road and 2 miles by horse trail, part of which was through a rough rocky trail. Henry tells what that was like with stories like this: *“One day in dead winter, cloudy and raining, my brother and I left the school after 4 PM. It was soon very dark and we held onto each other as we went on. As we neared home about 1/2 mile away we were going through the rough trail around the rocky bushy part when all at once just a few feet ahead in the trail we heard a noise and roar; then the bush cracked below us. We knew the animal was out of the trail so on we went toward home as fast as we could in the dark! The next morning when we went to school we saw the tracks of a large bear!”*

*We raised corn and ochre and browned the kernels to make “coffee.” Grinding it in an old hand-mill. My older brother raised watermelons which weighed 25-40 pounds! He’d put 2 in a sack and tied the tops of the sacks together and put them on the horse—“Old Whitie”—and went to the valley and sold them for 25 cents each. It took him all day but he collected a dollar. Another thing: we cut pine cones out of the pine trees and got the nuts; we got 50 cents for a 50 pound flour sack—anyone who knows the size of a pine nut and how many it takes to fill a sack will know you can’t fill a sack in one day!”*

**—this, too, will be continued in Newsletter 3!**

**Below: Esparto Town Baseball Team photo taken between 1938-40**



**Back row, L to R: Assistant Coach Luis Gimenez, Manager Cliff Nelson, Paul Hartwig, Joe Gallardo, Hugh Stephens, Elbert Tadlock, Sid Wood; Assistant Coach Al Pardini. Front row, L to R: Joe Adan, Earl “Pug” Burk, Homer Lewis, Al Storz, Leland Nichols, Fred Storz.**

*Photo courtesy of John Gallardo and edits to names provided by Dolores Storz Stephens.*

**NOTE: Elizabeth & Kevin Campbell were instrumental in converting the old Felix & Pearl Russell ‘Seven Palms’ homestead in Brooks to the *Capay Valley BnB* in 2001. Today it is under new ownership. Felix’ brother Robert married Pearl’s sister Agnes, and they settled nearby, having five children: Lowell, Robert ‘Milton’, Joseph, Helen and Dick. —continued in Newsletter3...**

**YOUR LOCAL  
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**As the Patwin tribe of Native Americans of Capay Valley—now legally known as Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation—are doing their own history,** they do not

need me to tell their story for them, but I am determined to at least honor their existence of thousands of years along Cache Creek before the Euro-pioneers arrived—including my own Scots ancestors. When I asked their historian for information, he directed me to their websites and invited me to borrow whatever I wanted from them. Most of what I had published when I started this research four years ago came from ancient—and often now-discredited—historical texts on the people who would tell you they were here “from the beginning of time.” Part of the nationally recognized Wintun Nation, the Hill Patwin of our valley were greatly decimated by contact with “others,” just as were all Native People across this land. Their story was left out of our textbooks—just as were the atrocities committed against Blacks, Japanese, Chinese and others—until the 1970s when they began to get their due in our school curriculum. But even beyond what is in the textbooks now, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation of Capay Valley has its own history arm compiling information, resources and stories: For more information visit: <http://yochadehe.org/cultural-°-resources/living-°-culture-°-preservation/historic-°-archives> — excerpts follow:

By amassing the largest collection of Patwin historic archives, we are able to understand our past and make informed decisions for the future. Our collections include written documents, historic video and audio files, and a collection of 12,000 current and historic images. Sources for these files include federal government archives, as well as linguistic and ethnographic field notes housed in a variety of universities from Berkeley to Harvard. Family collections, oral histories, and newspaper articles provide primary documentation to ensure our stories are authentic.

The Patwin historic archive is used in a variety of ways to support the work of government affairs, educational engagements, site protection, and internal programs. Through primary materials, we are able to engage multiple generations in our educational and cultural experiences.

**Also check out: <http://yochadehe.org/heritage/history> — excerpts follow:**

For thousands of years, members of California’s Wintun Tribes have been guided by a culture rich with an understanding of medicine, technology, food production and land stewardship. The towns and roads of today were the villages and trade routes of our past. Our land was healthy and our early communities thrived.

The arrival of missionaries and European explorers forever altered the course of Native people in California. Many Wintun people were enslaved to serve the missions, while abuse and disease further dwindled our numbers. By the 1800s, many of our ancestors were purged of their home and hunting lands by opportunists driven by gold and greed. Northern California Native people were decimated by the Gold Rush and federal policies that legalized genocide. During this time the Yocha Dehe population declined dramatically and our ancestors were rendered nearly extinct.

In the early 1900s, our Tribe was forcibly removed from our village by the US government and placed on a federally created rancheria—otherwise known as a reservation—in Rumsey, California. Stranded on barren non-irrigateable land, they struggled to survive. In 1940, our people gained a hard-won relocation to a small parcel of land further south in the Capay Valley, where they managed to cultivate small amounts of food. Without the opportunity to produce more than subsistence levels of crops, our ancestors who had lived sustainably for thousands of years, became dependent on the

US government for survival. Finally, in the late 1980s, the tide began to turn. Some ancestral lands were restored to our Tribe, providing a land base for housing and economic development. It was at this time that the State of California instituted the California Lottery and the federal government enacted the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). The United States Congress enacted the IGRA, which in particular provided a means to promote economic development and self-reliance with the explicit purpose of strengthening tribal self-governance. This offered the Tribe the opportunity to open Cache Creek Indian Bingo on part of our 188 acres of trust land. Initially, our Tribe knew little about gaming. We focused our resources on building the necessary foundation for our tribal government to manage assets generated by the bingo hall. Powered by hard work and determination we developed our own management strategy and expanded the bingo hall into the world-class Cache Creek Casino Resort, eventually providing economic development and stability for our tribal members. The independence gained from the initial influx of gaming revenue gave the Tribe the where-withal to reacquire some of our traditional lands, to invest in the future of our children through improved education and to provide philanthropic support for communities in need. In 2009, the Tribe legally changed our name from the Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians, as we were originally labeled by the federal government, to *Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation*, named for our homeland in our ancestral Patwin Language. The name change represents an important mark in time for the people of Yocha Dehe. It connects our Tribe to our heritage and expresses our sense of pride and hope for the future. Yocha Dehe means “Home by the Spring Water” — along Cache Creek, Capay Valley, Also check out: <http://yochadehe.org/cultural>



**From:** The Greater Capay Valley  
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PO Box 442, Esparto, CA 95627

**TO:**

## The History and Stories of the Capay Valley



Elizabeth Monroe

Don't forget to contact us for a copy of the new 440-page hardcover book! Check it out on [greatercapayvalley.org](http://greatercapayvalley.org) or if you are a member-subscriber, your discounted rate is \$150— \$50 off the \$200 Retail price—send a request and check to TGCVHS at the address above—and how you want the author to sign it!