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CAPAY VALLEY

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greatercapayvalley.org

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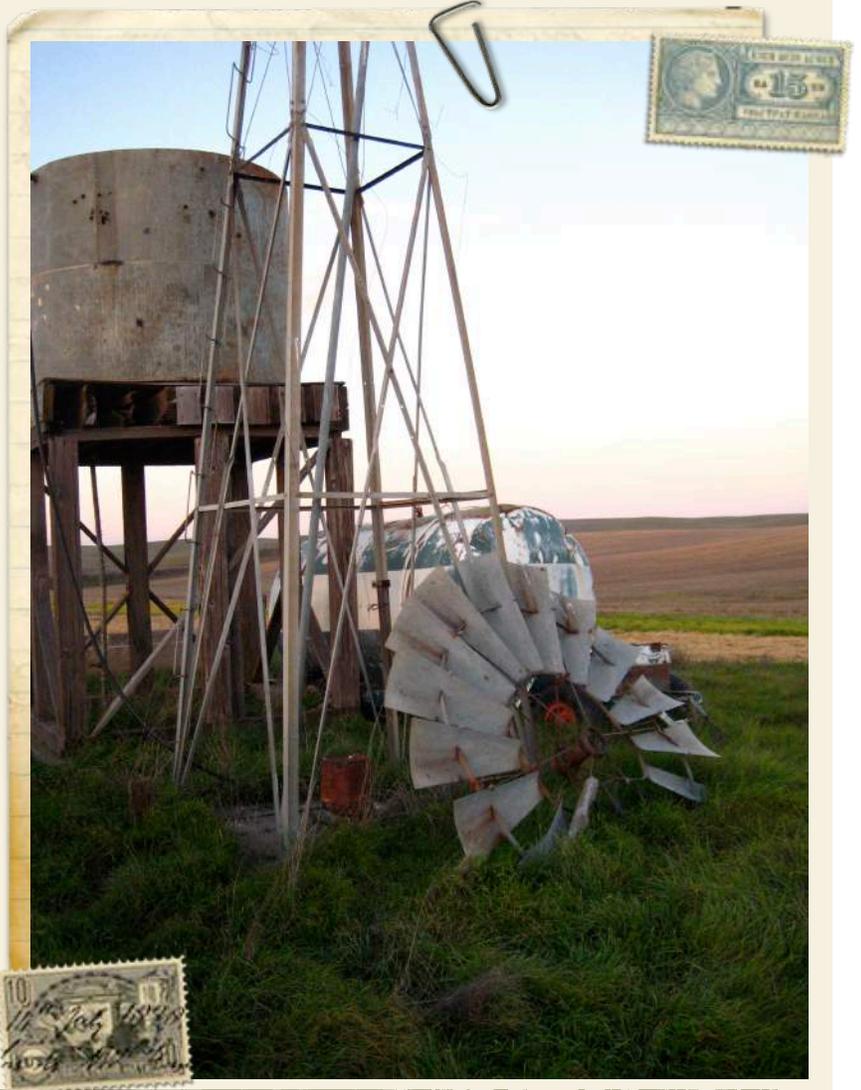
Well, what'll it be this time? I made a great discovery at the Yolo County Archives recently that determined that this volume would cover the largest bootlegging operation in the nation--in

*Pictures, Stories
and Research to
reveal and
celebrate a very
special place.*

*Focusing on the
Greater Capay
Valley, including
towns and areas
surrounding and
leading to Cache
Creek and up the
Capay Valley*



Guinda in the Capay Valley! So why not cover the history of wine in the area, too? And then cover the area's current wine industry, of course--seems fitting. And while at the archives, an article about Capay Valley's old-time Lowrey family had me on-line with old Esparto classmate, Dr. Tim Lowrey, now professor of botany at University of New Mexico, asking for their genealogy. Then, a reprint of a 1930s article in the Woodland Record-Mail led me to wonder about the ubiquitous black walnuts--were they all native or brought from back east, planted by pioneers? [Find out in volume5!] And what about all these sunflower fields? Their heads now drooping instead of facing the sun as it crosses the sky. Each volume grows from similar questions and serendipitous occurrences--a fun process!



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Special thanks to: Peggy Wood family, Doug Nareau, the Bloom and Lowrey families, and donors Cathy Monroe-Stephens and Jim Hiatt; also Linda Pillard, Gavin Taylor, Bonnie Stormont and Monique Garcia --and all the faithful subscribers and advertisers!

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Vestiges of the Southern Pacific Railroad’s Vaca Valley-Clear Lake Line still exist in the Capay Valley, though the trains and tracks have been gone for decades. Above, the RR bridge at Poppy Creek can be seen from Highway 16, but the site below, on private property, marks the former track line across County Road 82.



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Monroe family friend, Amy King, stands at the top of the former Monroe Ranch in 1973, overlooking the S-curve in Cache Creek in the Capay Valley; the flat farm land seen in the distance is now the Yocha DeHe Golf Course, seen below in a picture taken on March 20, 2011 when Cache Creek had flooded hole 14.



HISTORY IS ALL ABOUT VIEWPOINT...

Editor, Elizabeth Monroe

..and *The Greater Capay Valley Historical Society* is intent on exploring them all!

When you look around the greater Capay Valley today, you see a variety of crops that did not exist here in decades past, sometimes orchards and vineyards where dry grain farming used to rule--and sometimes where vintage oaks and wild oats used to grow among other native plants. In the over-half century I have considered this "home," I have seen many changes, some that hurt and some that excite. The problem with having grown up here is that you get used to seeing the land through your childhood memories, and you find it hard to see the same *beauty* in an orchard or vineyard that someone who did not know the land before sees. But I try to remember my father's words, "As long as it stays in agriculture, it's OK." And then I try to apply that optimistic view to other changes--like a casino and golf course! If I consider how the Wintun Nation is intending to be "good stewards of the land" it helps. It may not always be easy to accept such radical change, but as long as we all work to

keep this special place special, I try to be optimistic!

Like the pictures above, in those below, the

before and after can be dramatic: as one former Duncan Ranch went from oaks to *ripped* for an olive orchard, it was disheartening, but I am trying to see it as a **productive orchard someday...**



Above, Cathy Monroe looks at an ancient Oak felled for an olive orchard on the old Wyatt Duncan Ranch



Above, the old Wyatt Duncan Ranch before ripping; below after ripping for an olive orchard on the current John Scully property.





In 1858 the land speculators Arnold and Gillig purchased 13,760 acres of the Berryessa grant and began to subdivide the land into parcels of 200 to 3800 acres. Gillig planted grain, grapevines, and fruit trees northwest of Langville (the present community of Capay) and established the county's first winery in 1860...

When I decided to write about the infamous bootlegging operation and raid in Guinda in 1926, I thought it would be a good time to explore the history of wine in the valley and look at how it is flourishing today. While the many vineyards are often tucked away where they might not be seen by a tourist or even a local traveling our small highways and back roads, sometimes the vast vineyards surprise one, looming for miles amid dry grain fields--like the RH Phillips vineyards in Hungry Hollow's Dunnigan Hills. Formerly the Giguere Ranch, I remembered it as rolling grain fields, and in the late 1980s had the surreal experience of driving through some of the first vines in the area, mile after country, back-road mile. The brainchild of John Giguere and his family, the successful winery

sold to Constellation, along with the popular labels such as Toasted Head, and John and his wife Lane went on to begin again near Zamora, now serving Matchbook

through their Crew Wines label. [See the listed web sites for more on the Giguere family and the fascination with "toasted" heads and "matchbooks"--interesting pyro-story!!]

Today, events like the annual Taste of Capay and the Gala at the opening night of the Yolo County Fair remind us that there is a very wholesome wine industry in the area. The Taste of Capay is a celebration of over 300 patrons honoring the local farmers and vintners each fall, hosted in one of the lovely venues in the valley. Renowned chefs from the sponsoring Yocha DeHe Resort and Casino prepare a gourmet meal using local produce and meats that patrons then pair with local wines. The Fair Gala event offers a wine tasting amid

The History of Wine in the Greater Capay Valley



Above, Dunnigan Hills: vast vineyard seen in the distance on the former Giguere Ranch; more historically typical dry grain field in foreground.

Go to:
<http://www.crewwines.com/>
 Matchbook site

And an interesting take at:
<http://onerichwineguy.blogspot.com/2010/07/matchbook-ready-to-set-fire-to-wine.html>



booths offering samples and tastes of their wares. **Capay Organic**, the event venue hosting the Taste of Capay this year, is also holding a wine tasting event in September. But with all this local celebration of the wines, many still do not know that this valley became well known for its viticulture in the mid-1800s.

Historian Douglas Nareau, currently writing a history

(the present community of Capay) and established the area's first winery as the Capay Valley Winery, in 1858 on the Adobe Ranch. This ranch, (later occupied by the Peterson family in the 1970's) was under the proprietorship of John Gillig and supervised by Nicola Cadenasso.

In 1861, the Capay Valley Winery was awarded a gold medal as the finest winery in the State of California.

In 1860, two years after the founding of the Capay Valley Winery, the Orleans Hill Vineyard was established. Located at what is now the southern end of Road 83A in the Lamb Valley area west of Esparto, it gained recognition until disease destroyed its vineyards. The vineyard featured Orleans grapes and flourished for over 25 years. Carl Stobel and Jacob Knauth experimented with more than 60 varieties of grapes at the Orleans Vineyard. They concluded in 1869 that two varieties of Orleans and Reisling grapes were superior for wine making. In that same year, the Orleans Hill Viticulture Association was formed with Knauth as president and Strovel as secretary. By 1871, the association owned 850 acres, which produced 80,000



gallons of wine. By 1880, the vineyard had attained such respect that they were recognized by the Mechanics Institute and State Agricultural Society Fair. In 1880, Mr. Knauth was asked by Arpad Haraszthy,

Left: Old Homestead on Capay Organic farm, which was once a Duncan-Zentner Farm.



Above: Capay Organics' venue site for this year's Taste of Capay event and the new Capay Crush event. www.capayorganic.com www.farmfresh toyou.com

Capay Crush, Capay Organic's wine tasting event Sunday, September 25, 2011 from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM: capaycrush.eventbrite.com

Grape stompin' fun, live music Boco Do Rio, an awesome Brazilian band, and Kelly McFarling. Wine tasting with six local wineries, kids' and art activities, harvest and stomp grapes, take farm tractor tours in a lovely farm evening atmosphere. Our local taco truck will be serving up fresh mexican food with our fresh organic produce. The farm is pleased to welcome Dr. David Block, professor and chair of the department of viticulture and enology at UC Davis. Dr. Block will give a short lecture during the event. At dusk, guests can gather around an evening bonfire and listen to live music from Boca Do Rio and Kelly McFarling.

Vineyards, Continued on Page 6

Vineyards, continued, including: 2003 appellation as an “American Viticulture Area”

president of the State Viticulture Society, to present a report on the history of the vineyard and the diseases that affected it to the society. Shortly thereafter, the Orleans Hill Vineyard was purchased by Mr. Haraszthy from the Napa area. At that time the vineyard was the largest of Yolo County’s six wineries, comprising some 360 acres—though some sources put it at 460 acres. Under Haraszthy, the vineyard continued to prosper, and at the viticulture convention of 1888, several Orleans Hill wines were rated as first quality. In the late 1880’s, the winery started specializing in Tokay grapes. By 1888, this variety comprised 21 acres of the estate. In addition to vines the estate also included 600 Olive trees and several hundred prune, persimmon, almond, orange, lemon, English Walnut and chestnut trees, all of which produced extremely well.

Eventually, there would be 3700 acres of wine grapes and 6 wineries in the county before drought, pests, disease and the temperance movement and prohibition caused the viticulture industry to essentially die in Yolo County, until it was reintroduced in the 1980’s.”

The first to grow wine grapes and establish a vineyard in the Capay Valley in a century was couple Tom Frederick and Pam Welch with their Capay Valley Vineyards in 1998. After a viticulture course at UC Davis Extension, they planted 15 acres at 13757 Highway 16 in Brooks, the old Wallace place. Making what they refer to as “customer-friendly wines...smooth and easy to drink,” Tom says, “You don’t need to be a wine aficionado to enjoy them.”

Capay Valley Vineyards now shares a 2003 appellation as an “American Viticulture Area” with several other wineries, among them are Herren Vineyard-Rominger West Winery, Simas Family Winery, Yocha DeHe’s Seka Hills, Taber Ranch Event Center and Vineyards, and the Casey Flat Ranch wine estate--with yet others on the way. And true to the growing trend of this special valley, eating and enjoying wines locally is important to the vintners.

Passport Weekend Event

by *Roots to Wine* group

October 8th thru 9th

Hit the road in this first annual Passport Weekend tour, visiting participating wineries and tasting rooms for exclusive pourings such as vertical flights, library wines and barrel tastings; food and wine pairings; art; music; education; promos; special offers; and conversations with winemakers during *crush*. Smell the freshly pressed wine while hobnobbing with other wine lovers and makers from 10 to 5 both days.

Capay Valley vintners will be represented thus: Simas Family will pour at/with Capay Valley Vineyards; Seka Hills will be at the Yocha DeHe Golf Clubhouse; Casey Flat Ranch will join Root Stock in Winters--without the long-horn bulls!



For your passport go to:
info@rootstowine.com or
local Chamber of
Commerce.

Vineyards and
Texas Long-horns
-- Why not!?!
Capay Valley is
unique that way!



The Capay Valley has many microclimates, making each vineyard offering unique. For instance, sitting hidden up in Casey Flats above Guinda, the

had just experienced yet another Capay Valley wonder, “perhaps the most unusual vineyard in the greater Sacramento area”—complete with Texas longhorns!

Casey Flat Ranch wine estate has daytime temperatures similar to the Napa Valley, but unlike Napa and even Clarksburg, the coast and delta breezes do not reach the Capay Valley, thus the heat is retained longer here. Dealing with the microclimates and each vineyard’s particular “terroir” determines the varietal chosen. For instance, where Capay Valley Vineyards has great success with its Viognier—recently adding a popular sparkling Viognier—up on Casey Flats the Syrah has become “a star,” according to the article in the Sacramento Bee, June 1, 2011. As the article goes on to say, the “site includes a modest ranch operation, a nod to the area’s history.” On a recent hike up the unpaved county road to the water fall on Casey Flats (see volume 1) we came around a bend and face to face with amazing, though docile, “purebred Texas longhorns”—though at the time we did not know what we were confronting in the road. Having been raised on a local cattle ranch, I just calmly moved slowly around them, talking softly to a bull all the while, not snapping pictures until we had a safe distance—just in case. The Bee article clued me in: we



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