

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

Happy summer to everyone! We had a really nice turn out for the Annual meeting in January, thank you everyone for coming and bringing tasty dishes. A slide show and presentation of “History of Courtland High School” was enjoyed by all.

It's been a great six months so far at the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society. We have had some entertaining programs. Our very own Board Member Phil Pezzalia presented his book on Delta Towns, as did Lawrence Tom, both beautifully illustrated.

We have received hearty participation in community business and personal contributions to this year's Pear Calendar, thank you all. We will be selling the calendars, featuring pear crate labels from the collection of Jim Dahlberg, at this year's pear fair in Courtland, July 28th. We hope all of you come out to celebrate and purchase a calendar; it is SRDHS's only fundraiser of the year. They will also be sold at local retailers, call the resource center if you wish to feature them in your store.

Please visit the Resource Center every Tuesday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm for an interesting representation of where we came from.

See you at the next meeting!

Cathy O'Connor

2013 BOARD MEMBERS

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS FOR 2013

Jean & Steve Barsoom from Walnut Grove
Cindy Cossi from Walnut Grove
Delta Protection Agency from West Sacramento
David Dunbar from Rio Vista
Marjorie Brown Dunn from Stockton
Phyllis Ehlert from Sacramento
Peggy & Robert Finney from Oceanside
Tim & Sharon Marriott from Courtland
Ellen Skillings from Rio Vista
Ron Squaglia from Walnut Grove
Naomi Wetzel from Courtland



41st Annual - July 28, 2013

The Early Canning Industry

By Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

Canning was developed by Nicholas Appert, a Frenchman, who developed the process of sealing peas inside champagne bottles and then cooking them in water. The idea for "portable food" was hoped to assist feeding Napoléon's army during its invasion of Russia. The idea was then taken to England and to America in 1819 by William Underwood who built the first American cannery in Boston. His product: "Underwood's Deviled Ham" - you can find it today on grocers' shelves everywhere.

During the 1820's there were fruit canners in Baltimore, Maryland. Thomas Kensett and his father-in-law Ezra Daggett canned winter crop white oysters and in the summer fruits and vegetables and branched into canning exotic fruits and vegetables, notably imports from South America. William Numsen in the 1840's began canning pineapple from South America in exchange for grain, flour, and cornmeal. Coffee was also exchanged.

The East Coast was the first big market for canned fruit followed by California beginning with the Gold Rush where a ready market for canned goods developed and the market would pay whatever the cost. The California Gold Rush made Walter Baker Chocolate famous. It's also still on the grocers' shelves. All sorts of canned goods from Baltimore packers were sold - oysters, peaches, pineapple, chocolates, etc.

Increased demand led to new technology. Isaac Solomon who built a big oyster canning business on Chesapeake Bay discovered that calcium chloride could be added to water which in turn raised the temperature in the canning process and reduced the time of cooking. Unfortunately the salt eroded the cans and they swelled and exploded.

In 1874 Baltimore canner Andrew Shriver developed a retort kettle (a big pressure cooker) which heated canned goods under pressure which eliminated salt corrosion and explosions. Stacks of canned goods could be put in it and heated under pressure without resorting to the salt bath. Being under pressure the cans didn't swell and explode. This was a major technological breakthrough.

In 1881 a man by the name of Cox developed the "Cox Capper" a device which automated capping which closed the can.

With the retort kettle and the Cox Capper large amounts of pre-canned foods could be dumped in one end and finished capped on the other end.

As noted, centered in Baltimore, the industry used immigrant workers who organized and then struck in 1872. This first cannery strike was followed by a larger and more difficult strike in 1874. After the Civil War some canneries moved near to the fields to use freed slaves. The canned goods were then shipped to Baltimore.

Early fruit canners in America included Heinz (1869), Campbell (1869), Stokely-van Camp (1891) and many others who were merged, acquired or went out of business. Libby, McNeil and Libby was a Maine Corporation.

American wars were a great stimulus for the canning industry. The Civil War was the first time an army relied extensively on military contracts for canned foods. The Spanish-American war was another.

In 1896 Sussman, Wormser & Co. (S&W Fine Foods) was formed in San Francisco as a wholesale grocery distributor. The three founders were Samuel Sussman, Gustav Wormser and Samuel I. Wormser - all related to each other. The business originally had seventeen employees, six sales representatives and a business manager nephew Jake Blumlein. The sales reps made deliveries in one-horse buggies and the main warehouse was at Fremont and Market streets. At this time the canning industry was in its infancy in California consisting of a number of small privately owned firms. There was considerable variation of quality and S&W rejected anything which didn't meet its high standards.

California packing company (C.P.C.) was headquartered in San Francisco. A huge canner it was involved in canning and packing of peaches, other fruits, dried fruits, mackerel, sardines, tuna, salmon and vegetables.

Hunt Brothers packing company was founded in 1890 by Joseph and William Hancock Hunt. The brothers had each summer helped their mother can home-grown fruits and vegetables. When their mother died in 1888 they opened a small canning business on the family ranch in Santa Rosa. After incorporating in 1890, they constructed a cannery in Santa Rosa. Their first pack was 30,000 cases of fruits and vegetables. In order to get closer to their supply line in the Central Valley of California they moved their operation to Hayward. William Hunt died in 1896 but his brother Joseph continued the business. Hunt was one of the earliest fruit canners in the state and Sussman and Wormser was its distributor.

Eventually the "Cox Capper" was replaced by sealing machines. Instead of pushing the product through a small opening in the top of the can, the whole can was open at the top. After filling, a cover larger in circumference than the can was placed on top and was mechanically crimped under and rolled over - all without solder. Only the side seam was soldered. Once the cans were properly sealed they were deposited at one end of giant cooker which sterilized them and discharged them. Several different can companies supplied the cans, among them American Can Company (it had a plant in San Francisco) and Continental Can Company (Sacramento).

On the river the only crop continually processed was asparagus. Old-timers recalled watching the discarded butts lazily moving back and forth with the tides. There were two asparagus canneries on Grand Island, two at Isleton, one each at Vorden and Rio Vista and two in Sacramento and one in Thornton.

In the 1920s tomatoes were processed by Libby at Locke and by Del Monte at Rio Vista. Del Monte had large asparagus plants at Rio Vista and Vorden. Other plants were Pratt-Low at Ryde, Sun Garden National and Bayside, Isleton, as well as the California Coop, Isleton, Golden State and Ensher, Alexander & Barsoom at Isleton. Libby also had plants at Isleton and near Ryde on Grand Island. Prior to 1922 there was a cannery on the Stewart Ranch on upper Steamboat Slough, Grand Island and Griffin and Scully at Ryde which was bought by C.P.C. In 1926 C.P.C. opened the largest all-purpose cannery in the

world in Sacramento. Also in Sacramento was a big Libby cannery on T and Alhambra and in North Sacramento Bercut-Richards canning company opened in the 1930's. The local pickle works ended up in Isleton and was owned by Heinz. Salmon was also canned at Rio Vista and Collinsville and several other Delta locations in the early days.

In time the canneries followed the produce out of the Delta to the South Bay area: San Leandro, Hayward, Santa Clara and San Jose. Pratt-Low went to San Jose where other canneries were located such as Schukle, and Western among others. Growers also shipped to Gerber, Tillie Lewis, Stokely-Van Camp, Hunt, and Del Monte. Today many of the canneries are found in the San Joaquin Valley.

Sources:

-various

-The Story of James Dole

THE HOLT CATERPILLAR TRACTOR

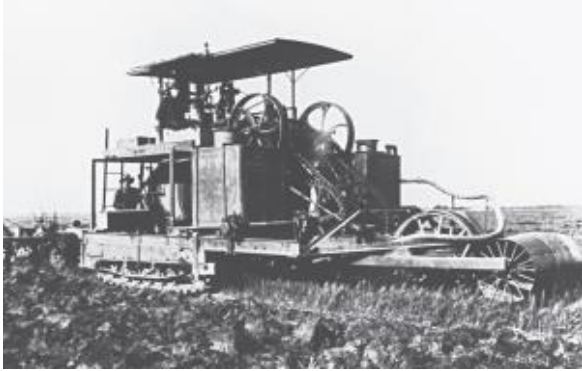
By Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

In 1904 Benjamin Holt, owner of Holt Manufacturing Co. in Stockton, tried out a new idea. His steam powered tractor, with a 40 horse power Holt Junior Road Engine #77, kept sinking into the San Joaquin River loam. He replaced the back drive wheels with a pair of two foot wide, nine feet long tracks. Thus was born the first track layer machine and problem solved. "Steam tractors of that time weighed 1,000 pounds per each horse power. So that a 40 horse powered tractor weighed 20 tons. It took seven men to run one tractor." A licensed farm engineer was in charge of firing up the boiler.

In 1908 Holt converted his steam tractors to gasoline. A gasoline tractor took one person to operate. The sobriquet "caterpillar" was attached to the product by a photographer who thought the tracks viewed upside-down, looked like the crawling bug.

At the outbreak of World War I, Holt won the contract to supply track laying equipment to the U.S. Army and allies to pull supplies across unpaved roads.

Holt had a rival in the track laying business – C. L. Best of the C. L. Best Traction Co. in San Leandro. After a spirited rivalry, which included vying for the services of the engineer Oscar Starr, the two merged in 1925 to become Caterpillar Tractor.



One of Holt's original track-laying tractors

President Jim Metcalf of the Rio Vista Museum Association commented recently: "As you drive along the highways that border on farmlands you see tractors working the land. Today however, many have cabs enclosed with air-conditioning and filled with music. The Caterpillar 30 that we have in our Museum was developed by Best Tractor prior to 1925, at which time the company was purchased by Caterpillar Tractor. The tractor was purchased in 1926 and used on the McCloskey ranch until the mid-1980's. Bill Turner donated the tractor to the Rio Vista Museum in 1996. The restoration and painting were donated by Ramos Oil. Teneco Tractor Company donated the paint, which was matched to the original color used by Caterpillar tractor."

Excerpted from the Alameda County Historical Society Newsletter, Rio Vista Museum Notes, River News Herald and Isleton Journal

CHINESE IMMIGRATION

From the San Francisco Chronicle:

"The crowd strolling up the Embarcadero heading for the Giants-Dodgers game Monday at AT&T Park will be passing right by one of the most historic places in San Francisco without knowing it.

On the waterfront, where Brannan Street ends, is a place where Asian immigration to the United States began. Asians started coming to the America in

significant numbers in the California Gold Rush, or just after, and now, according to Pell Research Center report released last week, Asian Americans are the fastest growing immigrant group in the country. They also have the highest incomes, and are the best educated of any immigrants to the United States. It was page one news: a major shift in the American immigrant story.

Nearly all those first immigrants were from China, and they landed first San Francisco at the Pacific Mail Steamship Co.'s terminal at the Brannan Street wharf. It is ground zero for the Asian experience in the United States.

It is easy to walk by this place and not notice. There is no sign, no marker, nothing. There used to be a tall pillar on the Embarcadero sidewalk describing the significance of the spot, but a vehicle hit it; it was taken away and not replaced.

All that is about to change because the port of San Francisco is ready to start work on a brand-new waterfront park extending from the sidewalk out into the bay- a wedge-shaped open space with a huge lawn, benches to sit on and interpretive panels to explain the history of the place.

Let's hope the panels explained the history truly. It is not a pretty story.

In 1852 alone, 25,000 Chinese came to California, drawn by the Gold Rush and the chance for a new life. By the early 1850s it was clear that the white gold seekers did not want competition. John Bigler, governor of California, declared the Chinese quote "a menace". He advocated an immigrant tax on Chinese – \$50 a person, a fortune in those days. The legislature passed the foreign miners tax, enforced apparently only against Asian or Latino miners. That was only the beginning.

By 1875, according to historians T.H. Watkins and Roger Olmstead, there were close to 100,000 Chinese in California. Most of them were young man ready and willing to work any job available.

In San Francisco, Watkins and Olmstead wrote, 20% of San Francisco's work force was Chinese.

There was also in an economic depression with thousands of other men out of work. Wages were dropping. It was a volatile mix.

On June 23, 1877 – Saturday was the anniversary – a huge mob attacked Chinese business and headed for the symbol of Chinese immigration, the Pacific Mail wharf at the foot of Brannan Street. They tried to burn the pier. They failed but four people were killed in the riots that followed.

The better people in the city were outraged, especially since the anti-Chinese faction also wanted to hate the rich. But Asian immigrants had few friends. By 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion act, designed to keep Asian workers out of this country. Four years later in New York, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated. In 1903 the famous inscription, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” was added to the statue. It was clear these words did not apply to Asian immigrants.

The immigration station at the foot of Brannan Street was moved to Angel Island in 1910; new piers were built, and life on the waterfront moved on. Pier 36, the last of the docks at Brannan Street was torn down – demolition was wrapped up only a week ago.

San Francisco changed. The mayor, the president of the City Planning Commission, the president of the Port Commissioner, four members of the Board of Supervisors and a third of the city's population are Asian American. An amazing story. And it all began where Brannan Street meets the bay.”

Old Pictures



Haggin Museum

Time, use and habitat on the delta has changed over the decades.

Could this be Grindstone Joe??



A McKean car – one was used on the Walnut Grove Branch Line

ALERT! ALERT!

Arcadia Books switched the captions (on page 57) of John Brown and his brother Art Brown in “Towns on the Sacramento River Delta” by Phil Pezzaglia.

COMING NEXT NEWSLETTER

Letters from Bill Hutchinson, Sr.

Presented by Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

In 1938 Bill Hutchinson, Sr. on two trips East and to the Northwest investigated the Delta crop on its arrival at the auction markets as well as the farming methods of his competitors.

This is the first of a series of seven letters of various lengths which he sent back to the Delta growers at Walnut Grove.

The manager of the California Asparagus Growers Assn., J.S. Brown, Jr., Jack Brown, the eldest son of John Stanford Brown, the President of the Bank of Alex Brown in Walnut Grove.

Two of the interesting letters mentioned above will be part of the December 2013 newsletter.

RESOURCE CENTER NEWS

“2014 Calendars” produced by SRDHS are soon to be printed. They feature “another” 12 pear labels from Jim Dahlberg’s collection in frameable sizes. They will be available for sale at Courtland’s Pear Fair and at the center beginning in August. See sample of our new labels and order form on next page.

Thank you for your donations to our resource center! We are recording each item in our data base – many collections are done, but many still need to be entered. **Would you like to help?** We work almost every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and need people to enter data (it’s already handwritten and just needs to be typed.) Please call Bobbie at 777-6792 or Esther at 777-2227 to make sure we will be there and join us.

SRDHS 2013 SCHEDULE

July/August.....	Summer Break
September 17.....	General Meeting
October 15.....	Board Meeting
November 19.....	General Meeting
December.....	Board Meeting
	December Newsletter
January 21, 2014.....	Annual Potluck

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INFORMATION

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society web site is srdhs.org. Please view and enjoy the information. If you wish to email the resource center, the email address is srdhs@riverdeltawireless.com.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

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

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

Then make sure you pay your 2013 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):
 2013 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
 Design/Layout..... Esther Koopman

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

NEW “2014” SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR AVAILABLE AT PEAR FAIR OR AFTER AUGUST 1st

Here is a preview of the cover of the delightful 2014 Calendar representing more Pear Labels from Jim Dahlberg’s Collection? Each month shows a different Pear Label and there is one page with explanations of each of the labels shown.



The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society’s “Pear Label” Calendar for 2014 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 by filling out the form below and mailing it with your check to:

SRDHS
P O Box 293
Walnut Grove, CA 95695

The price for each calendar is \$15.00 (plus postage if applicable)

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

- 1 Calendar \$15 plus \$2 postage
- 2 - 6 calendars \$15 each plus \$3.00 postage for media mail (7-12 day delivery)
- Or
- 2 - 6 calendars \$15 each plus \$5.25 for priority mail (2 to 3 day delivery)

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Calendar Order Form

Please send _____ calendars @ \$15 per calendar

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____