

NAPA COUNTY

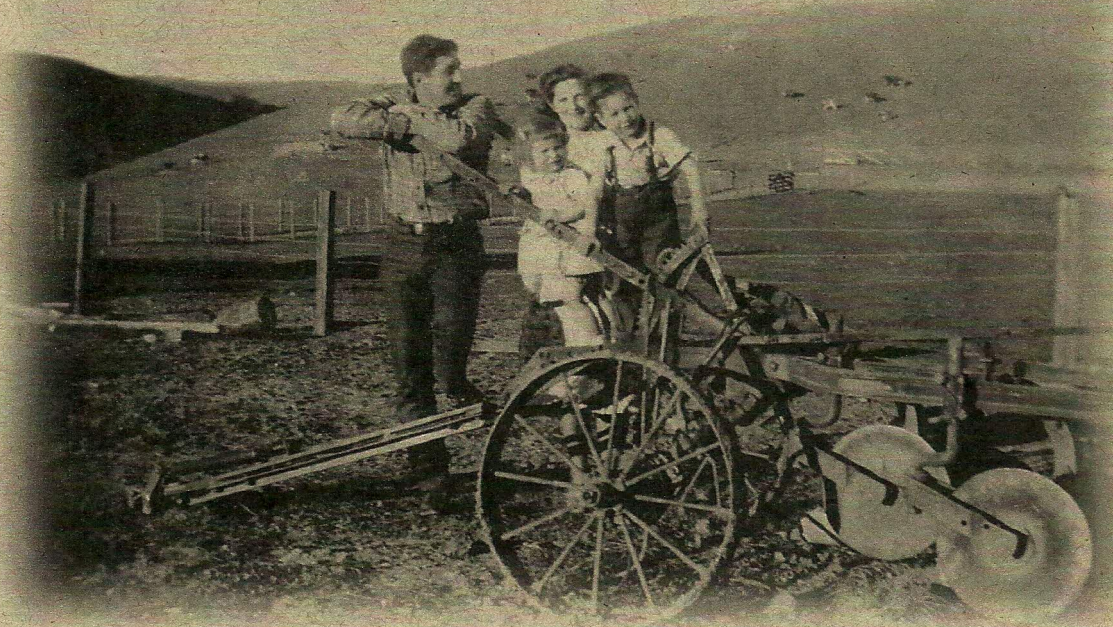


100

YEARS

1913 - 2013

FARM BUREAU



*Napa County
Centennial Farm Family
Histories*

This booklet is a collaborative effort put forth by the Napa County Farm Bureau Centennial Steering Committee members. It is our hope that this booklet will serve as the seedling for a larger book project honoring Napa County agricultural heritage.

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A land without apology, the Napa Valley...

Masthead from "The Napa Journal", John E. Walden, Editor & Proprietor

This subdivision of about 800 square miles is one of the smallest, yet most fertile in the state, and in its sunny clime nearly every vegetable and fruit can be produced. The industrious man can here find a home and follow the labor of his choice. The comfort loving man is here in the midst of comfort. The lover of beautiful scenery and art can here get inspiration for his work and in no less degree can woman, around whom centers the home, as well as the people in general, here find an ideal spot.

"Napa City & County Portfolio & Directory", Published by H. A. Darms, 1908

Acquistapace Family (Vivian Mazza Atchison), Oakville, California

Carlo Acquistapace (b.1870) and Rosalia Spandrio (b.1888), married November 26th, 1906. They emigrated from Gerola Alta, Italy (located in the mountainous northern part of Italy) and traveled by way of Havre, France on the ship *SS La Provence* to New York arriving December 15th, 1905 having spent six days at sea. Rosa, Carlo and 5 of the 8 children were born and lived in the Elk, Mendocino area prior to 1919.

1910 Census: Living in Cuffeys Cove Township, Mendocino Co, CA w/ husband Carlo and daughter Josephine. Rosa's brother Console Spandrio (b.1884) from Italy was also living with them – occupation farm hand.

Moved to the Oakville-St Helena area about 1919-1920, their 6th child Charles was born in September, 1919 in Napa County. Leased dairy farm in Oakville.

1930 Census: Living in Yount Township, Napa County, California. Household consisted of husband Charley, wife Rosalie and children Leo, Rita, Oreste, Levia, Charley, Alice and Loraine. Also in the household: Ernest Bettiga, hiredman milker.

St. Helena Star 22 February 1931: "Charles Acquistapace has had the ice plant in his dairy overhauled and a new condensor installed. F.A. Albright, refrigerating engineer of San Anselmo was in charge of the work."

St. Helena Star 13 November 1936: Oakville Dairy Ranch Sold. The Lakeside Dairy Co, of Vallejo, has purchased from the Pacific Coast Joint Stock and Land Bank the Dos Reis dairy ranch East of Oakville. On the ranch are two dwelling houses, a dairy barn, hay barn and outbuildings. Extensive improvements will be made to the property, after which a fine herd of milk cows will be placed on the ranch to provide dairy products for the Vallejo dairy. The place has been under lease to C. Acquistapace

St. Helena Star 13 November 1936: Personal Mention: Mr and Mrs Louis Volper, who recently sold their farm on Silverado Trail near St. Helena to C. Acquistapace, are now residing near Yountville where they will remain until they decide definitely where they will locate.

St. Helena Star 23 November 1936: Real Estate Transfers: Louis E. Volper et ux, to Carlo Acquistapace, 43 acres more or less in Carne Humana Rancho.

I spent my summers and holidays at the ranch. Being born and raised in San Francisco, I loved the transition from city to country living. I loved picking vegetables, fruits, flowers, milking the cows, gathering eggs and best of all swimming in the creek on the ranch.

After visiting Gerola Alta I now know why she made such great cheese--she inherited the talent!!!

Barberis Family, Calistoga, California

When did your family first arrive in Napa County?

Giuseppe (Joseph) Barberis arrived circa 1898. Unfortunately, he died in 1908. According to the 1910 Census, Giuseppe's wife, Guilia (Julia) said 1898 was their immigration year. Giovanni (John) Barberis came in 1900. At some point, he returned to Italy, but came back to Calistoga following Giuseppe's death to care for Guilia and their four children. In 1911, Giovanni married his brother's widow. Domenico Barberis came in 1903.

From where did they emigrate? The village of Murialdo, Savona, Liguria, Italy

Who were those first family members? There was three Barberis brothers: Giuseppe (eldest), Guiseppe's wife Guilia, then Giovanni, & Domenico (youngest).

What did they do? All the brothers were farmers. They planted prunes, walnuts, and then grapes.

Where was their farming operation located? Calistoga/Hot Springs. The same land that was the home to Giovanni & Guilia is still owned by the Barberis family, four generations later and still farmed. Domenico Barberis bought and farmed the land that is now called the Palisades. Domenico's children sold the land after he and his wife Guila passed. It is now home to the Carver-Sutro Winery, a Clos Pegase vineyard & Ted Surber.

How was the operation run? Driving around Calistoga Giovanni sold his produce from the back of his truck.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years?
Yes. Robert (Buddy) Barberis, Jr, great grandson of Giuseppe Barberis operates the remaining 35 acres

of vineyards. Just like his father and grandfather, Buddy is 100% hands on maintaining the vineyards and employs three crewmen to assist him. Two of those crewmen have been with the family for 20 years. Not much has changed.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? A speeding car on Hwy 29 lost control and plowed into the vineyard running over three vines. The insurance company called Robert (Bob) Barberis Senior asking for the value. Bob called a neighbor who bought from that vineyard and told Bob they were worth \$500 a piece; the neighbor's wife, got on the phone, told Bob to "screw 'em" and charge \$1,000 each. When Bob received the \$3000, he threw a New Years Eve party with 50 friends and family and served lobster. As it turns out, those three vines survived.

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? Recognition of the challenges we have faced in the past and good predictions of future issues such as labor and water shortages, and the shrinking margin between profit/survival and loss.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Never let Prop 13 be repealed.

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? It would be great to see farm/ag education start earlier in schools. Communities who have 35% or more agricultural land use and/or employ a reasonable amount of the population in farm/ag should have at minimum, one elective course in agriculture offered at the high school level.

Battuello Family, St. Helena, California

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? Departed San Francisco one week before the 1906 earthquake and fire... after one month in San Francisco having arrived from Northern Italy.

From where did they emigrate? Favria, Lamecia, Rivarolo (Piemonte, Italy near Mont Blanc)

Who were those first family members? Matteo and Serafina Chiarbaglio Battuello

What did they do? Farmed fruits, vines, nuts in Italy. Family continues to farm in Northern Italy and added escargot cultivation in the 1920s, though none have dabbled in that market in Napa County.

Where was their farming operation located? At present site, 3350 Ehlers Lane, St. Helena, beginning with 45 acres in 1909 by Matt and Sera (property went Bale-Kellogg to Rutan to Battuello); adding 26 acres adjoining in the 1920s. Successor son Dominic Battuello and Ellen Battuello added 10 acres in 1947, completing purchases in the area to Mill Creek at Napa River.

How was the operation run? Owner-operated much like a hacienda, with fruits dipped and/or dried on trays on-site, nuts hulled and dried on site, until these operations were centralized in the 1930s in St. Helena and vicinity. Dried fruits and nuts were sacked, weighed, tagged, and moved by train (Napa Valley InterUrban electric line) to markets in San Francisco, until rail was discontinued in 1938. Grapes planted by Rutan (one of the earliest to cultivate vines on the valley floor to supply Charles Krug) continued to be processed by Charles Krug Winery from the 1870s forward. Grapes were sold fresh to brokers (Gallo, Cairns, Mondavi) during Prohibition, to cooperatives after until Caesar Mondavi purchased Sunny St. Helena Winery (currently Merryvale) and Charles Krug facilities 1940-42. Currently, Craig Battuello leases most of the vineyards to outside wineries. Matt and Dominic were both hands-on farmers, and both also managed other area properties for absentee owners. Dominic and Ellen leased 10 acres at Mill Creek 1942 (until purchase in 1947) to help the war effort (World War II), and grew tons of banana squash. Vines were planted in 1948. Matteo and Sera grew corn among trees and vines and in fallow area to help the war effort (World War I). Fruit orchards (approximately 50% of land usage) gave way to vineyards in 1972. Walnuts also gave way to vineyard development. Harvest these days isn't a July - November operation, merely two weeks off and on, with a single crop, wine grapes, to harvest. Dominic kept two prune trees as he was a member of the Board of Directors of Sunsweet Growers through 1979.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? Lease arrangements, with minimal acreage under family management since taking by Craig Battuello in 1999.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? As my nonno used to say, "The farming is nice, it is a very nice life, but that AT&T (stock), she's a wonderful." Handed

down: "Don't look up 'til you reach the end of the row or you might not get there." "Let it rain."

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? Farm Bureau has had the vision to protect prime agricultural land, supporting ballot measures following Williamson Act and other protections. Passage of Measure J came at a critical time (1990), as did its extension through Measure P to 2058. Farm Bureau's active interests in crafting ordinances to protect farmland from abuse of recreational privileges has thus far prevented hike and bike trails from being developed in our neighborhood (Trail through the Vines that would link public Ehlers Lane to public Big Tree Lane), spewing the public into our vineyards and causing significant trespass problems.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years?

Continue to promote ballot initiatives such as those foregoing, and Ordinances, including Farm Bureau's most recent efforts to prevent changes to the Winery Definition Ordinance. Continue to bring along younger family farmers to pass from one generation to the next the important work of Farm Bureau's land use committee and Ag in the Classroom program, among other important work.

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? I will continue to promote farming and the preservation of farm land as a national security priority. When a nation can't feed itself, its people are at risk.

Bell Family, Yountville, California
By Catherine Bell Wright Lerner

My grandparents Charles E. Bell and Catherine Jane Bell left Connecticut to become pioneers and come to California by covered wagon in 1859.

My grandfather built ships on Mare Island but to get their seven children out of Vallejo they bought the Bell Ranch off Crystal Springs Road, St. Helena, in 1878. My mother Evelyn, their youngest, was born on that ranch.

My grandfather and his sons cleared that land and planted grapes and also had a bonded winery there until Prohibition. For years that ranch had cows, horses, chickens, fruit trees and vegetable gardens too. The Bell Ranch property was in undivided shares by the survivors and I inherited my mother's share. That property was later sold with that little valley finally becoming a lake to hold St. Helena's water supply. Water rights are always important. St. Helena Sanitarium and Hospital was established over a year after the Bell family moved to their Bell Ranch. It wasn't long before that hospital needed more water so built a small dam high up in the Bell Canyon without my grandparent's permission.

When my grandfather found out about the dam, he and one of his sons climbed up the canyon and dynamited the dam, releasing all the Bell Canyon Creek water back into its original channel.

If it wasn't for my grandfather's actions the lake that is now in Bell Canyon Creek's little valley would probably not be there to supply the City of St. Helena with its water.

Two of the original Bell sons, Theodore and Edward, became attorneys and began their practices in Napa. Theodore became the youngest Napa County District Attorney during that time. I lived at the Bell Ranch from three weeks of age and through most of my teens. My farming there included picking grapes and gathering the many eggs that I put in large cases to be later sold in regular egg cartons.

From my late teens I lived with my aunt and uncle, Lillian and Paul Revere Miller on their Silverado Trail ranch in Calistoga. My aunt Lillian was a founder of Tucker Farm Center and became President of Napa County Farm Bureau in 1929 - the first woman president of any Farm Bureau in California.

On the Miller Ranch my main job was to pick prunes off the ground while on my knees. There were grapes there too and during Prohibition I helped my husband, Fred Lerner, make wooden boxes to hold 25 pounds of grapes, which were then shipped to New York for private wine making

An example of how that homemade wine could have been started was when I watched our Merced County ranch tenant wearing high boots as he stomped wine grapes in a tub to make a small amount of personal wine allowed during Prohibition when none could be bought legally.

For five school years, my parents and I lived on my father's 80-acre ranch south of Merced. He loved farming and had over 20 acres of almond trees and Thompson Seedless grapes which we picked and put on large brown paper sheets between the rows to make sun-dried raisins. If it rained, we went out and rolled those papers up and put them under the heavy vines to keep dry. The rest of that ranch was rented

out as a dairy, surrounded by green alfalfa fields that were irrigated by flooding with water from our reservoir.

I have always lived on ranches except for a few years on Cedar Street in Calistoga. Even then, my husband and I had fruit trees and a large vegetable garden on our extra lot at the side of our home. My husband, Fred, also grew up on a farm. It was only 8 acres on the side hill off Foothill Boulevard (Lerner Drive) in Calistoga which his father Philip Lerner bought in 1906. He cleared the land and had grapes, prunes, a milk goat, chickens, a vegetable garden and a blacksmith shop. He and his wife also had a small 4-cottage resort on the property until 1929.

Fred and I physically built our own home on that property 46 years ago. Now, at 97-years old, I still live in that same house and still have the farmer in me. Around my home I have a "mini farm" with 12 fruit trees. There are also 12 wine-barrel halves full of vegetables and pots of herbs placed at the edges of my sidewalks so I can plant and harvest vegetables and herbs for myself from my electric scooter!

The family farmer instinct carries on. My daughter, Evelyn Scherrer and her husband Ed live on their own large vineyard, owned by the Scherrer family since 1897, in Alexander Valley. Their daughter, Louise, is now their vineyard manager. Their son Fred Scherrer and his wife Judy own a winery near Sebastopol and Fred's son Ryan helps in the winery and also on his grandparents' ranch in the summer and on some weekends. My grandson, Ricky Sereni, fifth generation, raises sheep on Mt. St. Helena. Therefore, the farming gene goes on and on through six generations of the Bell family in California.

Brown Family (Troy Blackwell), Napa, California

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1872

From where did they emigrate? Originally Germany through Ohio then to Napa

Who were those first family members? Malcolm Brown and Annie Holdorf

What did they do? We had a vineyard in the 1930's, as well as prunes. The ranch was primarily a Dairy Farm.

Where was their farming operation located? 1345 Henry Rd Napa CA (Current home to Artesa Winery) we sold the ranch in 1989; it was in the family for over 100 years.

How was the operation run? It was a family-run business. We milked up to 650 head of cows; the rest of the ranch was in hay.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? We currently have a small ranch near the old Dairy. It is 11 acres at 5030 Old Sonoma Road. We have a couple of cows now; we irrigate just to maintain the land. My Grandfather eventually recognized that vineyards were moving into the valley. He turned himself self into a general engineer as a farmer and put in most of the vineyards and reservoirs in Napa; the landscape is dotted with his work.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? When my Grandpa believed that the vineyards would never make it in the Napa Valley, they ran the cow guys out of town. We also had the first steam bailer in the valley for bailing hay.

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? The farm Bureau has done a nice job of preserving land from being over developed.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Continue to keep land from being over developed

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? Continue to host events, and share the stories from the past to the next generations.

Don Buhman, Napa, California Interviewed by Dana Estensen

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? April 1872

From where did they emigrate? Prussia, now known as Germany, to Cow Hollow area in San Francisco to Napa Valley

Who were those first family members? John Buhman and Genevieve Dunkel
What did they do? Dairy cows and raised grapes, plums and cherries
Where was their farming operation located? Redwood Road until he purchased several properties North and West of Napa City
How was the operation run? Family run
Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? Yes
How has this changed over the years? Raise beef cattle now of which we have a smaller herd and we planted 35 acres of grapes
What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? John Buhman arrived in Napa from San Francisco by boat, bringing his family's goods and cattle up the Napa River.
What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Lower property taxes; keep the Ag Preserve; get rid of Estate Taxes
What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? Not so many restrictions or permits; give farmers a break

Foster "Scooter" Clark, Napa County, California
Interviewed by Erin Bright Wilson Russell

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1844
From where did they emigrate? Kentucky - England before that
Who were those first family members? Granville Perry Swift – my great-great-grandfather. The clubhouse at Green Valley Country Club was his home. He was killed in Berryessa off a horse in 1875. Tom Clark. My uncle, Lilburn Clark's middle name was Swift. On the Clark side: my great-great-grandfather was buried at Spanish Flat at Monticello. Abraham Clark: born in 1880 in Kentucky. Came to California in 1864 to Sonoma and Colusa. Came to Berryessa in 1866 and farmed 10,000 acres there. The "Bureau of Wreck the Nation" flooded the Berryessa Valley. They ran everybody out in 1956. Farmers were paid "fair market value" for their land. But you know how it is, like your dad on his ranch (Terry Wilson of Rancho Chimiles), a farmer knows every rock and blade of grass on his land. The ground they bought elsewhere wasn't the same. They weren't able to farm elsewhere. They didn't know the ground.
What did they do? Abraham (died in 1891) farmed in Berryessa Valley on his 10,000 acres – middle/upper valley: 3,000 acres of wheat; 180 head of cattle; 800 hogs; 3,000 sheep. He was born in England in 1820. He came to New York in 1829, and then made his way out here. The Clarks have been involved in agriculture ever since. N.D. (Norman Delmar) Pete Clark – was a Napa County Supervisor when the Agricultural Preserve was established in 1968.
Where was their farming operation located? Berryessa Valley. They built a huge house which burned in 1927. The house had 22 rooms and 10 fireplaces. It cost \$10,000 to build. Our family also farmed in Sonoma. My ancestor, Swift, ran 45,000 acres in Sonoma. The clubhouse at Temelac Country Club was his home – they laid the cornerstone in 1858. They were part of the California Bear Flag Party. Story has it that they ran General Vallejo out.
How was the operation run? It was all run on horses – no gasoline engines of any sort. 128 head of horses and mules and 90 men to work. Some members of the Berryessa family were still around. Young guys did all the farm labor. Every farm kid worked on the farm.
Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? We made a decision to lease our land to Cal Plans, which is managed by John Rauck. They lease the land from us and do all the farming these days.
What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? Strictly a personal story: I worked for my dad Kenneth Clark, and my uncle Lilburn Clark, being a farm laborer 12-16 years. My uncle Lilburn had a heart of gold; he would be giving you hell and getting ready to give you his right arm. Lilburn had a couple sayings about me and my cousins: "You know a goddamn dumb apprentice like you ought to be paying me for the experience"; and "Get busy. You might as well be useful as ornamental – and you're sure as hell not very ornamental!"

Manual labor – many people won't do it today.

For us it was normal to work all day in the sun. We walked or biked to school. Life was more primitive and physically more demanding. Even the tractor was noisy and hard riding. All work was tougher physically.

I remember my days at Wooden Valley School. From the 4th grade on, I took a gun with me to school. My lady Grammar School teacher gave me a membership in the NRA as a gift. I carried a single shot .22. My philosophy on family farm generational transfers? Think of it like your mom and dad leaving you a cow. A cow gives milk. You can sell milk. If you sell the cow, you have no milk. Keep the goose that lays the golden egg.

What do you feel Farm Bureau had done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? I don't know. I think my dad was President, Kenneth Clark. I am not a member. Is Cal Plans a member? I don't think it's necessary for the government to be involved in every part of your land. Who is going to take better care of land than you? Is a bureaucrat?

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Farm Bureau should fight for the little guy. Government is a hindrance to constructive enterprise – that hindrance doesn't help.

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? Good farmers should be free to develop their property, i.e., if you want to plant crops. Government interference isn't doing any good. Example: On the FEMA flood map, they have Wooden Valley all under water. FEMA sent me a letter recommending flood insurance. How in the sam hell is this going to flood? My tax money paid someone to send this inane letter. Multiply that example by millions. All you want to do is something constructive.

George Clark, Napa County, California
Interviewed by Erin Bright Wilson Russell

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1862

From where did they emigrate? The Clark family emigrated from England to Iowa. The town was Clarksburg, Iowa. It is said they turned the first sod in Iowa.

Who were those first family members? Abraham Clark, my great-great grandfather

What did they do? They rented farming ground by Stornetta's dairy in Napa/Sonoma for two years, and then moved to Berryessa Valley.

Where was their farming operation located? Berryessa Valley, where they farmed 10,000 acres

How was the operation run? Oats, wheat, and barley tilled with mules. The grain was hauled to Suisun, then went by barge to England where they weren't growing grains at the time. Later, after the building of the road from Berryessa to Napa was completed in 1883, they hauled the grain to the Hatt building in Napa. The grain was processed there and delivered to San Francisco.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? Yes, it still has an active role. I am the only one still in the livestock business. The family has been in the livestock business in Wooden Valley since 1917. Our grain producing ended by the flooding of Berryessa Valley in 1957. We planted prunes, grapes and pears and ran livestock in Wooden Valley from 1917-1970, when we planted it all to grapes. Some livestock was maintained.

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? I know we used to enjoy the Farm Bureau benefits at the Napa County Farm Supply Store at Union Station on Solano Avenue. Stella Williams was the last person to run it. You could buy anything you needed to operate your farm: ladders, prune buckets, fence wire, all farm needs.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Keep property taxes down, as well as the onerous regulatory procedures that are negatively affecting business. They can't regulate the weather, so...

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? All older people can do is help younger people by imparting their knowledge and experience.

Cole Family (Joseph Barkley), St. Helena, California
Interviewed by Anne Nissen

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1863

From where did they emigrate? Woodland, CA. Before that, a covered wagon from the east

Who were those first family members? David and Lieurnah Cole

What did they do? Farmers and winemakers. Farmed walnuts, grew hops and wine grapes, and raised cattle in Conn Valley.

Where was their farming operation located? South side of Pope Street in St. Helena. The winery was at the end of McCorkle Street in St. Helena. When the winery closed, they moved in with their daughter, Florence, and son-in-law, Charles Greenfield. Florence and Charles bought a 6,000 acre ranch for their son, Guy, who wanted to be a cowboy. In the 1920's, Guy decides the ranch is not big enough for him and leaves. The property was leased several times from 1920 to 1948. In 1948, Florence and Charles' daughter, Lieurna Greenfield and her husband Oscar Peter ("O.P.") Erdahl moved from Walnut Creek to run the ranch. Between 1969 and 1981 it was leased again until Lieurnah and O.P.'s daughter, Florence and her husband Joseph Barkley, moved to the ranch. 450 acres is now in a land trust.

How was the operation run? By family and friends

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? Now in Conn Valley, starting in 1909

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? "Kept their eyes on the ball" all these years to aid in farming problems coming from all directions.

Jim Frediani, Napa County, California
Interviewed by Norma Tofanelli

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1906 after the San Francisco earthquake.

They had a drayage company in SF. Army confiscated all the wagons and stock in SF after the quake. They WERE reimbursed. Used their last wagon and team (which had been on the Sausalito side of the ferry) to move them to Calistoga. Bought the Pickett Rd half of the property from Pickett with the money they had been given ... except for a chunk they used to help form the Bank of Italy ... except they didn't get anything in writing.

From where did they emigrate? San Francisco (after emigrating there from Italy)

Who were those first family members? Ida Lecari and her first husband David Lecari. After David passed, she married Abramo Frediani at the time he lived in Knight's Valley, sometime before 1919.

What did they do? Grapes, prunes and olives.

Where was their farming operation located? Calistoga

How was the operation run? On a shoe-string budget. The whole family worked. About what you'd expect in 1906 agriculture.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? Ida and Abramo's son Eugene carried on and expanded the farming operations. Since Eugene's passing in 1978, his son Jim has been operating the vineyards. Eugene's grandson, Ken Flynn, is now assisting in the vineyard as well. Eugene's daughter MarySue and her husband own On The Edge Winery on Spring Mountain in St. Helena. Eugene's widow, Jeanne, now 92, still does all the ranch book keeping by hand - no computers allowed!

Jim says: Well, child labor-laws being what they are, the whole family doesn't work anymore. But I do put any relations I see standing around to work during harvest. It's amazing how many stay away August through November now :)

Also, with things like shoot-positioning, de-leafing and crop thinning, there is no longer dead time from the end of June until prune picking started. Of course, there

aren't any prunes, walnuts, hay or olives any more either.
All things we used to deal with in the '50s and early
'60s.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? The anvil-carrying race my grandfather and a local blacksmith used to do down the main drag of Calistoga every 4th of July. Usually after a heavy round of wine consumption, and after sunset. Whoever carried the anvil the farthest won. One of them made it as far as the rail depot one year, but my aunt couldn't remember which one. They'd start at Foothill, so the first leg was downhill.

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? Supporting the Ag Preserve.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Keep protecting the Ag Preserve!

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? Reversion to the principles of dry farming. Ag that relies on a lot of water is not going to be "sustainable" too much longer, as more and more urban expansion will be looking for more and more sources of water. It's inevitable. The "people" in Sacramento don't want agriculture in California. They want more and more houses, thus more and more voters. More voters, more political clout. One went as far as to say we can import food cheaper from Mexico and Chile than grow it here. Short-sighted, in my opinion. But that's where their interests lie.

Joseph Ghisletta, Napa, California
Interviewed by Anne Nissen

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1904

From where did they emigrate? Switzerland; worked his passage on a lumber ship, landing at Salt Point, near Sea Ranch, CA

Who were those first family members? Joseph Peter Ghisletta, Sr. and his wife, Mary Luchini; married in 1904

What did they do? Established a dairy business, grew hay and raised all replacement Holsteins; the business was Joe Ghisletta and Sons at first and later became Ghisletta Brothers

Where was their farming operation located? First Silverado Trail, south of Yountville; then in 1913 bought 300 acres 2 miles south of Napa: from the Napa River west to Foster Road

How was the operation run? By family members and all milkers were hired from Switzerland. They all spoke Swiss-Italian dialect.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? 1971: Family left dairy business but still herding cattle

1978: Joseph and Stephen retired; Grandson Joe leases land – strictly cattle but farms grapes on other property

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? His grandfather brought power to the area. Also altered milking routines to 1 AM/1 PM to allow more family time

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? This generation helpful for information and classes they offer to all the members

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Continue to work with local government to keep housing to a limited amount

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? Perhaps allow wineries to serve food with wine for more opportunities to teach food and wine appreciation; continue more events to hook kids to farming

Joseph Ghisletta Narrative:

Joe Ghisletta, whose fine farm, two miles south of Napa, is one of the most valuable and best improved ranches in this section of the county, was born in Switzerland in 1870, a son of Steve and Marguerite

Ghisletta, both deceased, and who were for many years engaged in the dairy business in Switzerland. He attended the public schools of his native land and remained at home until he was eighteen years of age, and in 1888 he immigrated to the United States, coming to Mendocino County, California. He remained there about two years and in 1890 located in Sonoma County and embarked in the dairy business on his own account, meeting with success. Nine years later he went to Bodega Bay, where he was engaged in the dairy business for about three years, at the end of which time he sold out and returned to his native land for a visit. In 1904 he returned to California, locating in Napa County, where for eleven years he was engaged in the dairy business near Yountville. Mr. Ghisletta then bought three hundred acres of land two miles south of Napa and has there run a dairy farm continuously to the present time. He keeps a herd of fine cattle and so manages his farm and directs its operations as to gain the best results. He has made many improvements on his property, which, at a conservative estimate, has doubled in value since he bought it, and he is recognized as one of the most progressive and up to date farmers in this locality.

While on his visit to his old home in Switzerland, in 1904, Mr. Ghisletta was married to Miss Mary Luchini, who was born in that country, November 20, 1881, and attended the public schools there. They are the parents of three children, Mary, Joe and Steve, all of whom remain at home with their parents. Politically, Mr. Ghisletta gives his support to the Republican Party, while his religious faith is that of the Roman Catholic Church, of which he is a faithful communicant. He has taken a keen interest in the general welfare of the community and joins heartily with his fellow citizens in any proposed measure for the betterment of public conditions. Mr. Ghisletta has two brothers in this country, Rocco, who is engaged in the dairy business in Novato, Marin County, California, and Anthony G., who is in the dairy business in Chileno Valley, Sonoma County.

*History of Solano County, California by Marguerite Hune
and Napa County, California by Harry Lawrence Gunn
The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co.
Chicago 1926*

Gordon Family, Napa, California
Compiled by Don Gordon and Scott Panton

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1851. William Henry Gordon (1801-1876), a native of Ohio, was a fur trapper who went to New Mexico in 1823, where he married Maria Lucero (1805-1844). Gordon and his family came to California with the Workman-Rowland Party in 1841. In 1843, Gordon was granted the two square league Rancho Quesesosi—near his friend John Sutter—becoming the first pioneer settler of Yolo County. His wife died in 1844, and in 1855, Gordon married Elizabeth Corum. William Gordon's daughter, Isabel Gordon (1831-1890), married Nathan Coombs in 1845. William Gordon and his son-in-law Nathan Coombs purchased 17,762 acre Rancho Chimiles in Napa in 1851 for \$1,750.00. Chimiles gradually became known as Gordon Valley.

From where did they immigrate? Scotland to New York to Ohio to New Mexico to Yolo and Napa, California

Who were those first family members? William Gordon Sr., Maria Lucero Gordon, John Gordon, William Gordon Jr., Isabel Gordon Coombs, Joe Gordon, Sarah Gordon Ingrahm

What did they do? In the earliest years, they hunted and trapped. Soon after they began farming grains, oranges, figs, almonds, apricots, peaches, walnuts and grapes. Livestock has included goats, sheep, hogs, and cattle.

Where was their farming operation located? Where 6060 Gordon Valley Road in Napa is today; the Gordon Family barn built in 1871 is the oldest structure on the ranch and is still in working use today.

How was the operation run? In many ways, it was farmed much the way it is today. It's always been a working ranch run by family with additional hired help. Crops, livestock, and practices have changed, but the model remains the same.

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? Yes. It is currently farmed and ranched by 5th and 7th generation members of the Gordon Family.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? It is said that Isabel Gordon and Nathan Coomb's wedding was the first in the newly created California and that they needed to ride to Sacramento in order to have John Sutter perform the ceremony because it was the closest legal location.

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? Farm Bureau has worked to make the business of farming more profitable, and the community a better place to live. It has provided an organization for unified efforts, which have secured benefits that couldn't have been accomplished through individual effort.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Address and educate the consumer about agriculture in a proactive positive manner, and in a language they understand. Remain focused on land use and natural resource issues. Continue to understand the needs and differences of owner-operators vs. owners and custom operators.

What would you like to do to help the future of farming? What measures and methods would you like to see implemented to assist in that future? We feel farming's biggest hurdle is its consumer perception and understanding. There is inherent fear in the unknown. Information and education has been an agricultural focus, but its importance may be underrated.

William Wallace Hardin, Pope Valley, California
Interviewed by Anne Nissen

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? James and Matilde Dealy, 1850; Robert Stephens Hardin, 1868; George Pomeroy Wallace, 1868

From where did they emigrate? Dealy, Missouri; Hardin, Kentucky; Wallace, Tennessee

What did they do? Raised sheep, hogs, wheat crops, feed for stock; "drove sheep" to Oregon for sale.

Where was their farming operation located? Pope Valley: two ranches, about 8800 acres, bought in 1856 by Hardin and Wallace from Dealy (father-in-law)

How was the operation run? Hired help, housed/ seasonal/family; some skilled, i.e., sheep shearing; shared equipment, i.e., thresher

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years? Yes. Mechanization helps, but cattle still the same. Now lease some property for grapes. Still do all cattle operation.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? Been here so long, can't remember anything special.

What do you feel Farm Bureau has done to protect and preserve your family's farm over the years? Protect farmers from government issues for the most part.

What can Farm Bureau do to maintain your family's ability to farm for the next 100 years? Keep government out of people's "faces".

Haug Family (Ramona Haug Decker), St. Helena, California
Interviewed by Anne Nissen

When did your family first arrive in Napa County? 1873

From where did they emigrate? Esslingen, Germany

Who were those first family members? Gotthilf and Dora Haug

What did they do? Planted grapes, then prunes, apples, peaches, pears, walnuts, apricots, cherries. They built the winery in 1878.

Where was their farming operation located? Bought 143 acres on Ink Grade Road, Pope Valley

How was the operation run? By family

Does your family still have an active role in the farming operation? How has this changed over the years?

We sold the family farm in 1999. My son, Jim, still farms a family vineyard given to him by his Aunt Hilda.

What is your favorite story or memory from your family's history of farming in Napa County? The whole life on the farm. Drying prunes – so much work with different jobs for each variety. We had French prunes which went through a “shaker” machine with a gas motor. It would sort the big prunes staying on the top tray and the small ones would drop through to the bottom tray. The Imperial prunes, we dipped in hot lye water, then roll them out onto trays and put in the sun in the drying field. If it started to rain, we would have to stack the trays all up and cover; then spread them all out again when the rain stopped. If the harvest was late we had to use the dehydrator and watch it 24 hours! When that check came from Sunsweet we all got a little money for helping with the prunes.

Gary Heitz, Napa, California
Interviewed by Anne Nissen

Where was their farming operation located? They came from Westhoffen, a village in Alsace, Germany (now France) to San Francisco via Ellis Island in 1894. Michael, who had been an orchardist in Alsace, originally was a gardener at Holy Cross cemetery in Colma. After the death of a baby in the foggy air, he moved the family to Calistoga. In 1904 Michael and Louisa Heitz bought from the Skellengers a wooden Victorian home and 50 acres on highway 29 two miles south of Calistoga. He commuted by ferry and train on weekends for a while. In 1920, the house burned to the ground. In 1921 they built a stucco craftsman style home on the same site. While they were rebuilding, some of the younger children stayed with the neighbors, the Holjis, at St. Michael's Villa.

Who were those first family members? The first family members in Calistoga were Michael and Louisa and their 11 surviving children. Of those 11, descendants of 7 of them still live in the Napa Valley. Many of the third and fourth generation are involved in the vineyard and winery businesses: Molinaris, Bertoluccis, Del Bondios and 2 of the Heitz brothers' families. Fred and Walt Heitz' sons still farm on the old property.

What did they do? They farmed wine grapes; had a fruit orchard and raised hogs, geese and chickens for their own use. Surplus was sold to the store in Calistoga where they bought sugar, coffee, thread, etc. and at the end of the month, the store owed them money. It was all kept track of in a ledger. In 1906 they built the M. Heitz Winery, Bond #130 and produced wine from their grapes. When Prohibition went on and on, they took out most of the vineyard and planted prunes, pears, and walnuts, which were sold to the Fruit Exchange. Just before the end of Prohibition, they pulled the bungs on the casks and let the wine run down the ditch. There is a well-known photo of Louisa, Jack, and Michael having a last drink before Prohibition. Three walls of the old winery still stand on Heitz Way. After Prohibition, they planted wine grapes again and sold them to Napa Wine Company and later to the Napa Valley Cooperative Winery where Fred was a winemaker. In the 50's, Fred replanted to Chenin Blanc and Gamay. He thought that by having a “black” and a white grape, one or the other would always be in favor. The horses were gone and he had a Ford wheel tractor and a disc. They did keep a small block of Charbono grapes, which were sold to Inglenook by Michael, Fred and then Gary. In the 80's, Gary replanted the ranch to Charbono under contract to Inglenook. Now his son, Peter, is replanting some of the Charbono to other varieties for his own wine label, Shypoke. Shypoke is a folk name used by Michael and Fred for the blue herons that come into the Napa River by the ranch. In 1958, the State rerouted Highway 29, which then cut through the ranch. The old highway 29 was renamed Heitz Way.



Napa from Sonoma Hills. Courtesy of Adair Louise Tench



Picked wine grapes. Courtesy of the Society of California Pioneers



Prune drying at the Napa Fruit Company's drying yards.
Courtesy of Adair Louise Tench



Hauling grapes to winery. Courtesy of the Society of California Pioneers



Unloading grapes at winery. Society of California Pioneers



Plowing Home Place Flats with Sampson Tractor.
Courtesy of the Lincoln and Stewart Families



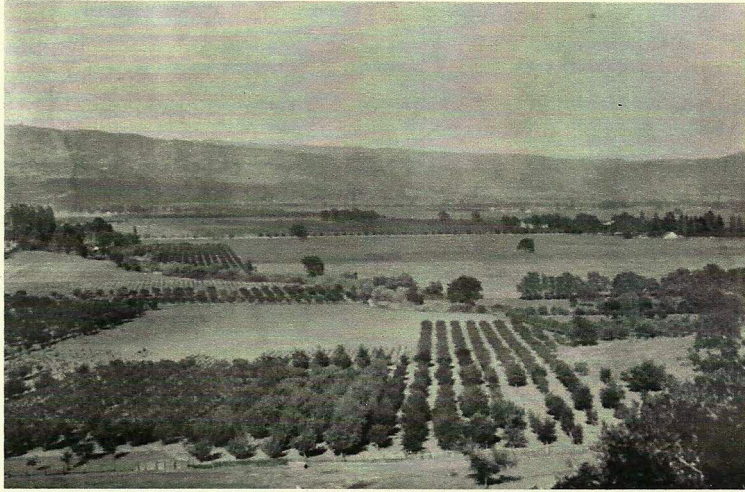
Courtesy of the Brown Family



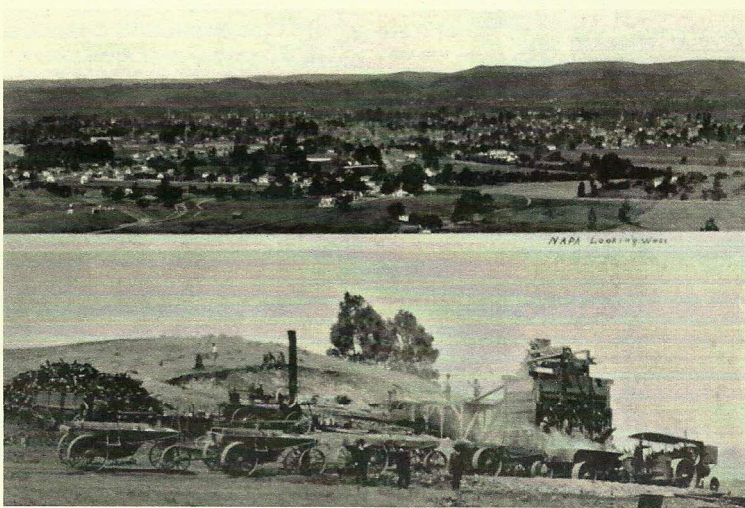
Brown Family Homestead. Courtesy of the Brown Family



Courtesy of the Brown Family



Orchards of John Darms. Courtesy of Adair Louise Tench



Top: Napa looking West. Bottom: Machinery
Courtesy of Adair Louise Tench



Courtesy of the Tofanelli Family