

Sonoma County's Landscape and Horticultural History

Thomas A. Brown

The land in what is now Sonoma County was initially home to Native Americans, with their principal tribes the Pomo, Wappo, and Miwok. Like other California Indians living in terrains with mild climates and generous vegetation, they practiced neither horticulture (cultivating plants for special purposes, including ornamental ones) nor agriculture (growing groups of plants systematically, mostly for use as food crops or as forage for livestock). They relied greatly on local plants, not only for food but also to supply many other practical needs. Wild animals, shellfish, and salmon provided most of their dietary protein. As hunter-gatherers the natives made little impact upon the landscape, though they practiced a few simple land-management tactics such as protecting the sedges used in their intricate basketry work. Clearing the grassland around oak trees through controlled burning made it easier to gather acorns—one of their staple foods.

The Spanish Settlement Period

In 1769 Spain began colonizing Alta California, and in 1776 founded Mission San Francisco de Asís and a presidio at the tip of the peninsula jutting out northwardly into San Francisco Bay. During the two previous centuries, ships—usually Spanish—had passed along the coast north of the bay, and sometimes captains and their crews came ashore, as Sir Francis Drake did in 1579 to repair his ship. Late in the 18th century soldiers from the presidio occasionally explored areas in what are now the counties of Marin, Sonoma, and Napa, which were reachable only by boat.

The first horticulturists and farmers in Sonoma County were the Russians, who created Fort Ross on the coast in 1812, in a plan to supply the Alaskan fur-trade colonies of Sitka, Kodiak, and Unalaska with food from their fields, orchards, and livestock, along with pelts of sea otters

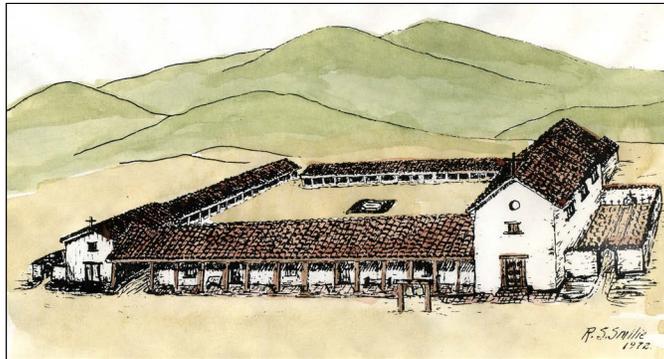
caught by the Aleuts who had come with them. (The California poppy, the state flower, acquired its botanical name, *Eschscholzia californica*, from a visiting Russian naturalist.) When the Russians' farming efforts proved insufficient, they sent ships down to the San Francisco presidio, where wheat, tallow, and dried or brined beef produced by the northern missions could be purchased and paid for in

pelts, various articles crafted by the Russians (including small boats), and—when absolutely necessary—coin. Neither side adhered to the Spanish edict forbidding all trade with foreigners. Spain, embroiled in the war of Mexican Independence, could spare neither men nor resources to prevent this traffic or to dislodge the Russians. Meanwhile the seldom paid and perennially under-supplied military benefited from this illegal but necessary commerce.

Spain established a foothold north of San Francisco Bay on the Marin peninsula in 1817 when Mission San Rafael Arcángel was founded as a haven for ailing Indian neophytes who, removed from the cool and damp mission in foggy San Francisco, might benefit from the warm, sunny climate there. It proved successful by improving the natives' health and sending its agricultural products to the San Francisco settlement.

The Mexican Era

In 1823 Californios learned Mexico had finally won its independence from Spain, which made California a province of the new nation. The Mexican government, as the Spanish one before it, wanted to prevent the Russians from occupying fertile areas well beyond Fort Ross and thereby threaten the Hispanic hold on the Bay area. Past experience in the Americas had shown that claiming land was not sufficient to hold it; only colonizing could do that—which



The probable appearance of Mission San Francisco Solano in Sonoma, c. 1836, before the collapse of its large church. The chapel on the left, originally a granary, was rebuilt in its present form by Vallejo in 1840-41; the long colonnaded veranda remain in place today. From Robert S. Smilie, The Sonoma Mission (1974); color added by Thomas Brown.

meant that they might thwart the Russians by creating a new settlement close to Fort Ross. A young priest, José Altimira, secured the governor's permission to start a new mission north of San Rafael. Having visited different places, he chose a location with these desirable features: "a mild climate, arable land, stone, woods and springs." And there in the Sonoma Valley on July 4, 1823, Padre Altimira founded Mission San Francisco Solano, honoring a saintly Spanish missionary who had served in Peru. It would be the last and northernmost link of the Franciscan mission chain that had begun over a half-century earlier in San Diego, and also the only mission established under Mexican rule. All the California missions enlisted Native American labor in both building work and agriculture. The process of converting Indians to Christianity followed a simple baptism rite, and it induced the *neofitos* (from the Latin *neophyti*, meaning "new plants") to reside at the mission, where they would learn and perform basic skills essential to the local colonizing efforts.

Construction of buildings began in October, with the new mission sited about 200 feet north of an Indian village located next to a small creek, with its beehive-shaped huts made from the abundant tule reeds growing there. The open space between mission and village served as a public square and meeting place. European-style agriculture came in quickly. At first the new mission was supported by its sister missions, which not only supplied food, but also furnished plants, seeds, and plant parts to start a variety of crops, trees for providing fruit and shade, and a vineyard. The fields probably lay to the south of the mission and a small stream ran through them, useful for irrigating crops such as chick peas, maize (corn), beans, and squashes. The last three were New World plants, as were potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkins, and peppers, along with many other vegetables, fruits, herbs, and spices that were gradually added to the European cuisine.

Three years after its founding, the mission suffered a crisis when its Indian population rebelled against Padre Altimira and his strict regimen, which often subjected the neophytes to extreme punishments. After he fled back to his native Spain, his place was taken by the more benevolent Padre Fortuni. After he had gained the Indians' trust, they willingly tended crops and completed the several adobe buildings that comprised the mission. Crop surpluses beyond the needs of the resident Indians at this and other northern missions were often sold to or exchanged with the Russians at Fort Ross.

In 1833, to check further Russian expansion (for by then Fort Ross was operating three inland farms), the governor put young *Alférez* (ensign) Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo in

charge of starting two civilian settlements in the valleys where the cities of Santa Rosa and Petaluma are now located. But the ventures soon ended when the Church insisted that these desirable lands belonged to Mission San Francisco Solano. In the next year, however, came the decree that secularized all California missions and required them to give up their extensive land ownership. Vallejo, elevated to the rank of *Comandante*, was ordered to house and command a garrison of troops next to Mission San Francisco Solano, where he also was to dispose of its temporal assets. (The pueblo's name, Sonoma, reportedly began as an Indian word for "nose"—the nickname of a local chieftain with a large proboscis; it was then assigned to this first permanent town in the future Sonoma County.)

Just to the west of the mission Vallejo laid out a new plaza—the largest one created in Alta California. On its north side he built a barracks for the garrison and next to it the two-story Casa Grande that housed his office on the ground floor and a residence above. At its west end was a three-story tower from which he could view his troop's exercises in the plaza. To build these and colonists' houses, mission buildings were cannibalized for large wood timbers



The remaining northern half of Mariano Vallejo's large adobe casa today. Built in the late 1830s, it served as the main residence and workshop center of his 66,000-acre rancho, where hundreds of rancho workers lived. Preserved and restored, it's the main feature at Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park. www.petalumaadobe.com/photos/

and still-sound adobe bricks. The large church collapsed in 1838, weakened by heavy rains when its roof was in process of being redone. In 1841 Vallejo replaced it with the adobe chapel that is still in use today.

The secularization of all 21 California missions released to civilian control hundreds of thousands of acres of mission-held lands. Vallejo, in charge of inventorying Mission San Fernando Solano's possessions, including its lands, recommended to the new governor those local people who merited land grants. Intelligent, resourceful, and energetic, he was well-positioned to benefit himself from this largess. Additional acreage was awarded to his relatives, including brothers and two *Americanos* who had married Vallejo's sisters. His mother-in-law, Maria Ignacia Lugo de Carrillo, received Rancho Cabeza de Santa Rosa, and the adobe house she built in 1838 on the south bank of Santa Rosa Creek became the first permanent non-Indian habitation north of Sonoma.

Initially the California missions had been assigned the task of training Indians to become productive and self-sufficient, whereupon they were to receive their own land. But this rarely happened. In the chaotic period following

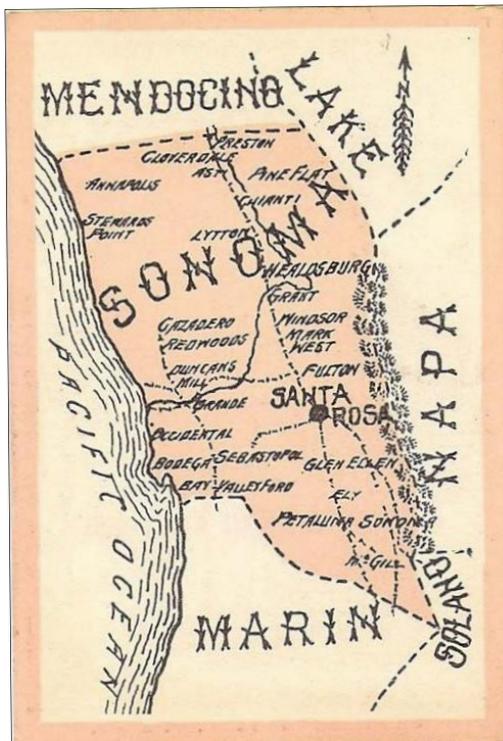
secularization, natives who had lived and worked at Mission San Francisco Solano, most with less than a decade of exposure to the white man's "civilizing" ways, became homeless. Vallejo provided many hundreds of them—those who had survived the horrific epidemics of European diseases such as smallpox—with a place to stay and food; for this, they tended the large cattle herds and flocks of sheep, made useful goods in a variety of workshops, and built Vallejo's huge second home. The adobe building on his 66,000-acre Rancho Petaluma was the largest adobe ever constructed in Alta California. (Half of it, restored, is the main feature at Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park.)

The major occupations in the region in the 1830s and '40s, as elsewhere in Mexican California, were cattle and sheep ranching. The new rancho-owning families grew crops to furnish food for themselves and their workers, including the cattle-tending vaqueros—most of them *indios* or *mestizos*.

Meanwhile the natural environment declined. In valleys and adjacent hillsides, woodlands disappeared as large trees were cut down for building material and firewood, and the tender green seedlings growing up to replace them were eaten by livestock and deer. Grazing had another effect: introduced annual grasses out-competed the native grasses, many of which were perennial bunch-grasses that had stayed green for much of the year. Sheep and goats not only ate the bunch grasses but also pulled up their roots.

In 1841 the Russians abandoned Fort Ross, since the local sea otter population had been exterminated and farming yields were disappointing. Immigrants, mostly Americans, increasingly were coming into Alta California as fur-trading mountain men, seamen, farmers, and practical businessmen of various kinds. Settling down and eager to share the land, they set up enterprises that required particular skills lacking among the Californios in their rancho-focused economy. Some managed to acquire land grants after becoming Catholics and citizens of Mexico; they often married into Californio families.

The first great challenge to Mexican rule in California erupted in Sonoma in 1846. Several dozen armed Americans—angry, rambunctious, and oddly garbed—arrived in the plaza on June 14, took General Vallejo captive, and raised their handmade, grizzly bear-decorated flag to launch the Bear Flag Republic. They hadn't heard yet that the US had already declared war against Mexico. Though Vallejo already admired the American's entrepreneurial spirit, and actually welcomed an American takeover, he spent the next several months imprisoned at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento.



Promotional map of Sonoma County, 1913, showing cities, towns, the Mayacamas Mountains, and railroad lines. Oddly, though, "Solano" takes the place of the location of San Pablo Bay. Gail Unzelman Collection.

For a half-year longer, California supplied some battlegrounds for skirmishes in the Mexican War. By February of 1848 the war had officially ended and the transition from territory to US statehood began. Sonoma County was one of the state's original 27 counties. It was created on February 17, 1850, although California was not officially admitted as the 35th state until September. (There are now 58 counties. Sonoma had initially contained what became Mendocino County in 1859.)

The town of Sonoma was at first selected as the county seat, but in 1854 Santa Rosa—rapidly ascendant as a commercial center—took over that designation after its politicians waged an underhanded campaign. By the time California achieved statehood and such matters were being decided, large changes were already taking place that would affect Sonoma County's future—and its various landscapes.

Landscape Transformations

In 1848, shortly after the signing of the treaty that ended the Mexican War, gold was discovered in the Sierra Nevada foothills. San Francisco, providing the main entryway to the gold fields, soon came virtually under siege. Thousands (eventually about 100,000) of eager gold seekers arrived in the area in ships from different ports around the world, or came overland in wagons or by foot. During the early 1850s this influx created population centers that grew into townships, with many evolving into the cities of today. In each place there was at least one occupation that provided income—whether a form of commerce, farming (which included livestock and poultry raising), the lumber industry, or quarrying. Within Sonoma County each form of employment or industry used the natural landscape in some way and thereby altered it.

The Gold Rush probably created more fortunes among those who supplied the miners than among the miners themselves. Since California manufactured very little at the time, almost everything had to be imported: pickaxes, gold-washing pans, saws, and clothing, along with basic staples like flour and lard. Diet at the mines might utilize wild game for meat, but the dearth of vegetables, fruit, and dairy products resulted in high food prices. San Francisco rapidly expanded as both primary entry point for aspiring gold miners and transshipment center for goods of all kinds traveling up the Sacramento River to the gold fields.

Since people needed to eat, it was urgent and sensible to produce food in areas close to San Francisco—including Sonoma County, parts of which had been settled from the

*"The Yankees are a wonderful people—wonderful! Wherever they go, they make improvements. If they were to emigrate in large numbers to hell itself, they would irrigate it, plant trees and flower gardens, build reservoirs and fountains and make everything beautiful and pleasant, so that by the time we get there, we can sit down at a marble-topped table and eat ice-cream."
—Mariano G. Vallejo*



General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo (1808-1890). Photo: Wikipedia.

1830s on, if sparsely. There and elsewhere, many of the desirable bottomlands had been included in the Hispanic land grants, and these acreages were still family holdings, though occasionally portions of them had been deeded to pay debts. Inevitably, the closed-ownership situation frustrated and infuriated would-be occupants. Men who had given up the arduous work in the mining country, and intended to remain in California, often sent for wives and relatives to join them. They now wanted land to settle down on, then find ways to make a living from it. Different kinds of land, needed for various development purposes, became increasingly valuable. Land became a medium of exchange.

The treaty ending the war had guaranteed the original land grants, but the American legal system began to require that those claiming ownership must now produce documents proving the legitimacy of these grants. Confirmation by the courts was a tedious process that could take as long as 15 years and often resulted in denials. Meanwhile, taxes on land ownership had to be paid—and not as before in hides, produce, or workshop goods. Squatters who were occupying and farming on unused rancho lands refused to leave; when they challenged the rights of owners to expel them, deals might be made. Circling around in all this confusion were unscrupulous lawyers who could first exhaust an owner's capital by charging high fees, and then were later paid off by receiving a portion of his rancho property. Over time, in Sonoma County much of the land in the original Mexican grants was dispersed.

Whether coming by boat or overland, a fast-growing number of people entered the new Sonoma County to settle down, intending to labor on the land or set up a profitable business. Access to the markets in San Francisco of course required shipping goods from San Pablo Bay into the larger bay to the south. Although inland by some miles, Petaluma had an early advantage conferred by its navigable river (which for many years was called Petaluma Creek). Meanwhile, its hinterlands supplied exports of farm products to San Francisco, and took in imports of manufactured goods and staples not produced yet in the region.

In 1849, a trading post near Petaluma Creek had been started by two former miners who hunted for deer, quail, and other game to supply meat to San Francisco. Two years later, James M. Hudspeth built a warehouse next to the creek, at what is now Washington Street, for storing

potatoes from Bodega and locally cut hay. The town soon became the shipping hub of Sonoma, Lake, and Mendocino counties, from which cargoes of potatoes, eggs, fruit, grain, and dairy products were transported across the bay to hungry San Franciscans and up to Sacramento. Hay was essential to feed all the horses. By 1857 the town had several hotels, along with churches, saloons, brothels, shops, mills, and lumber yards, and it incorporated the next year.

Even before the American takeover, enterprising non-Hispanic settlers in California had made some changes in the appearance of both its natural and rancho-altered landscapes by introducing machinery invented and widely used elsewhere. In Sonoma the lumber industry had an early start in the early 1840s, when New England sea captain Stephen Smith saw promise in timber growing along the Sonoma coast. Knowing that the Mexicans lacked equipment to create building-quality lumber, he acquired in Maryland the makings for a steam-powered sawmill, which he brought to California to install at Bodega Bay. He was rewarded by being granted Rancho Bodega. Elsewhere, efficient new gristmills were introduced to convert grain into flour.

In the 1850s lumbering became an important early industry in the valleys of the Russian River and its tributaries, with their dense stands of redwoods. The settling-down of so many newcomers in San Francisco and communities around it in the Gold Rush period had created a huge demand for wood, and many new buildings used redwood from Sonoma County. Coming from a culture and tradition of forestland, Americans and northern Europeans consumed far more wood than the Mexicans had in building their homes and outbuildings. The Hispanic building style utilized sun-dried adobe bricks for the walls, saving wood for beams, posts, lintels, and roofing. In contrast, the immigrants were steeped in an architectural standard that tended to use wood for everything in the house except the foundations and the hearth. (In commercial buildings, though, the walls were often made of stone or brick.) Forest-located communities in Sonoma County began as lumber camps that logged redwoods and sent them downriver to sawmills, with the finished wood then shipped to San Francisco or other destinations. (Guerneville, the site of one of the early sawmills, was first called Stumptown.) The pace of logging and lumber production would greatly accelerate after railroads were introduced into Sonoma County.

New residents in Sonoma didn't just consume trees as firewood, building materials, and charcoal for industrial uses; they also began planting them to beautify their surroundings, offer shade, and provide different kinds of fruit and nuts. The trees they were planting were seldom the native ones close at hand that continued to be felled—notably the redwoods and oaks—but familiar fast-growing and deciduous species indigenous to the Eastern states and Europe. (Plants from Asia and Australia came a little later.) Thus there was a mounting need for conveniently located sources of plants and for the skilled people who would import, reproduce, prepare them for eventual sale, plant them, and tend them when necessary—both nurserymen and knowledgeable horticulturists.

Evolving Agriculture in Sonoma County

Sonoma quickly responded to the great demand for foods of many kinds brought on by the great population surge that accompanied and then followed the Gold Rush. Farming benefited from the vigorous lumbering industry as more cleared lands became available for crops, orchards, and livestock, as well as sites for new settlements for the people who would tend or market them. The Americans also brought in or improvised farming machinery that grew ever more efficient and reduced labor costs.

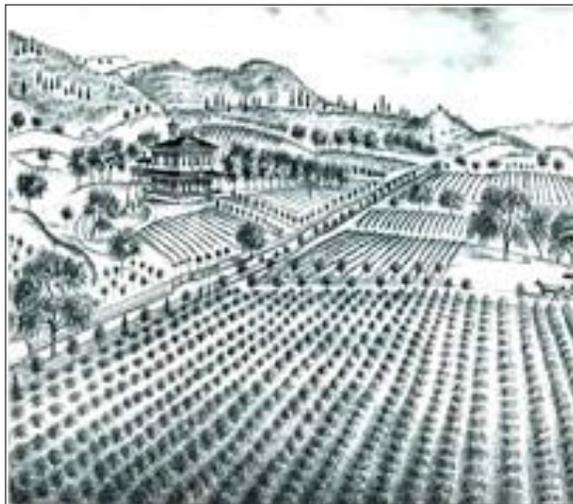
The county's first agricultural boom had come with fast-growing potatoes, which were durable and easy to ship. By 1854 a full 10 percent of the county's occupied arable land was planted to this crop. Early centers of potato production were close to the coast, near Bodega Bay. Inevitably, overproduction resulted in a glut and then a price collapse, followed by a steep drop in acreage. This root vegetable also soon exhausted the thin-soiled marine terraces, which then were given over to cattle ranching, even though sometimes the forage was poor.

Invariably, agriculture changed to accommodate market needs. The longhorn cattle herds of the Hispanic ranchos were unsuitable for the new calls for dairy products and good-quality meat. Since the flatlands and grassy hillsides in the southern part of the county were well suited for raising livestock, entire herds of cattle breeds favored by Americans were driven overland from other states and territories by cowboys, as were flocks of improved varieties of sheep, wanted for both wool and mutton. Many large poultry farms started up to produce eggs as well as meat.

Hay continued to be grown at various locations for San Francisco's equine population, and continued right into the early years of the 20th century. (In fact, hay trucks loaded with still-green bales are even today seen in late spring and early summer in Petaluma.) Wheat was another important crop, as were barley, oats, and corn. Hops, a specialty crop important in adding a touch of bitterness to fermenting beer, did particularly well in the Healdsburg area, and hop kilns dotted the landscape. But above all, by the late 19th century Sonoma County's agricultural output was best known for the fruits produced and shipped elsewhere. Fruit growing favored apples and plums—especially the smaller and sweeter plums that made good prunes. The need to rapidly propagate fruit-tree rootstock and scions for grafting called for specialized nurseries and well-experienced grafters.

Despite the success of Pomona, Bacchus triumphed. The wine grape became the most historically and economically significant crop grown in Sonoma County. (See "Early Winegrowing in Sonoma County," p. 12.) Vineyards now

occupy many of the former orchards, and also increasingly take over lands that had either been left natural or were used for other purposes. Cattle still graze on dairy farms in the southwest part of the county, but Petaluma's once ubiquitous chicken ranches have moved to the Central Valley. Sonoma County has become a haven for organic and biodynamic farmers, who produce specialty crops such as unusual lettuces and other salad greens that are featured at upscale restaurants and sold at farmers' markets.



Sketch of Sonoma vineyards and orchards in 1877. From The Historical Atlas, Sonoma County, California.

New Kinds of Transportation Accelerate Changes

Agricultural products when not consumed locally or requiring immediate processing must be moved quickly and efficiently into shipping centers or market areas. Under Mexican rule, horseback was the usual mode of overland travel, and the few existing primitive roads posed problems to the occupants of lumbering ox-pulled *carretas*, with wheels made from round tree-trunk slices. Transporting goods or people from place to place was mainly done in shallow-bottomed boats that could navigate the

Petaluma and Sonoma creeks at flood tide. Otherwise, the trip between Petaluma and Sonoma would require a very long walk or ride.

The impatient new Sonoma farmers, eager to move their goods to places that would pay for them, soon constructed wider and smoother roads to accommodate wagons, as well as the stagecoaches that regularly carried passengers and mail, greatly speeding up and improving communication and sociability (though after rainstorms the muddy roads often became unusable). Bridges were built to span the creeks and rivers that abounded in the county.

Petaluma, with its river providing the main entry into the interior, kept growing as the county's commercial hub. In the 1860s the river was shortened and improved when Chinese laborers (who also dug wine caves, tended vineyards, and crushed the grapes) cut through some oxbow meanders and dredged a deeper channel—changes that provided access for the larger flat-bottomed schooner scows and even small paddle-wheel steamers that also plied the bay.

The next improvement in transportation was the railroad. In 1864 the first one arrived: a one-mile-long standard-gauge railway going from Petaluma to a ferry port at the mouth of on Petaluma Creek—Haystack Landing. But after the locomotive exploded in 1866, for a few years the coaches were pulled by horses along the track. In 1869 the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad (SF&NP) began a railroad going northward from Petaluma, reaching Santa Rosa in 1870 and Cloverdale in 1872. In 1879 the line was extended south to San Rafael; in 1882 it went another three miles south to Tiburon, where a new ferry terminal was

built. (The station and depot building are still there.) Branch lines were built from Santa Rosa to other parts of the county, and from Cloverdale the line continued north to Ukiah.

In time, steam-driven machinery, including that used for transportation and agricultural equipment, was replaced by petroleum-fueled engines. By the 1920s trucks had become the main means of hauling agricultural products to places where they would be transformed or marketed.

An Avalanche of Plant Immigrants

When Spain ruled California, the ports had been officially closed to all but Spanish vessels. While under Mexico these restrictions were eased, and when the US took over, ports were open to ships of all the world. They had brought Argonauts bound for the gold fields, and then a wide variety of trade goods and many new plants to satisfy the demands of the many new residents. A growing number of wealthy estate owners particularly wanted attractive and novel plants in their extensive gardens and conservatories.

During the almost 80 years of Spanish and Mexican control, probably about 250 species of plants were introduced to the region. By comparison, during the next half-century—up to 1900—over 11,000 species and varieties of fruit, cereals, forage, and ornamentals (also, inevitably, weeds) were introduced into California.

The completion of Union Pacific Railroad in 1869 made transcontinental transport far easier to bring in healthy live plants from Eastern and European growers. It would be largely nurserymen—a new and expanding profession in California—who arranged for this flood of plants to satisfy their many customers. Petaluma's easy connection to San Francisco via steamboat ensured that it early shared in the bonanza of new plants. Significantly, Patrick Barry, co-owner of the large and famous Mount Hope Nurseries in Rochester, New York, came west on the railroad in 1874 to meet with colleagues in California and drum up business. There is no evidence that he visited Sonoma County, but his business visit indicates the growth potential of the horticulture industry, along with the new ease of importing plants.

The first nurserymen in California knew little about the peculiarities of its climate. They introduced species familiar to them: trees, shrubs, and perennial plants that were deciduous species adapted to the much colder wintertime climates of Europe and the East Coast. It took a few years for people to realize that plants that needed to be carefully

protected in greenhouses during Eastern winters were perfectly hardy out of doors in this Far West state. Nurseries then began importing many broad-leaf evergreen species, particularly plants of all sizes from other Mediterranean-climate regions of the world—not just Southern Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa, but also such places as the Cape Province of South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and parts of South America and Asia.

The pioneer nurserymen varied widely in their horticultural knowledge. Some had already obtained training in Eastern nurseries. Others, however, relied on early horticultural publications that were all written by Easterners and therefore were based on Eastern or Midwestern conditions. Through hard experience it was gradually realized that California conditions presented significant differences not just in climate, but also in soils, water, parasites, beneficial and harmful insects, and even soil pathogens.

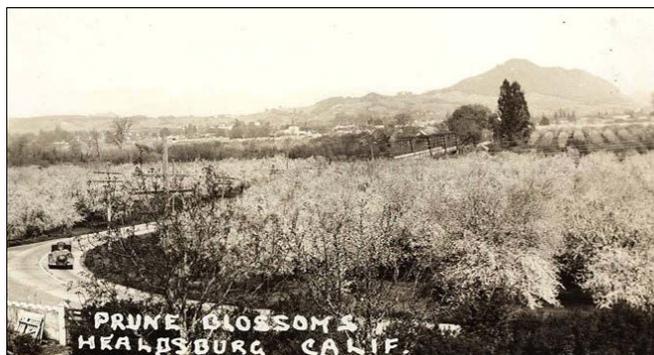
The need to investigate the unique circumstances for agriculture and horticulture in California provided the impetus and plenty of scope for research and field testing by professors—most notably Eugene W. Hilgard—at the fledgling University of California at Berkeley, where by the 1880s the importance of both plant-connected industries to the state's economy was finally recognized. Eventually this resulted in establishing three Agricultural Experiment Stations—in the Sierra foothills, another just south of San Jose (which specialized in eucalyptus species), and a third at Riverside (specializing in citrus trees). In 1915, the University "Farm" was established in the Central Valley at Davis—later to become a separate UC campus.

Early Plantsmen

Nurserymen are seldom given extensive mention in the official histories of our counties. Perhaps their temperament or the demands on their time in keeping plants alive precluded their participation in the political arena, and they were rarely so financially successful as to be considered their communities' movers and shakers. Nonetheless, these men and women played a large role in changing the face of California, and their work literally lives on beyond them. Perhaps one measure of their success can be seen in the urban and suburban areas of the state, where something like 90% of the plants we see are introduced species.

A surprising discovery in the study of 19th-century California nurseries came from perusing the Day Book of the California Nursery Company in Niles. The portion covering the late 1880s revealed a tremendous inter-nursery correspondence and commerce. Among Sonoma County's early nursery people were these men in Petaluma and Healdsburg:

W.A.T. (WILLIAM ABDIRE THOMPSON) STRATTON is said to be the first real nurseryman in Sonoma County. Born in Sullivan County, New York, he was only 17 when he arrived in San Francisco in 1853. He first worked at the Flint & Haile Nursery in Alameda, learning the business. He opened a large general nursery in Stockton in 1860. Disposing of it in 1864, he resettled in Petaluma, where he began a nursery in 1870. He was briefly (c.1878–79) editor of the *Floral Californian*. The 1884–1885 City Directory



Postcard showing prune plum orchards in bloom.
www.healdsburgmuseum.org

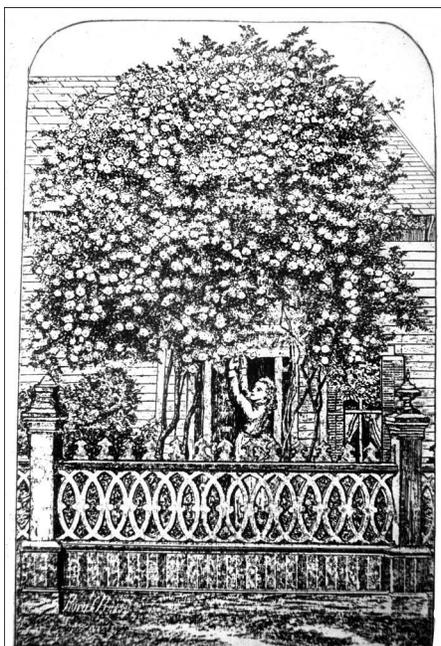
locates his residence and nursery on Upham, near Bodega Avenue.

In his early years Stratton was both nurseryman and florist. He specialized in flowering plants, particularly in roses and flower seed “of his own growing”—which is of interest because although flowers are grown in many places, often the growing season isn’t long enough for them to set and ripen good seed. By 1883 he listed a few shrubs in his catalog. However, by 1911 his main interest had shifted. He had an extensive stock, and was an early advocate of eucalyptus trees, in which he specialized. As Tom Gregory, author of *History of Sonoma County with Biographical Sketches*, wrote of Stratton:

As a state California has but recently awakened to the fact of the great value of the eucalyptus tree which grows to such perfection upon her soil, and which is taking its place among the prime commercial factors of the state. As a close student of conditions and progress Mr. Stratton has long since recognized the possibilities of this special tree and for many years has made it the subject of special study and investigation. His nursery is composed entirely of this specie of tree of the best varieties, with which he is constantly experimenting, both as to the varieties themselves, in his endeavor to find those best suited to requirements and conditions, as well as the fertilizer best suited to their propagation. As the knowledge of the value of the eucalyptus tree has become more general among citizens of the state Mr. Stratton’s business has grown in a like ratio, for he is recognized as an authority on the subject all over the state and shipments of young trees from his nursery are made to all points of the state.

WILLIAM HOWARD PEPPER, born in New York State in 1824, moved to California in 1850. He went first to the mines in Yuba County for 18 months, then ran a sawmill for six years. In 1858 he settled in Petaluma and opened Pepper’s Nurseries, with G.B. Pepper as co-proprietor. He always listed his occupation as farmer rather than nurseryman. The Greenhouses and Tree Depot were at the southwest corner of Washington and Liberty Streets. By 1877 he owned 201 acres located 6 miles northwest of Petaluma on the south side of Pepper (now Liberty) Road—where Pepper Lane is now. Catalogs were offered in several issues of “Pacific Rural Press” for 1874, but since no examples are known to exist, we have no solid idea of the selection or extent of his plants.

WILLIAM SEXTON is mentioned in the 1877 *New Historical Atlas of Sonoma County* as a nurseryman-grower of fruit, ornamental trees, and shrubbery. Born in Ohio in 1840, he came to California in 1853 with his father, Richard Kenann Sexton. They settled in Petaluma in 1865, and both referred to themselves as farmers. By 1877 William had 38 acres on Eastman Lane, about two miles west of town. The Sexton nursery was in business until at least 1900, although



Nursery catalog artwork promoting floral abundance of Burbank-era plants. From *The Floral World and Garden Guide* (1874), p. 158.

after 1883 William Sexton is not mentioned in city directories or voter records. It isn’t known whether he ever published catalogs or broadsheets, as none have come to light so far. He probably raised a variety of crops on his land, with only a small portion given over to nursery stock.

WILHELM A. REINHOLDT was born in Germany in 1854, a time of great social, economic, and political upheaval. He arrived in the US in 1879, but it isn’t known when and where he arrived in California. In 1887 he established a nursery between 6th and 7th streets in Petaluma, at 602 D Street (so it was sometimes called the “D Street Nursery”). Today there are three fine homes on the site. No catalogs are known, but he was mentioned in the 1895 city directory and the 1897 *Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County*. This extract conveys Sonoma horticultural tendencies at that time:

Ten years ago W.A. Reinholdt established the D Street Nursery, and it is now one of the best-equipped concerns of the kind in the county. Its stock includes fruit trees of every description, apple, peach, plum, apricot, cherry, pear, etc., together with every variety of berry bushes.

In the flower and ornamental foliage department are to be found all the famous roses, lilies, carnations, geraniums, begonias, violets, pansies, tulips and the rarest shrubs and exotics known to foreign climes. This splendid nursery has a large assortment of roses; strong plants grown in open ground. The nursery is completely equipped with hot houses and all the latest apparatus for a systematic conduct of the nursery trade.

Mr Reinholdt is a native of Germany. He came to this country eighteen years ago. He has worked in nurseries since he was fifteen years of age, and has been identified with the largest nurseries in San Francisco and Oakland.

Mr. Reinholdt raises and ships by the thousands the famous blue gum and Monterey Cypress trees, which are used for hedges, wind-breaks, etc. Millions of these have been sent by Mr. Reinholdt throughout Southern California in the last few years. He has won an enviable reputation for reliability and integrity and especially as to correctness in the labelling and selling his fruit trees. This it must be conceded is an important consideration with those growing fruit trees.

ANDREW BOUTON (sometimes erroneously spelled Bon-ton), born in New York State in 1831, came to California in 1858. According to the *New Historical Atlas of Sonoma County* (1877) and *The History of Sonoma County* (1889), he was employed for five years in managing the orchards of Oak Knoll Farm near Napa, and for two more years in managing the entire estate. Later he worked for a time in pruning and grafting operations on various local farms and orchards. In 1868 he settled in Sonoma County, where he established a nursery on 10 acres of his 120-acre ranch, located on the main highway between Cloverdale and

Healdsburg, about 5 miles north of the latter. By 1883 he had expanded the nursery and also had a fruit-bearing orchard of 25 acres.

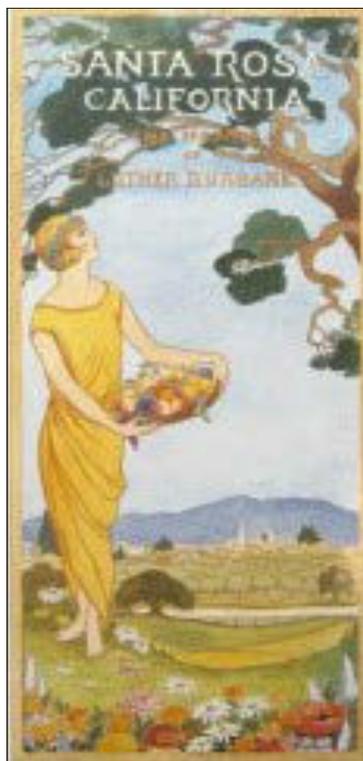
Two other early nurseries were located in Healdsburg. Edward Morgan is mentioned in the 1877 *New Historical Atlas of Sonoma County*, but no further details or catalogs are known. There is also a single existing catalog of the J.F. Miller Nurseries, thought to date from 1869.

As for Santa Rosa, the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland, had, in 1983, a single Wholesale Price List for 1893–94 of the Sonoma Valley Nursery in Santa Rosa. No information has come to light on its proprietor or when it began operation. Still, Santa Rosa was able to stake a claim of sorts to horticultural quality by the following article:

THE MAMMOTH ROSE-TREE OF SANTA ROSA is, we think, of sufficient importance to justify its being noticed in these pages. This immense rose-tree, now clothing the cottage of a Mr Rendall, of Santa Rosa, is an example of our old friend *Lamarque*, one of the finest of Noisette roses. It covers an area of 400 superficial feet, and in due season is fairly loaded with flowers. Indeed, so profusely does it bloom, that it has had no less than 4000 fully expanded roses and 20,000 buds at one time. It appears to have been planted fifteen years since, and so vigorous has been the growth from the first, that it now extends over the roof of the house, and when in bloom presents a magnificent sight. [*The Floral World and Garden Guide*, 1874, p. 158]

By the turn of the century, Santa Rosa's preeminence in horticulture within the county—indeed, within the state itself, nation, and even internationally—was secured because it was the home of the so-called “Plant Wizard.”

LUTHER BURBANK during his lifetime (1849–1926) and ever afterwards is Sonoma County's most celebrated nurseryman and horticulturist. (See the article on pages 13-14.) He chose many of his own projects but also accepted commissions from various distant nurseries and seed houses to transform some existing plant by increasing its flower size, creating new colors, introducing disease resistance, or improving flavor (as in edible plants), or encouraging the development of other traits held to be desirable.



1925 poster by Juanita Storch that promoted Santa Rosa as the home of Luther Burbank. Courtesy, LBH&G.

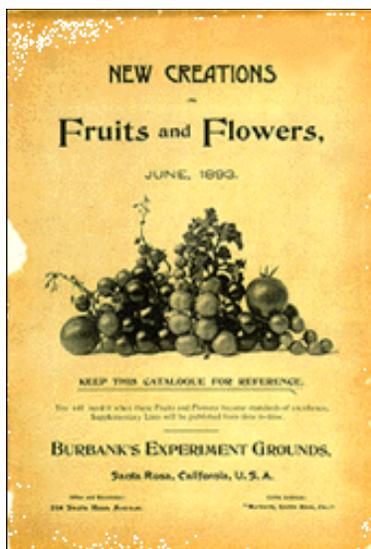
Burbank's method, once he undertook a project, was to configure numerous long and narrow raised beds with redwood sides. He seeded them with several species or varieties of the plant genus he wanted to improve, and then carefully studied the plants as they grew. Finally, when they had matured with flowers or fruits, he marked with white string or cloth strips those with desirable traits. (New varieties of fruit trees of course required longer development periods.) To pursue the desired improvement, seeds from these selected



The Burbank-created Quilled or Spatulated Shasta daisy. Photo: Thomas A. Brown.

plants were harvested and labeled, after which the entire crop was ripped out and burned. Next year, the saved seeds were again thickly sown, with the inspection and selection process repeated. This elaborate procedure, called “rouging,” would go on until the desired trait was achieved.

By establishing the criteria for selection and bringing together species that might never have hybridized on their own, Burbank essentially sped up natural selection by centuries or even millennia. Many of his



Burbank's catalogs marketed plants that he had developed at his experimental gardens in Santa Rosa and Petaluma. Thomas A. Brown Collection.

creations were sold to other nurseries. Among them was Burpee's Seeds, which then propagated, advertised, and introduced the plants. (Its founder, W. Atlee Burpee, was Burbank's distant cousin.)

Burbank also issued catalogs of his own. Among the many plants he improved were amaryllis, gladiolus, Shirley poppies, amarcrinums, canna, and roses. He produced, to wide publicity, the spineless beaver-tail cactus. His greatest fame would rest secure on the creation of just two—the Shasta daisy and the Santa Rosa plum.

Burbank also acquired 18 acres in Sebastopol, 8 miles west of Santa Rosa. It was called Gold Ridge Farm, and a portion of it still exists, including his small office shed. Following his death in 1926, his widow sold rights to his experimental plants in progress to Stark Bros. Nurseries of Missouri maintained the property until about 1935, when they removed the most economically usable plants.

Horticulture Makes a Great Leap Forward

In the 1930s Sonoma County continued providing much of the fresh produce and fruit for San Francisco. (In 1935 Sonoma County was ranked 10th in agricultural production among all the nation's counties.) The opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937 had little immediate impact, except that produce could now be hauled directly by truck instead of transshipped across the bay by ferry. Although Marin County's population swiftly increased as its towns became "bedroom suburbs" of San Francisco, Sonoma County was too far away for easy commuting to the City, so its population grew only minimally. Then came a war and its aftermath.

As in the First World War, WWII had increased demands upon certain crops in Sonoma's agricultural output. But it was the postwar period that transformed the nursery business. Many thousands of servicemen who had shipped or returned through California ports had liked what they had seen in the Golden State—and decided to settle down in this mild-climate and still somewhat exotic place. If not already married, most soon did so, and then wanted houses, schools, parks, roads, and supermarkets. The new houses had front and back yards that needed plants to quickly beautify them. Many of these homeowners had seen gardens quite different from those in their home towns—whether in theaters of war in Europe or Asia, or in different states and cities.

These new settlers also tended to be open to new ideas that imaginative architects and landscape and garden designers were creating now to improve the appearance of the postwar world. Experimentation in new materials was rife, and these included plants, especially from the Asian-Pacific region and somewhat later, from South Africa as well.

FRED ROHNERT created the Rohnert Seed Farm in the 1930s on ranchland that his father, Waldo Emerson Rohnert, had bought in 1929 and then improved by creating a drainage system, as it was subject to winter flooding. The property, north of Cotati, had once been part of Rancho Laguna de Santa Rosa.

After his father's death in 1933, Fred ran the ranch from his San Mateo home. Much of the area was devoted to flower-seed production. Travelers on the Redwood Highway would open their car windows to enjoy both the fragrance and the view of long rows of brilliantly colored flowers, as 70 acres were devoted to his specialty: sweet pea seed production.

When the Cotati bypass portion of Highway 101 was completed in 1957, land values increased so much that farming was no longer viable. Thus the present planned community of Rohnert Park was created, to be incorporated as a city in 1962.

Notable Recent Nurseries in Sonoma County

By the 1970s there were over 40 nurseries in the county, mostly small and serving a mostly local clientele. Among ones dating back to the mid-century period are these:

SONOMA HORTICULTURAL NURSERY. Stewart and Audrey Barber began growing and hybridizing Exbury azaleas in 1964, and Polo de Lorenzo and Warren Smith purchased their nursery in 1976, by which time it consisted of the gardens by the house and the growing grounds (now the parking lot and lath houses), with the rest of the 7½-acre property overgrown with nettles and blackberry vines. To create today's gardens, over the years Polo and Warren stabilized the banks of the spring-fed pond and Blucher Creek, and cleared acres of weeds. There are now over 1½ miles of pathways to explore and enjoy.



Burbank's office is preserved at his former Gold Ridge Experimental Farm. Photo: Thomas Brown.

The nursery, located south of Sebastopol off Hessel Road, specializes in rhododendrons and azaleas and has a wide selection of shade-loving trees, shrubs, and perennials. Current stock includes 350 species of rhododendrons, 650 rhododendron hybrids, 500 azalea hybrids, more than 60 varieties of clematis, and over 15 varieties of dogwoods—plus magnolias, hostas, viburnum, davidias, and here and there some really rare and unusual weeping varieties of trees. Much of it is laid out as a garden, and it's spectacular in early to mid May. This is an example of a hybrid—more nursery than garden.

WESTERN HILLS GARDEN, at the other extreme, is about two miles out of the small town of Occidental, on Coleman Valley Road. In 1959 landscape designer Lester Hawkins and plantsman Marshall Olbrich, both San Franciscans, purchased a 3-acre property with a small stream running through it. They built a modest country and weekend home on a high part of the property, and below it laid out a looping gravel path. Then they worked tirelessly to bring plants from around the world to their garden, experimenting until they had the best of them adapted to the California climate.

As self-taught horticulturists and pioneers of the back-to-the-land movement, they developed a taste for unusual plants and varieties from far-flung places such as New Zealand and the Mediterranean. Most were not yet well known in the US, with some being the first of their kind in the nation. Friends sent the owners additional rare plants to try, making the garden in effect an important acclimatizing center. Eventually the collection numbered into the hundreds of species and varieties, although accurate identification and record-keeping has only just begun; the originators and their employees kept all the information in their heads.

In the early 1970s the garden opened to the public and was soon besieged with requests for cuttings or starts of this and that plant. While these transactions were initially met on a personal basis, they started taking too much time; the

garden itself needed more work as the plants grew. So a couple of lath houses and tables were erected for larger-scale propagation. Modest prices for rare plants paid for necessary supplies and hired labor, but it was never a nursery-for-profit. The place had a profound effect, though: it became a mecca for rare-plant devotees, who also partook of training and education in plant care.

Hawkins died in the mid 1980s, and Olbrich in 1991. They left the garden to a long-time employee and friend, Maggie Wych, who continued the garden as well as she could until 2007, when it had become too much work for her. She sold it to Robert Stansel and Joseph Gatta, who had no nursery experience, but intended to hold it until a nonprofit group could take it over. At this point the national economy tanked, and the bank foreclosed the property in 2009. Gardeners and horticulturists all over the Bay Area grew anxious. Despite the efforts of local volunteers, the garden was more or less untended for several months and showed signs of severe neglect. As any gardener will tell you, a garden neglected soon ceases to be a garden at all.

In mid-2010 the garden was bought by Chris and Tim Szybalski of Moraga, owners of Westbrae Nursery in Berkeley. Chris said that since it is not economically viable as a nursery, the goal now was to preserve the garden and eventually reopen it to the public for visits and education. "This was never going to be our private garden," he added. "There are way too many people who own that garden in spirit."

By the 1980s, rising land costs near the larger cities and higher labor costs forced many nurseries to close or move to new locations, or else rely for much of their stock on a few very large growers who increasingly dealt in volume production and developed additional and competitive retail outlets in chain and big-box stores. These changes encouraged the growth of specialized or niche nurseries. Currently there are at least 50 nurseries in the county, with the majority specializing to some degree. For instance, a spate of coffee-table books on Japanese Gardens, published from 1950 into the 1980s, had whetted the desire of many for "Japanesque" gardens of their own. This in turn fueled an interest in lesser-known plants from Japan and China. Newer trends tend toward California native and Mediterranean-climate plants, especially drought-tolerant ones.

Prominent among Sonoma County nurseries are these:

MARCA DICKIE in Glen Ellen, which specializes in Japanese maples.

MOMIJI, another specialist in Japanese maples, was started around 1982 by Mike and Sachi Umehara just west of Santa Rosa. Mike learned about the maples from his father, Mitsuo—for many years the curator of the original

Japanese Tea Garden in San Mateo's Central Park. The nursery now offers over 250 cultivars and varieties of Japanese maples.

BAMBOO SORCERY was founded near Sebastopol around 1988 by Gerald Bol, a past president of the American Bamboo Society. He had traveled extensively, studying and collecting rare and endangered bamboo species, and he introduced many new varieties into the US. His efforts are represented throughout the 8-acre demonstration gardens of the nursery, which now has more than 300 bamboo varieties in total, with about 200 regularly in stock for purchase.

SEQUOYAH RIDGE NURSERY, yet another bamboo nursery, is near Occidental. It serves the wholesale trade with over 200 varieties.

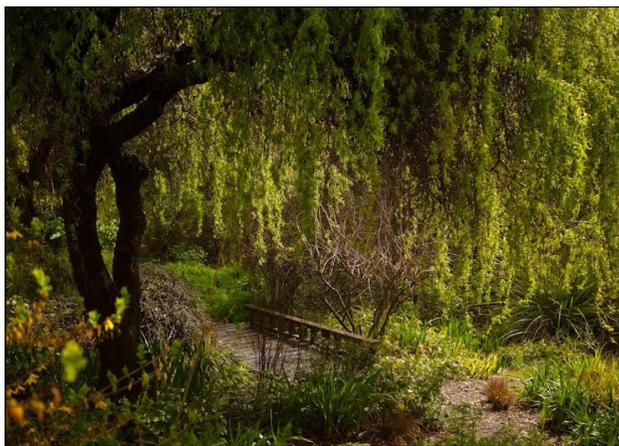
MUCHAS GRASSES. Classified in the Poaceae family, bamboos are likened to "grass on steroids." Another part of that spectrum grabbed the interest of Bob Hornback, who, in 1987 founded Northern California's first and only ornamental grasses specialty nursery. This wholesale nursery expanded rapidly, and was relocated to larger grounds three times, at sites on the east and the west sides of Santa Rosa.

Bob's enthusiastic promotion of grasses helped fuel a tremendous surge of interest in these plants. He eventually decided to leave the propagation of grasses to other growers, and thus freed himself to be a specialist in consultation, education, plant brokerage, and design with ornamental grasses. Bob also imported a large variety of unusual, rare and striking phormium, and even introduced two of his own, 'Toney Tiger' and 'Ed Carman.' Most of his introductions and collection are now

available at Emerisa Gardens, west of Santa Rosa.

CALIFORNIA CARNIVORES, founded in 1989 on the outskirts of Sebastopol by Peter D'Amato, has grown considerably since its inception. It sells the widest variety of carnivorous plants in the US, and houses one of the largest collections of carnivorous plants in the world. From this stock it is able to offer divisions and cuttings of many rare plants that are otherwise hard to acquire. Importing plants from all over the world continues. Peter, who has authored several books, lectures widely on these unusual plants.

THE GREAT PETALUMA DESERT started supplying the Bay Area with cacti and succulents in 1976, well in advance of public interest in planting xerophytic species. Technically, some 70% of California is classified as desert, and though Sonoma County is not part of that area, the drought years in the 1990s brought a new awareness of dwindling water supplies, leading to repercussions in gardening. Lawns may be let go in summer, or replaced with more water-thrifty plants. Over the years the nursery has refined its collection to rare and exotic succulents, particu-



A scene at Western Hills Garden. Photo: Denise Ginger.



A Quarryhill landscape in bloom. Photo: <http://www.quarryhillbg.org/photogallery.html>.

larly caudiciforms. It is largely a one-man operation and a labor of love—as are so many nurseries nowadays. No catalogs are printed, but there is a website. Visits can be arranged by appointment, but only for Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

QUARRYHILL BOTANICAL GARDEN came about because Jane Davenport Jansen in 1968 purchased more than 40 acres northeast of Glen Ellen, in the Mayacamas foothills—land that had been severely burned four years earlier. She later planted vineyards on the open valley floor, and in 1987 began to create a unique garden on 20 acres of the rocky, steep hillsides above the vineyards. The name Quarryhill seemed appropriate for the garden, since several quarries had once been mined on the site for road base aggregate, leaving piles of rubble and numerous depressions that filled with water during the heavy winter rains. A winter stream, winding its way through the rough terrain, eventually connected a group of ponds and waterfalls.

In the fall of 1987 Quarryhill representatives went on their first seed-collecting expedition to Asia. A nursery was established on site the following year, and by the spring of 1990 young plants were ready for the garden. Thanks to seeds gathered on more than 20 autumn expeditions to East Asia, planting new seedlings continues every spring and fall. Efforts are now focused on rare and endangered species from China and Japan, although oaks, maples, magnolias, dogwoods, lilies, and roses are also well represented in the garden. Today, Quarryhill is home to one of the largest collections of scientifically documented, wild-source Asian plants in North America and Europe, many of which repre-

sent ancestors of horticultural favorites found throughout the western world. Quarryhill has become virtually a world-renowned botanical institution, providing other botanical gardens, arboreta, researchers, conservationists, students, and the visiting public with living examples of the beautiful and threatened temperate flora of East Asia. An annual plant sales event is offered.

Jane worked on her garden until her death in 2000. She had personally funded the entire operation and subsidized 15 of the plant-hunting expeditions. In June of this year Quarryhill celebrated its 25th anniversary.

In recent years several small nurseries have been established to specialize in some aspect of the native flora of California and Sonoma County. Another recent trend is the growing number of gardens growing special crops for restaurants throughout the Bay Area, such as uncommon vegetables and fruits, and new and unusual salad greens. The orchards, especially those of apples and plums, that formerly dominated the cultivated landscape have now mostly given way to vineyards, which also have a long history in the county. (See next page.)

The range of its microclimates and various soil types, coupled with a relative sufficiency of good quality water and still reasonable rural land prices, suggest that the story of both agriculture and horticulture in Sonoma County has many chapters yet to be written.

Thomas Brown obtained an MA in Landscape Architecture from UC Berkeley in 1969 and interned for six years at a major landscape office in San Francisco. To prepare for teaching a landscape history course at Berkeley, for 8 months, in 1974-75, he traveled around the world—visiting, studying, and photographing great gardens and urban spaces. He then started a landscape practice in the Bay Area that specialized in historic landscape preservation and restoration. In 1985 he began teaching 10-week courses in landscape plant recognition and use for UC Berkeley Extension. He has lectured widely on garden history, plant introductions, and related topics. Semi-retired, he is finishing a book on Ships of Colonial California, 1769–1849 and occasionally accepts a project that he feels is “particularly interesting or worthwhile.”

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Early Winegrowing in Sonoma County

Viticulture and winemaking—now a major dual economic force, along with providing a great tourist attraction—have a long history in the county. The Russians planted the first grapevines near Fort Ross in 1817. A more ambitious and enduring vineyard of about 12 acres was established at Mission San Francisco Solano eight years later, just north of what is now Sonoma's East Spain Street. The only European *Vitis vinifera* variety in Alta California

was the Mission grape, which made a barely drinkable wine, but it could at least be distilled into *aguardiente*, or brandy. While distributing the mission's lands in 1834, General Mariano Vallejo took over its vineyard and began making wine. After becoming the owner of the Sonoma Barracks in 1853, he used it as a commercial winery. Among his many occupations over the years, Vallejo was a winegrower, with prize-winning wines.

By the mid-1860s Sonoma County had become Northern California's most active winemaking center—annually producing some 250,000 gallons, with Vallejo and Agoston Haraszthy its prime movers. The latter, an aristocratic Hungarian, moved to Sonoma Valley in 1856 and acquired Salvador Vallejo's vineyards after judging the county an ideal place to grow winegrapes. He bought additional acreage, planted some new varieties, built a large stone winery for his Buena Vista enterprise, and had three wine caves tunneled into the hillside. In 1861, intent upon improving California winemaking, he collected 100,000 grapevine cuttings while traveling through France, Italy, Germany, and Spain—to plant in his own vineyards or sell to other vintners. His ambitions in California eventually collapsed. He started a rum-producing venture in Nicaragua, then disappeared in an alligator-infested river. Buena Vista lived on, but his two sons, Arpad and Attila, worked elsewhere as winemakers. Arpad, who produced the first California champagne, Eclipse, touted his father as “the Father of California Wine”—a title downgraded by recent wine scholars.

In 1873 an infestation of the dreaded *Phylloxera* was first discovered in California in Sonoma County, near Buena Vista's vineyards. This fast-spreading aphid, native to eastern United States fed lethally on grapevine roots. The pest had already invaded Europe in the 1850s through vines brought there from North America. Huge efforts to produce a deterrent or remedy failed, and most vineyards were destroyed. By the 1880s the noxious insect was ravaging California's vineyards and its prospering wine industry, and Sonoma County's acreage plummeted. The only solution was to graft European varietal scions onto phylloxera-resistant native American grapevine rootstock. By the early 1900s Sonoma County again led the state in wine



Grape crush in 1877. Collection of Thomas A. Brown.

production. Thus expert field and bench grafters and some specialized grapevine-producing nurseries became critically important in reviving the wine industry in Sonoma County, as they did elsewhere. (They are still needed in today's vastly expanded viticultural operations.)

The second major setback to the wine industry in California came in 1920 with the passage of the 18th Amendment that prohibited the making and sale of alcoholic beverages. But since Prohibition

legislation allowed people to make home wine, wineries with vineyards could at least sell grapes; some were even licensed to make sacramental and medicinal wines. However, most of the grape crop was shipped by railway to the Midwest and East Coast, so vines with large, pungent, and thick-skinned grapes that could withstand the rigors of transportation and storage replaced those bearing delicate grape varieties. Repeal came in 1933 in the midst of the Great Depression. It took many years for most Sonoma vineyards to be replanted with fine varietals favored by the Wine Revolution that began in the late 1960s. By the 1990s winegrowing provided the county with its major interconnected economic activities in agriculture, wine production and sales, and tourism—as it did in neighboring Napa, and since then spread to other counties.

Sonoma County, with its variable climates and terroirs, now has 13 appellations. Recent statistics show that vineyards occupy over 60,000 acres (out of a total county acreage of one million), with almost 2,000 grape growers, and some 350 wineries, with 250 or so open to the public for tastings and tours. By now, vineyards have replaced many of the county's historic forests, apple and plum orchards, and grazing fields. Though these new landscapes are undeniably beautiful, old-timers are apt to regret the loss of the differing viewsheds familiar to them in the past.

Some of the most notable historic wineries or their premises that date back to the 19th and early 20th centuries still exist, whether run by their founders' descendants, have been resuscitated, or else operate under other ownerships—sometimes with new names. In order of founding years, they are: Buena Vista (1857), Simi (1881), Martini & Prati (1881, now Martin Ray), Korbel Champagne Cellars (1886), Gundlach-Bundschu (1896), Foppiano Vineyards (1896), Seghesio (1901), Sebastiani (1904), Pedroncelli (1927). (For tour information, visit their websites.)

Many of today's wineries and grape growers use sustainable practices that reduce energy consumption and water use (as through dry farming), preserve or rebuild ecosystems, recycle wastewater, and practice organic or biodynamic farming methods and integrated pest management.

—BKM

Luther Burbank: Master Horticulturist

Claudia L. Silkey and Barbara Marinacci

I firmly believe, from what I have seen, that this is the *chosen spot of all this earth as far as Nature is concerned.*”—That’s what Luther Burbank, aged 26, wrote to his mother about Sonoma County when arriving in Santa Rosa in late October of 1876 after a nine-day train trip across the continent. He had come because he wished to improve the world’s food supply and beautify its landscapes and gardens by developing new varieties of plants that would outperform their predecessors in important ways. His three brothers, already there, had assured him that in this part of California he’d be able to grow anything.

Burbank began life in 1849 in central Massachusetts, in Lancaster. In his boyhood he was influenced by an older cousin who was a naturalist and, he later wrote, “made me want to know, not second-hand, but first-hand, from *Nature* herself, what the rules of this exciting game of *Life* were.” Burbank’s future career as horticulturist and plant breeder would involve first learning the rules about plants, then testing them in practice—and finally stretching them in order to create new plants.

After the death of his father, a farmer and brick-maker, 19-year-old Luther gave up further schooling and moved with his mother to Lunenburg, where he bought a 17-acre property and began to grow produce for sale. He developed skills in bringing crops to market ahead of competitors. By then he had read with fascination Charles Darwin’s *Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication*, and began attempting to develop better plants by improving upon the natural selection process.

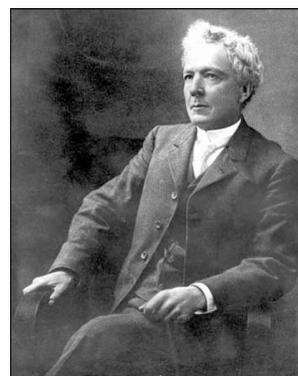
At age 25 Burbank had his first big success. It came after he found a very rare potato seed ball. (Potatoes, readily reproduced from the tubers’ “eyes,” seldom produce seeds.) He knew that an anomalous “sport” might occur in potato seeds to create a plant differing greatly from its parent; also that this Early Rose variety, neither tasty nor a good keeper, was blight-resistant—a valuable trait ever since the potato blight three decades earlier had spread throughout Europe, causing extreme famine, especially in Ireland. One of the seed ball’s 23 seeds produced a plant with large tubers that not only resisted blight but also had excellent flavor, texture, and appearance. (This “Burbank” potato, now better known as the Russet or Idaho, would become the most popular spud in the US.)

When Luther decided to join his brothers in California, he sold his property—and, for \$150, the reproduction rights to his new potato to a local nurseryman. (Plant creations, unlike inventions, couldn’t be patented then.) When he got on the train he had \$660 in his pocket, a basket with provisions prepared by his mother to sustain him on the long trip, and luggage containing 10 precious potato tubers, which might lead to future income. From the start, though impressed with the plant-growing potential in Sonoma County, Luther struggled just to have a roof over his head and enough to eat. He worked intermittently in Santa Rosa and

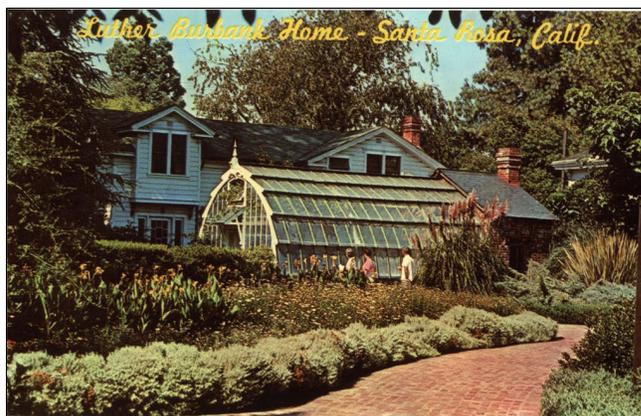
Petaluma as a carpenter or nursery assistant. Fortunately, in the summer of 1877 his mother, Olive, arrived with his younger sister, Emma, and bought a cottage in Santa Rosa with land around it. Luther rented two acres from her as a site for a part-time nursery business while he earned steadier money as a carpenter.

Having been much influenced by a Darwin book in his late teens, Burbank was now inspired by the English evolutionary scientist’s recent *The Effects of Cross- and Self-Fertilisation in the Vegetable Kingdom*. Convinced that he could develop new and better varieties of plants through a careful selection process initiated through crossbreeding and hybridization, he began carefully transferring pollen among flowers of the same variety, different varieties, or even different species—each with certain unusual features he wished to replicate. (Also, random mating would occur whenever the flowers were cross-pollinated by insects or birds.) He then sowed the seeds, their progeny, by the thousands, and afterwards quickly selected only a few promising plant candidates for future reproductive modifications. He would repeat this process again and again, until he finally got exactly the new plant he wanted.

Burbank’s horticultural targets ranged from ornamental garden plants and cacti, to vegetables, melons, and berries, to grains and nut- and fruit-bearing trees. His first major hybridization efforts involved improving the walnut tree, prized for both nuts and hardwood quality, and resulted in two new varieties named Paradox and Royal. By 1879 he was a full-time nurseryman, and by 1882 he became locally famous for making good on an order to produce 20,000 new plum trees in eight months, accomplished by grafting plum buds onto seedlings sprouted from almonds. In 1884 he bought four acres alongside Santa Rosa Street and began



Luther Burbank. Wikipedia.



Postcard showing Burbank’s greenhouse, with his home in the background. Santa Rosa Public Library online archives.

reclaiming the land by improving drainage and amending the soil with manure. On the property stood a five-room, two-story, New England-style white frame house, and he added a greenhouse, barn, and carriage house—all still there at the Luther Burbank Home & Gardens, now a city park. (The 14-room stucco house he built across the street in 1906 was leveled in 1964.) At the end of 1885 Burbank purchased 18 acres in Sebastopol for growing trees, which required much more space than the smaller plants he was busily developing. He usually traveled to his Gold Ridge Farm, seven miles from his Santa Rosa home, several times a week by horse and carriage.

While Burbank grew plants he was also growing a lucrative business—not by selling plants directly to local customers but by licensing his new plant varieties, often at high prices, for sale by large commercial nurseries and seed companies elsewhere in the nation. Promoting these plants through his “New Creations in Fruits and Flowers” catalogs, he initially supplied distant outlets with seeds and other means of replicating the plants he had created. Using his uncanny ability in reproducing and selecting a continuous line of promising new plants, Burbank performed everything on a huge scale, doing massive amounts of plant hybridization. He literally raised thousands of seedlings in order to cultivate one improved variety.

Burbank is credited with more than 800 plant introductions altogether. Notables include 200 fruits; nine types of grains, grasses, and forage; 26 types of vegetables; and 91 types of ornamentals. He was patient: it took him 17 years to develop the quadruple hybrid Shasta daisy, an entirely new species that combined several daisy species from different parts of the world. It took 22 years to get his spineless cactus, intended as cattle feed in desert locations. Overpromoted by its vendors, then not succeeding well, this extraordinary cactus undermined Burbank’s reputation late in his career. He was also criticized for maintaining that environment could modify certain traits that might become heritable—a position now scientifically validated.

Though self-taught and lacking scientific training, Luther Burbank achieved worldwide fame as a pioneer in agricultural science and plant breeding. He had many visitors: famous ones such as Henry Ford, Thomas Alva Edison, John Muir, Helen Keller, and Jack London; royalty and notable plant scientists like horticulture expert Liberty Hyde Bailey and Dutch plant geneticist Hugo De Vries; and just ordinary people eager to view the “Plant Wizard’s” gardens. While sociable with visitors, he was protective about re-



Historic photo of the entrance to Gold Ridge Experiment Farm in Sebastopol. (The gate was usually closed.) <http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/lbsite/grf/grfpast.html>



A Burbank garden area today. Photo: Sandra Price.

vealing details about his work, since plant patents still did not exist at the time. He also didn’t train anyone in learning his techniques, and had no children to whom he could pass on knowledge and skills. A hands-on doer, not a data collector, he didn’t keep the precise records expected of scientists. Future plant breeders also couldn’t directly benefit from his work because of his cryptic ways of recording his procedures and outcomes. However, collaborating with writers and editors he did write some books—such as *The Training of the Human Plant* (1907) and the 12-volume, lavishly illustrated *Luther Burbank, His Methods and Discoveries and Their Practical Applications* (1914–15).

Burbank died in 1926. Four years later, Henry Ford testified before Congress to help bring about legislation to create plant patents, knowing that this protection would help to protect the work of future Burbanks. The Plant Patent Act was passed in 1930. Eventually, Luther Burbank was posthumously awarded 16 plant patents. After

1947 his surname was even entered as a transitive verb into various editions of *Webster’s Dictionary*:

Burbank, *v.t.* To modify and improve (plants or animals, esp. by selective breeding. Also, to cross or graft a plant. Hence, figuratively, to improve (anything, as a process or institution) by selecting good features and rejecting bad, or by adding good features.

Though this word is no longer in our current lexicons, there are more lasting legacies. Burbank’s widow, Elizabeth, deeded the remainder of the original Burbank property to the City of Santa Rosa. The Luther Burbank Home & Gardens, on 1.6 acres, is a Registered National, State, and City Historic Landmark. It is maintained by the nonprofit Luther Burbank Home & Gardens Association and its volunteers. In 1974 the Western Sonoma County Historical Society was formed in Sebastopol, partly to preserve the legacy of Gold Ridge Experimental Farm. Burbank’s birthday on March 7th is celebrated as Arbor Day.

Close to the end of his life, Burbank gave a sermon that summarized his highest aspirations as a plant breeder:

What a joy life is when you have made a close working partnership with Nature, helping her to produce for the benefit of mankind new forms, colors and perfumes in flowers which were never known before, fruits in form, size, color and flavor never before seen on this globe, and grains of enormously increased productiveness, whose fat kernels are filled with more and better nourishment, a veritable storehouse of perfect food—new food for all the world’s untold millions for all time to come.

Claudia L. Silkey is a volunteer docent at the LBH&G.

M.F.K. Fisher: A Connoisseur in Sonoma

Paula Panich

Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher was, at heart, a California girl. She had been brought to Whittier as a toddler (she was born in 1908) but considered it a bit of bad luck she wasn't native-born.

M.F.K. Fisher is known as a passionate writer, fully engaged with life; food, landscape, place, and love are her metaphors.

Famous for writing about France and Switzerland, her steady love for California fuels much of her work. She writes of Whittier; of Laguna; of her "90 acres of red-hot hell" in Hemet, and her house in St. Helena.

"Last House" was a contemporary two-room cottage on Bouverie Ranch near Glen Ellen, in Sonoma County, where she lived for two decades until her death in 1992.



M.F.K. Fisher at work in her kitchen in Last House, Glen Ellen, Calif. Photographer unknown.



Fisher's "Last House," on the Bouverie Ranch in Glen Ellen—with a view of her beloved "rugged ridge." Photo: Paula Panich.

After the sun went down it grew cool and sweet, she writes, and across the little valley I watched, as I do almost every night, the darkening high ridge of desolate craggy mountains between me and the ocean ...

And in another essay: *It is very simple: I am here because I choose to be. "Here" is a ranch on Route 12 in northern California, about two miles from Glen Ellen, where Jack London lived and drank and piled up the red volcanic stone of the region ...*

She never fails to seduce.

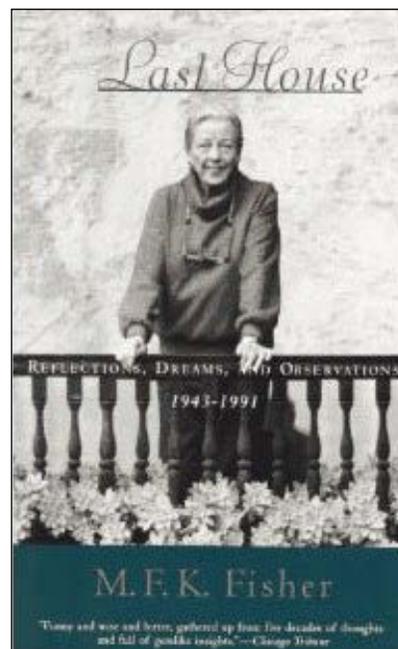
Bouverie Ranch is now a nature preserve, part of Audubon Canyon Ranch. It is open to the public by reservation only (though not, alas, Last House).

Visit www.egret.org or call 415-868-9244.

Paula Panich is an author, editor, and teacher, as well as a CGLHS member who serves on Eden's Editorial Board. She is also a longtime admirer of M.F.K. Fisher as a person, connoisseur, and writer.

It was here in Sonoma that she came into her own. The American palate, especially in California, had awakened to the deep pleasures of the table, and Mary Frances became one of the goddesses of this revolution. Her out-of-print books were revived in new editions; she was interviewed by every food writer who could manage the drive to Sonoma. She was filmed, recorded, feted, crowned with laurels, and celebrated as new books flew out of Last House and onto the shelves of the newly converted food connoisseurs. She had become famous at last.

James Beard and other legendary chefs came to dinner at Last House. My friend Jon once lunched there, bringing "Julia and Paul" from Cambridge along in his car. (Can one perish from envy?)





Plants, Passion, Propagation

A Horticultural Tour of Sonoma County Nurseries

Annual Conference of the California Garden & Landscape History Society

September 8 & 9, 2012

Santa Rosa, California

Our 18th annual conference will celebrate the horticultural heritage of Sonoma County—"the chosen spot," as Luther Burbank wrote in 1875, "of all this earth as far as Nature is concerned."

We second that. For more than a century, Sonoma County has brought forth a rich diversity of plant material that has found its way into the gardens of the state, country, and the world.

The plant nurseries of Sonoma have few equals anywhere; many are a testament to what writer Mac Griswold has called "businesses ... small and idiosyncratic, the brain-children of people with odd and original visions of how gardens should be."

Some nurseries are well known; others quietly exist, known only to clients and friends. All the growers, though, are passionate about plants, and their contributions have contributed to our unique Californian horticultural heritage.

We invite you to join us in learning about the past, present, and future of plant propagation in the lovely Sonoma County of California.

Lectures and tours feature:

Luther Burbank Home and Gardens
Wildwood Farm
California Flora Nursery

Valley of the Moon
Quarryhill Botanical Garden
Western Hills Garden

Conference Fee: \$190

Includes all conference events: tours and lectures on Saturday and Sunday; Saturday evening reception; lunch Saturday, and lunch on Sunday. To register, use the enclosed registration form, or visit www.cglhs.org.

Conference Hotel:

Courtyard Marriott, 175 Railroad Street, Santa Rosa. The hotel is located in the Historic Railroad Square District of Santa Rosa. Restaurants, shops, and historic buildings are within walking distance.

Reserve by August 6; mention CGLHS for discounted rate of \$149/night. Phone: 707-573-9000.

<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/stscyc-courtyard-santa-rosa/?toDate=9/9/12&groupCode=CGLCGLB&fromDate=9/7/12&app=resvlink>

Conference Schedule:

Saturday, September 8: Santa Rosa and Valley of the Moon

8:30 a.m.–1 p.m. Luther Burbank Home & Gardens

Adele Yare: "Luther Burbank"

Dave Fazio: "History of Sonoma Nurseries"

Tour of home and garden

Lunch, with a talk on the restoration of the gardens by Tom Brown

1:30–2:30 p.m. Wildwood Farm, Nursery, and Sculpture Garden in Kenwood

2:45–4 p.m. Quarryhill Botanical Garden in Glen Ellen

Talks by Director William McNamara and Nursery Manager/Education Coordinator, Corey S. Barnes

5:30–7 p.m. Reception

Sunday, September 9: Fulton and Occidental

9-10 a.m. California Flora Nursery in Fulton

10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Western Hills Garden in Occidental

Sites To Be Visited:

LUTHER BURBANK HOME & GARDENS is the site of the home, greenhouse, and gardens where Burbank lived and experimented with plants for most of his 50-year career. It is a Registered National, State and City Historic Landmark. The gardens contain many Burbank-cultivated plants. We'll have a docent-led tour of the Victorian garden, a Memorial garden, house, and other gardens. Visit the website: <http://www.lutherburbank.org/>

CALIFORNIA FLORA NURSERY opened for business in 1981 as a native plant nursery. Phil van Soelen and Sherrie Althouse emphasize natives, small container sizes, and in-house propagation with an emphasis on species and genetic diversity. The nursery received the 2002 Annual Award from the California Horticultural Society for contributions to California horticulture. Both Sherrie and Phil are past presidents of the Milo Baker (Sonoma County) Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. <http://www.calfloranursery.com/>

QUARRYHILL BOTANICAL GARDEN began in 1987 when Jane Davenport Jansen established a garden on the site of an old quarry in Glen Ellen. Today the garden contains plants from Asia grown from seeds collected in the wild; some are now the only existing examples of certain plant material due to development and destruction of once remote sites. Quarryhill has partnered with the Howick Arboretum and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Edinburgh, on expeditions to China, Japan, India, Taiwan, and Nepal. <http://www.quarryhillbg.org/>

WESTERN HILLS GARDEN, formerly the Western Hills Rare Plant Nursery, was created by Lester Hawkins and Marshall Ohlbrich in the 1960s. Many plants we now take for granted were first introduced here, such as penstemons and euphorbia; they were planted by the original owners once they began collecting and propagating plants from around the world. A destination of serious gardeners, it is the "Tiffany's of plants," according to the *New York Times*. Now under a new name and ownership, the property has been designated a Preservation Assistance Garden by the Garden Conservancy. <http://westernhillsgarden.com/>

WILDWOOD FARM is a 5-acre park-like setting nestled in the Valley of the Moon. Highlights of the nursery are 250 different Japanese maples, 50 varieties of dogwood, and companion plants for Western gardens. The garden is on the site of a property that was designed by Californian John McLaren (1846–1943), the longtime superintendent of Golden Gate Park. Still existing are several trees that were planted at McLaren's behest. This charming nursery is hidden in plain view; it is a delight to plant collectors and gardeners. <http://www.wildwoodmaples.com/>

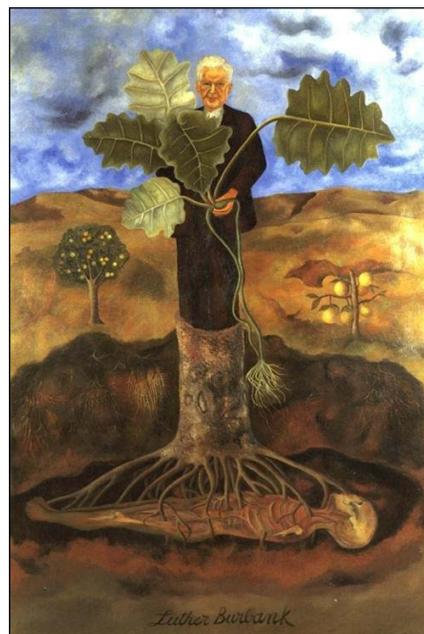
Speakers:

Tom Brown, immediate past-president of CGLHS, is a landscape architect, historian, author, and teacher. Tom was the historian on the Luther Burbank Garden restoration project, among many projects he has undertaken. He has contributed to *Pacific Horticulture*, and has taught Landscape History at University of California, Berkeley.

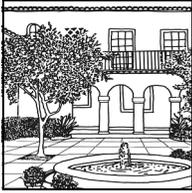
Dave Fazio has been the owner of Sonoma Mission Gardens in Sonoma for 37 years. He taught horticulture at Santa Rosa Junior College for more than a quarter-century, and was co-host of "Garden Talk" on KSRO in Santa Rosa for almost two decades. He still fills in at the station occasionally.

Adele Yare, head of the Speaker's Bureau at Luther Burbank Home & Gardens, is a retired teacher and active gardener. She is also a docent at Duncan's Mill in western Sonoma County.

Please visit www.cglhs.org for more conference details, including a reading list and recommended tourist sites. For conference questions, please e-mail conference@cglhs.org or call Sandra Price at 707-963-9504.



Frida Kahlo's painting that depicted Luther Burbank as half-man, half-tree was inspired by her visit in 1930 with husband Diego Rivera to Burbank's home site. There his widow, Elizabeth, showed them his grave beneath his favorite cedar of Lebanon tree. Kahlo's botanical accuracy was defective, but she did add, appropriately, two odd fruit-bearing trees in the background. <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/frida-kahlo/>



Book Reviews

The Making of Yosemite: James Mason Hutchings and the Origin of America's Most Popular National Park. Jen A. Huntley. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2011, 248 pp., \$34.95.

Jen A. Huntley, an environmental historian and sustainability consultant whose area of expertise is the Sierra Nevada and Pacific Rim, has written *The Making of Yosemite*. It is set in England, James Mason Hutchings' birthplace, San Francisco, and Yosemite Valley, from the 1820s to the 1890s. She successfully argues that Hutchings, a publisher and hotelier who made his home in Yosemite for 11 years, has been erroneously depicted in the national park's history as an opportunist who merely exploited its natural wonders for selfish personal gain. Noted documentarian Ken Burns portrayed Hutchings, best known for *Hutchings' California Magazine*, as an illegal squatter living in Yosemite Valley, determined to develop the area, and resisting eviction once the valley was "saved" as a national park by passionate nature lovers and the federal government.

Huntley shows that this aspect of Yosemite's history is more complex than Burns' simplistic interpretation. She deftly explores the myriad threads of race, class, politics, economics, national identity, land management, and religion that influenced Hutchings' actions and those of 19th-century American society as a whole. She demonstrates how Hutchings, in his desire to bring civilization and order to California's chaotic Gold Rush-inspired society, hoped to entice Anglo settlers by presenting Yosemite as an icon of divine sanction. These newcomers would ensure that California would evolve into an Anglo-dominated culture and economic power.

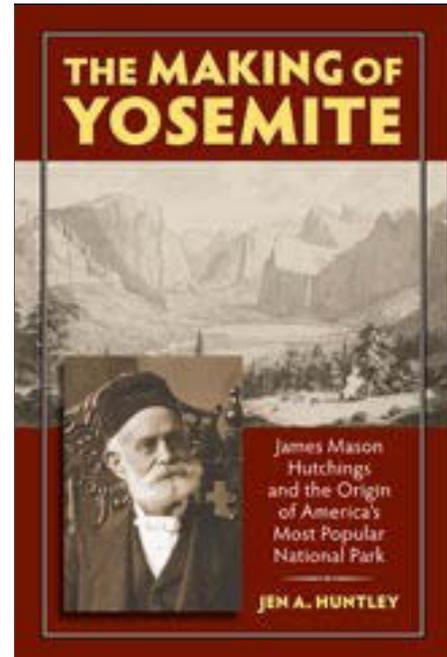
John Muir, noted for his modern notion of the wilderness and for his lyrical writings describing Yosemite and the High Sierra, worked for Hutchings for three years. During this time, Hutchings' wife, Elvira, developed intense feelings for Muir, who may or may not have returned them. Huntley examines the fraught relationship that inevitably developed between Hutchings and Muir, looking at their similarities and differences as they pursued their goal of bringing Yosemite to the greater public, each in his own way. Readers may be surprised to learn that Muir, despite his public image as an ascetic wilderness saint and his declarations against wealth, amassed a sizable fortune after his 1880 marriage to Louise Strentzel. Managing her family farm in Martinez for over 20 years, Muir was worth \$241,137 when he died in 1914, roughly four million dollars today.

Huntley's book is as much about how California as a state came into being as it is about Yosemite's beginning as a national park. Hutchings' role as a prolific publisher of Yosemite material played a significant role in this process. It is well worth reading for all of the new information she has unearthed about James Mason Hutchings and for the broad range of cultural interpretations she applies to the creation of Yosemite as a national park. Those interested in Yosemite's history or in California's history will find much to reflect upon in this academic yet highly readable offering.

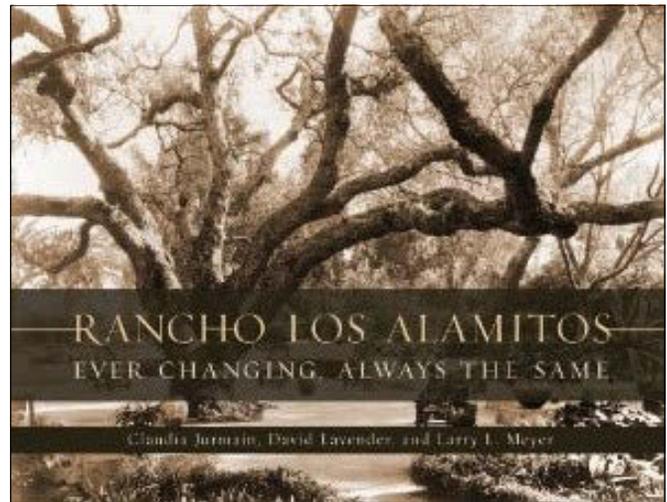
—Julie Cain

Rancho Los Alamitos: Ever Changing, Always the Same. Claudia Jurmain, David Lavender, and Larry L. Meyer. Berkeley: Heyday Books; and Long Beach: Rancho Los Alamitos Foundation, 2011, 228 pp., \$35.

The stately old pepper trees that grace the cover of this book originated in the landscape design planned for the ranch by the Olmsted Brothers, and they were planted by members of the well-known Bixby family of Southern California that had lived and worked at Rancho Los Alamitos from the late 1860s on. This information is but one small historical detail among a great many provided in this comprehensive and beautiful book, which has over 300 illustrations.



Rancho Los Alamitos: Ever Changing, Always the Same opens with a Foreword by noted California historian Kevin Starr, who describes the significance of the Los Alamitos hilltop for the group of Tongva Native Americans that dwelled in the coastal part of the Los Angeles basin, partly within the area that is now Long Beach and San Pedro. The three authors then proceed, chapter by chapter, to carefully document the land’s evolving sense of place, along with the different generations of people who lived there and invariably changed the land over time. They begin with the Indians, who called the region *Povuu’ngna*, and summarize information gathered in the expanding scholarship of the Tongva tribe, including descriptions of the customs and art specific to their “center of the world.”



This now small, 7½ -acre spot, the only preserved portion of the Tongvas’ sacred ancestral land, serves as another cultural center—a place that commemorates and displays the lives of the people who came after the Tongvas: generations of Spanish, Mexican, and American landowners who raised livestock and farmed this ranch property.

Rancho Los Alamitos (which translates into “little cottonwoods ranch”) began as a Spanish land grant of 300,000 acres given to Manuel Nieto. The available water sources; hilly grassland suitable for grazing cattle; the start of intensive farming operations; the discovery of an amazingly rich source of oil and the resultant drilling; the impact of the continuously fast-growing Southern California population: all such important factors in the rancho’s history are addressed, while profiling each generation in the succession of people who lived here and invariably changed the landscape .

Readers are introduced to the rancho’s first prominent owners during the Mexican period, which then transitioned into the American one with enterprising Yankee businessman Abel Stearns and his beautiful wife, née Arcadia Bandini. Especially winning is the introduction to plant-aficionada Florence Bixby, who devoted much of her life to developing and tending areas like the Secret Garden, Jacaranda Walk, Rose Garden, Olive Patio, Geranium Walk, and Cactus Garden—some now well restored. Notable too are the histories of the historic Moreton Bay fig trees and the citrus grove. Well-documented oral histories taken from various workers emphasize their role in the ranch’s maintenance and upkeep. CGLHS members will be particularly interested in reading about specific landscaping plans for the ranch done by such prominent designers as the Olmsted Brothers’ firm, Florence Yoch, and Paul Howard. In 1968 Bixby family members deeded the remaining ranch property to the City of Long Beach.

This National Historic Site is operated by The Los Alamitos Foundation, whose long-range design plans, prepared by Executive Director Pamela Seager, called for further preservation and restoration of the part-adobe Bixby home, the garden areas, and farm buildings, along with developing an Education Center. This book’s publication timing is appropriate, as the new visitor center opened in June, marking a new chapter in Rancho Los Alamitos’ living history. A permanent exhibit emphasizes the land’s educational aspects and uses some of this book’s text and illustrations—and has the same title.

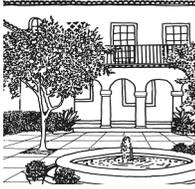
—Ruth Taylor Kilday



Sketch by Architectural Resources Group for the new Visitor Center and restored farm buildings. <http://artweek.com/news/hidden-treasure-renewed-rancho-los-alamitos>.

Rancho Los Alamitos is open to the public on Wednesdays through Sundays, from 1 to 5 p.m. It is located at 6400 Bixby Hill Road, Long Beach, CA 90815.

For information visit the website www.ranchoosalamitos.org or call 562-431-3541.



Postings

The Jessie Tarbox Beals Collection at the Frances Loeb Library of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design includes a number of images of California architecture and designed landscapes, dating from the late 1920s and early '30s. Beals arrived in California in 1928 and over the next few years documented a number of notable sites, particularly in the Santa Barbara / Montecito area. For more information, contact Mary Daniels: mdaniels@gsd.harvard.edu

SAH's Landscape History Chapter announced the winner of its essay prize: Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, for "Perennially New': Santa Barbara and the Origins of the California Mission Garden." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 69, no. 3 (September 2010), 378-405. The jurors noted that "Kryder-Reid's history is well-written, well structured, well-scaled, and contributes directly and powerfully to new histories and/or to [revisions] of preservation practices of landscapes."



CGLHS member **Roger Boddaert**, an arborist who's known as "The Tree Man of Fallbrook" and specializes in oak tree care, wants everyone to become aware of a new and extremely serious oak-killing infestation that has arrived in Southern California from Mexico and Arizona. The gold-spotted oak borer (*Agrilus coxalis auroguttatus* or GSOB) is frequently spread through transported firewood that harbors the beetle, its pupae, larvae, and eggs. For more information, contact him at P.O. Box 1806, Fallbrook, CA 92088-1806; phone 760-728-4297. Or consult various websites on this important subject, such as http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrilus_coxalis.

Board Meeting, California Garden and Landscape History Society

Friday, September 7, 2012 / 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
Santa Rosa, California

All members are welcome.

Please contact Phoebe Cutler ember445@pacbell.net if you plan to attend, as space is limited.

Annual Membership Meeting, California Garden and Landscape History Society

At Luther Burbank Home and Gardens
204 Santa Rosa Avenue, Santa Rosa, Calif.
Saturday, September 8, 2012 — 8:45 a.m.

Member News

An essay by **Christy O'Hara**, "Moorish to Modern," appears in the July issue of *Pacific Horticulture*. It is based on the her presentation at the "Gift of Persia: Exotic Gardens for California" seminar held in July 2011, co-sponsored by The Garden Conservancy and the Ruth Bancroft Garden. (The magazine will have a digital version starting with this issue.)

Judith Taylor, MD, shared a photo of the first award winners of the Pitschel Prize contest, which she established last year to honor the late Barbara Pitschel, the head librarian at the SF Botanical Garden's HCR for many years. (See the notice on page 24 in the Winter 2011 *Eden*.) The awards ceremony took place at the City College of San Francisco on May 17th. "Friends of Barbara's will be pleased to see the successful outcome of the competition I founded in her memory," she says.

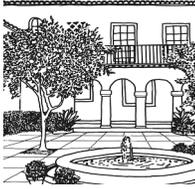


Pitschel Prize-winners, from left to right: Toni Torres, 2nd prize; Zann C Goff, 1st prize; Dr. Judith Taylor; and Sandy Jungwirth, 3rd prize.



Members of the team for the City of Pasadena's Historic Designed Gardens Study. Left to right: CGLHS members Kelly Comras and Ann Scheid, City of Pasadena historic preservation planner Kevin Johnson, CGLHS member Marlise Fratinardo.

See next page—and consider attending the upcoming Tour & Talk in Pasadena.



President's Message

I fell in love with a fuchsia when I was three—and my falling-in-love with plants continues to this day. I began prowling through nurseries in 1964; finding those with the most unusual plants has been a never-ending treasure hunt. I fell crazy-in-love with beech trees, *Fagus sylvatica*—weeping, tricolor, fastigate, coppersy—on my first visit, in 1994, to Western Hills Rare Plant Nursery in Occidental. My summer love is *Eucomis* 'Toffee' from Digging Dog Nursery in Albion. (I would blush to go on.)

I am delighted then, to return to the rich landscape of Sonoma for our September Conference. Sandra Price has orchestrated a lively few days for us, and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Preservation matters to me. I am proud that CGLHS has been part of the Coalition to Save the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden. Here are some updates since we e-mailed our members in May, asking you to go online and sign the petition, and to write to UCLA and the UC Regents urging that the sale of the garden be stopped and the garden preserved with continued public access.

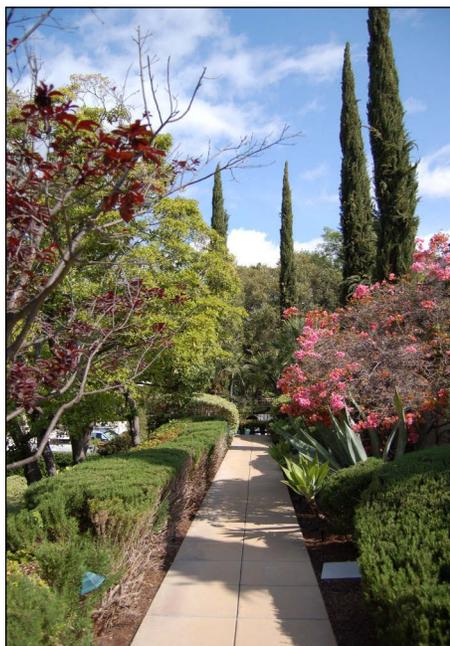
- May 7, 2012: A lawsuit was filed by children of Hannah Carter to block the sale
- May 17: UCLA extended bidding process until August 15
- May 22: The Coalition wrote to UCLA, the UC Regents, and real estate agents handling the sale requesting disclosure of the public opposition to the sale and giving notice that should UCLA proceed with the sale to a private entity, "the Coalition is prepared to submit an application and seek Historic-Cultural Monument designation of the historic garden." Such designation would protect the Garden from destruction and inappropriate alterations under the design review process of the Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources and the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission.
- July 6, 2012: Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Lisa Hart Cole postponed judgment on the fate of the Garden until July 27. Cole directed attorneys for the heirs of Hannah Carter to prepare a supplemental five-page brief on whether the UC Regents are a government entity or a charitable trust. "This is really a very interesting case," Cole said. "The Regents were duplicitous."

I continue to hope that UCLA will meet with the Coalition to seek a solution that will preserve the garden with public access. If you want to stay informed, sign up for email notices at <http://www.hannahcarterjapanesegarden.com/>.

Documentation and landmarking are important steps in saving our cultural treasures. Our next Tour and Talk will feature the City of Pasadena's efforts on behalf of its many historic gardens. Brava Pasadena!

So please mark your calendars and save the date for the upcoming CLGHS Tour and Talk, announced below.

—Judy Horton



A CGLHS Tour & Talk

Piecing Together Pasadena's Garden History: A Unique Project in an American City

Date and time: October 13, 2012 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Place: La Casita del Arroyo, Pasadena

Kevin Johnson, planner in the City of Pasadena's Design and Historic Preservation section, will speak on a remarkable project, the **Study of Historic Designed Gardens** in Pasadena, thought to be the only survey of its kind in the country. Pasadena's rich garden history spans the work of great American landscape architects from the Olmsted Brothers to Lawrence Halprin. A tour of three incomparable gardens will follow.

For more on the project see: http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/Planning/Study_of_Historic_Designed_Gardens_in_Pasadena.

More details and registration will be emailed to members in September and posted on our website: www.cglhs.org.

Pasadena's Historic Designed Gardens project has turned up a number of interesting gardens in the city. Photo: Kevin Johnson, City of Pasadena.

EDEN

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Eden: Call for Content

Eden solicits your submissions of scholarly papers, short articles, book reviews, information about coming events, news about members' activities and honors, and interesting archives or websites you have discovered. In short, send us anything pertaining to California's landscape history that may be of interest to CGLHS members. Also, more regional correspondents reporting on local landscape preservation concerns, efforts, and accomplishments will be welcomed, along with other relevant issues.

For book reviews, notices of interesting magazine articles, and museum exhibits, please write to Associate editor Margaretta J. Darnall, 1154 Sunnyhills Road, Oakland, CA 94610.

All other submissions should be sent to *Eden* editor Barbara Marinacci (see above contact information) Deadlines for submissions are the first days of January, April, July, and October.

Material may be photocopied for academic purposes, with appropriate credit.

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The Society organizes annual conferences and publishes EDEN, a quarterly journal.

For more information, visit www.cglhs.org.

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- 1996 – Santa Barbara (Spring)
San Diego (Fall)
- 1997 – UC Berkeley (Spring)
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- 1998 – Sacramento
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- 2000 – Monterey
- 2001 – Sonoma County (city of Sonoma)
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- 2003 – Stanford University (SF Peninsula)
- 2004 – Riverside
- 2005 – Napa Valley (10th anniversary)
- 2006 – Saratoga (Westside of Silicon Valley)
- 2007 – Los Angeles (for Japanese-style gardens)
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Western Hills Garden, near Occidental in Sonoma County.
Photo: Sandra Price