

A BIG PUDDLE –
The Early Laguna de Santa Rosa

By

JOHN CUMMINGS

September 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of numerous staff of the Sonoma County Library system during the research phase of this paper.

The assistance and encouragement of Evelyn McClure of Sebastopol is also gratefully acknowledged, especially for her verification of many historical events and her recommendations of where to look for further information.

Walter Roeder of Petaluma was particularly helpful in his assistance in researching information on the names of the early steamboats in the region.

INTRODUCTION

This paper augments the historical information in the author's earlier 2003 paper on the Laguna ("Crystal Laughing Waters") and provides an annotated and broader understanding of the role of the Laguna de Santa Rosa during the early county.

Most of the early Petaluma newspaper articles cited or summarized in this paper for the period between 1855 and the summer of 1893 were obtained from the microfilm files of the forerunners or the different names of the *Argus*, but for convenience, the articles are referenced by their original designations of the newspapers in which they appeared.

PJ&A – the *Petaluma Journal and Sonoma County Advertiser*

SCJ – the *Sonoma County Journal*

PA – the *Petaluma Argus*

PJ&A – the *Petaluma Journal and Argus*

PWA – the *Petaluma Weekly Argus*

Microfilm copies of the *Argus* are unfortunately not available for most of the 1890s (a gap after December 29, 1888 until January 1899). The gap necessitated switching to the *Petaluma Courier* (PC). But again unfortunately for regional county historical research, the *Courier* changed from a regional weekly newspaper to a daily city and town oriented newspaper on December 4, 1891. Further scanning of the daily newspaper for information relevant to the Laguna became very inefficient and unacceptably laborious, and was terminated in the summer of 1893.

Also for convenience, the upper and lower case letters in the articles cited faithfully duplicates the cases used in the title of the original newspaper article. The variation in the spellings also faithfully duplicates the spellings used in the original newspaper article.

While long quotes from the old newspaper articles are in parentheses, the language used in the summaries often attempts to duplicate the language "flavor" of the original newspaper articles and is often not in parentheses.

The author's comments are in small print following the references to the old newspaper articles.

PJ&SCA – October 6, 1855 Petaluma and Santa Rosa Valleys

Extracted from a letter to the California Farmer, this article describes the westerly drainage of the Santa Rosa Valley as “ending in a laguna at the base of the Coast Range, which vents itself to [the] Russian River.” Of particular interest, this article also refers to the village of Santa Rosa, describes the northern part of the valley as being “well covered in oaks,” and opinions that the valley will in time due to artesian borings, “smile with venture and blossom like a rose.”

SCJ – April 6, 1860 HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

This article was reprinted verbatim in my earlier historical paper (Cummings, 2003 p3) and as previously noted, the article’s statement that stage coach passengers landing at Sebastopol could be conveyed by the little steamer, *Georgina* (presumably down the Laguna) warranted caution in interpretation and further analysis. While not the booming lumbering area following the arrival of the narrow gage coast railroad in the early fall of 1876 (Wilson, 1999), the following analysis strongly supports a literal interpretation of the old newspaper article – that the *Georgina* went from Sebastopol to the redwood logging and milling region of the lower Russian River in the early spring of 1860.

Analysis

The title and the first sentence (“HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL – The stage drivers find Jorden a hard road to travel, about this time.”) appears to be a spelling variant of a biblical reference and is undoubtedly a very realistic description of the early spring road conditions in the county at the time. A recent editorial in the *Sonoma County Journal* had complained that there was not a five mile stretch of road in the county without a stream or “bottomless mud hole” (long stretches of sand such as on the Petaluma to Sebastopol road were equally vexing to summer time travel at the time). Throughout early California, what roads there were at the time, were often little more than cleared, double tracks of wagon and stage coach trails. About a month before this article appeared, a new state law directed county supervisors to designate district road overseers and to build and improve roads in their counties. Since at least 1858, a poll tax system was required of all males in California over 21 (until age 50 or 60) to either work two days per year on their local roads or pay an annual poll tax (initially only \$2.00, and later the alternative of local road work was discontinued). More than a decade after this article appeared, the Petaluma road district approved a special tax to macadamize its roads with “asphaltum.”

The first part of the second sentence (“The trip from this city to the steamboat if made by horse and steam power,” refers to taking the steamer *Petaluma* to San Francisco (from Rudesill’s landing at Haystack, about two and one-half miles from town down Petaluma Creek). Advertisements at the time, describe the *Petaluma* as being built expressly for the Petaluma to San Francisco route and as a “new favorite steamer” with Captain McKensie and Agent C.M. Baker, with stops at Lakeville and Point San Quentin. (The *Petaluma* was advertised as new in late October of 1857.) While a group of prominent citizens of Petaluma in early 1860 had received state authorization to straighten and deepen Petaluma Creek and build a new wharf at Italian Gardens, about one-half mile closer to town, it was not until the summer of 1862 that the creek was deepened and straightened, and a new wharf was built at Italian Gardens. The iron horse railroad from town to the new steamboat wharf did not chug and snort into Petaluma until the summer of 1864. (The connecting railroad’s original steam engine tragically blew-up in late August 1866, and was replaced with horses and mules.)

A year before this article appeared, Doyle and Rudesill advertised their Steam Boat Coach Bus Line to Rudesill’s landing, but no similar ad was found in early 1860. Since G.A. Runk was reported to have sold such a stage line to J.B. Hinkle in February 1863, it is highly likely that a stage coach operated between Petaluma and the steamboat landing at Haystack in the early spring of 1860. However, the road to Haystack was undoubtedly in very poor condition. A newspaper editorial at the end of October 1862 noted that the Haystack road would soon be in terrible condition and appealed to allow the road to become a private turnpike. (Many early roads throughout the county were built and maintained as private turnpikes with user tolls.) Since the article clearly states that travel from Petaluma to the steamboat “is made by horse and steam power,” it appears that the only means of travel to the steamboat that used both methods of power at the time, would have incorporated little, shallow draft steam “lighters.” San Francisco bound

freight and passengers from Petaluma would have had the non-bone jarring option of traveling to Haystack in little lighters which were safely and reliably able to navigate the crooked and shallow upper reach of Petaluma Creek.

The second part of sentence two (“the coaches landing their passengers at Sebastopol, from which point they are conveyed by the little steamer *Georgina*.”) strongly implies that the *Georgina* went down the Laguna to the Russian River at the time, but the article does not state the destination of such passengers – the crux of this analysis. While this article was written nearly ten years before Captain King of the steamer *Enterprise* unsuccessfully attempted to travel from the lower Russian River upstream to Healdsburg (essentially disproving that Healdsburg could be reliably reached by boat), it is highly unlikely that the *Georgina*’s destination was Healdsburg. It is far more likely that the *Georgina*’s destination was the redwood logging and lumbering region of the lower Russian River.

It is also highly unlikely that the “Sebastopol” stated in the article was not in Sonoma County. The Post Office in Sebastopol, Napa County, did not change its name to “Yountsville” until the beginning of 1868, nearly eight years after this article appeared. While the *Sonoma County Journal* commonly included news stories outside of Sonoma County, events outside of the county were fastidiously identified as to their locations. All articles not identified as to their locations are assumed to refer to locations in Sonoma County. Given the primitive road conditions in the early county, especially in the early spring after the winter rains, travel would have been much like the exploration period of the area. Travel by boat on any possible waterway, as perilous and adventurous as it often was, would have been preferred over travel by land.

W.S.M. Wright was awarded a franchise for a toll ferry across the Russian River below Duncans’ mills in November 1862. About a year later, L.(Lew) W. Miller’s Bloomfield and Bodega stage line was extended to Duncans’ mills. (The new town of Duncans Mills, across the river from Mosco, formed in the winter of 1877 on land purchased from John Orr. In the early spring of the same year, Samuel M. Duncan, the town’s first postmaster, was reported to be building a “fine residence” in the new town.) Without question, while Duncan’s town did not form until over sixteen years after this newspaper article was published, the redwood logging and lumbering region of the lower Russian River was undoubtedly active in the early spring of 1860.

W. (Winfield) S.M. Wright owned a relatively large ranch near the mouth of the Russian River below Duncans’ mills in 1860. Winfield Wright was one of the most prominent and wealthiest men in the early county. He was one of only eight men in 1869 that had county assessed values of over \$100,000 and was reported to have paid the largest amount of tax in the county in 1872. A year later, Wright was advertised as being a major stock holder in the Bank of Sonoma County and was successfully elected to the state Assembly, but served only one term. The Honorable Winfield Wright and others were reported to be starting to manufacture a rotary harrow in Santa Rosa in April 1875. By 1879 Wright was one the largest land owners in the county with over 6,000 acres. Coincidentally, Winfield Wright owned the small property next to Santa Rosa Creek which was acquired by the city for Santa Rosa’s first sewer farm in early 1889 (Cummings, 2001).

The first part of the third sentence (“From Petaluma to Bodega, it requires all of ‘Dill Bibbitts’ skill as an engineer to make the rifle,”) is essentially a play on the name of Bill Tibbetts. (Newspaper articles spelt Bill’s last name with an “i” however, his ad for his company spelt his last name with an “e.”) Bill Tibbetts was the owner and operator of the U.S.M. line of stages from Petaluma to the “potato mines” at Bodega (via Stony Point, Millar and Walker’s store and the village of Sebastopol). About four months after this article was published, Bill “Whip” Tibbetts was humorously referred to in another *Journal* article as a fast stage driver – “that very prince of jolly Jehues.” After the civil war Tibbetts was referred to as “Colonel Tibbetts” and drove the stage from Santa Rosa connecting to the new little steamer *Joise McNair* in Petaluma, offering for the first time a one-day round trip between Santa Rosa and San Francisco. Col. Tibbetts and his partner, John Orr, purchased Wilson’s Exchange in Sebastopol in early May 1866. Wilson’s Exchange was a hotel and ballroom in Sebastopol completed in 1860 and joined Joaquin Carrillo’s Analy Hotel at the time. But by the spring of 1870 the hotel was again referred to as Wilson’s Exchange. The building was referred to as Mrs. E.G. Wilson’s hotel in the reports of Sebastopol’s great fire in late August 1881. (John Orr was a relatively large land owner and prominent citizen in the western county at the time. Tuomey’s, 1926 biography of John’s son, T.F., includes much information on the father.)

The rest of the third sentence (“while a trip between here and Healdsburg is only accomplished with the utmost difficulty, ox-power being required it is said, to help the coach out of some of the mud holes!”) appears to be a literal description of the road conditions at the time between Petaluma and Healdsburg, and is probably not much of an exaggeration.

An attempt was made to research the name of the little steamer, *Georgina*, hoping to independently verify that such a boat operated between Sebastopol and the lower Russian River in 1860. Mac Mullen (1944) describes a little 30 ton, side wheel steamer named the *Georgiana* which was built in 1850 for use on the upper San Joaquin River, but was promptly replaced by a more suitable, small shallow draft stern wheeler. Mac Mullen also reports that the *Georgiana*

blew-up in Petaluma in late November 1855. Lynch (1997) cites old NWP railroad records to identify two little steamers, one of which was named the *Georgina*, which operated on the Sonoma and San Francisco route between 1850 and 1865. An article in the December 3, 1875 addition of the *Petaluma Weekly Argus* states that the *Georgina* running the Sonoma and San Francisco route, began running the Petaluma and San Francisco route on September 17, 1855 – about two months before it blew-up in Petaluma. A November 24, 1855 article in the *Petaluma Weekly Journal and Sonoma County Advertiser* indeed reports on the blowing up of the boiler of a steamer in Petaluma, but contrary to Mac Mullen, the boat is named the *Georgina*. (Subsequent articles reporting on the coroner’s jury on the death of the boats engineer and a later newspaper editorial urging local steam captains not to race their boats, also names the tragic boat as the *Georgina*.) A letter in the Petaluma newspaper describing a Petaluma resident’s trip to the Salmon River mines in Oregon in early 1862, describes taking a lighter named the *Georgiana* to Haystack landing (the article describes the *Georgiana* as being a “fast packet” and does not indicate that the boat was powered by steam). To add to the confusion in the names *Georgiana* and *Georgina*, Heig’s (1982) book on the history of Petaluma quotes directly from the relevant newspaper articles, but substitutes the name *Georgiana* rather than *Georgina* as in the original newspaper articles cited. The centennial addition of the *Petaluma Argus Courier* (August 18, 1955) tells the story of the 1855 steamboat catastrophe of the *Georgina* as in the original newspaper articles. The Maritime Museum in San Francisco has apparently no records of local steamboats named either the *Georgina* or the *Georgiana*.

The records search on the name *Georgina* or *Georgiana* did not provide an independent verification that one could take the *Georgina* from Sebastopol to the redwood logging and milling region of the lower Russian River in the spring of 1860. However, a report nearly twenty seven years later in January 1887 that the beautiful little steam yacht called the *Pride of the Laguna* would soon be making tri-weekly trips from Sebastopol (down the Laguna) to Guerneville, strongly supports the interpretation of early travel down the Laguna from Sebastopol and then down the Russian River to the redwood region of the lower river.

SCJ – August 3, 1860 SEBASTOPOL

This is a great article on the early history of Sebastopol. The article refers to the Laguna as “a fine fishing stream (see Cummings, 2003 p 3).

PA – December 24, 1861 STUCK IN THE MUD

The stage from Santa Rosa came into Petaluma very late. The stage had been swamped in the “Lagoona.” The team had been rescued from drowning and the lady passengers had been carried to “terafirma.”

The Petaluma and Santa Rosa road at the time appears to have crossed the upper Laguna near where Cotati/Rohnert Park is today.

PA – December 31, 1861 Settlers vs. Grants

The article begins with an English copy of the original Mexican land grant of Joaquin “Corillo” for the “Solano de Santa Rosa” (Llanos de Santa Rosa ?) rancho by the “Lagunas” dated March 29, 1844 in Monterey and signed by Micheltorena. The land grant is followed by the OPINION OF THE [U.S. LAND] COMMISSIONERS, which approved the grant request of Joaquin “Corilo” for his three square league grant (13,316 acres). The opinion of commissioners Thompson and Campbell dated October 21, 1853 was that Joaquin “Corillo” had satisfied all of the legal requirements and that his claim should be confirmed. (The deposition of M.G. Vallejo was accepted by the commission – that the grant claim had been occupied by the claimant in 1841 or 1842, that the claimant had first built a house on the land in 1843 or 1844 and that he has since built a very large house on the land, and that the claimant has horses and cattle on the land with 300 acres in corn, barley, beans and wheat.)

PA—January 7, 1862	Settlers vs. Grants
PA – January 14, 1862	Settlers vs. Grants
PA – January 21, 1862	Settlers vs. Grants
PA – January 28, 1862	Settlers vs. Grants
PA – February 4, 1862	Settlers vs. Grants

C.F. Kelly details in series of five lengthy articles the settlers' position challenging the validity of the Mexican land grants. The first two articles focus from the settlers' point of view, on the validity of Joaquin Carrillo's land grant request and the favorable action of the Land Commissioners. Essentially Kelly doubted the truth of the testimony supporting the grant (no house was ever built on grant land, Carrillo's adobe was on the west side of the "Lagunos" and west of his land grant request, there were no signs that the grant land had ever been cultivated, that a large sum of money had been paid to induce the survey and establish the boundaries of the grant, etc.). He considered the document submitted to be a forgery since the original grant was for the "Llagunos de Santa Rosa" and had been overwritten with "Llanos de Santa Rosa." Kelly opined that the grant should be for the land west of the "Lagunos" and not the valley land to the east of the "Lagunos," and he called for a new survey of Carrillo's boundaries. Kelly's following three articles focus on many other technical and legal arguments from the settlers' point of view, which challenge the validity of the Mexican land grants in general.

Kelly's last article is followed by a lengthy history of the Mexican land grant which clouded the titles of all parcels in the growing town of Petaluma – a town built on grant land.

PA – March 26, 1862 Settlers Meeting

The article reports that a large and enthusiastic meeting of settlers was held near Santa Rosa and that a large number of them had joined the "Settler's Home Guard." Certain settlers had already been notified by the claimants of the Joaquin "Corillo" grant to lease, buy, vacate their land and homes, or pay a penalty for being in contempt of court, but the group resolved not to comply with such demands. The group also declared that the "Corillo" grant was a forgery and resolved that they would have nothing to do with it. They also claimed and demanded governmental protection against the swindle and the group called for the aid of citizens throughout the state of California.

Unlike several other areas in the county where settler disputes of the Mexican land grants led to the so called "squatter wars" (LeBaron,1991), squatters on Joaquin Carrillo's Llano de Santa Rosa appear to have settled their disputes rather amiably – at least no newspaper stories to the contrary were found.

Final recognition of Joaquin Carrillo's rancho lands would have allowed him to sell or lease portions of his land to the about fifty settlers within the surveyed area of his grant (the settler's request for a new survey was denied). Relative to the Laguna, Millar and Walker acquired title to nearly 4,000 acres of Carrillo's rancho land for a large Spanish cattle ranch.

The road pattern of government land with its section line roads exactly one mile apart, is still very evident in the north east Laguna north of Occidental Road (Piezzi Lane, Willowside Road, Guerneville and Piner roads, etc.). Harrison Valentine, the original settler of the land of which a portion is now the City of Santa Rosa's Stone Reclamation Farm (Harris, 1980), settled on land to the immediate north of Carrillo's grant. While he was never a squatter, Valentine probably would have not been certain that he was not a squatter until after the completion of the U.S. government survey of the area.

PJ&A – June 2, 1864 DROWNED

The 16 year-old son of John McReynolds drowned in the Lagoon near Sebastopol. His body was recovered several hours later by the assistance of Indian divers.

PJ&A – July 28, 1864 BADLY SOLD

The rebel, W.L. Anderson, telegraphed from Santa Rosa that the three noted rebels of Sebastopol (Dr. Harris, Wilson and Valentine) had been arrested for treason and would be sent to Alcatraz. In the evening when the stage arrived from Sebastopol, Democracy rejoiced – the report was a hoax.

The Valentine referred to in the article is undoubtedly Harrison Valentine, born in the South and one of the first settlers in the county. At the time the article was written, southern born, southern sympathizers and southern supporters, were often simply referred to as “rebels” by staunch Unionists. That Democracy should include those with divergent views is the overall point of this article.

PJ&A – December 14, 1865 CITIZENS MEETING

Citizens of Petaluma and vicinity met in McCune’s Hall to consider changes in the boundary line between the counties of Marin and Sonoma. The proposed new boundary of Marin County would be moved north to the mouth of the Russian River, thence up the river to Mark West Creek (also know as Mill Creek at the time), thence up the creek to the Laguna and up the Laguna to North Santa Rosa Creek, thence up Santa Rosa Creek to opposite Santa Rosa and thence on a line going directly east to the border with Napa County. The meeting appointed a committee (A. McCune, H.L. Weston and H. Meacham) to form a larger group to take the necessary steps to secure the passage of an act by the state legislature for the new boundary line of Marin County.

This early attempt to divide the county suggests that to some residents of Petaluma, it was much better to be in Marin County than to stay in Sonoma County with the much smaller and dominant southern town of Santa Rosa as the county seat. However, many folk in Marin County were not excited or pleased to make Tomales their new county seat. Since at least by 1860, there had been a number of proposals by Petaluma residents to rectify the perceived injustice of Santa Rosa being made the county seat. The problem was discussed openly in the Petaluma newspaper in August 1860 and the *Argus* was later chastised for supporting a petition submitted to the state legislature in the same year to move the Sonoma County seat to Petaluma. Such a state bill was reported to have been approved by the legislature in March of 1861.

PJ&A – October 4, 1866 CATTLE STEALING

Sixty-odd head of “beeves,” cows and calves were stolen from John Walker’s ranch. Walker searched and recovered forty-odd head in San Rafael, San Pablo and San Francisco. While the thieves had earlier attempted to sell the stolen cattle to Petaluma people on Paper Mill Creek, the thieves “have probably made good their escape.”

John Walker and his partner, Dr. Joseph Morgan Millar (usually spelt Miller), who had long since given up practicing as a physician, opened the regions first trading post in 1850 near a ford across the Laguna south of what became the town of Sebastopol. The partners also acquired nearly one third of Carrillo’s grant for a 4,000-acre cattle ranch. Dr. Millar died in the Walker home near the village of Sebastopol in late January 1875. In visiting Santa Rosa in the late 1880s, John Walker, now a millionaire, was referred to in the *Sonoma Democrat* as the “cattle king of Sebastopol.” John Walker died in the late 1890s and both he and Dr. Millar are buried in Sebastopol’s Pleasant Hill Cemetery (McClure, 2004; 2005).

PJ&A – August 12, 1869 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The column taken from the *Democrat*, states that the county supervisors had changed the boundary line between the Santa Rosa Township and the Analy Township. The new boundary line of Analy Township now goes up Santa Rosa Creek from its mouth in the Laguna to the county road between Healdsburg and Petaluma, thence south on the road to where the road meets the Laguna again near Wm. H. Rodger's place, the present boundary line of Analy Township.

As in much of the U.S., "Township" in Sonoma County was used to designate an administrative unit – not the six square mile unit used in surveying.

PJ&A – November 6, 1869 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The news items listed from the *Democrat* includes a paragraph describing that Mr. Bailiff had discovered that one of his horses had been stolen during the night. He had immediately come to town and telegraphed a description of the horse to many places in the region. The thief and the horse were captured in San Francisco and brought back to Petaluma. Presumably the horse was returned to Bailiff's ranch, but the thief was lodged in jail.

John Bailiff at the time owned a relatively large ranch (about 600 acres) on the eastern side of the Laguna, north of what is now known as Guerneville Road. Foreign born, Bailiff was reported to have come to California in 1848 and was one of the earliest settlers in the county. He was an unsuccessful candidate for county supervisor in 1878, but none-the-less, Bailiff was a prominent citizen of Analy Township. As well as the usual orchard and diverse crops such as melons, he primarily appears to have devoted most of his ranch to grain and grasses for a stock raising business (sheep and horses). Bailiff was reported to also have horse ranches in Santa Barbara and Tulare counties and partnered in the sheep raising business on another ranch in Humboldt County. Bailiff's ranch was immediately south of what became the Ballard property in the late 1890s, with its resort next to the Laguna lake, locally known as "Ballard Lake."

PJ&A – November 27, 1869 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The items listed include notes from the *Democrat* that wild ducks are becoming quite plentiful in the Lagoon and marshes around Santa Rosa and that the residence of Mr. Van Wyck on the Lagoon was destroyed by fire last week. At the time of the house fire, only Van Wyck's wife and two children were home and the fire burned so rapidly that it was impossible for them to have saved anything except themselves.

PJ&A – November 18, 1871 MURDER NEAR SEBASTOPOL

An Indian named Pedro killed a squaw last Sunday by beating her brains out with a picket on Allen's ranch. The Indian was arrested and taken before Judge Berry who sent him to Santa Rosa and "he is now in Jail with the rest of Sheriff Potter's guests" awaiting the action of the Grand Jury.

The squaw appears to have been killed on Otis Allen's ranch adjacent to the west bank of the Laguna, just north of where Occidental Road crosses the Laguna today.

Amasa Bushnell and Otis Allen (Messrs. Bushnell, Allen and Co.) introduced hops into Sonoma County on about ten acres of Green Valley land in the spring of 1858. The partners sold their first crop (fall 1859) in San Francisco for a very good price of \$1.00 per pound, but they received only \$0.50 per pound for their bountiful 1860 crop. (Mr. Edwards of Petaluma's Eagle Brewery, also purchased some of their 1860 crop.) It is not certain when Otis Allen first planted hops on his own ranch adjacent to the Laguna. The partners are only recorded to have planted another eight acres of hops in the spring of 1860 "near Sebastopol." However by 1874, Santa Rosa's *Democrat* reported that Otis

Allen had harvested 2,500 pounds of hops on three acres of his land along the Laguna and was paid \$0.275 per pound (LeBaron and others, 1985). Allen's hop yard along the Laguna had been enlarged to about twenty five acres by 1890 making him one of the major growers in the county at the time. (In 1890 there were about fifty hop growers in the county with a total of about 1000 acres devoted to hops.) It made the news in September 1891 when Miss Mattie Allen picked 374 pounds of hops in one day in the father's hop yard in the Laguna – the same year in which Otis Allen was Vice President of the Sonoma County Hop Growers Association.

Hops were widely grown and promoted throughout California by the mid-1860s – often described as “one of the most profitable crops in the world.” But hop prices fluctuated widely from year to year. Hop prices were so low in many years that many ranches with hops that they couldn't feed to their livestock, simply left them in the field to rot and many other hop fields were plowed under. Hops first appeared in the county agriculture statistics in the early 1890s and continued to be a prominent crop in Sonoma County until shortly after the end of WWII (LeBaron and Mitchell, 1993; see also LeBaron and others, 1985 for a synopsis of the growing of hops in the county).

Amasa Bushnell appears to have given up farming since it was reported in March 1874 that A. Bushnell, formerly of Analy Township, had been awarded the position of postmaster on Alcatraz Island. But in May 1878 an Amasa Bushnell of Forestville Township attended a non-partisan convention to elect delegates to a state constitutional convention.

PJ&A – December 30, 1871 COUNTY OF SOTOYOME

It is reported that people in the upper county are agitating to be separated from southern Sonoma County. The county seat of the proposed new northern county, Sotoyome, would be at Healdsburg and the seat of Sonoma County would be moved to Petaluma. The proposed boundary line between the two counties would begin at the mouth of the Russian River, thence up the river to Mark West Creek and into the Laguna, thence up the Laguna to Santa Rosa Creek, thence up the creek to the bridge opposite Santa Rosa (south of town at the time), and from there due east to the Napa County line – “providing it is approved by a vote of the people.”

PJ&A – February 10, 1872 COUNTY DIVISION BILL

This article reprints an approved state act to divide Sonoma County in two, after a general election favoring such a division. The northern portion of the county would become the County of the Russian River (rather than Sotoyome County as in the previous article) with its new county seat at Healdsburg. The act provides funding and directs the new county supervisors to build a county Court House and Jail on the Healdsburg Plaza. Within ten days after a favorable vote, the Act directs the current Sonoma County supervisors to divide the county in two according to the boundary line described in the preceding article.

The preceding two articles outline other unsuccessful early attempts to divide Sonoma County and move the county seat to Petaluma rather than having it continue at Santa Rosa. While the Petaluma newspaper did not record the results of a failed vote, the “war” to divide the county and move the Sonoma County seat to Petaluma was not over. In February 1883 another petition was circulated in Petaluma to turn over Petaluma's Washington Plaza and provide \$100,000 to the county for a new county Court House and jail, if the county moved its seat to Petaluma. Santa Rosa about this time, also apparently offered to donate its plaza to the county to erect a new court house, but the ownership of Santa Rosa's plaza was considered clouded since the county claimed to have already owned it. To make a long story short, the county laid the foundation stone for its new Court House on Santa Rosa's Plaza in late 1883 and on May 7, 1884 of the following year, with much celebration, laid the corner stone of its new Court House. (Yet another proposal to divide Sonoma County circulated in January 1920. The 1920 proposal called for the southern portion of the county with a new county line just north of Cotati, to become the County of Petaluma and would have included the southern Sonoma County coast with the towns of Bodega, Occidental and Camp Meeker.)

The geographical descriptions of the proposed county boundaries in the two 1872 articles, in the earlier 1865 article, on old maps of the county and even on current official U.S. government maps, all describe or show that Mark West Creek empties into the Russian River and that the Laguna de Santa Rosa empties into the creek rather than discharging directly into the river. Most people today describe the Laguna as flowing between Rohnert Park and the Russian River

with Mark West Creek emptying into the Laguna – especially since the lower reach to the creek and its confluence with the Laguna has been moved southward about two miles from its historic location (Waaland, 1990 and see also Cummings, 2004 and comments to the November 5, 1875 article).

At the time of the county division proposals described in the two articles above, the county's demographics and economics was beginning to be subject to the major changes associated with the coming of the railroads. The railroads precipitated Petaluma's waning dominance in population and in its shipping and importing focal point of the county. With a county population of about 20,000, Petaluma Township had nearly 1.6 times the population of Santa Rosa Township in early 1870. But by the end of the year, when the steamer *Sacramento* departed from the Jackson Street wharf in San Francisco for the new town of Donahue on San Pablo Bay near the mouth of Petaluma Creek – inaugurating the San Francisco and Santa Rosa route of the SF&NP, Petaluma now had only a railroad depot in east Petaluma. Two years later, concern was expressed in the *Argus* that Petaluma was dropping in population. Petaluma's downward spiral of importance in the county would have been further exacerbated with the arrival of the narrow gage coast railroad from Sausalito in Monte Rio in September 1876 (Wilson, 1999) and the SF& NP's branch line between Fulton and Guerneville which was completed in early March of 1877.

The 1890 census data reflects the demographic shift in the county which had now grown to about 33,000 people (an increase of about 25% in the previous ten years). Petaluma Township had only grown 9% since 1880 while Santa Rosa Township had grown about 44% in the previous decade. (The 1890 population of the City of Petaluma was about 3,700 and the population of the City of Santa Rosa was now about 5,000).

PJ&A – February 24, 1872 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The news items listed from the *Democrat* include notes that the lower bridge over Mark West Creek on the Sebastopol to Healdsburg road had been washed away and that the middle bridge on the Petaluma to Healdsburg road had been severely damaged and was now impassible.

PWA – December 12, 1873 DREADFUL ACCIDENT

The five-year old daughter of George Ford, who resides on Laguna road, was fatally burned last week after her clothing caught fire.

PWA – September 18, 1874 SANTA ROSA AND VICINITY

Items from last Saturday's *Democrat* included a note that James Fowler, who was shot by his brother Sam on the Laguna, has not been heard from since the shooting.

PWA – December 11, 1874 SANTA ROSA AND VICINITY

Items from last week's *Democrat* included a report that there had been considerable loss on the Laguna and on lower Mark West Creek from the recent freshet. 140 head of Levi Slusser's sheep had drowned. The Italians making charcoal on Griggs' land had 25 cords of wood carried away, but a large portion of their 2,000 sacks of charcoal had lodged in the creek against the lower Laguna bridge and was expected to be recovered. R.B. Ross lost 150 bushels of corn and 100 sacks of potatoes. Mr. O'Leary, at the upper end of Green Valley, had two acres of his land washed away. In addition, Slusser, Ross, Mr. Archer and H.J. Fisher all lost extensive sections of pickets and fencing, etc.

PWA – January 15, 1875 OUR SANTA ROSA LETTER

A Santa Rosa correspondent tells the story of two aspiring “novloos” in the house breaking profession that had come to Sonoma County to practice. They went through an Italian’s house near the Lagoon very thoroughly and removed any article of use or value, but they were soon captured. Despite the tears of the mother of one of the boys, the boys were convicted as charged and are awaiting sentencing.

PWA – January 29, 1875 SANTA ROSA AND VICINITY

Items selected from last Saturday’s *Democrat* included a note that the barn of John Morrison, whose place is just east of the Lagoon, had blown down with a loss of \$1,500.

PWA – October 15, 1875 SANTA ROSA AND VICINITY

Items selected from the *Democrat* included a note that Thomas Sebring, who lives on the Laguna one mile north of Sebastopol, sold his ranch last week to a gentleman from San Francisco.

Lake Sebring, the local name at the time for the Laguna lake just north of Sebastopol, was apparently named after Thomas Sebring. The same lake would become locally known as Lake Jonive in the early 1900s. The daughter of Thomas and Margaret Sebring had married James Gannon in 1863 (McClure, 1995). James Gannon, whose ranch was also next to the Laguna near the village of Sebastopol, was seriously injured after being flung to the ground when a gang plow hit a stump at the end of January 1873. Gannon’s right arm was amputated six inches above the elbow after his accident, but it was reported that he was not expected to recover. But recover he did and until he died in 1896, James Gannon was one of the most prominent citizens of Sebastopol. He opened Laguna Park – a one-half mile horse racing track on his property next to the Laguna, in the fall of 1873. Gannon served as a county supervisor in the early 1880s and among many other things, Gannon led Sebastopol’s efforts to be connected to a railroad. In his later years between 1891 and 1893, Gannon was the Sebastopol postmaster and moved to the Yaegler property in the center of town.

PWA – November 5, 1875 LAGUNA BRIDGE

An article taken from Santa Rosa’s *Times* reports that the new railroad bridge across the Laguna is nearly completed. The bridge is 1,248 feet long and will be 4 feet higher than the top railing of the nearby county road bridge. The track is now laid and graveled to the new railroad bridge.

This article appears to refer to the building of SF& NP’s branch line between Fulton and Guerneville (beginning at Fulton). The old railroad trestle crossed the north Laguna near where River Road crosses the Laguna today. The anecdotal story is that the SF & NP railroad first diverted the confluence of Mark West Creek and the Laguna southward about 3,000 feet in order to protect their property from the partial dam and flooding of the Laguna caused by sediment coming down the creek (Waaland, 1990 – see also Cummings, 2004).

PWA – September 14, 1877 MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

A short article at the end of this news column reports that Otis Allen, who has a ranch on the Laguna three miles from Sebastopol, has just completed harvesting his hops from his five-acre hop yard yielding about 5,500 pounds. His large area planted to corn promises a fine yield. Mr. Allen has recently leased his place for a term of years and will be shortly moving to Petaluma.

PWA – July 26, 1878 ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The column includes a note that the little child of G.W. Sinclair wandered from the house and while playing, fell into the lagoon near Sebastopol and drowned.

PWA – November 22, 1878 DEAD BODY FOUND

A party of hunters found the dead body of a man floating on the Laguna just north of the bridge near the Illingsworth's ranch. A jury investigation determined that the deceased was a Chinaman who had been dead for about eight months. Suspicion was placed on some Indians that were known to have had a quarrel with a Chinaman near A.J. Peterson's last spring (see Cummings, 2003 p5).

PWA – January 10, 1879 ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The column states that there is good hunting on the Laguna. One sportsman bagged fifty ducks in one day.

PWA – January 31, 1879 PROPERTY TAX DELINGUENTS – Analy Township

The list includes:

Brown, Jno. – seventy acres of land boarded on the west by the Laguna, south by the county road, east by the lands of Kelley and north by the land of Gianelli.

Bowhen M. – fourteen acres of land bounded on the north by the lands of Solomon, east by the Laguna, south by the land of Barnes and west by the county road.

PWA – March 7, 1879 THE STORM

The heaviest rain of the season, more than 48 hours without a break, caused major flooding in the towns and eliminated travel in many places throughout the county. Rincon valley was nearly all under water and the Santa Rosa to Sonoma stage had to stop at the dangerous bridge crossing of Alamos creek. Deputy Sheriff Van Doran left Santa Rosa for Sebastopol, but was stopped at the first bridge of the overflowed Laguna. The high water in the Laguna covered the fences and there was a strong current between the first and the long bridge across the Laguna, suspending all travel. Russian River flows were higher than they had been at any time in more than a decade.

PWA – March 14, 1879 ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The items listed include a note that the long bridge over the Laguna on the road from Santa Rosa to Sebastopol was badly damaged by the high water last week. Another note in the column states that the *Sonoma Democrat* was informed that the water in the Laguna last week reached the high water mark of 1852. The water in the Laguna rose six feet in two hours on Thursday.

PWA – March 20, 1879 LOCAL BREVITIES

The items listed briefly reports on the story of the Chinaman employed by Wm. Illingsworth, who died of his injuries following an explosion of the damp blasting powder that he was drying on an open fire (see Cummings, 2003 p6 for details of the tragedy).

PWA – May 16, 1879 ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The list includes a note from the *Democrat* that reports that twenty five carp have been placed in the Laguna by E.A. Howe of Fulton at the junction of the Laguna with Mark West Creek.

See Cummings, 2003 p6 – the original *Sonoma Democrat* article described the introduced fish as cat-fish – not carp.

PWA – June 6, 1879 ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The items listed includes a note that Joel Crane of Santa Rosa, age seventeen, was drowned while bathing in the Laguna near Sebastopol (see Cummings, 2003 p6 for details of the tragedy).

PWA – August 22, 1879 LOCAL BREVITIES

The synopsis of Santa Rosa news from the *Democrat* includes a note that a number of fields near Lytaker's blacksmith shop on the lower Laguna road have been plowed and made ready for next year's crop.

Laguna road at the time appears to have been an eastern section of what we now know as Guerneville Road.

PWA – September 19, 1879 DRAINING THE LAGUNA

The article briefly reports on a *Democrat* article that Press Davis has surveyed the ground and that 600 acres of rich bottom land in the Laguna are to be reclaimed by discharging the surplus water into Lake Sebring (see Cummings, 2003 p7 for a summary of the original *Sonoma Democrat* article).

PWA – October 17, 1879 BODY FOUND

The article briefly reports on the finding of the body of an about 25-year old man floating on the Laguna near Sebastopol (see Cummings, 2003 p7 for details of a *Sonoma Democrat* article on the finding).

PWA – October 24, 1879 IDENTIFIED

The article summarizes a report from Santa Rosa's *Times* that the body of the young man found floating in the Laguna last week had been identified as that of Frank Perkins.

The *Times* article differs somewhat from the *Sonoma Democrat* article summarized in Cummings (2003 p7). The *Times* article reports that Sheriff Dinwiddie had given Perkins a job of piling wood ten days before Perkins' body was found in the Laguna. After receiving his pay for piling the wood, Perkins had bought some tobacco which he divided with his comrades in jail, this being the last seen of him in Santa Rosa.

PWA – October 31, 1879 ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The items listed include a complaint from the *Times* that the bridges between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol are in an execrable condition.

PWA – November 14, 1879 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

After determining that forming such a district complied with the state Act of 1872, the board formed a Laguna Drainage District for the frequently flooded land of the Laguna. The list of names and their acreages in the Laguna district were erroneously reported for the Petersons as 49 acres each in my earlier paper (Cummings, 2003), but should be only 40 acres each and not 49.

See Cummings, 2003 p8 for J.M. Charles' verbatim petition to the supervisors to form a Laguna Drainage District with a list of the names and their Laguna acreages to be included in the 561.5-acre district. The list provides the names of all of the property owners adjacent to the Laguna north (downstream) of Sebastopol in late 1879. The list could serve as an invaluable tool by combing the names with other historical information such as crops grown, genealogy and community involvement, etc. Without further research, the listed acreages of overflowed Laguna land which complied with the state Act of 1872 cannot be directly converted to any modern description such as the area below a given year flood level or the area below that of a certain elevation.

PWA – November 28, 1879 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The items listed include a note that Bud Jackson shot a swan on the Laguna weighing over twenty pounds and measured six feet between the wing tips.

PWA – December 12, 1879 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The supervisors approved warrants for the Laguna Drainage District in favor of:

A.G. Shannon for \$ 40.00
 Press Davis for \$63.53
 J.P. Clark, F.G. Hahman and Press Davis for \$ 17.16?
 Ragdale Bros. for \$ 68.63

Note: this is the only record found to date that the first Laguna Drainage District may have undertaken any activity other than carrying out an initial survey.

PWA – January 9, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS ITEMS

The news items listed report that two dogs killed seven sheep and wounded several others on Bailiff's ranch near the Laguna. Afterwards the dogs raided the flock of the Illingsworth Bros. where they were caught in the act and one dog was killed. The owner of the dogs paid Mr. Bailiff

\$ 42.00 in damages. “This was manly; but how many are willing to do as they would be done by?”

PWA – February 6, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS ITEMS

The items from the *Democrat* begin with a note that the by-laws of the Laguna Drainage District Association were filed with the county Recorder last Saturday.

PWA – April 2, 1880 FROM GREEN VALLEY

The letter to the *Argus* includes a note that everybody in the lower end of the valley is anxious for a better bridge across the Laguna on the Ellingsworth road. Many teams are now compelled to go to Santa Rosa via Sebastopol making the round trip fully five miles further.

The often called, middle or central bridge, on the Ellingsworth road across the lower Laguna was approximately where the bridge on Guerneville Road crosses the Laguna today. The middle bridge was near the Illingsworth brother’s ranch at the time.

PWA – April 9, 1880 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Reported activities of the supervisors included a response to the petition of Bailiff, Allen and others by appointing supervisors Crane and Acker to a committee to examine the Cantrel bridge across the Laguna for any necessary immediate repairs. The supervisors also ordered that sealed proposals would be received for building a new bridge across the Laguna near Illingsworth’s (see also Cummings, 2003 p 8).

PWA – April 16, 1880 ALONG THE LAGUNA

Hops are a staple production along the Laguna below Sebastopol and Samuel Talmedge is the “boss” hop grower of this region with 22 acres of vines with a yield of about 2,000 pounds per acre, which at the low price of \$ 0.25 per pound, his crop is worth \$ 500 per acre. Mr. Talmedge also has some extensive fish ponds for pisciculture and around his fish ponds are irrigated strawberry patches. Parties are now contracted with Talmedge to clear and set for him 50 acres of grape vines. (“The Forestville folk are dividing their time between blue ribbon meetings and pisciculture.”) Otis Allen is enlarging his hop fields and he complains of a sheep malady killing his sheep from a leach which leaves the sheep liver full of holes. Mr. Ragle has lost between forty and fifty sheep since last Autumn from the same malady, while Mr. Allen has lost only seven of his sheep so far. Geo. N. Sanbourne has moved his dwelling up nearer the county road and has set out a peach orchard of 200 budded trees. Capt. Scammon has gone to Mobile, Alabama to take charge of the U.S. Revenue cutter operating in the Gulf of Mexico. James Gannon had forty of his lambs killed by dogs in one night. Grain is considerably damaged along the Laguna. Frank Scudder has returned from Petaluma where he was going to school and Gus Peterson’s son will probably set out a field of hops this spring. The article also includes information that the Rev. Mr. Croco, preached at the Green Valley Congregational Church and reports that one of the Noffsinger boys is slowly recovering after falling from a barn loft and hitting his head.

The stately Victorian mansion of Samuel Talmadge, built in the late 1880s, is on the corner of Beaver and Cherry streets in Santa Rosa. Hopefully the current owner will reach his goal of restoring the mansion to its original glory (Coursey, 2005).

Both pisciculture – the artificial rearing of fish, and the stocking of local streams with “more desirable” fish species (often naively by current standards), was widely promoted and facilitated by the U.S. government beginning at least by the early 1870s. Government motivation primarily appears to have been to provide an alternative protein source, but undoubtedly also included combating the gross over-fishing of native streams. (A good local example of over-fishing [meat fishing] is a report in the *Sonoma County Journal* in the spring of 1862, that 304 trout had been taken from Copeland Creek in three hours.) While pisciculture remains a very small American industry today, pisciculture is practiced in many countries throughout the world. The culture of carp dates back about 3,000 years in China and China today produces about 90% of the world’s total yearly production of carp (about 600 million tons).

Julius A. Poppe introduced German carp in America on his ranch in the Sonoma Valley near Glen Ellen in 1871 (LeBaron, 1994). In the late fall of 1875, Julius was reported to be selling his carp for a very expensive price of \$ 1.00 per pound. (A very expensive price since wild salmon sold in the Petaluma market at the time for only 12 to 15 cents per pound. The average salary of male teachers in California in 1874 was about \$ 1.72 per day, but female teachers averaged only about \$ 0.48 per day.)

By the time Julius Poppe died in January 1880, over a dozen carp growers and one cat-fish grower had been identified in Sonoma County by the Petaluma newspaper. Levi Davis of Forestville was perhaps the most widely copied, successful and enthusiastic promoter of carp rearing in the county between 1876 and 1884, when he was reported to be now in the fruit business. In the early spring of 1881, Davis reported that he had already received 361 letters so far this year inquiring about carp rearing and that he had shipped founder carp throughout California and the western states – so much so that he could not deliver all of the orders he had received. (Davis also raised bass, perch and suckers.) While Petaluma’s *Argus* carried an article in the summer of 1876 on the Family Fish Pond, which recommended carp raising throughout the West, and another article on domestic carp in the spring of 1887, no further mention of carp raising was made in the local newspaper, indicating at least that carp raising was no longer newsworthy or more likely that carp raising in the county was no longer seen as a spectacularly profitable crop – the get rich quick scheme, that had been initially promoted.

While carp culture was quite important in early California, especially in Sonoma County, by 1876, five years after the exotic fish were introduced, escaped carp from Poppe’s ponds had established themselves and were regularly caught in Sonoma Creek. The first major carp populations in the Laguna were reported in February 1886 and were attributed to the washing away of Aaron Barnes’ carp ponds near Forestville in the storm and floods of January 1878 (see Cummings, 2003 p 4). In fact the common and uncontrolled escape of non-native carp into local waterways is said to have been a major reason for the U.S. government to cease fostering and promoting the on-farm raising of carp in America.

PWA – April 23, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

Notes in this column include that the Russian River came up twenty feet in one day this week. The water in the Laguna is four feet above the bridge on the Redwood road. This is the Illingsworth bridge now advertised for rebuilding by the county supervisors. Travel from Forestville to Santa Rosa now comes via Sebastopol.

Redwood road appears to have been an old name for part of what is now known as Guerneville Road.

PWA – April 30, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The column includes notes that J.S. Groff, residing near Sebastopol, reports that the flood in the Laguna carried off the soil and fencing from about two acres of some of his best land. W.B. Griggs reports from the mouth of Mark West Creek that the sediment from the recent flood had covered ten acres of wheat and barley.

PWA – May 7, 1880 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Activities of the board included supervisors Robert Crane and R.W. Acker reporting to the entire board that they had examined the Cantrel bridge over Mark West creek and found the bridge to be in good condition and was not an obstruction to the flow of water in the creek. The committee of supervisors also reported that the timber and brush in the creek and in the Laguna are a greater obstruction to the flow of waters than are the bridges.

PWA – July 2, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The regular column notes that Abm. Gamble had left in the office of Santa Rosa's *Republican* a mighty tall sheaf of rye grown on the hills near the Laguna.

PWA – August 13, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The column includes a note from the *Democrat* that a complaint has been made that “persons are in the habit of catching the young catfish and perch in the Laguna that were put there for the purpose of stocking the stream, and are protected by law for five years.”

While unfortunately frequency data are not available, of the eighteen species of fish observed in the Laguna today, ten are non-native, introduced species (Waaland and others, 1990). Local newspaper articles record only that there were two deliberately introduced fish into the Laguna in the late 1880s (cat-fish in the spring of 1879 and black bass in the early spring of 1896). At least two other non-native species were reported to be in the Laguna in the late 1800s (apparently perch in the summer of 1880 and sunfish in the spring of 1885) and the *Sebastopol Times* indicated that it was expected that the Laguna was to be stocked with pickerel in the spring of 1899. A few non-native carp were reported to have been caught in the Laguna in the spring of 1883, but it was not until the end of February 1886 that the Laguna was reported to be alive with carp. The carp at the time were considered to be escapees from the nearby carp rearing ponds in Forestville and apparently were not deliberately introduced into the Laguna. About a decade after the Laguna was reported to be alive with carp, a sportsman's fish, black bass, was introduced into the Laguna to destroy all of the carp if possible (Cummings, 2003). Non-native bass, carp, cat-fish and sunfish are found in the Laguna today, but while perch and pickerel were not collected by the gill net and seine used to obtain the 1990 data, the later two species were reported to be in the Russian River in the late 1800s.

PWA – December 3, 1880 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The column includes a note that King Chambers, while hunting on the Laguna, accidentally shot himself in the hand. The hand was so mangled that the doctors had to amputate it.

PWA – January 7, 1881 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The column includes notes from the *Republican* that the Laguna and streams are now alive with ducks and that the supervisors had received a petition to extend the Santa Rosa Road District to the middle of the Laguna so that the roads leading to Santa Rosa could be kept in better repair by a more abundant road fund. “None of the bridges crossing the Laguna are more than barely passable at this time” (see also Cummings, 2003 p8).

PWA – February 4, 1881 THE STORM

This long article summarizes the extensive damage throughout Sonoma County from a recent storm. The Laguna was unusually high and great damage was done to the bridges. The county bridge crossing Mark West creek was downed and struck the railroad bridge forcing one end of the railroad bridge several feet out of position.

PWA – February 11, 1881 THE STORM AND OTHER MATTERS

This article adds to the above article on the storm damage in the county. In Sebastopol, the water in the Laguna was reported to be higher than it had been since '61 – '62 and was five or six feet above the long bridge adjacent to Sebastopol. Sebastopol's mail was carried by boat across the Laguna to meet the stage. "A few of ye godless Sebastopolians hunted up their bibles last Sabbath morning, and interested themselves in the first chapter of Genesis with fears and tremblings." Many Sebastopol merchants considered it decidedly cheeky to be asked for aid to repair the roads east of town – "so that folks living around [the town] can go to Santa Rosa to do their trading." The Sebastopol schools had closed for a week on account of the storm, but none of the "professionals" could go to Santa Rosa for several days "to gaze at the signs."

PWA – April 1, 1881 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The column includes a note from Santa Rosa's *Republican* stating that the Illingsworth bridge across the Laguna on the Guerneville road was passable.

PWA – July 1, 1881 LOCAL BREVITIES

The column includes a note that Bob Robinson caught a mess of over one hundred catfish, ranging from ten to eighteen inches in length, in the Green Valley Laguna.

PWA – August 26, 1881 CATFISH

Bob Robinson of Petaluma and Mr. Russell, whose ranch is on Sonoma Mountain behind the Tom Hopper place, fished for catfish in the Green Valley lagoon in order to stock Mr. Russell's fish ponds on his ranch.

PWA – September 30, 1881 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The column includes a note that a fire on Mr. Pfiester's ranch near the Laguna destroyed \$ 100 worth of his property.

PWA – October 7, 1881 ANOTHER CAT-FISH HUNT

The Petaluma *Argus* organized a "cat-fish party," but when they arrived at the Laguna Lake the man who owns the fish trap had gone to Mark West, so they fished by themselves. Sam Weston,

Bill Mason, Frank Scudder and the ladies in the party, got into a large boat and were soon rapidly hauling in cat-fish from the deep water in the center of the lake. Those in the boat got over three hundred cat-fish, but the writer of the article tried to fish from the land and “he got over into John Bailiff’s watermelon patch” – and the melons were ripe.

PWA – October 28, 1881 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The items listed include a note from the *Republican* that the Illingsworth Bros. of the Laguna had brought eight horses and ten tons of barley to Santa Rosa – a full car load.

PWA – March 10, 1882 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The column includes notes from the *Republican* that the middle crossing of the Laguna is impassible for loaded teams and that Homer Meyer had reported that the water in the Laguna was over the bridge.

PWA – June 2, 1882 SONOMA COUNTY ITEMS

The column includes a note from the *Democrat* that large numbers of dead fish are floating on the surface of the Laguna. While never explained, the floating dead fish event happens nearly every year at this season. Also noted was that John Walker had disposed to two fine Durham bulls to parties intending to take them to Mazatlan.

This note indicates that already in the first three decades of the early county, high pollution levels in the Laguna had lowered the dissolved oxygen (DO) levels in the water to below fish kill levels. As late as 1946, a post-WWII proposed Laguna Storm Water District claimed a project benefit to wildlife would be having fewer fish in the Laguna floating “bottoms up” (Cummings, 2004). The water quality in the Laguna today is considered to be impaired, but it has only been in recent decades that the major pollution sources to the Laguna have been identified and the very complex source problems are now being gradually and systematically addressed.

PWA – August 11, 1882 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

The column reports that John Bailiff and his partner in the sheep business, George Dykes of Humboldt County, had visited Petaluma’s *Argus* on their return from catching rock cod and sea bass on Tomales Bay. The catfish in the Laguna near Mr. Bailiff’s ranch are so easily caught that he goes away from home for true sport fishing. The column also reports that the Abram Gamble family has returned from Washington and Oregon and will inhabit the old McNabb ranch on the Laguna.

PWA – November 17, 1882 SONOMA COUNTY NEWS

The column includes a note that the wife and daughter of John K. Fix of Green Valley got lost one day last week in the thickly wooded country lying west of the Laguna, while returning home after visiting a neighbor.

PWA – December 1, 1882 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

The column includes notes that Geo. H. Myer, formerly of the Laguna, now lives in Santa Rosa. Louis Myer, whose wife is in very poor health, has sold his ranch on the Laguna and now also lives in Santa Rosa.

PWA – December 8, 1882 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

The column includes a report from Otis Allen of Sebastopol that Sebastopol is booming – the people have found out that the climate and water at Sebastopol is the best in the state, and that the land is well adapted for grapes and fruits of almost all kinds. The hop lands along the Laguna always produce large crops and the hop craze has grown to such an extent that \$ 25 per 1000 is now offered for hop roots that in the past were simply thrown away or sold only for \$ 5 per 1000.

PWA – June 30, 1883 Big Fish Stories

The article begins with a note that cat-fish are ripe in the Santa Rosa Laguna. “Wm. Hill, the banker, was up the other day and banked some big ones, but he won’t tell how many.”

William Hill was a banker in Petaluma whose company specialized in agricultural land investments. His company’s name, Wm. Hill & Co., often appears as the property owner on old maps of the county prior to the 1900s.

PWA – March 1, 1884 COUNTY NEWS

The county news includes a note from the *Democrat* reporting that the red, chemically covered hills on the other side of the Laguna on the Santa Rosa and Forestville road, are being cleared and will be set out to French prunes.

PWA – May 3, 1884 COUNTY NEWS

The county news includes a report from the *Democrat* that three young men of Sebastopol were returning from the dance Saturday night and, after their horses shied while crossing the rail-less bridge, they and their vehicle were dumped into eight feet of water in an arm of the Laguna near Rodger’s place, just as the ice was beginning to form.

PWA – June 19, 1884 COUNTY NEWS

Among many others items, the column reports from the *Republican* that work on the Sebastopol bridge is progressing satisfactorily. John Wiley and his force of men will have things in order in three weeks. Light wagons can cross without difficulty on a temporary bridge just south of the main bridge.

PWA – December 27, 1884 COUNTY NEWS

The column reports that the Russian River at Guerneville was up about 15 feet. The river has covered all of the sand bars and has carried away all of the temporary bridges. The bridge over the laguna on the road from Sebastopol to Healdsburg was seriously damaged by the recent storm.

PWA – February 21, 1885 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The article states that the county's Laguna Drainage District has a fund balance of \$ 3.00.

PWA – April 18, 1885 CAT-FISH AND OTHER TALES

This long article is essentially about the town of Sebastopol in which the article states that the town is becoming famous for its cat-fish. The waters of the Laguna are now filled with these fish in less than a decade after they were introduced. Not-with-standing that cat-fish are regarded as a lazy man's fish since it requires little skill or exertion to capture them, many southern and western people are very fond of them.

The article also notes that Otis Allen, pioneer hop grower in Sonoma County, is not the least discouraged that the price of hops is down since he always contracts in advance at fair rates for a large part of his crop. Hops are considered to be a lottery crop varying greatly in price from year to year. Samuel Talmadge, who adjoins Mr. Allen's ranch on the north, has let his extensive hop fields to Chinese on shares and will be taking it easy for a few years.

See Tuomey, 1926 for a biographical sketch of Samuel Talmadge.

PWA – June 6, 1885 LOCAL INTELLIGENCE – BARN BURNED

The column reports that the barn of A. Frazier, who lives by the Sebastopol Laguna, was destroyed by fire with a loss of some 30 tons of hay worth about \$ 1,000.

PWA – June 27, 1885 Cat-fish Hunters

A large party from Petaluma went fishing in the Laguna near the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek. Since the water was down, the party had to hunt for deep holes with large fish. Part of the party fished in the creek on the Illingsworth brothers' premises and were quite successful, catching mostly cat-fish and a few carp. Dr. Matthews was the champion of this group and caught 101 fish, but Dr. Saul was close behind him. The other party went below and fished in Mr. Bailiff's part of the Laguna – on Gray's Lake, about one mile below (north) of the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek. The party fishing in the lake was also very successful and caught a large number of cat-fish, a few trout, carp and a good many sunfish.

The writer's advice for the remainder of the season was to fish from a boat on Gray's Lake, of which there are many, since the lake water is very deep and is always cold. (The article describes

Gray's Lake as a paradise for cat-fish hunters.) The best way to get there from Petaluma was to take the old county road to Santa Rosa, then take the Laguna road and turn right at Lytaker's blacksmith shop – a distance of about 24 miles from Petaluma.

E. Gray settled on land adjacent to the north Laguna prior to 1866. Like Lake Sebring near Sebastopol apparently being named for Thomas Sebring, it is highly likely that the northern Laguna lake also became locally known by the name of the adjacent early settler. In the early 1900s the same Laguna lakes would become locally known as Lake Jonive near Sebastopol and Ballard Lake in the north Laguna. Apparently the southern portion of Gray's Lake was more accessible through John Bailiff's ranch. Gray's Lake appears to have been called earlier the Green Valley Lake, lagoon or Laguna and also appears to have been referred to as simply as the Laguna Lake.

PWA – August 8, 1885 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

The column includes notes that H.A. Lynch was down from Green Valley and had reported that the water was cool in Gray's Lake and that the cat-fish in the lake were hungry. E.W. Dykes, a former resident of Sonoma County, now in the sheep business in Humboldt County with John Bailiff, and their Humboldt County neighbor in charge of the Fairbanks ranch on the Eel River, had visited the *Argus*.

PWA – October 17, 1885 LOCALS

The column contains a note that the Laguna bridge on the road between the Washoe House and Santa Rosa is in dangerous condition and that the farmers in the vicinity are making loud calls to the road master for their area.

The bridge referred to in this article appears to be on the road to Stony Point and is now called Llano Road.

PWA – November 7, 1885 Fruit Belt Ridge

The article includes a note that Mr. Scudder is improving the front, and Mr. Lynch is improving the back, of Mr. Scudder's old place near the Laguna.

The "Fruit Belt" refers to the eastern portion of Green Valley, bounded on the north by the Fulton to Guerneville branch of the SF & NP railroad, on the south by the Sebastopol and Freestone road, on the east by the Laguna, and on the west by the "crystal stream," Green Valley Creek.

PWA – November 28, 1885 LOCALS

The column includes a report that the water reached the Laguna bridge at Sebastopol last Tuesday – as high as it ever was before.

PWA – January 9, 1886 FRUIT BELT RIDGE

The correspondent's article complains that the Laguna back-up is as bad as ever and notes that the back-up seems to defy our local civil engineer, Gus Peterson, to do anything about it.

PWA – January 9, 1886 “WAKE-UP JAKE” HEARD FROM

“Wake-Up-Jake,” the correspondent of “Fruit Belt Ridge,” opinions that hopefully in the near future, John Walker’s large tract in the Laguna will be cut into hundreds of small farms where now nothing but cattle roam on his thousands of acres. Hundreds of happy homes on small farms, which has already happened in the Green Valley fruit belt, will accommodate more people and will be much better. While the correspondent comments that he is not a communist and doesn’t wish to divide Walker’s land without paying him, he states that it’s a sin to only use the land for no other purpose than pasturing cattle.

The correspondent appears to be referring to a large tract of Cooper’s former land grant in Green Valley which had been used as a sheep ranch for about twenty years. The large former sheep ranch in Green Valley was purchased by Wm. Hill and Co. and divided into 25 smaller farms in late 1884. John Walker’s son, Edward Lee, subdivided and began selling most of his late father’s large cattle ranch in the late 1890s. Fortunately for current Laguna preservationists, with a few exceptions of urban and rural residential properties, much of Walker’s former cattle ranch in the Laguna, remains in relatively large parcels by today’s standards and was not broken up into the small farms suggested by “Wake-Up-Jake.” For example, the City of Santa Rosa’s reclamation farms of Alpha and Brown alone account for over 900 acres of the old Walker ranch. At the time Walker’s ranch was subdivided, relatively large tracts for dairy farms and stock grazing ranches were in demand. Technically, much of the former Walker ranch are soils best suited to land extensive agriculture such as the relatively large dairy farms and the former orchards found today. The soils in general of the old Walker ranch are not suitable for the land intensive agriculture on the small farms envisioned by “Wake-up-Jake.”

PWA – February 13, 1886 Board of Supervisors

The county supervisors in Thursday’s proceedings, approved the work as a public necessity without advertising, and instructed the district road overseer to immediately repair the washed out section of the road from Fulton to the lower bridge on the Laguna.

PWA – January 1, 1887 “FRUIT BELT RIDGE”

Amongst the usual rumor, gossip and personal opinions, the irregular correspondent to Petaluma’s *Argus* states that when the water in the Laguna is high enough, the beautiful steam yacht *Pride of the Laguna* will begin to make tri-weekly trips between Sebastopol and Guerneville. The correspondent opinions that the new service is “go down Monday and try all week to get back again.”

About a month after the above article appeared in the Petaluma newspaper, the Laguna flooded. The *Sonoma Democrat* reported that the Laguna bridge was entirely under water (see next article). Indeed there was soon enough water in the Laguna for the *Pride of the Laguna*, but at the same time the Russian River probably would also have been flowing very fast and was undoubtedly very dangerous. Apart from the adventure and excitement of the venture, it is very difficult to understand at this point why a Sebastopol to Guerneville boat connection was even considered as a good idea and economic option for travel at the time, especially since the SF & NP branch line from Fulton to Guerneville had been completed at the end of February 1877 – almost ten years before the planned boat connection of early 1887. (Unless of course it was felt that the railroad was charging excessive rates.)

PWA – February 19, 1887 Neighboring Towns and Counties

The column contains information from Santa Rosa’s *Democrat* which notes that the Laguna bridges were entirely under water last Saturday morning and that a man had narrowly escaped

drowning. By the afternoon, the long bridge across the Laguna was five feet under the water. The *Democrat* added that the ducks are now more plentiful at the Laguna and that the high water makes it impossible to hurt them.

PWA – February 19, 1887 “FRUIT BELT RIDGE”

The correspondents’ article states that the old bridge across the Laguna had caved through in a couple of places and he opinions that the recent patching up will do no good. He comments that there won’t be a nice new bridge until the supervisors find a company that will build a new bridge and take the old bridge as their pay. The correspondent also comments that “the Laguna is way up and still it rains.”

PWA – March 26, 1887 Sebastopol and Petaluma

This article supports a direct railroad line between Petaluma and Sebastopol and reminds readers that the greater Sebastopol area includes the country for miles around the town – the Green Valley, the Fruit Belt and the Laguna areas – one of the most desirable, prosperous and favored sections of the entire Pacific Coast.

PWA – May 7, 1887 Board of Supervisors

Activities of Monday’s proceedings of the board included a report from Ex-Supervisor Pool that it was immediately necessary to erect a new bridge across Mark West Creek at or near the Laguna Station. The former supervisor informed the supervisors that the present bridge is dangerous and not worth repairing. The supervisors agreed to proceed immediately to replace the bridge across the creek.

PWA – May 28, 1887 Personal and Social

The column includes a note that the ladies of the Congregational Society and friends had a grand party and their annual “high jinks” at the Laguna ranch of I.R. Jewell.

PWA – June 11, 1887 Neighboring Towns

This column summarizes newspaper articles from a number of towns in the county. From Santa Rosa’s *Democrat* we learn that carp fishing is said to be a fine sport in the Laguna. Ed. Arnold, the Superintendent of the Hon. John Markley’s fruit orchard, had recently caught two eighteen-inch long carp weighing seven pounds each.

PWA – June 18, 1887 RAILROAD CONNECTION WANTED

This rather long article summarizes Sebastopol items including support for a direct railroad connection between Petaluma and Sebastopol. The proposed best route for the railroad follows the Laguna above the high water mark and comes into Sebastopol near John Walker’s with a

depot in back of Fred Jansen's hotel. The article also states that cat-fish and carp are abundant in the Laguna. The cat-fish have a good appetite for angle worms, but the carp are too lazy to bite and the boys shoot them when they come into shallow water to feed on the tules.

The affection for carp and catfish was not universal. By the early 1890s a number of communities in California began to adopt measures to destroy and exterminate carp and cat-fish from their local streams. Fewer than twenty years after the non-native fish were deliberately introduced or escaped from farm rearing ponds, the introduced species were considered by many to be worthless food fish that were destroying the aquatic habitat of the much more desirable native species.

PWA – December 3, 1887 “FRUIT BELT RIDGE”

Among the many items reported by the correspondent, is a report that the Fruit Belt will have a new post office at the River Road House near the Laguna Station. Duck hunting on the Laguna is reported to be fair to good. The correspondent offers that if one were to believe all the “yarns,” there are more dead ducks in the Laguna tules than have come there alive in the last three years.

PWA – April 21, 1888 FRUIT BELT RIDGE

The article includes a statement that times have changed since the farmers across the Laguna who used to ignore the brush and farming in the Fruit Belt, now send some of their sons to work in the Fruit Belt to earn money to buy their clothes.

PWA – September 29, 1888 FRUIT BELT RIDGE

The correspondent comments that from the amount of lumber being delivered at the Laguna, it's “about time” that we are going to have a new bridge.

PWA – November 17, 1888 FRUIT BELT RIDGE

The correspondent notes that 700 tons of grapes had been shipped to the city from the Laguna Station.

PC – February 13, 1889 p.1 SONOMA MINERALS

The article includes the vicinity of the Laguna as one of the areas in the county that fire proof building stone is being quarried.

PC – February 18, 1889 p.2 Map of the Route of the Petaluma and Sebastopol Railroad

The map shows the proposed route of the railroad between Petaluma and Guerneville going via Stony Point and Sebastopol, and then through the lands of the Sonoma Lumber Company in Green Valley to Guerneville. Unfortunately no features on the map are shown to the east of the Laguna, but while the season depicted by the map is unknown, the Laguna north of Sebastopol is

shown as a relatively large lake and then a wide body of water before it enters Mark West Creek in the north.

The Petaluma and Sebastopol railroad was not built. While the Santa Rosa newspapers were reported to be treating the proposed railroad as a joke and not a bona fide enterprise, there was widespread support for the railroad in Petaluma and in Sebastopol, and considerable survey work of the route was completed. However, Sebastopol soon had a railroad connection – a branch line of the SF & NP from Santa Rosa. In early May of 1890 Sebastopol held a huge barbecue to celebrate the coming of the railroad from Santa Rosa. A proposal to connect Petaluma and Santa Rosa via Sebastopol with an electric railroad was announced at the end of 1893, but it was not until July 26, 1904 that the first electric train from Petaluma arrived in Sebastopol.

PC– April 30, 1890 p. 7 SEBASTOPOL ITEMS

This article notes that the campers passing through Sebastopol are carrying fish poles as well as their blankets. Cat-fish and carp in the Laguna are reported to furnish “good sport.”

PC – October 8, 1890 p. 2 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Reported actions of the county supervisors on Monday included transferring money from the general fund to the Fulton road fund in order to pay for the Laguna fill.

PC – May 6, 1891 p. 7 SEBASTOPOL ITEMS

A letter writer from Sebastopol (W.H.W.) reports among many other items, that fishing in the Laguna is slim judging from the small strings that are now being taken.

PC – July 8, 1891 p.2 Evidence of Tragedy

John L. Walker of Sebastopol, while passing along the bank of the Laguna on John Walker’s ranch, found a lot of blood stained clothing, a large blood stain and much evidence of a major disturbance of the area. Initial speculation was that the body of an Italian would sooner or later be found in the Laguna.

PC – July 15, 1891 p. 7 The Laguna Mystery

The Laguna mystery continues and two men, Jake Walker and an Indian named John, have been arrested. According to Jake, on the afternoon of the Fourth he had come across Indian John and his wife, and Indian Bill, who had all been drinking and were quarreling. Jake claimed to have received a blow to his nose, which bled profusely, when he sprang to protect Indian John’s wife from a strike by her husband, and that a melee had followed. Jake says that he never knew the missing man, Fisher, and says he knows nothing about the tragedy. Indian John denies all knowledge of the little fracas.

PC – September 2, 1891 p. 2 COURIERLETS

The column includes a note that the boat of a party on the Laguna had upset, but the boat was in shallow water at the time and all of the party had been rescued.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bowers, A. B. 1867. Map of Sonoma County. 2nd Addition. New York – Mutual Life Insurance Company.

Coursey, Chris. 2005. Better days ahead for a work of art. Press Democrat. May 6, 2005

Cummings, John. 2001. The Sewage of Santa Rosa 1867 – 1926. Manuscript prepared for the Department of Utilities, City of Santa Rosa. 25 pp.

Cummings, John. 2003. “Crystal Laughing Waters” – Historical Glimpses of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. 20 pp.

Cummings, John. 2004. Draining and Filling the Laguna de Santa Rosa. 25 pp.

Harris, Dennis E. 1988. A Report on the Historical Significance of the Birdie E. Miller Ranch (Valentine Ranch). Prepared for the Cultural Heritage Board, City of Santa Rosa. 73 pp.

Heig, Adair. 1982. History of Petaluma – A California River Town. Scotwell and Associates. 166 pp.

LeBaron, Gaye, Dee Blackman, Joann Mitchell and Harvey Hansen. 1985. Santa Rosa – A Nineteenth Century Town. Historia Ltd. 225 pp.

LeBaron, Gaye. 1991. Urban ‘squatters’ recall the county’s early land wars. Press Democrat. May 19, 1991.

LeBaron, Gaye. 1994. Address all answers to the Great Norabel. Press Democrat. November 27, 1994.

LeBaron, Gaye. 1995. In other Augusts we’d be out there picking hops. Press Democrat. August 27, 1995.

LeBaron, Gaye and Joann Mitchell. 1993. Santa Rosa – A Twentieth Century Town. Historia Ltd. 350 pp.

Lynch, Robert. 1997. The Sonoma Valley Story – Pages Through the Ages. Sonoma Index Tribune, Inc. 311 pp.

Mac Mullen, Jerry. 1944. Paddle Wheel Days in California. Stanford University Press. 157 pp.

McClure, Evelyn S. 1995. Sebastopol California – History, Homes and People. 1855 – 1920. Belle View Press. 159 pp.

McClure, Evelyn S. Sebastopol’s Historic Cemetery. Belle View Press. 165pp.

McClure, Evelyn S. 2004. Personal communication.

McClure, Evelyn S. 2005. KEEPING TIME – A mistaken identity. Sonoma West Times and News, July 21, 2005.

Micro Film Files of the:

- Petaluma Weekly Journal and Sonoma County Advertiser (PWJ&SCA)
August 18, 1855 to August 15, 1856
 - Sonoma County Journal (SCJ)
August 22, 1856 to February 19, 1864
 - Petaluma Argus (PA)
February 12, 1861 to February 17, 1864
 - Petaluma Weekly Journal and Argus (PJ&A)
February 25, 1864 to January 31, 1873
 - Petaluma Weekly Argus (PWA)
February 7, 1873 to December 29, 1888
 - Petaluma Daily Argus
January 5, 1889 to January 19, 1889
 - Petaluma Courier (PC)
January 2, 1889 to December 2, 1891
 - Daily Courier (DC)
December 4, 1891 to August 11, 1893
- Thompson, T.H. 1877. Historical Atlas of Sonoma County, California. T.H. Thompson and Co. Oakland, CA
- Tuomey, Honoria. 1926. History of Sonoma County, California. VII. Higginson Book Company, Salem, Mass. 958 pp.
- Reynolds and Proctor. 1897. Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County, California. Reynolds and Proctor, Santa Rosa, California.
- Waaland, Marco. 1990. History of Human Use and Modification of the Laguna Ecosystem. In History, Land Uses and Natural Resources of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. David W. Smith Consulting.
- Waaland, Marco, Michael H. Fawcett, Jennifer L. Nelson, and David Smith. 1990. Current Conditions and Ecology of the Laguna Ecosystem. In History, Land Uses and Natural Resources of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. David W. Smith Consulting.
- Wilson, Simone. 1990. Sonoma County – The River of Time. American Historical Press, Sun Valley, California. 144pp.