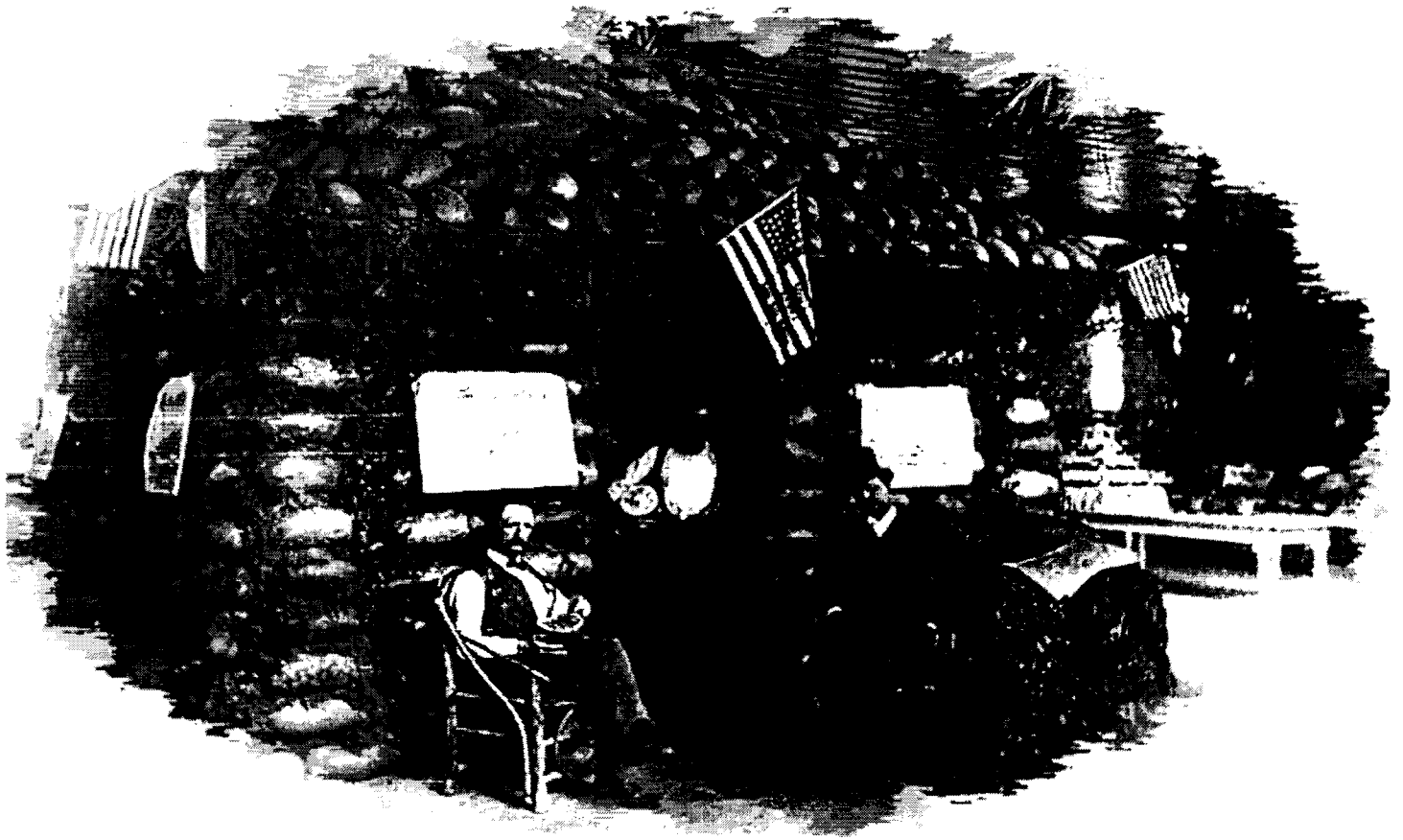


San Joaquin Historian



*Watermelon House
1887 County Fair*

Spring 2008

The San Joaquin Historian

Official Journal of
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and Museum



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The Society, a nonprofit corporation meets quarterly. Membership includes subscriptions to the *San Joaquin Historian* and the monthly newsletter, *News and Notes*. Additional copies may be purchased at the Museum.

The Society operates the San Joaquin County Historical Museum at Micke Grove Regional Park in partnership with San Joaquin County. The Society maintains its offices at the Museum.

Well researched manuscripts relating to the history of San Joaquin County or the Delta will always be considered. The editor reserves the right to shorten material based on local interest and space considerations. Inquiry should be made through the Museum office.

San Joaquin County
Historical Society and Museum

David Stuart
Society and Museum Director
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In This Issue...

San Joaquin County has always been noted for its crop diversification and walnut production is one of our signature crops. Beginning on **Page 3**, Jerry Barton offers a recollection of a lifetime of growing walnuts. It's not just walnuts. You will enjoy the many facets of this piece.

Excerpts from two letters written by Dr. P.F. Barton in 1910 and 1912 give a vivid picture of the state of county and valley agriculture at that time. This is first-hand history at its best. **Page 9**

Teen-ager Nellie Pardee offers a charming reminiscence of how our county looked in 1890 as she set off with her mother, aunts and an uncle for a camping trip in the Sierra. **Page 12**

Finally, enjoy the adventure of a first auto camping trip in 1903. (Be sure to "hold your horses"). **Page 14**

On The Cover

In 1887 watermelon was still king in north county. The growers of Live Oak Colony chose a very unique method of displaying their product by constructing this watermelon house in the Agricultural Pavilion, then home of the San Joaquin County Fair. Sorry, we don't have the names of the three men.

Credits

- Cover photo courtesy of the Bank of Stockton Historic Photograph Collection.
- The 1903 auto camping story courtesy of Mrs. Marilyn Frederickson, Hoffman family friend.
- The 1890 reminiscence of Nellie Pardee was first published in the Historical Society's *Museum Notes*, July 1977.
- The quote in the *Horse vs. Horseless* item on Page 15 is from a column by history writer Nilda Rego, published in the *Contra Costa Times*, June 12, 2005.
- Ken Ramacher for the Ramacher Harvester photo

Memories of a Lifelong Walnut Grower

by
Jerry Barton

The author grew up on a ranch southeast of Escalon where his father, uncle and grandfather planted their first walnut orchard in 1913. Here he not only gives us a picture of growing up on a farm in the late years of the Great Depression and during World War II, but adds an interesting family history, and a vivid first hand account of pioneer mechanization of the walnut harvest.

My grandfather, Perry Franklin Barton, was a country doctor in Southern Illinois who lost a patient that he believed he should have saved. That event proved to be a life changing experience as he came to California by train in 1910 where he saw first hand the impact of irrigated agriculture as he traveled throughout California and the San Joaquin Valley. From his letters which were published in the Pike County, Illinois newspaper, it was apparent that he was enthralled by the dramatic changes taking place in the farming landscape as California began the transition from dry land grain farming to irrigated agriculture.

Upon his return to Pleasant Hill, Illinois, my grandfather and grandmother, Elizabeth Jane Barton, made the decision to come to California. Initially, they lived in Oakdale but in 1912 purchased 131 acres of largely undeveloped

and un-cleared land adjacent to the Stanislaus River five miles south-east of Escalon in San Joaquin County. During the first winter, a small orchard of walnut trees was planted.

Some of my earliest and fondest memories growing up on the ranch involved the walnut harvest. I was five years old when I started Burwood School

which was a two mile walk from our home on the ranch. My mother and father always made sure to remind me that I should “hurry home after school so I could pick walnuts”. When I entered second grade they bought me a Red Romer bicycle and I have often wondered if it was done to get me home from school faster so I could pick walnuts.

The nuts were shaken to the ground with long hooked poles. They were then picked by hand into a bucket and then poured into lug boxes or sacks. Flatbed



The Grandfather Tree
Last of the original 1913 orchard.
Janet Barton poses with the huge
monarch of the Barton Ranch.

trucks were used to bring the walnuts from the field where they were hulled by hand.

My mother, Alice Lee (Hall) Barton and my father Robert Paul Barton were married in 1931. She was a native of Stockton and came to the ranch full of enthusiasm and eager to help in the harvest. After a few days of hulling walnuts by hand, she developed a severe allergic reaction to the juice from the walnut hulls and was hospitalized. From that adverse experience, my father vowed to build a machine before the next harvest that would remove the hulls mechanically.

The Barton Huller Invented

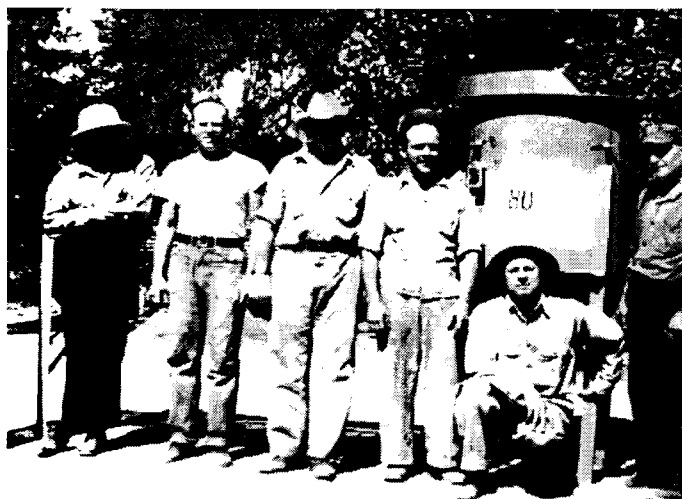
Working with his brother, H.W. Barton who was educated as an engineer at the University of Arkansas, they made a huller from used automobile parts and scrap metal that worked surprisingly well. Word of their successful invention caused interest among other growers. Amon Swank, a grower from Linden, asked if the Barton brothers could build a machine for him. This was in the midst of the Great Depression, and the capital needed to manufacture machinery was in short supply.

Fortunately, my mother had saved \$3,000 prior to her marriage working for the mayor of Stockton, Mr. Con Franke. He owned an electrical supply business and my mother was his bookkeeper. Her savings became my father's capital contribution to the partnership which built the first Barton Walnut Hullers in 1934, the year I was born. My father and uncle had decided to build ten machines the first year. But they were sold so quickly that they built and sold ten more and a new business was formed on the ranch, named *Barton Brothers Walnut Hullers*.

The manufacturing business contributed to our family's progress as the demand for labor saving equipment exploded during World War II. During years of peak production 80 to 100 hullers were manufactured and sold to growers throughout the state. This business was later managed by my brother Hugh P. Barton, until 1990.

While my father and uncle were inventing their machine, the owner of the Formway Machine Shop in Palo Alto invented the "Wizard Walnut Huller". It is

difficult to imagine today that walnuts were grown extensively on the San Francisco Peninsula, but today's Silicon Valley was a thriving walnut producing region at that time. Similarly, Charlie Anderson, member of a prominent farming family in Linden invented the "Hullit Walnut Huller". It continues to be manufactured today by Ron Kaiser in his manufacturing plant in Valley Springs. It should be noted that with the invention of these early walnut hullers, the first step toward mechanization of the walnut industry, had been taken and two of the three successful inventors-manufacturers were located in San Joaquin County.



Robert P. Barton (kneeling) and his crew proudly commemorate the production of unit number 80 of the revolutionary Barton Huller.

The Mitori John Deere Tractor and the Barton Tree Shaker

One of my friends when I first attended Burwood Grammar School was Bobby Mitori. His older sister Chiyo was a long time member and trustee of the San Joaquin County Historical Society. Sometimes I gave Bobby a ride home from school on my bike, as their farm adjoined our ranch.

At the outbreak of World War II, the Mitori Family was forced to leave their farm and spend the duration of the war in an internment camp. Mr. Mitori asked my dad if he would buy his farm equipment which included a Model "B" John Deere Tractor. This tractor later played a very important role in the mechanization of the walnut industry.

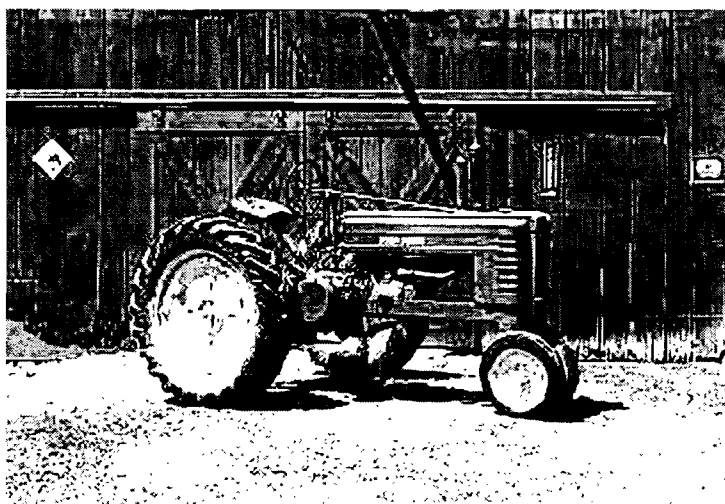
There was a tremendous need to mechanize any agricultural practice that required hand labor during the war because of the manpower shortage. I should explain at this point that more land on the Barton Ranch during the 1940's was devoted to prune production than to walnut production, but both crops were knocked by hand mallets or in the case of larger walnut trees hooked poles were used to shake the nuts off the trees.

I was about ten or eleven years old when I remember my dad spending a lot of time during the evening hours working in the shop. Some mornings he was at work so early that he did not join us for breakfast. He was doing something with the Mitori tractor and I soon learned in dramatic fashion what it was.

Picking prunes wasn't a bad job in the mornings but in the hot days of August it was tough to meet my quota in the afternoons. I could pick 15-20 boxes in the morning. In the afternoons, I only had to pick four boxes, but it seemed to take forever. It was during one of these afternoons that my dad arrived in the orchard driving the Mitori "Popping Johnny" as it was affectionately called. There were about 15 men knocking prunes at the time and 40 or 50 men, women and children picking them off the ground. As my dad pulled up to a prune tree, all work came to a stop while we observed one of the year around employees attach a cable running from a pitman shaft on the tractor to the tree. Dad then backed up the tractor to tighten the cable, engaged the clutch to the power take off unit on which an eccentric device had been installed and the prunes were instantly shaken to the ground. At that moment the work of fifteen men was replaced by a cable tree shaker operated by two men. It was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. That first shaker stayed in the orchard the rest of the day and for the remainder of the harvest. I was very proud of my dad.

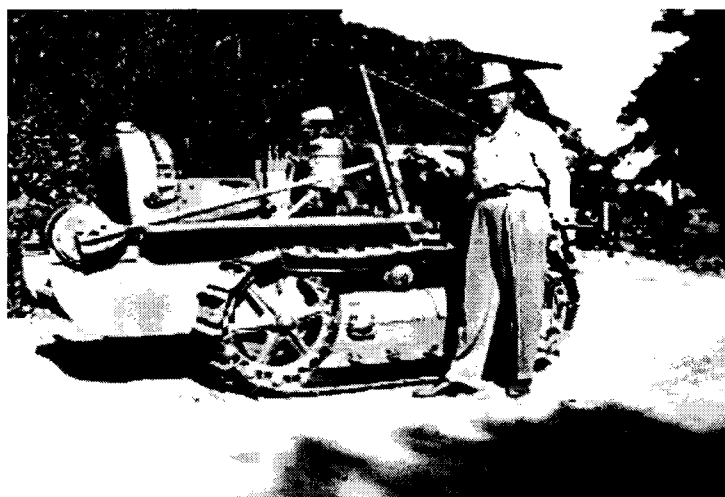
The success in shaking prunes that summer led my father to adapt the same mechanical principles to heavier crawler tractors that were then used to shake walnuts. His first walnut

shaker was mounted on a Cletrac Tractor, but those mounted on D-2 Caterpillars and TD-6 Internationals worked out best. Many of these machines were manufactured for the same growers who had previously purchased a Barton Huller.



John Deere Model B

When Kango Mitori and his family were sent to W.W.II Relocation Centers in 1942, he sold his Model B to R.P. Barton. Barton's ingenuity converted it to a tree shaker that amazed his young son and replaced 15 hired hands.



Mr. Barton and his walnut shaker mounted on a Caterpillar D-2 Tractor. The Model B proved to be light for walnut trees, leading to it being adapted for use on crawler tractors.

Operating a cable shaker required skill and great care. Young men called "squirrels" were needed to climb the large walnut trees and hook the limbs for the tractor operator. The squirrel usually stayed up in the tree to reset the cable while the tractor operator shook six to eight limbs. Sometimes the squirrel was shaken out of the tree. It was very hard and hazardous work. I can attest to this first hand because I was a squirrel. While I believe the Barton Cable shaker was the only machine commercially manufactured in San Joaquin County, Paul Balsbaugh in Modesto invented and manufactured the Best Shaker and the Gould Brothers from San Jose also made a very good machine. Both Mr. Balsbaugh and the Gould Brothers advanced shaking technology further with the design and manufacture of boom shakers which eliminated the need for men to climb large walnut trees.

California Agriculture played a very important role in winning the war for the United States and in providing food relief for other ravaged countries after the war. I believe it is well documented that our troops and our country's citizens were the best fed of any combatant during World War II. Even though they were confined in an internment camp, I like to think that the Mitori Family made their contribution to winning the war with that John Deere tractor.

The Walnut Harvester

As much as I appreciated my dad's efforts in building a tree shaker and the subsequent success that my parents achieved in its manufacture for other growers, my job as a prune and walnut picker seemed destined to continue. Walnuts and prunes still had to be picked off the ground by hand. Because of his mechanical ingenuity, I encouraged my dad to build a walnut picker. During the late 40's he made an attempt to mechanize this one remaining part of the walnut harvest with a self propelled machine mounted on a small Allis Chalmers tractor. However, it proved unsuccessful.

Fortunately, Ben Goodwin whose shop was located in Manteca, and had successfully invented the *Red Head* knocker for almonds developed a successful harvester that was easily mounted on an 8-N Ford Tractor. Mr. Goodwin's machines could be used on both almonds and walnuts and in 1950, my days as a

walnut picker gladly ended when my dad purchased a Goodwin harvester. I believe Mr. Goodwin's harvester and one manufactured by Mr. Wiebe in Hollister were the first to enjoy commercial success in the walnut orchards of California, but the machine developed by Rudy and Les Ramacher from Linden was not far behind.

The Ramacher harvesters were self propelled and initially had two motors. One motor was used to propel the machine and another to operate the picking head, conveying systems and blowers. The Ramacher had superior air separation which enabled it to very effectively separate leaves and trash even in wet conditions as sometime occurred following a rain during harvest.



The Ramacher Walnut Harvester (Les Ramacher driving)

This photo, taken from an early advertisement, well illustrates the intricacies of providing the final link in mechanizing the walnut harvest. It is not an elegant machine, but it was a key to a great revolution. Other early successful walnut harvesters were manufactured by Ben Goodwin of Manteca and

I think it is interesting to note that two of the first three commercially manufactured walnut hullers, one of the first three cable tree shakers and two of the first three harvesters were invented and manufactured in San Joaquin County.

A College Education

It seems to me that those who are deprived of a much desired college education, may hold it in greater value than those of us who have experienced the opportunity of obtaining a university degree. Such was the case for both my mother and father. During her freshman year at the University of California at Berkeley, my mother's father, Mortimer Lee Hall died suddenly. My mother left school and returned to Stockton in order to support her mother and to put her younger sister through college. My father's formal education was concluded even earlier. He was in his first year in high school when he experienced a 90% hearing loss in both of his ears. He once told me that leaving school was the "saddest day of his life".

Because my parents were unable to fulfill their desires to have a college education, my older brother, Hugh, and I were encouraged (perhaps indoctrinated is a better word) to "save money for your college education". My father was also a firm believer that the best way to keep boys out of trouble was to keep them busy. These two parental objectives meant that we always had jobs waiting for us when we got home from school. During summer vacations we worked full

time on the ranch or in the manufacturing business. My father made sure that each summer provided a different experience. He purchased two acres from an adjacent neighbor just so we would have our own land on which to raise various crops.

Dad designed the first self-propelled seed harvesters used on melons, squash and pumpkins. He manufactured these machines for Robinson Seed Co. in Modesto (later acquired by FMC Corp.) My brother and I were encouraged to produce seed crops on our two acres. We raised various seed crops that were harvested by the Barton seed harvester. We also raised onion and cabbage for seed which we had to harvest by hand. At age fourteen we switched to sweet corn because I was able to get a drivers license (exclusively given to youngsters who lived on a farm) and deliver orders to grocery stores in Modesto, Oakdale, Riverbank and Escalon.

During the school year, my dad also kept us busy with a variety of livestock and poultry ventures. He built a chicken house with capacity for 500 laying hens so we would have work when we got home from school. When I was 10 years old, he purchased our first cow and we operated a small Grade "B" dairy



Tradition

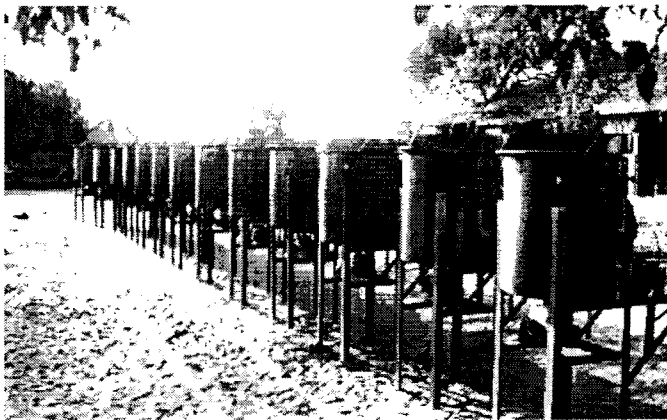
The Grandfather Tree lives on as a family and ranch icon. It remains the focus for family gatherings – now in the fifth generation of Bartons. This is a family gathering in 2002.

until I went away to college. We even had an ill-fated venture raising swine that were fed culls from our melon crops. The market for pork took a dive when we were ready to sell and I know we lost money. But since my mother was our bookkeeper, she “cooked the books” in our favor. It was to become my one and only experience with the wonderful life of subsidized agriculture.

The entire profits for all of these ventures were always deposited in our bank accounts for our college educations. I have little doubt that one of my mother and dad’s most rewarding moments took place when my brother, Hugh, graduated from Cal and I graduated from Stanford.

Brief Biographies

Robert Paul Barton was born in Pleasant Hill, Illinois on December 31, 1896. He was the fifth son of Elizabeth Jane and Perry Franklin Barton’s seven children. At the age of fifteen the Bartons moved to California where they settled first in Oakdale before buying the future Barton Ranch five miles southeast of Escalon in 1912. His older brother, **Herbert W. Barton**, graduated with an engineering degree from the University of Arkansas where he played on the Razorback football team. Together, the Barton Brothers developed the Barton Ranch into producing walnut and prune orchards. They invented the Barton Walnut Huller which was successfully manufactured on the ranch for nearly 55 years.



Barton Hullers Ready for Delivery

The Author

Gerald L. (Jerry) Barton, the son of Robert Paul and Alice Lee Barton, is a member of a pioneer San Joaquin County family. His maternal great grandfather, Daniel Adam Learned, came to California during the Gold Rush and purchased 300 acres of land near Stockton in 1867. Seventy acres of the original Learned Farm is now the location of the Diamond Foods corporation headquarters and processing facilities on Diamond Street. Jerry graduated from Escalon area schools and earned a degree in economics with distinction from Stanford University. He has been a lifelong walnut grower except for five years when he left the ranch to become the full time president of Diamond Walnut Growers (now Diamond Foods) from 1986 through 1990. Jerry and his wife, Janet, reside on their ranch near Ripon. Their three sons, Don, Gary, and Brent are actively engaged in the family walnut farming and processing/packing businesses. Jerry is a member of the San Joaquin County agricultural Hall of Fame.

Did You Know ???

- The ancestors of our California walnuts originated in Persia, India and western China
- Walnuts were introduced to California by Franciscan missionaries
- Walnuts are grafted to native black walnut stock. The resulting burls can sell for as much as \$30,000 for use as dashboards on European luxury autos
- In 2006 there were 43,000 acres of walnuts in San Joaquin County
- The value of the 2006 crop was \$133,539,000

The Fascinating Letters of

Dr. P.F. Barton

1910 and 1912

When Dr. Barton retired from medical practice in mid-life, he had the luxury of selecting his new home wherever it best suited he and his family. It appears he saw his future in farming, and he made a methodical search of all practical possibilities. In 1910 he traveled west to California, Texas and Oklahoma in his quest for a new home.

The 1910 letter to his family – a report, actually – is interesting for at least two reasons: his impression of the California communities he visited and his discovery of the miracle of irrigated farming. His fascination with irrigation is obvious in both letters and surely was the major factor in his final decision. He is meticulous in his research, always including production, income, and land costs for every single crop he investigated. (Much of this has been edited for space considerations). You can't help but see a little of the Wizard of Oz in his comments, i.e., "I don't think we are in Kansas anymore, Toto." He is truly amazed at California irrigated crop production.

The 1912 letter is actually a news column, apparently prepared on request. It is big, requiring more than a full page of newsprint. His attention to detail is again remarkable, and his observations acute. It is much like the 1910 letter in giving crop detail endlessly. Early in this letter you will find the perfect description of what was happening to our grain industry in 1912 and why Stockton's flour mills were soon to disappear. Read on and enjoy...

Excerpts abridged, emphasis added

Searcy, Arkansas, June 30, 1910

Dear Folks:

The wayfaring man has returned at last. I went through Oklahoma and Texas, and **did not find anything until I got to California, and there found the garden spot of the world.** The following are some of the places visited.

I stopped first at **Bakersfield**, an oil town, with all kinds of vice wide open, and got away as soon as possible. Stopped next in **Porterville**, the northern headquarters of the orange growing industry. Saw there thousands of acres of oranges. The largest I saw was one of 115 acres. Last year's crop sold for \$60,000, and a neighbor has an orchard for which she has refused \$2,000 an acre. It is paying 12 1/2% on a valuation of \$2,000 at this time. Notwithstanding these big figures, I found that these were the exception, rather than the rule, and that owing to the great expense of growing them, and the uncertainty, (they are like apples in this respect, as one orchard will do fine, while another orchard in the same vicinity, and on apparently the same

soil, will be unprofitable), I decided I did not want to engage in that business.

I then went on to **Merced**, found there the first and only good field of corn that I found in the state. Last year it yielded 70 bushels of shelled corn to the acre. Just across the creek from it 2 3/4 acres of alfalfa yielded 22.7 T, 3/4 acre of blackberries produced 260 crates which sold for \$1 a crate. The town is a right good one, excellent schools, but lots of saloons.

Stopped at **Fresno** also. Not much there except grapes and peaches, and raisins, which are selling at \$2.40 a hundred pounds – less than it costs the growers to produce them. I did not stay here long.

I went on to **Modesto**, and found a good town, with all kinds of fruit growing and doing well, and land out of sight. Near there are 2 1/2 acres of figs, which produced last year 15,000 lbs. I then went on to **Oakdale**. They have the largest canning factory in the world, canning English peas. They planted this year 600 acres, which they cut with a mower, hauled to the factory, thrashed with a thrashing machine, run through graders and other machinery and almost without

touching them by hand, turned them out the finished product. The soil is a fine sandy loam, easily worked, and will grow anything profitably nearly, except Irish potatoes. It is California headquarters for strawberry growing. By keeping your strawberries properly cultivated and irrigated, you can have strawberries every day out of your own patch, for from nine to eleven months out of the year. All kinds of fruit trees grow very rapidly and bear very young, apricots, apples, peach and plum trees bending over with their loads of fruit. Olives are largely grown, and very profitable. Vegetables of all kinds do well planted in an orchard under the trees.

There is a man out there has six acres of ground. He gave us a list of what he had on it to a land agent, and when the agent counted up his crops he had (the equivalent of) twelve acres of fruits.

Next I went to **Farmington** and dropped off at a little (store) but found that there was no prospect of irrigation, no society and nothing to recommend it except the rich soil. Went on to **San Francisco** on the next train, passed by Goat Island in the bay, saw Seal Rock and lots of ruins of the Great Earthquake, and spent one day in Ocean Park, naturally a beautiful region, for which Art has done her best. **And let me say just here that no one who has never seen it can realize the rank growth of all kinds of plants of which California is capable.** Geraniums, nasturtiums, and fuchsias up to the second story windows. Calla lilies in proportion to these.

From here I went south to **Los Angeles** without stopping, although I saw many things beautiful; hundreds of acres of flowers grown for seed. I went down below Los Angeles and looked at the sub irrigated belt. In this land, worth the speculative price of \$400 per acre, **one can find water anywhere by digging down about three or four feet.** (*How deep is that water table today? ed.*)

I came on up to **Ontario**, where I found quite a colony of Pleasant Hill (Illinois) people. Ontario is the most beautiful city I ever saw, not excepting Miami, Fla. Grand Avenue, which passes through the city has a world wide fame. It is 100 feet from curb to curb. Along each side is a row of Palm Trees. Through the center of the streets a trolley line, on each side of which there are bicycle tracks. Between each bicycle track and the trolley line is a row of pepper trees. Business buildings and residences are well kept. Most of the residences have lawns, palms, and various ornamental shrubs. The country around produces

almost everything in fruits and vegetables. The climate is almost ideal, no extremes of hot or cold. There are several large factories and packing plants in town which give employment to those who want it. The mountains are seven miles away and the street cars run to the mouth of the canyon, where ice cold springs and cooling breezes may be enjoyed at any time. Land here is of course very high. Full bearing orange groves from \$2,000 an acre. Six room bungalows on a city lot \$2,500 to \$3,000 according to location. Unimproved land near the city \$500 an acre. Soils are most too sandy, but seems very productive.

Upon leaving here, I went back to Los Angeles, and from there to **Escondido**, whose praises I had heard, but was very much disappointed in the place and got away from there as soon as possible.

I then came home as fast as steam would carry me, and was mighty glad to get here. We have not decided whether to go to Merced, Oakdale, or Ontario. Come and go with us. It will do you good.

Yours ever,

P.F. Barton

Excerpts from "Letter From California," Published February 22, 1912 Pittsfield, Illinois (abridged, with emphasis added)

The ranches here are quite large – from 1,000 to 20,000 acres – and the tendency is for them to become larger; the little fellows being crowded out because they cannot buy the expensive teams and machinery required to grow these crops most cheaply. The land is plowed and the grains sown at one operation, one man driving a team of ten or twelve horses usually. The grain is almost all harvested with a combined harvester and thresher, which costs \$ 1,800, and requires thirty-two horses or mules to draw it over the field, cutting a swath 20 feet wide. The grain is sewn up in sacks and dumped off on the ground where it will lie for a month before being hauled to market. No fear of rain to injure it. The animals that draw the machine are usually worth an average of \$ 350 a span, which makes the whole harvesting unit worth about \$7,400. Of course, no man on a small farm can afford to own an outfit like

this. He must therefore hire his wealthier neighbor to harvest his crop, and his wealthier neighbor does not work for accommodation only.

Again, the land has been farmed to grain for so long that it is nearly exhausted, and there is but a small profit on each acre and it is only by farming a large area that a balance can be placed on the right side of the ledger at the end of the year. **People are all agreed that the outlook for the grain farmer is by no means rosy-hued.**

When we turn to the level land in the central part of the valleys, however, we find a very different state of affairs. True there are many large grain ranches which pay no better than elsewhere. But they are rapidly being bought up by wealthy individuals or realty companies, subdivided and resold in twenty or forty acre tracts to people – largely from the east – are leveling it with plow and scrapper and bringing it under irrigation, either from a company ditch or private pumping plant. And here is where we find the most interesting developments in this new-old country. **Here we see intensive cultivation brought to a high degree of perfection. The same soil that would no longer produce a profitable crop of grain, when irrigated and planted to fruit trees or alfalfa will yield astonishing returns.**

Almost anything can be grown on any of these farms that grows anywhere in the temperate zone, which makes the list so long that I cannot attempt to do more than make a beginning.

All fruit trees bear earlier here than in the East and the yields are so large that I can hardly blame you if you refuse to believe me when I tell you of them.

Vegetables are of fine quality and are produced in such variety that instead of making a list I will ask you to look through your seed catalog. Everything listed there will grow to perfection here, and yield immense crops.

Hundreds of carloads of watermelons, cantaloupes and casaba are shipped from this county each year. About ten tons of watermelons to the acre is the average yield up to Sept. 15 at which time the regular shipping season ends. I have seen after that date eight or ten tons left on the ground. It was no trouble to step from one to another all over the field.

Poultry raising is a large and rapidly growing industry here. Both soil and climate are very favorable. **No running out in a thunder storm to pick up the half drowned chicks here. No cold,**

rainy spells here, either. Just feed the little fellows properly and keep them free from vermin and they will grow in a way to delight your eyes.

Of all the various branches of agriculture, perhaps none has had such a rapid growth as dairying. This county has advanced in four years from tenth place to first in the amount of butter produced. Thousands of acres of alfalfa are being sown each year and (*by far*) the most profitable way to dispose of the product is feed it to cows. A reasonably good cow will produce \$100 worth of cream in a year. Every dairyman has a cream separator. As soon as the cows are milked the cream is removed and placed in a can at the roadside where it is picked up and hauled off to town. The warm milk is fed to calves, pigs, and poultry.

A very few words will be sufficient to do the climate justice. It is world famous and is probably as good as the world can show. A little frost of mornings in the winter and little too warm for comfort in the afternoons of the summer. **About 300 days of sunshine each year. No blizzards, no cyclones, no thunder storms, no rain when you don't want it. Air is balmy and nights cool always. Good enough for me.**

The people are enterprising and public spirited. All public buildings and public works such as bridges are built without little regard for expense. The roads are better than most of us ever saw elsewhere, and are being constantly improved. The paupers are better cared for here than anywhere I ever saw.

There is very little complaint about taxes. Although I consider taxes high here, still as we can see, something to show for them. We do not "kick."

People as a class are well educated, honest and industrious – care little for dress or polished manners.

Boys in grammar grades usually wear blue overalls to school. Very few poor people here. The great majority are of the good, solid middle class.

Some of the disadvantages are the high price of land, the scarcity and high price of fuel and the scarcity of work for laboring men during the winter months.

P.F. Barton

Going to Yosemite 1890

By

Eleanor "Nellie" Pardee

1881 1896

A Young Girl's School Essay Gives a Charming View of San Joaquin County As She Saw It As A Ten-year Old In 1890

Museum archives include a school composition book of Eleanor "Nellie" Pardee. She was an "A" student, with a fluent style and beautiful penmanship. In this assignment she got so caught up in the beginning of her journey, she didn't have room for her impressions of Yosemite! We can be grateful for her enthusiasm because she left us a perfect pastoral picture of our county in 1890. Grain, stubble, stacks and bales, watermelons, flour mills, and even reference to the sad look of the Stanislaus River, red with mud from hydraulic mining. We awarded her another "A".....

Aug 3, 1896

A Journey To Yosemite Valley 1890

It was in the late summer of the year 1890 that my mother, two aunts, an uncle and myself left a farm near Stockton to travel to Yosemite Valley.

The first day we drove through a barren country, principally stubble grain fields, vineyards and acres and acres of watermelon vines. We met hay wagons going to Stockton where the hay would either be stored, or would



"...acres and acres of watermelon vines"

be sent down the San Joaquin River to San Francisco, where some of it might be destined to go to all parts of the globe. We also met wagons filled with grain sacks, the wheat which they contained was probably going to be made into flour by one of the great mills for which Stockton is famous. In some of the fields the hay was bound, in others, it was being stacked.

Every now and then a group of tall shade trees would be seen from the road. Upon looking closer the traveler may see a farm house nestled in among the trees.

One day, about two o'clock we crossed the Stanislaus River, at Knight's Ferry, on a toll bridge. The river did not nearly come up to my expectations. Its water was really red. I heard that this peculiarity is caused by the hydraulic mining farther up the river.

By this time we had reached the foothills. The weather was very warm, the road was stony, and the team, consisting of a mule and a horse, was tired, so we were obliged to go very slowly.

We had intended to reach a sleepy little town called Chinese Camp, but it began to grow late, and the pangs of hunger began to present themselves very forcibly, we were five miles from our looked for destination.

We were now nearly to the valley. The pines and redwoods told us that we were in the high Sierras. Nature is very grand here. The despoiler, man, has not dared to plant great cities and towns among these, the glories of God. Once we saw a deserted miner's cabin, this was, the only obtrusive thing in this magnificent forest before us. Silver streams seemingly very anxious to get to the sea, rattled busily over the rocks, this sound together with the gentle rustling of the trees, was all that was audible. There is something about the glories of God that is awe inspiring to the soul.

Remembering Nellie

Her marble bust reigns serenely over the Weber Gallery in the museum's Erickson Building. She keeps company with a large oil painting of herself and is surrounded by furnishings from the room her mother kept as a memorial to her after her untimely death at age fifteen.



Nellie's grandparents, Edmund and Sarah Elliott, accompanied by their children, came to San Joaquin County from Illinois in 1859 by wagon train and settled near Lodi. One daughter, Emma, married Dr. Enoch H. Pardee, prominent Oakland physician and politician. Dr. Pardee was a widower with a grown son. Their only child, Eleanor "Nellie" Pardee, was born in 1881. One cousin described Nellie as "... to have inherited her mother's beauty and her father's sweet personality."

Nellie's father died in the summer of 1896 and Nellie succumbed to consumption only three months later, not long after she composed the essay we share with you.

Her half-brother, George Pardee, served as California's Governor 1903 - 1907. He was the first "native son" to be elected governor.

An Earlier View of San Joaquin County

by
William H. Brewer

1828 - 1910

One of the best firsthand accounts of the early years of American California is found in *Up And Down California in 1860 - 64* by William H. Brewer. Young Professor Brewer took the position as Chief Field Assistant for the Whitney Survey of California. This group of young scientists was charged with mapping the state's topography and cataloging all of its resources. They climbed every mountain, scurried down every canyon, collected fossils, examined every mineral strata, and identified as much flora and fauna as they could find. It was a huge project, never completed. But Brewer worked on it for four years before returning to the classroom at Yale. It is probable that no human has ever seen as much of California as Brewer and his mates. In 1862 he wrote to his brother that in 25 months he had ridden 3,981 miles by mule, walked 2,067 miles, and traveled 3,216 miles by public conveyance. And he still had two years to go!

He did not keep a journal, instead writing long, chatty letters to his brother. These were collected and finally published in 1930.

He was invited to give a lecture in Stockton April 10, 1862. He used his free morning to visit the Insane Asylum and climb its tower, the tallest structure in Stockton at the time. Here is what he saw:

We went to the tower and enjoyed a perfectly magnificent prospect. The great plain around Stockton is some forty or fifty miles wide from east to west, and to both north and south stretches to the horizon, literally as level as the sea and seeming as boundless. In the west and southwest lies the rugged Mount Diablo Range, to the northwest lie the ranges north of Napa, while along the eastern horizon the snowy "Sierras" stretch away for a hundred miles, their pure white snow glistening in the clear sun.

Brewer made an interesting observation while studying coal deposits in Coral Hollow west of Tracy in 1861.

Tarantulas

...these are spiders, living in holes, and of a size that must be seen to be appreciated.as they stand their bodies as large as a half-grown mouse, their hairy legs of proportionate size, their fangs as large as those of a moderate sized rattle snake. Two of them would cover this page. Pleasant companions! We never think of putting on our boots in the morning without first shaking them for fear of tarantulas....

Auto Camping 1903 – An Adventure

Our First Car

by

Olive Hoffman

The Hoffman family of Byron, in East Contra Costa County, had a tradition of a month-long family camping trip to the Sierras every year after the grain was harvested and slack time was available. They had always traveled by team and wagon. And then they bought an automobile....

The first car we owned was a one-cylinder Oldsmobile with tanneau and back entrance. Since we lived in the country we had to go to San Francisco (about 70 miles away) to buy the car, and on the return trip the rain made the dirt road so slippery that my husband, baby daughter and myself were compelled to spend the night in an abandoned barn by the roadside.

We arrived home the next day without further interruption and immediately began making plans to go in splendor on our annual camp trip into the mountains. A team of mules and a wagon took all of our equipment while we rode ahead in our automobile at the marvelous speed of about ten miles an hour. When starting into the mountains we knew we must carry a supply of gasoline and therefore put several five gallon cans in the wagon.

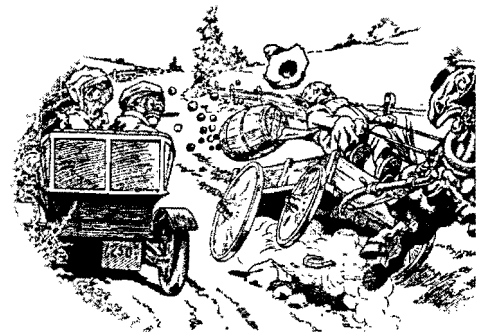
After leaving the populous valleys the team went ahead, warning everyone they met on the road that there was "an auto coming." Then there would be a confab as to the best way to pass. In most instances my husband would get the car as far off the road as possible and turn off the engine, while the other men led the horses by.

One time, climbing a steep grade with a sharp turn, the mule driver ran back in consternation – there was a horse team ahead and no possible place to get off the road!

After much work the men together got the automobile up a bank, then the teamster talked over the situation. He said, "My team has never seen one of these things but they go where I tell them to go." When he got opposite us, the horses were trembling with fear but he talked to them, and asked my husband to start the engine several times, saying it was good for them to get acquainted as the next man might not be so considerate.

We traveled many miles where there had never been an automobile and on entering

a little town we found the inhabitants all out in yards and doorways. Someone had telephoned that an auto was coming! Of course we stopped and visited with those so inclined and many marveled at our courage in "starting out in that contraption," and predicted that some teamster would take a shot at us. Our advance guard and our consideration for the horses won over the most aggrieved teamster.

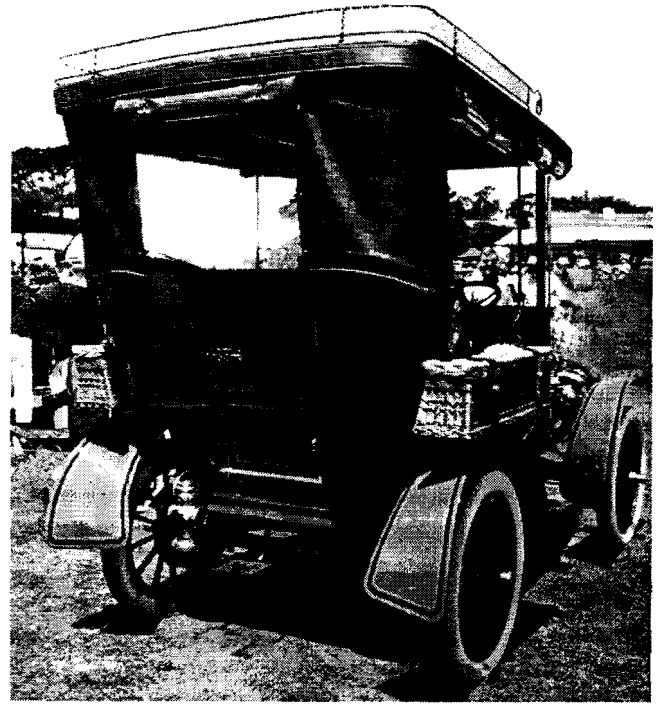


It is useless to say that the roads were not what one could desire. In many places the winter rains had washed down the ruts on the narrow roads so that the bottom of the car would strike the surface of the road. Then all hands would cut brush or shovel dirt and fill the ruts so that the car could proceed.

In our six weeks vacation we had only a minor mishap, a pin broke and the trusty mules came in service to haul the automobile to a camp where we stayed until an extra part could be sent from San Francisco and my husband, who was a mechanic, made the repair. Also the gasoline supply was not correct for the mules had to make a trip down the mountain grade to a town where gasoline could be procured before our return trip could be made.

The home trip was just as much a spectacle to the inhabitants of each village through which we passed and ...

...I shall never forget the old man who threw his hat in the air and called "Hurrah for you! I always hoped I would live to see one of these things go!"



*1903 Oldsmobile
with tanneau and back entrance*

Horse vs. Horseless

Dobbin did not quickly adjust to the appearance of the auto. Today most of us think of horses as placid animals, mostly from our experience at pony rides. We can't imagine a team of eight or more draft horses frantic with fear, running for safety, dragging whatever (or whom-ever) it is attached to on to sure destruction. It took America's 18 million horses a while to accept the "rattletrap." The battle between horse and the first autos became a huge problem with communities busy raising roadblocks for people who drove cars.

Columnist Nilda Rego sums up the problem nicely:

Some localities passed laws prohibiting cars from using their streets. Cars could not be transported on the ferries crossing the bay until their tanks were drained of gasoline. One community required motorists to pull over to the side of the road and turn off their motors when a horse approached.

It was proposed that the motorist carry a canvas tarp painted with scenery, which would be thrown over their car to convince the horse it was safe to pass.

The farmers met the challenge first when combined harvesters became common. The horses would soon learn the rhythm of the groaning, clacking machines, but any sudden noise, broken gear or other problem would send them running. Many horses were injured and had to be shot and several teamsters lost their lives in the Valley each year, victims of runaway teams. To solve the problem, John Horner and L.U. Shippee placed the hitch to the rear. When spooked, these teams would normally stop or try to back up. It was safer but the teams were difficult to control and guide. Ben Holt solved the problem by designing his machines with belt drives, rather than gears. They were not only quieter, but easy to repair when necessary. Of course, the horses eventually became accustomed to the contraption.

Mark your calendar. Upcoming events:

"Sparks in the Park" Dinner and Concert

The legendary Randy Sparks and Company.

Saturday, July 12, 2008. 6:00 p.m. social hour, 7:00 p.m. dinner, 8:00 p.m. concert. At the Museum. \$70 per person.

Benefits San Joaquin County Historical Society and Micke Grove Zoological Society.

Special Exhibitions at the Historical Museum

- "Lewis & Clark Revisited: A Trail in Modern Day," by photographer Greg MacGregor, July 13-September 7, 2008.
- "Bear In Mind: The California Grizzly," developed by the Bancroft Library and Heyday Books, September 21– November 16, 2008.

Return Service Requested

**San Joaquin County Historical Society
and Museum**

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