

*News from*

# *The Monterey County Historical Society*

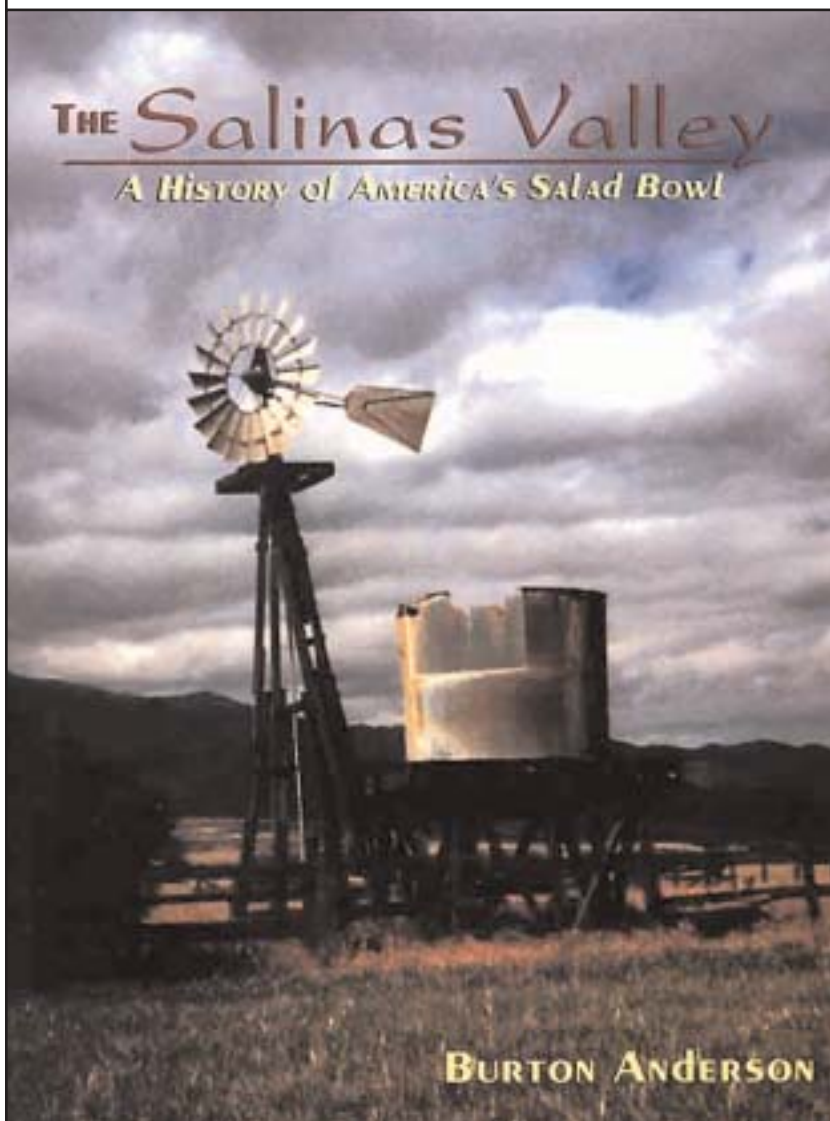
*December 2000*



## ***THE SALINAS VALLEY:***

### ***A History of America's Salad Bowl***

by **Burton Anderson**



Published by the Monterey  
County Historical Society,  
November, 2000

The day before Thanksgiving the Society received the initial copies of the first large-format book it has ever published. The book is titled *The Salinas Valley: A History of America's Salad Bowl*, and was written by **Burton Anderson**.

Signed copies may be purchased directly from the Society, and proceeds will benefit the Society's new Publication Fund. Contact Mona at 757-8085 to reserve your copy.

In Salinas, copies should also be available at Star Market, the Steinbeck Center, and the Steinbeck House, with many more outlets to come soon.

Burton Anderson

Founded December 22, 1933. Incorporated 1955. P.O. Box 3576, Salinas, CA 93912. (831) 757-8085.

# ***THE SALINAS VALLEY:***

## ***A History of America's Salad Bowl***

by **Burton Anderson**

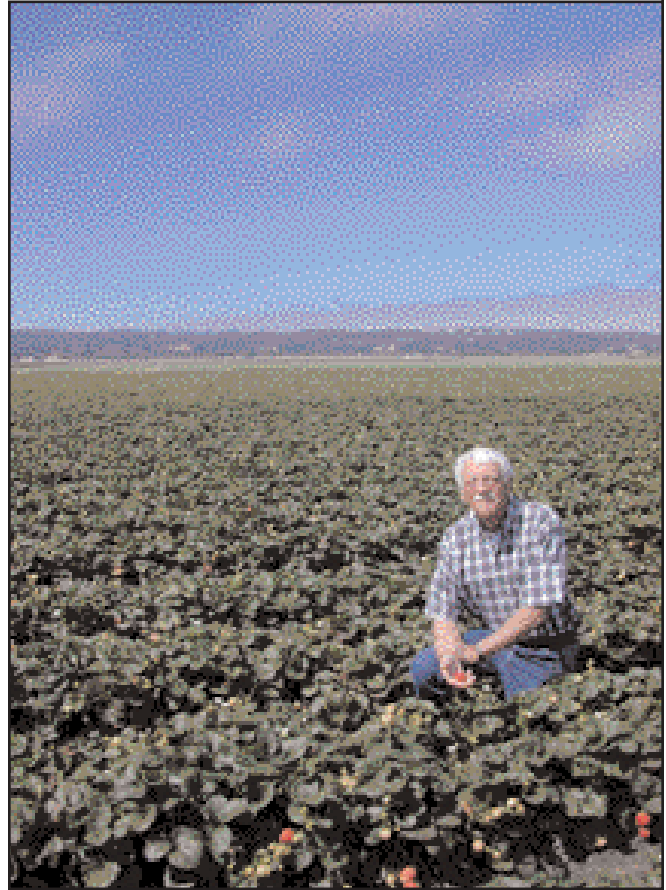
From the Spanish missionaries to the present, agriculture has formed the backbone of Central California's economy—and the Salinas Valley has led the way.

The earliest agriculture centered around the missions, while the grasslands of the Salinas Valley were devoted to cattle raising. This continued into the era of the ranchos, but the Gold Rush brought statehood and an influx of settlers. After California joined the United States, droughts, floods and a vast increase in population led to a shift from cattle ranching to grain and potato farming. New towns—Salinas, King City, and Gonzales—came into being, replacing earlier communities which had failed—Pilarcitos, Blanco, Hilltown, and Fort Romie.

At the turn of the century, Claus Spreckels brought sugar beets and the massive Spreckels Sugar Factory to the Salinas Valley, and irrigation, little used since the mission era, became a major factor in the next phase of expansion.

When sugar beets began to decline everything was in place for the transition to irrigated row crops. Strawberries, lettuce, artichokes, onions, cauliflower, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, green peas, spinach and many other crops were introduced and flourished. Beginning in the early 1920s the Salinas Valley began shipping produce as far as San Francisco. By the 1930s the development of the cooling industry supported rail shipment throughout the country.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was not the problem in the Salinas Valley that it was elsewhere because of the wealth generated by the new agricultural products. The valley saw an influx of workers and a vast increase in productivity—Salinas expanded into an agricultural trade center and the Salinas Valley became America's Salad Bowl.



Trudy Havesat and Gary S. Breschini

### **Burton Anderson**

Burton Anderson grew up on a ranch in the Salinas Valley, and is descended from pioneer ranching families.

After service in World War II as an ensign and damage-control officer aboard the *USS Pensacola* in the Pacific and the Bikini atomic bomb tests, he graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with a degree in economics in 1949.

After graduation, Burton began his career in agriculture with Bruce Church, Inc. He spent his entire career with the company in the Imperial and Salinas valleys, rising from ranch manager to department head.

After retiring from Bruce Church, Inc. in 1985, Burton formed Anderson & Associates, an agricultural consulting service, which he

still manages. He also served for a number of years as an instructor at Hartnell College, in the Japanese Agricultural Training Program and Staff Historian for the *Coastal Grower* magazine, where between 1989 and the present he has written over 30 articles on agricultural history.

Burton also found time to serve as man-

aging partner for the Tavernetti family ranches, to manage agricultural properties for absentee landowners, and to serve as chairman of the Monterey County Fish and Game Commission.

Burton is a member and former board member of the Monterey County Historical Society.



*Trimmers at the Bruce Church Company shed, about 1938. Courtesy the Growers Shippers Vegetable Association.*

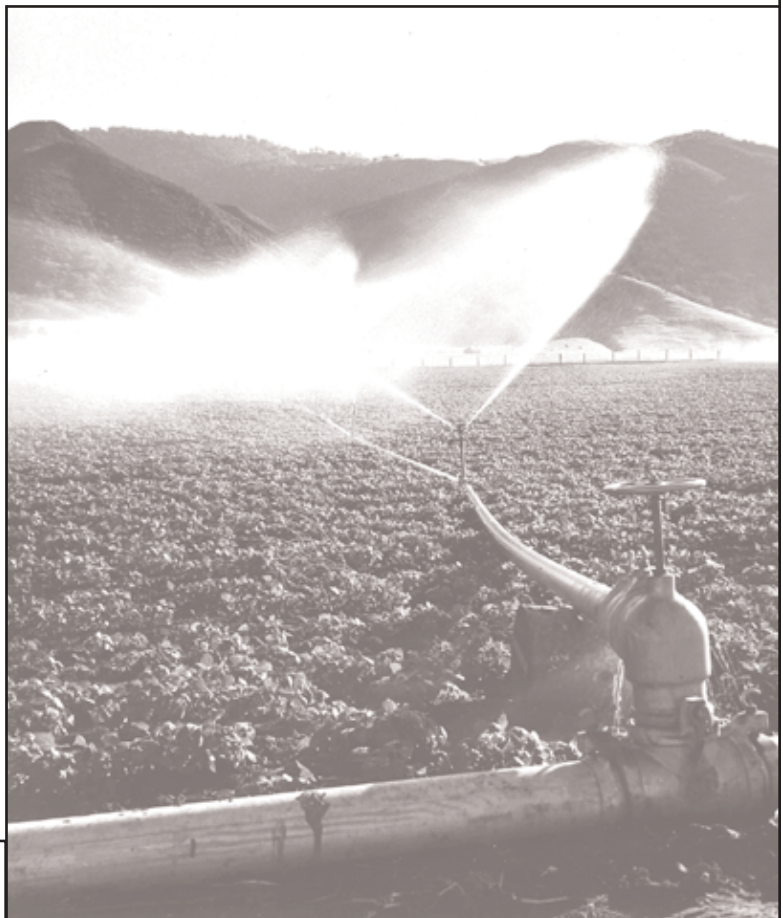
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*Sprinkler irrigation. Courtesy California Lettuce Research Board.*



## MEMORIALS

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ruth R. Andresen	Amy Brewster
Bill Cassara	William S. Cazares
Jim Conway	Dennis Copeland
Brian Cronwall	Monterey Public Library
Rosalie Gray	Edward M. Kelly
Joan Levy	Marie T. Holaday
Mrs. Winnie Washburn	Ann Witter Gillette
Mrs. Patricia Nelson Herring	

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

The following are the elected officers and members of the Board of Directors for Fiscal Year 2000-2001:

Carol Alleyne, President  
Al Baguio, Vice President  
Peggie Rosner, Treasurer  
James Perry, Secretary

### Newly Elected Board Members

James Bricker	Kathy Bricker
Trudy Haversat	Mr. Gasbarra

### Incumbents

Gary Breschini	John Smith
Anita Mason	Mark Yamaguchi

## COMPUTER

The Society just recently upgraded their Macintosh Computer of 10 years to a new Mac G4. All records and pertinent information is now being transferred to the new system. Please bear with us and as soon as all is complete membership cards will be mailed to all of those who renewed their membership along with all of the new members.

## ADOBE WALKWAY

Thank you to Granite Rock for their generous donation of 30 tons of base rock for the walkway around the Boronda Adobe along with 25 gallons of PennzSuppress which Granite Rock team members hand sprayed on the granite. A special thank you to Bruce W. Woolpert, President and CEO, Mr. Ron Conway and all of those who assisted us by donating their time for this project.

## WEBSITE

If you haven't visited the Society's Website lately, please do so. Gary Breschini continues to upgrade, add new material and thus far since February 25, 1997 we have had 130,367 visitors. The site has generated researchers, new members and many donations of artifacts for our archival vault.

## OCEAN MIST FARMS

Ocean Mist Farms has helped us for many years. On many occasions Mona Gudgel, our Executive Director, has been surprised as she looks out and sees their tractors humming through our parking lot and fields disking the weeds, and coming back to level everything. Thank you Troy Boutonnet for always remembering us and being the best of neighbors. We appreciate you and your team.

## OUR OFFICE HAS MOVED

The Society's office has moved to the former rental at the Boronda History Center. A special thank you to the following who helped to create a pleasant atmosphere after camping out so long in the trailer after our offices were damaged after the Loma Prieta Earthquake:

Joyce McBride who worked 6 hours a day, five days a week scrubbing walls, painting, patching the ceiling, sanding and refinishing doors, locating carpet to cover the dining and living room area.

Mr. & Mrs. Al Baguio, Peggie Rosner and Anita Mason for spending hours painting. Thank you Peggie for the beautiful desk you donated and Anita for all of the lamps and accessories you donated.

James Bricker for helping to rebuild the floor in the bathroom and installing the new water heater.

George Alleyne and J.R. Sanchez for moving file cabinets, desks, boxes, supplies and a refrigerator.

Carol Alleyne for purchasing and hanging all of the venetian blinds.

James Perry and Corey Sanchez for hours cleaning up the yard, moving furniture and helping to decorate the inside.

The office is gorgeous please, if you haven't been out lately, come and see us.

## OVERVIEW of POST-HISPANIC MONTEREY COUNTY HISTORY

by MaryEllen Ryan and Gary S. Breschini, Ph.D.

Settlement of Monterey County following the Hispanic Period was at first concentrated around the residences, inns, and commercial establishments of the earlier Hispanic settlers. As ranchos were subdivided and settlers applied for preemption to public lands, clustered farms appeared in the canyon mouths that opened on to the Salinas Valley. A source of water was of primary concern to the settlers who located around the "Upside-Down" Salinas River, and those who settled away from the easily dug wells and pools of the bottomlands were completely dependent on springs. The broad valleys containing former Mission San Antonio lands and the public domain that surrounded the lands were settled quickly in the 1860s and 1870s. The towns of Jolon and later Lockwood became south county centers for commerce and social activities.

With the extension of the Southern Pacific Railroad down the Salinas Valley to Soledad in 1874, townsites grew south from Salinas, promoted by their founders with advertising in eastern and European newspapers and notices. A county directory compiled within a year of the extension of rail service to Soledad offered the following description of the landscape and its people during that transitional period.

Chualar was founded about nine miles south of Salinas on the ranch of David Jacks, a controversial figure who was heavily involved in the transfer of rancho holdings to Americans during the 1860s, and who was certainly the wealthiest individual in the county by 1880 through his shrewd and exploitive real estate ventures. In 1875, it was noted that Chualar City boasted 51 persons, a hotel, stores, restaurants, shoeshop, blacksmith shop, and freight depot, all of which had been nonexistent a year before.

Gonzales was originally a stop on the Southern Pacific Railroad. The Southern Pacific Railroad laid tracks through the area in 1872, and later a depot was erected to allow trains to stop for freight and passengers. The original town, consisting of 50 blocks, was planned in 1874 by Mariano and Alfredo Gonzales on the land granted to their father, Teodoro Gonzales, in 1836. Twenty years later, in 1894, the earliest recorded population of Gonzales was 500 residents.

Soledad marked the end of the Southern Pacific line, and at this point passengers transferred to the Coast Line Stage Company. The stage road left the marshy Salinas Valley to follow the Arroyo Seco, with the first horse changing station at Last Chance, fifteen miles from Soledad. Three miles further along the road was the Gulch House inn, operated by Mr.

Thompson. Four miles beyond Thompson's was the store and hotel of A.E. Walker. San Antonio, or Lowe's Station as it was also known, was four miles beyond Walker's, where passengers could get supper and sleep. Ten miles further the stage reached the village of Jolon, which was by that time a substantial settlement dominated by the two-story adobe Dutton Hotel. The stage continued to Pleito Station, where it was noted that 43 persons had recently arrived from Kentucky to take up farming land. Pleito now lies beneath the waters of San Antonio Lake. Harris Valley with its fine grazing land was six miles west of Pleito, and beyond that was Sapaque Valley, where three families worked farmland and grazing lands of 1,000 acres.

The directory went on to describe other features and townsites. Quicksilver and gold mines were described ten miles northeast of Jolon, and note was made of the new community of Rootville six miles northeast of Soledad. Here Samuel Brannan, who had brought news of the 1848 American River gold discoveries to San Francisco, and H. Higgins had invested in a gold mine and brought in 32 settlers. Three mining companies were in operation at Rootville, the Robert Emmet, Comet, and Bambridge. The location of Murietta Stronghold was described five miles north of Rootville in a narrow, boulder filled canyon, while well known Indian caves 18 miles northwest of Jolon were also believed to be a Murietta and Vasquez gang rendezvous point. The physical description of the caves seems to fit Wagon Cave, a Santa Lucia range historic landmark used as a rest point on the trail from the Monterey County coast to King City. Wagon Cave also contains evidence of prehistoric occupation.

In the hills east of the Salinas Valley the directory author noted that Mormons had settled Long Valley and had built up productive farms, and that Peachtree Valley was headquarters for eleven farmers and four stockraisers, with one shepherd listed among them.

The 1878 directory listings noted substantially increased growth in the rural areas. Merchants and businesses in the town of Chualar were operated predominately by Danes, and the town boasted three hotels. In addition to the thirteen in-town businesses, 36 farms operated by individuals, families, and partnerships were listed for the Chualar post office. The settlement of Imusdale in the Cholame hills was center for 34 stockraising and agricultural operations, while thirteen ranches were listed for Long Valley and forty for Peachtree Valley. The commercial district of Jolon boasted two grocers, a butcher, a blacksmith, a harness maker, and a constable as well as

the general merchandise, post office, and Wells Fargo station operated by George Dutton in his adobe hotel.

The outlying communities were again described in a promotional county history published in 1881. San Antonio continued as a stage stop at the eastern end of Jolon Valley, while Jolon was described as the southernmost settlement in the county. Harris Valley and Sapaque Valley were described as fine grazing and grain acreage with few settlers. The Ray, Harris, and Liddle families were early settlers of Harris and Sapaque Valleys, according to oral histories compiled by descendant Rachel Gillett. These settlers are tabulated in the 1880 census, with Ray and Harris cultivating barley, wheat, and corn and raising swine and poultry on their farms, while Liddle was involved in sheepraising as well as the same types of grain cultivation. Elliott and Moore described Peachtree Valley settlements in 1881, noting that the village of Peachtree contained two saloons, a hotel, store, post office, and blacksmith shop. Peach Tree Ranch was by that time a Miller and Lux operation, consisting of 1,500 acres in grain in the fourteen mile length of the ranch, a ranch headquarters complex that was a small village in itself, and tenants farming on shares in the lower end of the valley.

Local historian Valance Heinsen has chronicled the growth of Jolon, noting that it had its beginnings as a home remodeled to an inn as early as 1850, then further remodeled to the two-story Dutton Hotel in 1876. A Chinese population attracted to mining ventures in the area operated a laundry in Jolon in the 1850s. The village experienced a growth spurt with Dutton's remodeling of the inn, and a dance hall and community church were added between 1876 and 1879. A community hall, school, granary, and several new houses were constructed by 1888. Several large horse barns and a smithy were added in the early 1890s, along with a detached post office and a telephone office. Several farmers moved into town in the 1890s, further expanding the population and offsetting losses brought about by the closing of the Los Burros mines.

Former San Antonio Mission grazing and agricultural lands in the San Antonio Valley had been quickly appropriated as ranchos in the 1830s and 1840s, and were in turn greatly desired by American and European investors with the passage of the 1851 Land Act. The old road connecting the missions linked several fine old adobe ranch headquarters through the valley, and as travelers increased on the Stage Road, so did interest in the rancho lands, which by that time were surrounded by homesteads and being infringed upon by squatters. San Francisco and London land agents purchased the vast spreads from the financially beaten Hispanic owners, locking up much of the land in widespread stockranging from the early 1870s. One of the ugliest chapters in south

county history took place during this period, when Faxon Dean Atherton, a San Francisco area financier and land investor, purchased Rancho Milpitas immediately upon its title clearance in the San Francisco court. He then sent notice to evict the squatters on the land, most of whom were settlers on improved lands awaiting preemption, and who included George Dutton and others who had believed they owned property in the town of Jolon. Efforts at an appeal and lobbying in Washington by the settlers failed, and in 1877 Atherton's son was sent with the sheriff to remove the occupants and repossess their homes. The wealthier among them repurchased their properties, but many moved on. Five of the former mission ranchos were eventually consolidated and in 1922 sold to Hearst's Piedmont Land and Cattle Company.

The Lockwood area was settled almost entirely by former neighbors and relatives from the Island Fohr, located off the west coast of German Schleswig-Holstein in the North Frisian Islands. The first arrivals purchased 160 acre plots from earlier homesteaders, and brought or sent for relatives to help expand the acreage and work the farms. Several early families in the Lockwood area are now in their third generation of farming the family holdings, some of which have been considerably expanded to several thousand acres.

The coastal regions of southern Monterey County were isolated from settled regions to the north (Big Sur) and south (Cambria) because of the precipitous terrain, and were more closely tied to commercial and social affairs of the San Antonio Valley-Jolon-Lockwood area than to other coastal communities. A mail road, actually a horse trail, led from Jolon through present day Fort Hunter Liggett lands to the Santa Lucia divide, where several trails led down to the coast or to the mining camps in the mountains. Settlers from the Lucia area and south to Pacific Valley followed trails over the mountains that rendezvoused at Wagon Cave (CA-MNT-307) on the San Antonio River, where horseback travelers switched to wagons stored there for the purpose of hauling provisions from King City and Jolon.

Soledad remained the southern terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad until 1885, when construction was begun to carry the line south to San Miguel. Throughout the 1870s homesteaders continued to locate along the watered canyons and high valleys of the coast ranges. The Paraiso Springs area, once a retreat for Soledad Mission, became a part of the public domain and was settled in several contiguous 160 acre tracts. The settlers who came to Paraiso found that in spite of the \$40 paid to a locator they had taken up railroad lands, and that their only source of drinking water was privately owned. Public records show that most of those filing claims to Paraiso area lands did so in the 1873-1877 period.

The settlers compensated for the water problem by purchasing and hauling water from the owner, and by digging cisterns to catch runoff. One homesteader located on top of a ridge overlooking the Paraiso and Mission districts hand dug a well 4 feet on a side to 400 feet deep, shoring it with hand sawn lumber and carrying a candle to warn of poisonous gasses. His efforts were in vain, although the dry well still remains in the southeastern quadrant of Township 18 South, Range 5 East. Most of the settlers found the conditions were more than they could bear, and their purchases were consolidated by later settlers. One of these, ancestor to a present day Paraiso resident who provided an oral history to the Monterey County Parks Department, purchased fourteen older homesteads to combine with his own in 1882.

The Paris Valley area west of San Lucas was settled as early as the 1860s by French and Basque, although the largest number of French, Basque, and Swiss immigrants arrived in the late 1880s and early 1890s to establish farms, stockranches, and dairies.

The Parkfield area in the Cholame Hills was settled in 1854 by the Imus brothers, and drew settlers by way of Slack Canyon and Peachtree Valley through the 1860s to 1880s. A sawmill, brick kiln, and hotel had been constructed by 1887, when the Parkfield Land Company of San Francisco was intensively promoting the healthful aspects of living in the remote country. Descendants of the early settlers note that the area was served by a circuit riding minister out of San Miguel from the 1880s population boom until 1917, when an Episcopal church was built with donated land, funds, and labor and used as a community church.

Nearly all the collected history of the outlying canyons such as Bitterwater, Cholame, Hames Valley, and other remote regions of southern Monterey County is contained in untranscribed oral histories taken by members of the San Antonio Valley Historical Association. Descendants of early settlers such as Brodie Reiwerts of Hames Valley provide a rare glimpse of the concerns of rural life in the isolated valleys, where the yearly cycle included conformance to Danish values of work and play, harvests that required a man's 15-hour work day of a 13 year old boy, picnics and social gatherings with other Hames and Sapaque Valley families, and close commercial ties with the service centers of San Luis Obispo County at Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo rather than those of the Salinas Valley. The south county regions are very poorly documented, and, although they would provide rich material for a study of the settlement process in marginal rural landscapes, have not been of interest to those doing settlement studies.

The Cachagua area was a submarginal area similar to Paraiso Springs in terms of water and soils. Homesteaders were drawn to the region early in the

1870s, but few stayed to build up holdings. During the recession of the 1890s, people from the Salinas Valley again migrated into the Cachagua to take up small holdings and carry out subsistence farming. Jamesburg was established as a stage stop on the rough stage road to Tassajara Hot Springs in 1885, during a period when the springs were heavily promoted.

Colony settlement schemes were much a part of the settlement history of Monterey County, receiving their push from the development of irrigation canals in the late 1890s. In 1897 German promoters Lang and Dorn offered ten acre parcels in St. Joseph's Colony southeast of Salinas in conjunction with Claus Spreckels' newly constructed sugar beet refinery. The colony contained a post office, store, school, and church in addition to a number of dwellings, and offered a German community to its residents in addition to Spreckels as a guaranteed buyer of their beet crops. The colony was heavily promoted in the German language in eastern cities and western centers. The inexperience of the farmers, the limited acreage, and fluctuating beet prices along with dishonest promotional practices killed the Colony within eight years.

In 1898, Claus Spreckels supported the formation of the Salvation Army agricultural commune of Fort Romie Colony on acreage situated close to Soledad Mission. The Salvation Army subdivided the property into ten acre parcels and recruited impoverished unemployed city-dwellers in an idealistic attempt to "return the landless man to the manless land." Settlers were bound by contract to repay the Army over a ten year period for housing, seed, and supplies provided. The attempt unfortunately coincided with a severe drought, and required intervention by the Salvation Army in construction of an irrigation system. By 1903 there were 70 colonists working under contract to Spreckels. The small size of the parcels prevented any real success, and the parcels were eventually sold to Spreckels or consolidated by Swiss dairy farmers and others moving into the area.

Rancho Arroyo Seco was the setting for a third colony, that of the California Home Seekers Association. Clark Colony was sold in twenty acre parcels, and irrigation canals were drawn from the Salinas River, while hedge rows of eucalyptus were planted for windbreaks on the windswept Salinas plain. The irrigation experiment was a success, and the Colony is now the town of Greenfield.

Copyright 2000 by G.S. Breschini

Source:

Breschini, G.S., T. Haversat, and R.P. Hampson, *A Cultural Resources Overview of the Coast and Coast-Valley Study Areas [California]*. Coyote Press, Salinas, CA, 1983.



## MUSEUM UPDATE AND OTHER NEWS

The Society has now received the generous bequest from the Armstrong estate which was discussed in the August 1999 *Newsletter*. This will permit us to resume construction on the museum. In fact, as this *Newsletter* goes to press we will be reviewing two slightly different front elevation designs; we think we should begin to enclose the front of the building within a few weeks. Then we can start on the inside.

Our strategy of building the museum one step at a time has taken a number of years. The choices we had were either:

- 1) To build only what we could afford in 1990 and have a finished building of about 1,000 square feet within a year of starting—but which would be hopelessly inadequate, or
- 2) To start a longer, step by step process and design an approximately 12,000 square foot museum plus another several thousand square feet of storage on the second floor—knowing it might not be finished for ten years or more.

We selected the second option, and have since completed major portions of our building. Some of the work does not show very well, as we had to spend a lot of our money and effort on underground utilities for the entire facility. But with the bequest from the Armstrong estate, we are ready to go again.

Since 1990, the Society holdings have grown, but our archival vault has somehow shrunk—or at least it seems that way (see the accompanying photographs). One of our current thoughts is to revise our building design to see if we can expand the size of the vault without too much change to the original plans. This would give us some much needed room to expand our most valuable holdings and collections.

Our archival vault is actually one of our best kept secrets, even though we have been trying to spread the news for over 20 years. Even so, many of our own members are not even aware that we have one of the best archival facilities on the central coast. It is nearly 1,000 square feet in size, with atmosphere and temperature control, and is named after **Robert B. Johnston**, a pioneer Monterey County historian and former Society president who donated his lifelong research files to the Society. A partial list of the contents of the vault appears on our website.

We will try to keep our members current on the construction plans as they resume in the next few weeks. Look for additional details and perhaps photographs in the next *Newsletter*, or for quicker updates please visit the Society's website at <http://www.dedot.com/mchs>.





**HAULING BEETS, 1920. RARE TRANSITION PICTURE SHOWING A MOTOR TRUCK PULLING A HORSE WAGON.**

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