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A Foundation Supporting the Study and Preservation of State and Regional History



Passing Farms, Enduring Values
—California's Santa Clara Valley

A Rewarding Beginning

It's been a hectic, difficult, sometimes confusing, but very rewarding, three-month initiation as the new executive director of CHC. Since Kathi Peregrin retired last June and I was selected as the new director during the summer the days have gone by in such a whirlwind that it is hard for me to get a grip on what has transpired.

When I play back the scenes from the last three months however, I am struck by the support and dedication the center's volunteers and supporters have provided. First, board members Mary Jo Ignoffo and Darlene Thorne jumped in and ensured that our second annual Vintage Celebration was a great success, providing a wonderful evening of wine, entertainment, and education, with a special presentation by guest speaker T.J. Rodgers. Next, board member Cozetta Guinn didn't hesitate to share her expertise and many hours of her time to help us put up our exhibit, "Awakening from the California Dream: An Environmental History." And our board treasurer, Bill Lester came to the rescue using his "handyman" skills to help us construct some last minute exhibit furniture we needed.

The campus community, its administrators, faculty and staff have patiently and warmly provided assistance on many different levels to the center and to me. College President Martha Kanter has been quick to promote our center and offer kind words of support. I look forward to the many opportunities the unique collaboration between the college and the CHCF provides for our work.

Last, but by no means least, I owe a very special thank you to volunteers Trudy Frank and Julie Stevens who agreed to fill in as temporary, hourly employees to pick up some of the office chores until our new staff member is hired. They, along with all of our other regular volunteers, have been terrific! Also, Lisa Christiansen, our librarian/archivist deserves the greatest praise for stepping in to take on many difficult tasks and overcome seemingly impossible obstacles to make our exhibit and conference a reality.

If space here allowed, there are many others I would thank for getting me off to such a wonderful beginning as the director. But since this is not the case, I hope that the acknowledgments offered in the following pages serve to show that I deeply appreciate all of your support in whatever form it may come. All of you, whether you are new members, long-time supporters or volunteers, make this place a fantastic, exciting place to work.

I would like to update you on a few things as we end this first quarter. We are continuing our work on the development of a strategic plan with the assistance of consultant Douglas Ford from CompassPoint, a non-profit resource agency, and the Packard Foundation. I will be sharing with you our ideas for the center's future in coming issues of *The Californian*.

By the time you receive this issue we should be well along in selecting and hiring a new staff member for the center to fill my previous position as administrative assistant. We will all give a big sigh of relief when this happens!

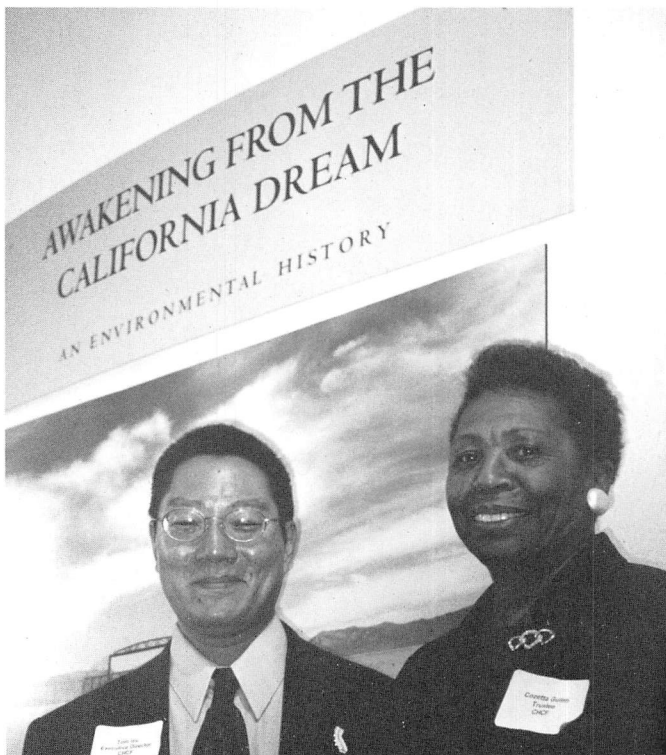
This issue features a chapter from the soon-to-be-reprinted publication *Passing Farms, Enduring Values* by Yvonne Jacobson. Her book, one of our most distinguished publications, continues to find an audience among those concerned with the rapid changes that have engulfed our valley. Originally published in 1984 our last copies are gone with many requests left unfilled. We are happy to report that the wait will soon be over for many of you! Another publication, *The Martin Murphy Family Saga* by local author Marjorie Pierce, will be out this month as well. We will be hosting an author's signing event for the Murphy book in the near future.

As we enter Winter Quarter and look forward to Spring, I hope to turn the speed down a bit and make some time to plan our activities for the coming years. I am always open to your ideas and concerns and invite you to call us or to drop by for a visit.

Tom Izu, Director

COVER: Cows accentuate the recently voted urban green line in east San Jose's Silver Creek area. The property shown is owned by Lowell Grattan, who would like to develop it. See article on pg. 6.

LEFT: CHC Director Tom Izu and Board Member Cozetta Guinn view the center's environmental exhibit.



CALENDAR

12/4 - 12/21	“Awakening from the California Dream: An Environmental History” exhibit at the center. The first major photography exhibition to document and explore environmental changes in California.	1/20 & 2/3	World War II and the Golden State field trips. See page 4.
		2/9 & 2/10	Santa Clara University Celebrates 150 Years field trips. See page 4.
12/14	Open house/holiday get together at CHC. 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. refreshments provided	2/16 & 2/19	Presidents’ birthdays observed. College and CHC closed.
12/15	Fall Quarter ends.	2/24 & 3/10	U.S. Conquest of California field trips. See page 4.
12/22 - 1/1	CHC closed for winter break.	3/3	The Seacoast of Bohemia field trip. See page 4.
1/2	CHC opens to the public. History Center hours are: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; closed from noon to 1 p.m.	3/5 - 3/9	Women’s History Month events. Call the center for scheduled activities.
1/8	De Anza College classes begin.	3/10 & 3/11	Threatened California and U.S. Conquest of California field trips. See page 4.

Erin Brockovich Comes to Town, Wows Crowd at CHC Reception

Erin Brockovich, the crusader who made a name for herself as an advocate for environmental health and corporate responsibility, was the guest of honor Nov. 16 at the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition’s 18th Anniversary Benefit held at De Anza College. A reception was held at the history center.

Brockovich’s investigative prowess in uncovering the groundwater contamination in Hinkley, Calif., resulted in a major lawsuit against PG&E and the filming of “Erin Brockovich,” starring Julia Roberts.

While working at the Masry and Vitotoe law firm in Southern California, her investigation

led to a \$333 million judgment—the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit. She is now director of environmental research at the firm.



Visiting with Erin Brockovich, second from right, at the reception held at the CHC were, from left, Mike Brandy, De Anza College vice president of finance; Martha Kanter, De Anza president; and Julie Phillips, De Anza environmental studies instructor. Photo by Sharon Draeger.

The coalition honored her with the Debbie Cole Memorial award, named after the founding board member who died of breast cancer.

The organization was formed in 1982 after groundwater contaminants were discovered leaking from an underground tank at Fairchild Semiconductor. The South San Jose neighbors suffering health problems banded together in “toxic tort” lawsuits.

EDUCATION

State and Regional History

The following courses will be offered winter quarter 2001 through the California History Center. Please see the California History Center class listings section of the De Anza College Winter Schedule of Classes for detailed information (i.e., course ID#, call #, and units.) For additional course information, call the center at (408) 864-8712.

***And don't forget, as a benefit of being a history center member you can register for history center classes (CHC classes only, not other De Anza classes) at the Trianon building.*

U.S. Conquest of California: *Chatham Forbes*

The U.S. conquest of Mexican California took place against a background of international rivalries. Strong and controversial leaders made questionable judgments at critical junctures. Emotions ran high and military actions were widespread across the state. The class will study this definitive event in the classroom and on field trips to key historic sites.

Lectures: Thurs., February 15 and March 1
Field trips: Sat., February 24 and March 10

World War II and the Golden State: *Chatham Forbes*

The movement of industry and military installations into California during the Second World War set off a process of rapid growth and change unprecedented since the gold rush almost a century earlier. The transforming economic, social, and political consequences are still operative today. The class will study this pivotal era in the classroom and in the field.

Lectures: Thurs., January 18 and February 1
Field trips: Sat., January 20 and February 3

Santa Clara University Celebrates 150 Years: *Betty Hirsch*

Santa Clara University, founded in 1851 as "Santa Clara College," is California's oldest institution of higher learning. It was established on the site of the Mission Santa Clara de Asis, the eighth of the original 21 California missions. For 110 years, Santa Clara was an all-male school. Then, in the fall of 1961, women were accepted as undergraduates and Santa Clara became the first co-educational Catholic university in California. In 1985 the university adopted "Santa Clara University" as its official name. The 7,700-student Jesuit university has a 150-year tradition of educating the whole person for a life of service and leadership. The class will discuss the university's history, its role

in the community, tour the campus, and view an exhibit at the DeSaisset Museum.

Lecture: Thurs., January 25

Field trips: Fri., February 9 and Sat., February 10

Threatened California: *Kristin Jensen-Sullivan*

Threatened California explores the wonders of the beautiful state of California through the study of and visits to a variety of California's ecosystems, including the coastal redwood forest, marshlands, Pacific tide pools and the rugged and spectacular mountain regions of the Diablo range. Students will discuss the many environmental factors that threaten California's flora and fauna, including global warming, overpopulation, pollution, ozone depletion, deforestation and the biodiversity crisis. A major focus of the class will be sustainable use of California's varied resources.

Lecture/Orientation: Wed., Mar. 7

Field trips: Sat. & Sun. Mar. 10 and 11

The Seacoast of Bohemia: *Betty Hirsch*

During the period 1905-1914 Carmel-by-the-Sea flourished as a lively artist colony. Among its colorful residents were poet George Sterling, photographer Arnold Genthe, novelist Mary Austin, and



Hotel La Playa, Carmel-by-the-Sea.

writer Ambrose Bierce (known as "Bitter Bierce"). Frequent visitors who joined the residents included Jack London, Joaquin Miller, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair and other literary luminaries of the period. The Seacoast of Bohemia will chronicle their bohemian life and philosophy of alternately working hard and playing hard while chanting "The Abalone Song." Excerpts from their works will be presented. A trip to Carmel will include the Forest Theatre, where many of their plays and readings were performed, a walking tour of Carmel, and a tour of Tor House, built by Robinson Jeffers, one of the later residents of the Colony.

Lecture: Thurs., February 22

Field trip: Sat., March 3

Environmental History Exhibit and Conference Big Hits

More than 200 students and community members attended the CHC's fifth annual daylong California Studies Conference held at De Anza on Nov. 3.

The conference took its title from the center's current photographic exhibit, "Awakening from the California Dream: An Environmental History."

Keynoters were geographer/historian Gray Brechin and photographer Robert Dawson, who criss-crossed the state documenting the profound changes in California's environment. Their efforts, captured in a book and the CHC exhibit, expose the myth of California as a land of limitless resources and bring to light a landscape profoundly damaged.

In a morning presentation, the keynoters urged attendees to answer the following question: "What could we learn from our past to help us understand our present and redirect our future?"

Later in the day, Brechin and Dawson were joined by Phil Mumma, "Awakening" exhibit curator, and Julie Phillips, De Anza environmental studies instructor, for a panel discussion with the audience.

The conference was followed by a tour of De Anza's Environmental Studies Area and the opening reception for the "Awakening" exhibit.

From lyrical, 19th Century images extolling the state's pristine natural beauty, through haunting scenes of damage inflicted by careless overuse, to photographs pointing toward environmental renewal, the exhibit charts the ups and downs in California's environment over the past 150 years.

The exhibit, based on five years of research by Brechin and Dawson, encourages Californians to reflect upon the historical events and attitudes that led to the degradation of the state's

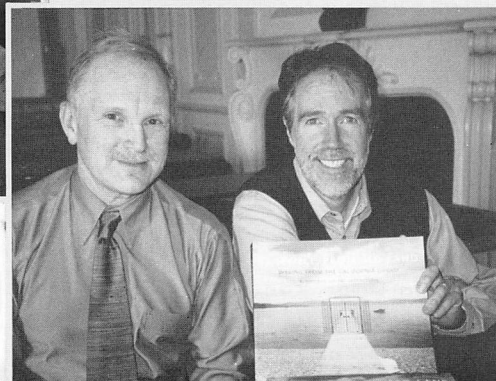
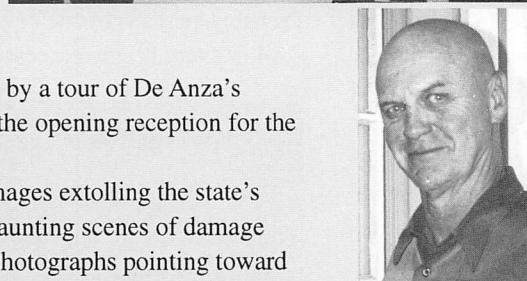
environment. It serves as a poignant footnote to California's sesquicentennial commemoration. And it is a springboard for dialogue on pertinent environmental issues facing California today. At the same time, the exhibition portrays how shifting attitudes can change the course of history and positively affect events here and elsewhere in the state of California.

The "Awakening" exhibit was organized and funded by the California Council for the Humanities in concert with the Oakland Museum of California, with support from the California Exhibition Resource Alliance and a generous gift from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the LEF Foundation.

The CHC exhibit is open through Dec. 21.



LEFT: Several volunteers were on hand to assist visitors at the center following the California Studies Conference. From left to right, Elizabeth Archambeault, Julie Stevens, and Nancy Bratman, introduce visitors to the CHC's fall environmental exhibit.



ABOVE RIGHT: Authors Gray Brechin, left, and Robert Dawson with their book which is the basis of the CHC's current exhibit, "Awakening From the California Dream: An Environmental History."

ABOVE LEFT: Phil Mumma, former associate director of the Oakland Museum and curator of the CHC's popular fall photographic exhibit on California, also was a speaker at CHC's 5th annual California Studies Conference.

FEATURE

Passing Farms, Enduring Values California's Santa Clara Valley

by Yvonne Jacobson

Passing Farms, Enduring Values—California's Santa Clara Valley, written by Santa Clara County native Yvonne Jacobson and first published in 1984, is being reprinted by the California History Center and will be available in January. The original book traced agriculture in the valley from the 19th Century to the beginning of World War II. In the epilogue of the new book, printed below, Jacobson brings the story up to the beginning of the 21st Century.

It wasn't an ax that cut down the cherry trees.¹ Bulldozers yanked them out, two seconds at a time. Shredding machines reduced them to a heap of wood chips. The anticipation of these events sent the shiver down my back that prompted me to write *Passing Farms, Enduring Values*. Now the trees were gone.

Inheritance taxes, following the death of my mother Rose in 1988, triggered the sale of a 10-acre piece of Olson cherry orchard in 1991. The remaining Sunnyvale property was divided. On September 7, 1999, the 100th anniversary of my father's birthday, the cherry trees, owned now by my sister Jeanette Gottesman, my brother Charles Olson and their families, fell to the bulldozer. Apartments and retail shops are replacing farm buildings and orchard. I continue to farm a remnant of the original cherry orchard on the west side of Mathilda Avenue at El Camino, but its days are numbered as well.

Many have asked how I feel about the loss of the trees and home place. I wasn't prepared for it. One day a working farm, then an empty piece of land. The earth-movers came, rearranging the landscape of our youth and all the years of hard work that had kept the farm together. It is gone. I feel the sorrow of loss, of memories stacked like so many trays, one on top of another.

I clearly remember how eager my mother had been to leave the house when the fruit came in, putting on her apron early in the morning to head out to the fruit stand, or to the apricot cutting shed. I remember my father getting up in the middle of the night to rotate the drying prunes, spread on trays stacked on a rolling dolly in the dehydrator, or going out early in the spring morning to light the smudge pots when the temperature had dropped too low. The fragile blossoms and leaves on the apricots exposed to frost could freeze. He also took quiet pleasure in driving early on Sunday morning to see what other farmers had done that week, taking in the endless rows of trees, the "fruit tree forest," and seeing how it fared.²

I asked John Cortese, a cherry farmer from the Evergreen

district whose family settled there in 1917, how he feels about the certain prospect of losing his cherry orchard to development. He summed it up in a few words, "Gut wrenching and traumatic! It hurts deep down, like someone pulling off my arms!"³

If the farm is now in the realm of memory, its history reaches back to the time before human occupation when this small Olson plot was part of a huge oak woodland and an alluvial plain graced with streams carrying rich soils down from the Coastal Range. Crossing the streams, the hunter-gatherers, established a foot path connecting their encampments passing what would become our family farm. The Spanish settlers after 1776 called it El Camino Real. We were on the south side of the well-worn path.

The first European owners of our farm, an Irish family, fenced their land and raised grain. Then, in the early 1900s, they planted orchards. An old photo of the time, shows the oaks, cut down later to make room for fruit trees.⁴ The history of their neighbors differed only slightly from this pattern, until most of the Santa Clara Valley by the late 1920s became the fruit tree forest called "The Valley of Heart's Delight".

World War II changed everything. A period of development followed with the rich soils covered over by buildings, homes, freeways and high-tech campuses. People continue to come to Silicon Valley and continue to find a serious shortage of affordable housing. The 300 apartment units going up in front of my eyes tell me that this is a good use of this land right now. These new structures, will they yield one day to yet another land use? Probably, perhaps to one of even greater density.

For every bright, successful idea that the engineers and venture



Author Yvonne Jacobson with her mother Rose in a packing shed, 1946. Photo courtesy Olson Family Collection.



Farmsite with fruit trees, vineyards and grains graces the eastern foothills of Santa Clara County. c. 1895. Courtesy Sourisseau Academy.

capitalists come up with here in Silicon Valley, more farmland disappears. Current president of Stanford University, John Hennessy aptly summarizes this, "If Stanford hadn't been here, we'd be driving down El Camino through plum trees. The price of being the most high tech region in the world is urbanization."⁵

The reach of Silicon Valley extends not only to the remaining acres of farmland in Santa Clara County, but to the greater San Francisco Bay Area, and, as we shall see, the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, America's most productive farmland. San Joaquin Valley alone grows 250 commodities valued at \$13 billion (1997). Considered the most threatened farmland in the country, it is faced with the same questions of urbanization that bedevil Santa Clara County.

SOUTH COUNTY

When the first printing of this book took place in 1984, there were 20,000 acres of orchards left in the Santa Clara County compared to only 4,500 acres of fruits and nuts today, mostly in south county, Morgan Hill and Gilroy. Another 11,500 acres of vegetables and berries remain. Hardly any piece of farmland there is out of sight of newly developed lands. Even the nature of the family farm has changed. While nearly 80 percent of farmers are still farming small parcels under 49 acres, the majority of those are under nine acres. But young family members train to be engineers and scientists, doctors and lawyers, architects and urban planners, seldom farmers.

John Cortese would like to continue farming, but he has reservations about moving to south county because he knows that he might have to move again. When he looked at land there he was told it would be available for development in 10, 15 years. But he does not want to relocate again. South county suffers development even when cities put up a Twenty Year Growth Boundary, a zoning technique established to define the limits of development on

farmland over a period of time. While the boundary can act to restrict expansion into farmland areas, such a hold on development is fluid at best. About the Morgan Hill boundary established in 1996, John Cortese said, "It is only as good as the next city council."

In 1996 the City of Gilroy in conjunction with the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) joined together to maintain Gilroy's agricultural base while addressing its need for growth. At present, an ongoing dispute puts intentions to the test once again in a classic situation of growth and development vs. agriculture and open space.

The Gilroy Twenty Year Growth Boundary, established in 1978, came up for reconsideration in 1998. After a two-year study, a 40-member citizen task force chosen by the City Council to study the issues, voted by a majority of 32-8 to maintain the boundary. Seven landowners, wishing to be excluded from the boundary, want to develop 660 acres of agricultural land next to the Outlet Stores, where Llagas Creek crosses Leavesley Road. With the help of a Palo Alto facilitator they brought their case to the seven-member City Council.

The Greenbelt Alliance has worked in Gilroy for 15 years on questions of farmland preservation. They endorsed the decision of the Task Force. Autumn Bernstein, representing the Alliance, noted that there are 14,000 acres of farmland left in Gilroy, all of it behind the Twenty Year Growth Boundary. It is a farm preserve, dictated by past city councils. Most of the county's 11,500 acres of vegetables are there, including the garlic, and some of the remaining fruit trees. She said, "This development is smack in the middle of the undeveloped acres and would undo what has been done to save farmlands in the entire area."⁶ Despite the fact that 1,200 acres zoned for development have not been used, and that downtown Gilroy is in need of renewal investment, the Task Force decision was rejected. The

council supported the developers in a 5/2 vote.

Noting the extreme emotion engendered by the topic, and following the request of council member Guadalupe Arillana who voted against development, both sides concluded that they would defer a decision until studies were completed to determine such things as the effects of the project on the 100-year flood plain of Llagus Creek, the traffic impact and access to the freeway systems. Some of the seven owners lease land to tenant farmers and express the sentiment that farming no longer pays on their land. Bernstein confirms this, "It is true that, with development next to the land, the real estate value of the property has risen and it is worth more in development than as farmland."

Several landowners, among them farmers whose families have held land for many years, are in favor of the right of the owners to dispose of their land and to realize its market price, should they deem it necessary or desirable. Farmers in Santa Clara Valley, especially those near retirement age and because of the urbanization taking place here, are in a position to realize high values, having held on to their land for decades in some cases. They resent the fact that anyone should interfere with their right to sell or develop their land.

Santa Clara County government, mindful of the meager acres left in valley agriculture, endorsed urban boundary lines in its "General Plan for the Years 1995-2010." Concerned about the dwindling acres in agricultural land, they also spelled out ways to protect the viability of agriculture in Santa Clara County. The General Plan noted that agriculture still contributes to the local economy and is a link to the county's past.

The Santa Clara County Crop Report for 1999 shows that the total production value is now \$176 million. The main crops, nursery plants, mushrooms and cut flowers grown on plots measured in square feet, reflect the high cost of land. Nursery crops yielded \$39 million; mushrooms, \$35 million; and cut flowers, \$15 million. By comparison the once dominant fruit and nut tree industry produced only \$22 million on 4,500 acres.

New plantings in vineyards, and the production of wine increased by \$4.2 million to \$12.5 million in 1999. Along Watsonville Road between Morgan Hill and Gilroy, new vineyards are staked alongside older, established vines. With cool, coastal evenings, warm days, and rich mountain soils of the Santa Cruz Range, this area is one of the premium wine-growing regions of Santa Clara County.

One winery, Clos La Chance of Saratoga, recently planted two vineyards off Watsonville Road, totally 180 acres. On nearby

Redwood Retreat Road, a new vineyard of 96 acres was planted on what is left of 160 acres originally granted to the family of Charles Sanders in 1862 under the Homestead Act. The new generation, Linda Pond Oetinger and her son Charles, hope to develop a thriving vineyard, thereby continuing the property's long, agricultural history. The 40-year-old cabernet vines of the Redwood Retreat Vineyard next door, sold to the best local wineries, are proof of the region's fine qualities. Other new and older commercial wineries continue to thrive in Santa Clara County.

SAN JOSE

San Jose drew its own Green Line, Urban Growth Boundary, in 1996. A recent challenge to its integrity related to slope angles on hillsides and restrictions to build beyond the present line. In the November ballot of 2000, the present mayor and council won measure K by an overwhelming majority of 81 percent to confirm its present configuration. Landowners who had hoped to develop their properties outside the line are now prohibited and the line cannot be changed again except by ballot. The rights of property owners are pitted against the efforts of a city to curtail its growth, and lawsuits are one possible outcome.

While San Jose restricted growth on its hillsides, it is considering the pivotal development in Coyote Valley destined to change the entire picture of south county agriculture and open space. If approved, the massive Cisco Campus in Coyote Valley will shift the border of development and make the remaining agricultural regions south to Morgan Hill, Gilroy and San Benito County more vulnerable to development. The Monterey/Salinas area will become more exposed to Silicon Valley's growing radius of influence. Already, Salinas is experiencing the loss of their affordable housing stock, thereby limiting shelter for families of modest means.

Many local environmental groups are working to alter if not stop Cisco's plans. They claim that already overcrowded freeways and streets clog the traffic flow. The planned 22,000 ground-level parking spaces indicate an insufficient attention to a public transportation system, unavailable at present, and a poor use of land. The strain on the existing housing supply will be made worse by the presence of such a large facility. There is pressure to build more housing now in the Coyote Valley Urban Preserve. Underlying the problem is the increasing income disparity between those in the high-tech industry and those in the service industries who cannot afford to live in the towns where they work. So many employees will drive the price of affordable housing higher, sending a ripple effect through the cities to the south. Service-



The 16-acre piece of Olson cherry orchard in Sunnyvale under construction, November 2000. Photo by 111th Aerial Photography Squadron.

industry employees include clerical workers, teachers, police and firemen, building maintenance workers, fast food employees and farm workers. And the environmentalists claim that the Cisco project will degrade the environment, especially the fragile Coyote Creek habitat adjacent to the site.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY RANGELAND

Whereas flat lands bear the brunt of development, the next most available agricultural land in Santa Clara County is rangeland, some 391,000 acres. Half of those acres are devoted to cattle raising. The other half is too steep, remote, unstable or unavailable for development⁷. While much of it lies along and behind the Mount Hamilton Range, a large portion also lies close to urban areas.

The cattle industry has suffered in recent years. From 1987 to 1998, the number of cattle and calves in Santa Clara County dropped by almost half, from 33,600 to 17,000. The acreage of rangeland decreased by 20 percent⁸. Gilroy cattle rancher Jeanette Dickens explains that the decreasing numbers result from a few factors. In the late 1980s, a long period of drought forced a thinning of cattle herds due to a lack of green pastures. Second, competition from foreign imports under NAFTA reduced market share. Also, there are only two major companies left who purchase beef in the United States, reducing competitive pricing.

Mrs. Dickens learned her ranching skills from her late mother-in-law, Ruby Dickens, with whom she managed three ranches. At present, Mrs. Dickens is also the president of the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau. The former accountant said about a profession that puts her in the beauty of the outdoors, "When I first started in this business, I could not believe that anyone would pay me to stay

outside." She continues to manage a herd from her home off Hecker Pass in Gilroy. What does she think about losing farmlands? "As a nation we must always be able to produce our own food. We must not be in a position where we have to rely solely on imports."⁹

Cattle ranching, under fire from many environmentalists who decry the effect on rangeland deterioration and stream pollution, has responded well to "Holistic Management" techniques based on the habits of African grazing animals and the American buffalo. The animals graze for three days and move on, leaving a healthier landscape. Harold Eade, from Coalinga, practices the Holistic

Management philosophy. "Grazing has a bad name all over the West. If it is done right, it works and improves the land," he said. "An awareness is creeping into the business and getting stronger and stronger."¹⁰ An indication of organizational support is the American Cattlemen's Association annual Environmental Stewardship Award.¹¹

Rangeland sites are undergoing pressure from development. Areas along the foothills and the lateral valleys of the south county are prime land for those who want to own a ranchette in the country and live close to the action of Silicon Valley. The new owners, most often, do not need to make the land pay. A drive down the 101 freeway to Morgan Hill illustrates this type of development on Mount Hamilton rangeland. The ranchettes, five, 10 or more acres with a house in the center of former rangeland, can be seen perched along the flank of the eastern mountain range.

This trend has not gone unnoticed by environmental forces. In January 2000, The Trust for Public Land—with the help of the Santa Clara County Farmland Trust, the Coastal Conservancy, the Open Space Authority, the city of San Jose, and private donors—purchased the 534-acre Kirk property to add to Alum Rock Park. Nationally, the Trust for Public Land has purchased more than 1.2 million acres.

Another group, the Nature Conservancy (founded in 1952), plans to protect and ensure permanent conservation management of nearly 500,000 acres or 780 square miles within the Mount Hamilton Project area in the next five to seven years. This region is selected because it contains some of the best remaining examples of habitat communities in California. To cite a few: Oak woodlands, Coast Range ponderosa pine community, sycamore alluvial woodlands, aquatic and riparian habitats and wildlife.

Some of these properties are in Stanislaus, San Benito and Merced counties, but most of the land is in Santa Clara County. And why do they propose to do this: "We will help to shape the Mount Hamilton area into a tangible and enduring wild legacy for the enjoyment of future generations."¹²

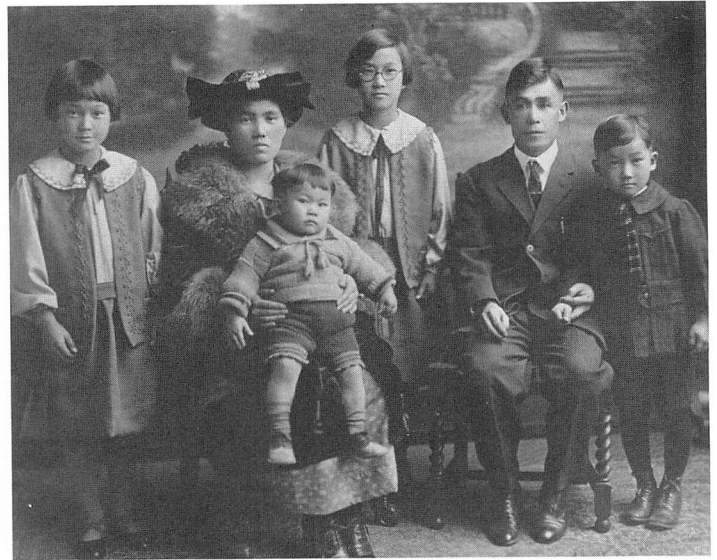
Within the last two years, the Nature Conservancy has purchased at least three major properties. Development rights to other properties within the targeted area have been promised. George and Pat Kammerer have owned their rangeland property for 25 years. While it has not been their main source of income, they raise cattle there on oak-studded acres above Alum Rock Park. From where they live, they can see as far as San Francisco, but they can also see ranchettes with large houses creeping up the hills. Working first with Peninsula Open Space Trust and then the Nature Conservancy, the Kammerers plan to donate their development rights to the non-profit organization. Their property is the northern-most buffer against urbanization proposed for the Mount Hamilton Range by the Nature Conservancy.¹³

Three properties, the Simon Newman Ranch, the Romero Ranch, both behind Mount Hamilton, and the Stevenson Ranch near Gilroy have been purchased outright. Discussions are under way with additional property owners, including those of the Isabel Valley Ranch. The three families who share ownership of the 11,000-acre Isabel Valley property are working with the Nature Conservancy to trade their development rights so that the land is not developed.¹⁴

The first use of the purchase of development rights in the country was with the Marin Agricultural Land Trust founded in 1980. Marin County successfully saved its dairy lands using this device. Once development rights are purchased, the value of the land is then permanently agricultural. Since the donors receive tax considerations, farmers see it as a way to aid in planning the disposition of their land. Young people wanting to farm can better afford such land, either to buy or to lease. Today there are 1,200 such land trusts in the United States and 130 in California.

The California Farmland Trust, a non-profit group founded by ranchers in 1998, offers the purchase of easement rights from the lifelong farmers who want their land to remain forever as farmland or rangeland. The farmer can continue to farm all his life. As noted earlier, the local Santa Clara County Farmland Trust office is playing its part in local farmland preservation as well.

A major local force involved in funding development rights and land conservation is the Packard Foundation. In 1998, the foundation, governed by the children of the late David and Lucile Packard, implemented their vision for funding the "Conserving California Landscapes Initiative". They set a goal of buying outright or helping to conserve 250,000 acres of land in California by the end of 1999. Their goals were exceeded! Some of that land is in Santa Clara County. Behind this funding concept is the assumption, shared by environmental groups, that the only way to permanently protect land from development is to take it off the market by outright purchase, or through the purchase of its development rights.



The Aihara family, c. 1935, lived and worked on the Olson farm during the 1930s and 1940s. They were "relocated" to an internment camp in 1942. Photo courtesy of George Aihara.

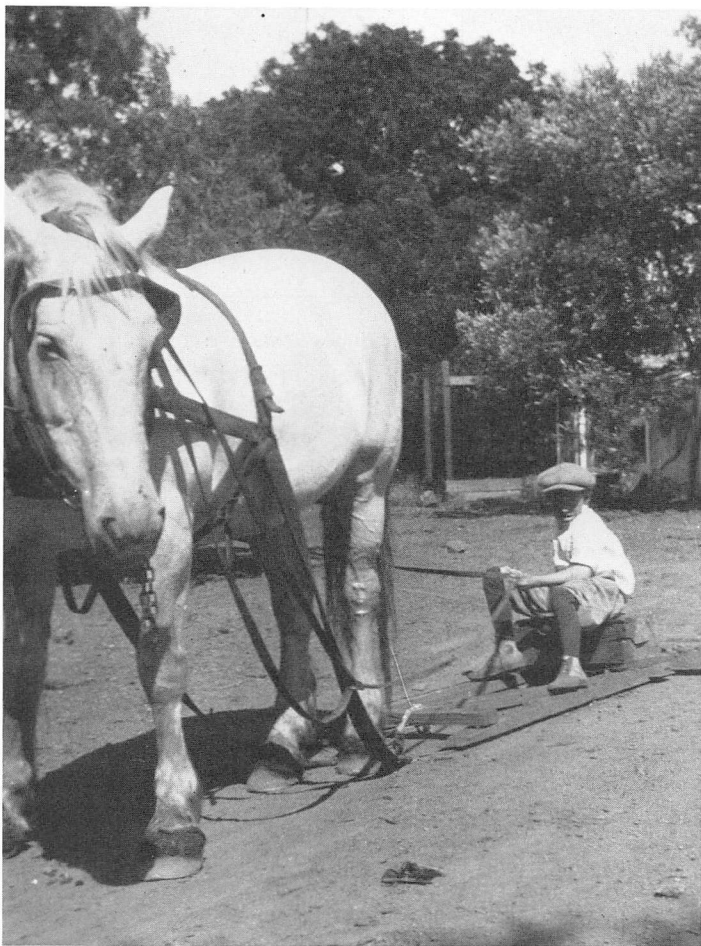
THE CENTRAL VALLEY

The most imperiled farmland in the United States, according to the American Farmland Trust, lies in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley (also referred to as the Central Valley). This fertile valley of California is the most productive farmland for fruits, vegetables and specialty crops, not only in the United States, but in the world. At the same time, it is the most likely region for future farmland loss. Land is cheaper, builders are buying it up, and valley cities approve new housing, roads, and schools, to accommodate people who, in many cases, work over the hill in the greater Bay Area.

Silicon Valley's high tech industry is a major factor driving urbanization of the Central Valley. With the high price of real estate here, housing is no longer affordable for many people who work in Santa Clara Valley. There are six jobs for every house built.¹⁵ Families are buying up more affordable houses in the Central Valley. One needs only to travel from the coastal mountains to the foothills of the Sierras to see the new housing developments tacked onto the old valley towns: Livermore, Tracy, Modesto, Turlock and Dinuba to name a few. The price these families pay to own their own homes is a two-hour commute each way in maximum traffic.

These homes are built on Class I agricultural lands, the best lands available for growing food. While some Central Valley communities, like Yolo County, want to preserve their farmland base, others want to become not just a bedroom community, but another high tech research and development center. Tracy is one such town welcoming high tech companies. In the November 2000 election the voters set a limit on building houses in Tracy to 750 per year, an indication that uncontrolled expansion is losing favor.

The American Farmland Trust, a private, non-profit organization established in 1980, was instrumental in founding the Marin Trust to stop the loss of productive farmland using the "purchase



Robert T. Butcher with barn-door sled hitched to his horse Dolly at the Butcher family farm in Santa Clara, 1923. Photo courtesy Robert T. Butcher.

of easement rights” technique. The AFT has three offices in the Central Valley, an indication of the group’s sense of urgency about farmland loss there. They encourage farmers in the role as “Stewards of the Land,” urging practices that lead to a better environment. Nurturing the soil over a long period of time yields untold benefits, not the least of which is food and fiber, open space, and refuge for wildlife and fowl. A farmer’s job includes a promise to treat the land with care so that future generations can reap benefits. The integration and recognition of the farmer as land manager/steward has played a large role in the success of this organization. The alliance between farmers and environmentalists, at odds with one another at times, is still unfolding.¹⁶

DISAPPEARING FARM LANDS-HERE AND ABROAD

While researchers find that increased efficiency in American farm production is making up for lost acres, few doubt that the best soils are finite and increased farm technology is not a long-term answer. It is estimated that 700,000 acres a year go out of farming in California. While this may seem a small part of the total, these acres are usually on the edge of cities, reaching into the most fertile acres of land where most of our diverse crops are grown.¹⁷

Rather than build on the “edge” of urban areas, city planners

are being encouraged to fill in and consolidate housing close to towns and transportation in urban areas. Called “smart growth” its aim is to keep the farmland intact and to slow the intrusion into our best soils. Reaching out to cheaper farmland away from the cities’ edges does the most damage because it opens roads and services for further development.

Is there a national crisis? At present 26 states are losing farm and ranchland to development. Voters are getting the message. In the November 1999 election there were 240 farmland and open space initiatives on the local and state ballots nationwide. The total money voters taxed themselves to protect farming and open space: \$2 billion. In the November 2000, seven out of eight open space protection and transit measures backed by Greenbelt Alliance were approved in the Bay Area. Santa Clara County voters approved tax increases for rapid transit. Nationwide, 75 percent of Sierra Club issues were approved.

Even with these modest gains, there is another trend of thought. Some agricultural economists suggest that America’s farmland is too expensive, that farming no longer pays except for the large corporations. The global economy mandates that nations with lower costs of labor, equipment, and subsidized lending, or American corporations investing abroad, will become the food producers. America will become a food consumer whose food source is from foreign imports. In parts of the Midwest, farm families are falling by the wayside. Their land and lifestyle are no longer competitive in the global market place.¹⁸

Environmentalists counter that the farmland crisis is worldwide, that population growth and industrial development in emerging nations threatens agricultural lands everywhere. The United Nations agencies, the World Bank, and the World Resources Institute, taking the pulse of the world’s environment, finds the patient ill. While improved food production has increased productivity per person world wide, 40 percent of the world’s best agricultural land is seriously degraded. The global picture includes the loss of half the world’s wetlands in the last century to development along rivers and waterfronts. Over-logged forests, over-fished rivers and oceans, species destruction, and population growth add to the degraded health of the world’s ecosystems. “Since 1980 the global economy has tripled in size and the population has grow by 30 percent to 6 billion people.”¹⁹ Farmers will need to grow the food required for another 1.7 billion people in the next 20 years.

CONCLUSION

The face of California is changing as its population continues to grow. By the year 2025 another 20 million people are expected, two thirds more than at present. Lack of affordable housing, gridlock, strained social services, air pollution—all the urban ills—will still be with us, and probably much worse than now. The underlying problem? Economics drives land use, and increased populations require more room. Farmland is easily available for expansion. In America, many want to own an individual home with space in suburbia, preferable close to the “country.” All these factors put farmland at risk.

The national average age of a farmer working on his or her family farm is 54. As land becomes more expensive, it is more difficult for young people to get started. Added to the problem is the fact that most of the remaining canneries and packing houses available to growers have moved to the Central Valley, closer to produce. In 1997, the county Board of Supervisors changed agricultural zoning in south county to allow farmers to process and pack farm products on their property, allowing sales directly to the public, through distribution abroad or through outlets nationally and locally. In cooperation with the Farm Bureau the county has hired a marketing firm to come up with a plan to promote Santa Clara County agriculture.

One bright spot on the farming scene is the burgeoning farmers' markets. Begun in the 1970s, the movement has grown to 350 markets in California alone. Locally, there are 17. It is nationwide and growing. The organic farm movement has emerged as well. No doubt this is the point where environmentalism is most closely wedded to farming. Many of these growers are helping to fuel the increase nationwide of farms in the 1-9 acre category, very small farms in which newcomers are filling a niche funded by the public's willingness to pay higher prices to buy fresh produce and value-added products directly from the grower. Making and selling packaged food products such as jam from berries, or processing fresh fruit to preserve it as dried fruit are examples of value-added products.

While the numbers show a decrease in agricultural acres in Santa Clara County, and a decrease in the number of farms, the vitality of agriculture continues in another form requiring square feet instead of acres. Environmentalists, ranchers, farmers, non-profit groups and concerned citizens have promoted a dialogue that has resulted in many thousands of acres of open space being set aside, some of it for ranching and much of it for public use. All told there are nearly 180,000 "secure" acres of land in Santa Clara County, about 22 percent of its land mass, according to the Greenbelt Alliance's report "At Risk, 2000". This includes parkland, property in the publicly funded preserves, and land bought outright by conservation groups. The same report notes that there are another 100,000 acres at high or medium risk.

It is very clear that the sprawling development of Silicon Valley and the knowledge of what is lost has spurred a powerful environmental movement, at times, joined to agriculture. Urban ills have created a backlash against indiscriminate development. The remaining fertile acres farmed on the valley floor are in a holding pattern, but they will continue to be developed, perhaps at a slower pace due to urban growth boundaries.

Santa Clara agriculture continues to survive around the urban edges. What also survives is the value of agriculture. The connection between the soil, the cycles of the earth and the dedication of men and women to bring the harvest to our table, to enrich our lives with bountiful fruits, vegetables and all good things to eat, is worthy of our appreciation and acknowledgment. The farmer is an essential part of our history and an integral part of our strength as a nation. We take it for granted and yet, what would we be without the efforts of so many to bring forth plenty for all of us. Whatever happens in the struggle over land and how it should be used, one fact is certain: we have no more hills to cross, no new land to settle.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Last stage direction in Anton Chekhov's play, "" (1904), quoted at the end of Wallace Stegner's "Foreward" to this book. A reference also to George Washington, who cut down a cherry tree with an ax and couldn't lie about it.
- 2 J. O. M. Broek, *The Santa Clara Valley, California: A Study in Landscape Change*, N.V. Oosthoek's Uitgeverij-Mij, Utrecht, pg. 16, 1932.
- 3 Phone conversation with John Cortese, June 19, 2000.
- 4 This photograph of an Irish family can be seen in *Passing Farms: Enduring Values*, pg. 115.
- 5 *Stanford Daily*, April 3, 2000, Pg. 1. Just this June, 2000, the Department of Food and Agriculture has decreed that the former prune is now to be called a "dried plum," one more marketing effort to entice people to eat the wrinkled fruit.
- 6 Phone conversation August 21, 2000.
- 7 Calif. Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program Report, 1996-1999, "Santa Clara County Land Use Conversion."
- 8 U.S. Department of Commerce, Geographic Area Series, Vol. 1, Part 5, AC92-A-5, California State and County Data, 1994. Interview July, 25, 2000, and phone conversation August 9, 2000.
- 9 *Holistic Management*, Allan Savory, Second Edition; Island Press, 1999; also, *Grazing for Change*, by Dan Macon, Calif. Cattlemen's Assoc., 1999, a booklet.
- 10 Phone conversation, July 28, 2000.
- 11 Press release, January, 2000.
- 12 "The Mount Hamilton Project," March 1999, The Nature Conservancy, a booklet.
- 13 Phone conversation with Pat Kammerer, August 3, 2000.
- 14 Phone conversation with Louis Oneal, owner, August 7, 2000.
- 15 *American Farmland*, American Farmland Trust, March, 1997.
- 16 Home Builders Association of Northern California, San Jose Business Journal, June 6, 2000.
- 17 "Farms and Land in Farms," USDA, Feb. 2000, the most recent report on farmland loss in America, is undergoing revision and corrected numbers from the USDA are expected out in December of 2000.
- 18 Steven C. Bland, *The End of Agriculture in the American Portfolio*, 1999.
- 19 *A Guide to World Resources 2000-2001*, World Resources Institute, Washington, D.C., September, 2000.

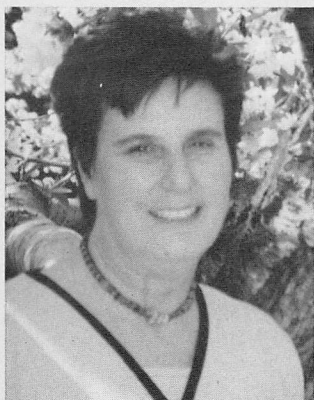
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yvonne Olson Jacobson was born in Santa Clara Valley. She graduated from Stanford University in 1960; she also attended Columbia University in New York City where she received a master's degree in English Literature. In 1962, she married William Jacobson. They have two children and two grandchildren.

She began her academic career in 1974, lecturing on the role of women in the Judeo-Christian tradition. When she realized that her family's farm, like so many in the Santa Clara Valley, could not survive for very long, she began to photograph and research the remaining farms, including her Olson family orchards in Sunnyvale. Working with the California History Center, she obtained a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant, plus matching funds, made it possible for her to complete a much acclaimed photo exhibit, now on permanent display at the San Jose History Museum. Her book *Passing Farms: Enduring Values* followed in 1984.

Since the printing of the book, Jacobson has researched and published articles on local history subjects. She also manages three remaining acres of the Olson cherry orchards in Sunnyvale. At present she is the historian/advisor to the new Los Altos History Museum, opening in the spring of 2001.

The California History Center approached Jacobson to reprint the book. It continues to be in demand, and the hardback has become a collector's item. As an addition to the book, she has research and written an Epilogue (reprinted on these pages) that brings *Passing Farms: Enduring Values* up-to-date. The Epilogue reviews the various land use issues and conflicts that are determining the last acres of farmland in Santa Clara County. The paperback reprint of her book will be available in early 2001 at the California History Center and local bookstores.



Author of *Passing Farms, Enduring Values*—Yvonne Jacobson.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Passing Farms, Enduring Values is a non-profit project, first funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1980. Many people matched NEH funds to bring about the first printing in 1984. Three special friends contributed to the first printing as well as the second: Miss Nancy P. Weston, Mrs. Will Lester (1925-2000), and Dorothy Lyddon (1923-2000) of Seven Springs Foundation. All were involved in farming. Members of my family donated to the first printing, and others donated to the second.

My relationship to the California History Center, the publisher of the second printing, goes back more than 20 years. Kathi Peregrin, retired director, suggested the reprint and was instrumental in fundraising; former director of the CHC, Dr. James Williams, wrote the fine Introduction to the Second Printing; board member Mary Jo Ignoffo saw the publication through to completion, and Mary Strong helped with fund-raising letters. Current Director Tom Izu and librarian Lisa Christensen graciously stepped in when needed.

The late Wallace Stegner set the tone of the book with his Foreword to the first printing, and Mary Page Stegner, his wife, read the early draft of the Epilogue. Both have been an inspiration.

Greg Van Wassenhove, commissioner for agriculture, Santa Clara County, stepped forward to help raise money; he also gave advice and provided information.

Maria de la Fuente, the director of the University of California Cooperative Extension for Santa Clara County took time to show me present-day agriculture in south county. She also provided printed materials and references that proved important.

Don Weden, principal planner of Santa Clara County supplied me with valuable research materials. His office is the county's link to agricultural issues.

William Kaufmann published this book the first time. He graciously stepped in to help with the reprinting by introducing us to Mark Larwood III, who volunteered his company Consolidated Printing of Sunnyvale.

Mike Hamilton, formerly with William Kaufmann, Inc., gave early advice about the reprinting; he helped create the fine production values in the first printing.

Our children, Laura and Mark, made welcome suggestions about the text. My husband William, helpful for 38 years, proved a good reader and critic.

Thank you one and all.

Yvonne Jacobson

FOUNDATION NOTES

80 Sip and Talk Wine at Second Annual Vintage Celebration

About 80 CHC supporters attended the second annual Vintage Celebration—a benefit wine tasting and silent auction held at the history center on Sept. 23.

The event featured wine from three well-known Santa Clara Valley vintners—Cooper-Garrod Winery, Guglielmo Family Winery and Picchetti Winery.

Mary Jo Ignoffo, event chair and CHC board member, said guests enjoyed the evening, and the event cleared about \$5,000 for the center.

The evening included a presentation by T.J. Rodgers, founding president/CEO Cypress Semiconductor Corp. and renowned home vintner.

Vintage Celebration, underwritten by Pitch and Cathie Johnson, was dedicated to the memory of Ward Winslow, the California History Center's longtime board member, advocate, benefactor and friend who died July 7.



LEFT: CHC Board Member and Vintage Celebration Chair Mary Jo Ignoffo, center, visits with guests Karen and Peter Filice.

RIGHT: Board Member Cozetta Guinn and her husband Ike were among the 80 guests attending the second annual wine event.



Photos by Darlene Thorne.



LEFT: Director Tom Izu was on hand at the Vintage Celebration to greet Holly Winslow, center, and Robin Winslow Smith, the wife and sister, respectively, of longtime CHC board member Ward Winslow, who died July 7. The event was dedicated to his memory.

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Staunch CHC Supporter Dies

Dorothy Stauffer Lyddon, CHC member and advocate, passed away Sept. 30. A native of Kansas City, Mo., she moved to California in 1970 and for 30 years managed Seven Springs Ranch, Cupertino, continuing the tradition of fruit production which her father began. She was generous to several philanthropic endeavors, including the CHC.

Special Gifts

Passing Farms book

Mark Larwood III, president, Consolidated Publications, Sunnyvale.
For complete listing of all donors, see page 13.

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Passing Farms, Murphy Family Books Due Out in January

Two CHC-published books on Santa Clara Valley's agricultural history and Sunnyvale founder Martin Murphy will be available in January.

The Martin Murphy Family Saga was written by Marjorie Pierce, former *San Jose Mercury News* columnist and author of two other historical books. CHC members at the \$50 level will receive a copy of the book as a premium for the 1999-2000 year.

The other book, *Passing Farms, Enduring Values—California's Santa Clara Valley*, was first published in 1984. It will be reprinted with an epilogue. The author is Yvonne Jacobson, longtime valley resident. CHC members at the \$50 level will receive a copy of the book as a premium for the 2000-01 year.

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