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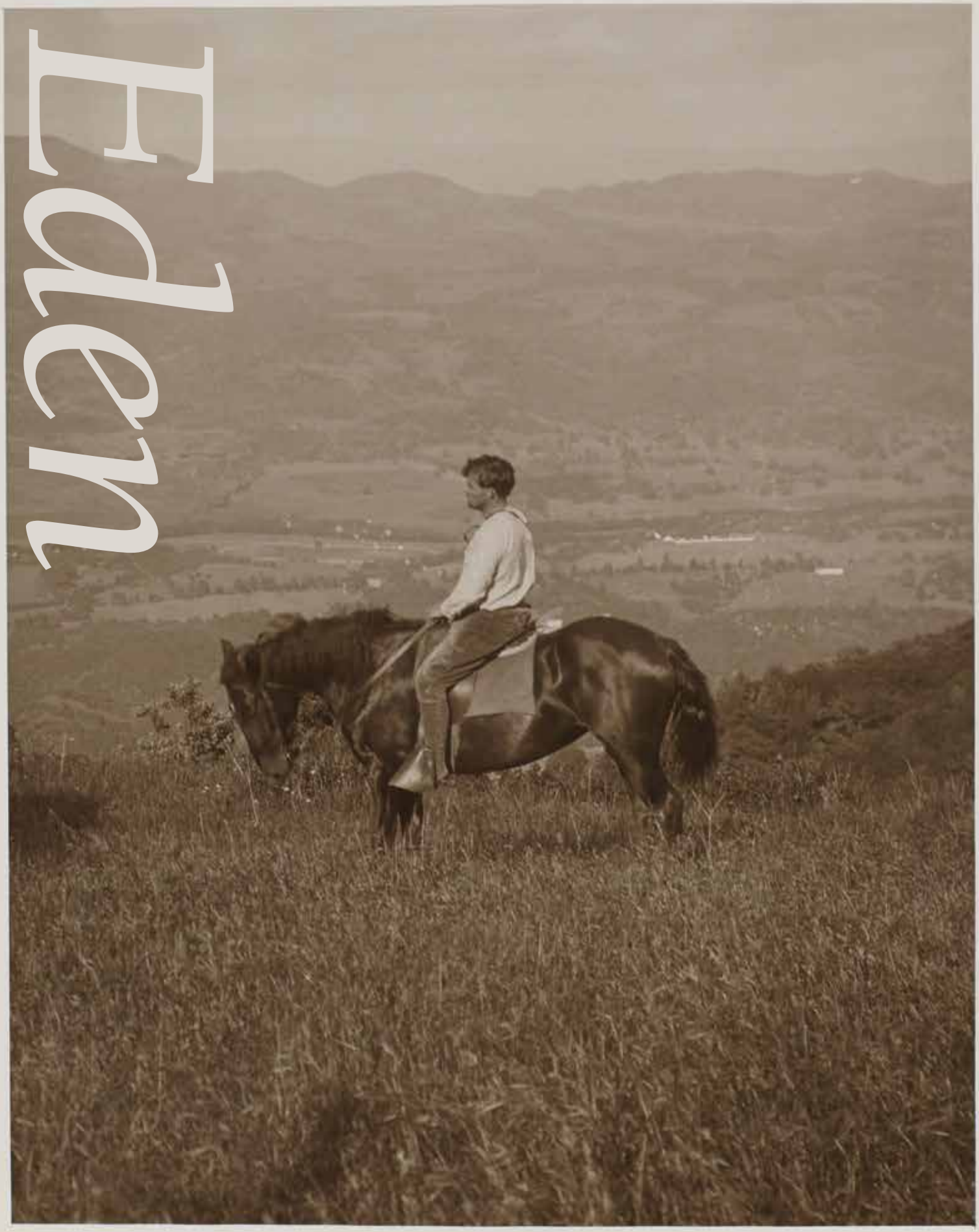

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Above: Kearney Boulevard in Fresno is lined by an allee of palm trees.

Eden

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Contents

Above: Tree-lined Kearney Drive in Fresno. Vintage hand-tinted postcard circa 1930.

JACK LONDON'S RANCH OF GOOD INTENTIONS

VONN MARIE MAY

Right: Jack and Charmian London stand beside the fishpond on Jack London Ranch. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.


MR. & MRS. JACK LONDON
GLEN ELLEN CAL.

"I am rebuilding worn-out hillside lands that were worked out and destroyed by our wasteful California pioneer farmers.
I believe the soil is our one indestructible asset,
...I am getting results, which the Chinese have demonstrated for forty centuries."[1]

- Jack London, 1914

Jack (John Griffith) London (1876-1916); was and remains, a major figure in American literature. His canon of work covered an extraordinary range of topics, including agronomy, architecture, sailing, conservation, gold mining, hoboing, relationships, penal reform, prizefighting, socialism, and war. London was best known for his personalized version of rugged individualism and romanticized adventures. From his most popular book, *Call of the Wild,* published in 1903, until his death in 1916 some fifty books and more than 300 articles in serial publications—he "dominated the public's imagination in the literary marketplace as few other authors have done."[2]

What the public didn't know was that Jack London's writings made it possible for him to purchase 1,402 acres of primarily former nineteenth century exhausted vineyard land in the Sonoma Valley. His intent was to restore the landscape, create a model farm and ranching operation, and introduce premium livestock for breeding, in order to demonstrate the potential to reverse the irresponsible exploitation of California land. Kevin Starr wrote in his book, ***Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915,*** "On 23 July 1909 Jack London came home to California after two years in the South Seas. His health, finances, and writing career were in deep trouble. London told San Francisco newspaper reporters that he was "unutterably weary" and had "come home for a good rest." Settled in his Sonoma County Ranch he began to rebuild himself and his career. He threw himself into the therapy of ranching, a therapy that in time became an orgy, and finally a dance of death."[3]

London was born on January 12, 1876,

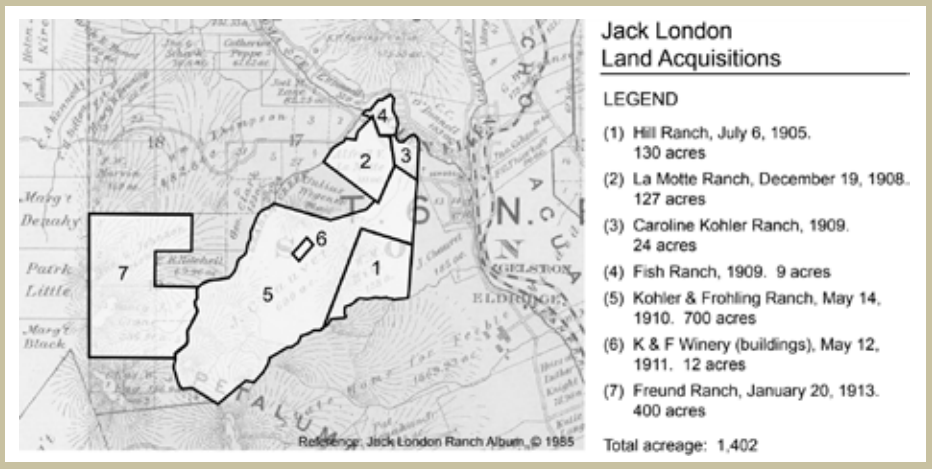
Above: A studio portrait of Jack London as a young boy with his dog, Rollo, circa 1885. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Right: Jack, Charmian and their dog Possum. Photograph circa 1910. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

in San Francisco to Flora Wellman, a spiritualist mother indifferent to his needs, and William H. Chaney of Chicago who was visiting San Francisco at the time. They briefly married in 1874 but Chaney returned home to Chicago by late 1875. London's name at birth was John Griffith Chaney.[4] In September of 1876, Flora married John London. Recently widowed following the death of his wife Anna, John London was raising his daughter Eliza. Growing up together Jack always referred to her as his older sister, despite learning that John London was not his biological father. Nevertheless, he held the father he knew in the highest regard. Flora was unable to nurse her son so she engaged her neighbor, an African American wet nurse named Jenny Prentiss, and told her to "keep the child until he was weaned."[5] Both the London and Prentiss families would move across the San Francisco Bay to Oakland by 1879. Jack lived off and on with the Prentiss family long past Flora's initial intent. As a teenage boy, with a free will, he explored his setting, especially drawn to the rough and tumble world of the Oakland docks. Mammy Jenny, as Jack called her, loaned him enough money to buy his first boat, a small vessel called a ***felucca*** propelled by oars, which he used to work as an oyster pirate (one who raids oyster beds before businesses can harvest them). Jack earned his first money at the age of fifteen. He also wrote one of his first narratives after being caught, ***A Raid on the Oyster Pirates***, a stream-of-consciousness piece rife with action and colorful characters. The experience would forever bond him to the Pacific Ocean and foreshadow future voyages. In London's Last Will and Testament he provided for Jenny Prentiss.

London attended local schools, and much later even a short stint at the University of California, Berkeley, but spent as much or more time at the Oakland Public Library. He befriended librarian Ina Coolbrith who stoked his passion for reading. Ina Coolbrith was no ordinary librarian. A well-known poet who later became California's first Poet Laureate, Coolbrith was a beloved figure in the community, often remembered today as a mentor to young Jack London and Isadora Duncan, and as a friend to California notables Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, and Ambrose Bierce.[6]

Jack's self-education was fueled by his voracious desire to read, and—as he matured—to pursue exotic travel adventures. He loved and mastered sailing, which widened his knowledge of his surroundings and of the world at large. In 1893 at age



Top: Courtesy: PGA Landscape Architects, Oakland, CA

Bottom: Jack at work writing on his 'big slab of myrtle' Wake Robin, Glen Ellen, 1905. Here it was that Jack London wrote his book, *The Sea Wolf*. Photograph from the book *The Book of Jack London* by Charmian London, 1921.

Opposite: Coastal redwood 'clonal' second growth (Fairy Rings) on the Hill Property. Photograph by the author, 2022.

seventeen he published his article, *Typhoon off the Coast of Japan* in the *San Francisco Call,* a local newspaper. Jack had "shipped before the mast as an able seaman, going as far as Japan and passing some time seal hunting on the Russian shores of the Behring Sea."[7]

"London's most consequential travel adventure came in 1897 when he made the trek to the Klondike Gold Rush, in Canada's Yukon territory on the border with Alaska. It was a significant experience for the young man. While the goldfields yielded no wealth he absorbed and documented his observations. Between 1899-1900, London wrote no fewer than twenty-four articles that were published in respected local and even national periodicals. One article, "Through the Rapids on the way to the Klondike," appeared in the national periodical, *Home Magazine,* which reflected his ability to take real life situations and fictionalize or 'enhance' them to better tell the story. During the same period, he wrote eight articles for *Overland Monthly*, a highly regarded national publication that brought tantalizing stories of the Far West to the rest of the country. Included in his early work was *The Son of the Wolf,* which combined all of his tales of the 'north' into book form. London was now a *writer.* It may have also been the emergence of his alter-ego, the Wolf.

London was an avid Socialist and political activist, conducting lectures around the Bay Area, and as far away as England, on topics regarding class struggles, poverty in the richest nations, the failure of Capitalism, and tramps (hobos). His dystopian themes led to his books, *The People of the Abyss* (1903), *War of the Classes* (1905), and his

classic, *The Iron Heel* (1908). London actually ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Oakland on the Socialist ticket in 1901.

Overland Monthly business manager Roscoe L. Eames and his wife, editor Ninetta (Netta) Eames recognized London's talent early on. In fact, Netta has been duly credited with launching London's writing career. Netta and Roscoe Eames also operated Wake Robin Lodge, a tourist resort in the village of Glen Ellen in Sonoma County. Jack, of course, was invited for a visit. By happenstance Netta's niece, Charmian Kittredge (1870-1955) lived with her aunt and uncle and was introduced to the world of writing and publishing. Charmian was then formally introduced to the new writer they had discovered, although both she and Jack were somewhat familiar with each other within the literary community of the Bay Area. Under Netta's tutelage Charmian became an accomplished author in her own right and was published, coincidentally, in the same issues of *Overland Monthly* where London's essays appeared. Charmian later would become London's "Mate Woman" in his book, *Valley of the Moon,* as well as in real life.[8]

Glen Ellen

Glen Ellen got its name in 1858 when Colonel Charles V. Stuart purchased ranch land from the Vallejo Mexican land grant and named it for his wife, Ellen. Joshua Chauvet, however, was responsible for the development of the village, building the first grain mill, lumberyard, and brickyard—and planting the first vineyard.[9] Glen Ellen became a noted tourist destination because of its

Above: "Farming on the Level" Terraced Vineyards circa 1910. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Opposite: Jack London State Historic Park, Terraced Vineyards. Photograph by the author, 2022.

beauty, its rustic lodging, and several hot springs in the area. Two railroads served Glen Ellen, the Southern Pacific, and the Northwestern Pacific, providing fast service to San Francisco for getaway vacationers[10]. The town also attracted American homesteaders, vineyard operators, and a small logging industry. From the 1860s, landowners planted vineyards to 'chase the trend' and capitalize on Sonoma Valley wines. It was, however, the Kohler and Frohling Winery that succeeded in becoming the largest vintners and distributors of California wines with facilities throughout the state[11].

Having been exceptionally impressed with Glen Ellen, Jack decided to settle permanently in the Sonoma Valley. Jack's first wife, Bess Maddern, mother of his two daughters Joan and Becky, had divorced London in 1904. By November in 1905, London married Charmian Kittredge. It was his second marriage, and her first and only. The couple at first resided at Wake Robin. Already familiar with the area through Charmian and the Eameses, London began to assemble acreage in the valley and to plan for a home under the redwoods for himself and his "Mate Woman." The first three and half years of London's property acquisitions consisted of a 130-acre parcel in its natural state, known as the Hill property, was purchased in July of 1905. London also bought the property as a retreat from the urban stress of the Bay Area and as the most publicized author of the day, to escape "the scorching focus of the public eye."[12]

London's introduction to the natural beauty of Sonoma Valley was a revelation to him. He designated the Hill property to be the land where he would build the couple's dream home, the "Wolf House." In a letter to his publisher, George P. Brett of Macmillan Publishing, Jack described the setting:

> "There are 130 acres in the place, and they are 130 acres of the most beautiful, primitive land to be found anywhere in California. There are great redwoods on it, some of them thousands of years old—in fact, the redwoods are as fine and magnificent as any to be found anywhere outside the tourist groves. Also, there are great firs, tan-bark, oaks, maples, live-oaks, white-oaks, black-oaks, madrono and manzanita galore. There are canyons several streams of water, many springs, etc., etc. In fact, it is impossible to really describe the place. All I can say is this—I have been over California off and on all my life, for the last two months I have been riding all over these hills, looking for just such a place, and

> I must say that I have never seen anything like it. . . . I am anchoring good and solid, and anchoring for keeps, and it means a great deal to me. My lasting regret, in case the thing fell through, would be not the loss of money already advanced, but the loss of the place itself. I could never find another place like it again, and I who am a Californian, tell you this."[13]

London continued to purchase adjacent parcels, a series of seven separate land acquisitions from 1905 through 1913, until he had acquired a total of 1,402 acres. He named the assembled properties his "Beauty Ranch."

Jack referred to himself as a sailor on horseback, an apt self-description, which expressed the pivotal change from his fabled sailing voyages to a landed gentleman amassing hundreds of acres of land—from sea to land, from fiction to reality. London transformed his intensity and dedication he gave to his writing career into an applied set of early twentieth century land ethics. Heretofore, his obsession to develop a viable land restoration legacy largely has been unrecognized.

Beauty Ranch

London's land was a wild forest along the north shore of Asbury Creek, which also formed the southern boundary. "A sweet land, Mate Woman, an almighty sweet land you and I have chosen . . . our valley of the moon." The native vegetation, although indiscriminately disturbed during the mid to late nineteenth century American Frontier-era, consisted of the coastal redwood forest, much of which by then was second-growth. Coast redwood *(Sequoia sempervirens)* responds to logging by stump sprouting; hence, most stands in the unit are "fairy rings" or "clonal rings" of trees that formed around the original trunk. The forest canopy is dominated by coast redwood; associated canopy species include California bay *(Umbellularia californica),* Douglas-fir *(Pseudotsuga menziesii),* big-leaf maple *(Acer macrophyllum),* and tanoak *(Lithocarpus densiflora)*. The shrub layer is diverse, and includes snowberry *(Symphoricarpos alba),* hazelnut *(Corylus cornuta california)*, poison-oak, toyon *(Heteromeles arbutifolia),* elk clover *(Aralia californica)*[14] This, along with abandoned vineyards, is what London found on the properties that would become Beauty Ranch.

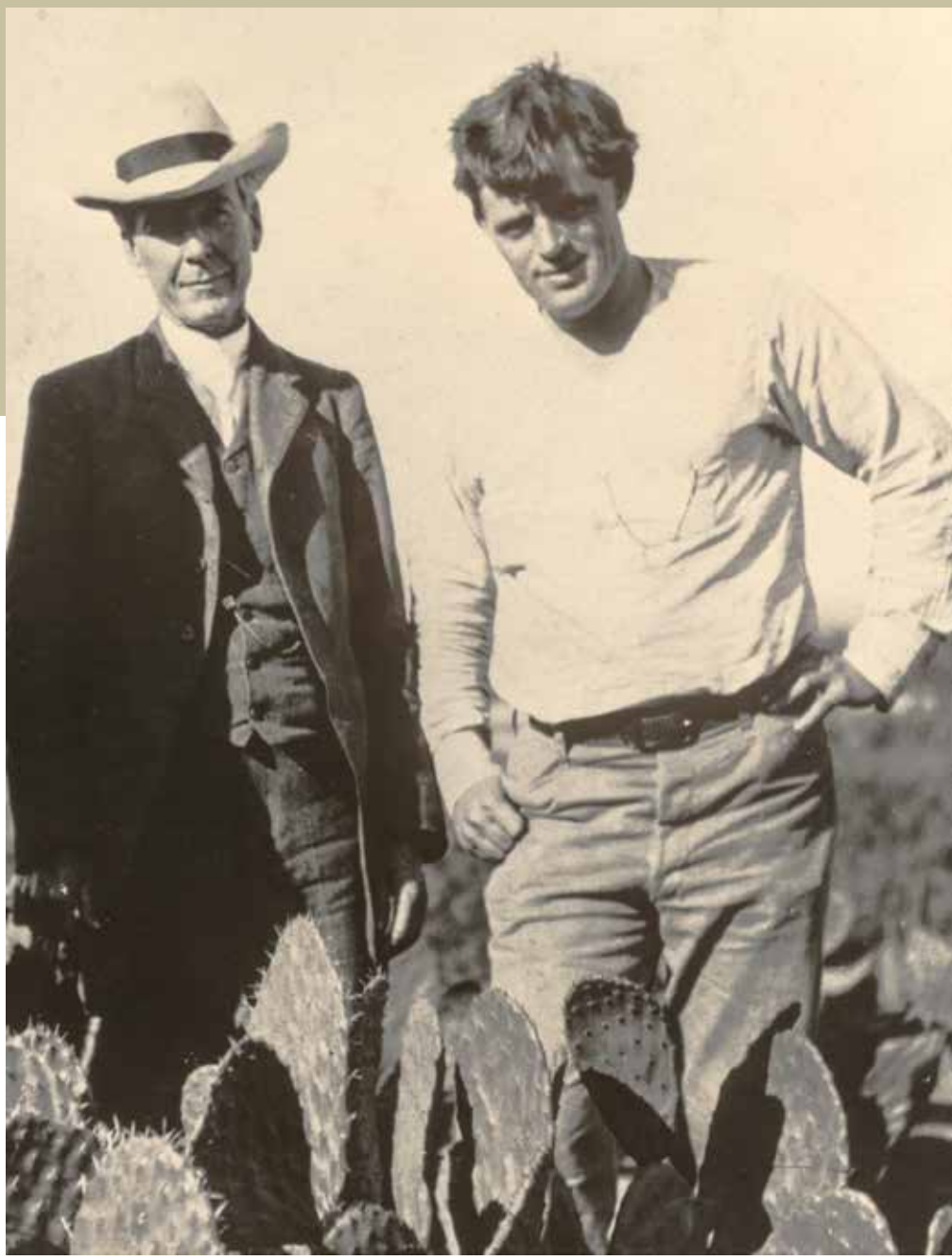
Sonoma County Wine

The rich agricultural history that predates Jack London's Beauty Ranch is a remarkable story of robust winemaking in Sonoma County, California. In 1834 Governor José Mariano G. Vallejo, grantee of the Rancho Petaluma (66,622-acre, or ten Spanish leagues) was dispatched by the Mexican government to dispose of Mission property and to maintain control of the area. Vallejo was also responsible for encouraging settlements of both Californios and of Euro-Americans coming West. Following the Mission's example Vallejo also planted vineyards of Mission variety grapes for winemaking.

Rancho Petaluma extended from the area from the Petaluma River on the west over the hills to the Sonoma Creek on the east and all lands between the two waterways bounded on the south by the San Francisco Bay and on the north to the present site of the town of Glen Ellen and what is now the Jack London State Historic Park.

The Gold Rush of 1848-49, one of California's most significant nineteenth century epochs, launched the migration of Euro-Americans to California, which contributed to America's western expansion and eventually California statehood. After the rise and fall of gold fever the 1862 Homestead Act became a more stabilizing federal government program. Homesteaders found that the Sonoma area was conducive to farming and engaged in small-scale agriculture.

In the 1860s the center 'bowl' portion of what would become London's ranch property was known as the Tokay Vineyard. The



chain of land ownership documents Louis Csomortanyi purchased 500 acres directly from Vallejo. He initially planted sixty acres of vineyards with the Hungarian 'Tokay' variety imported by his good friend Agoston Haraszthy founder of the Buena Vista Winery, the first winery in Sonoma County. Adjacent landowners observing the successes of the Sonoma wine grape boom began planting their properties in vineyards as well. Eventually the area would become central to California's wine industry.

By 1862 over a million vines were growing in the Sonoma Valley. The California Wine Growers Association was founded to "encourage the production of the Grape."[15] In 1872 the State Viticultural Society was organized by notable vintners, Kohler and Frohling, William McPherson Hill, Haraszathy, Chauvet, La Motte and Wegener, all properties that would be purchased and restored by Jack London.

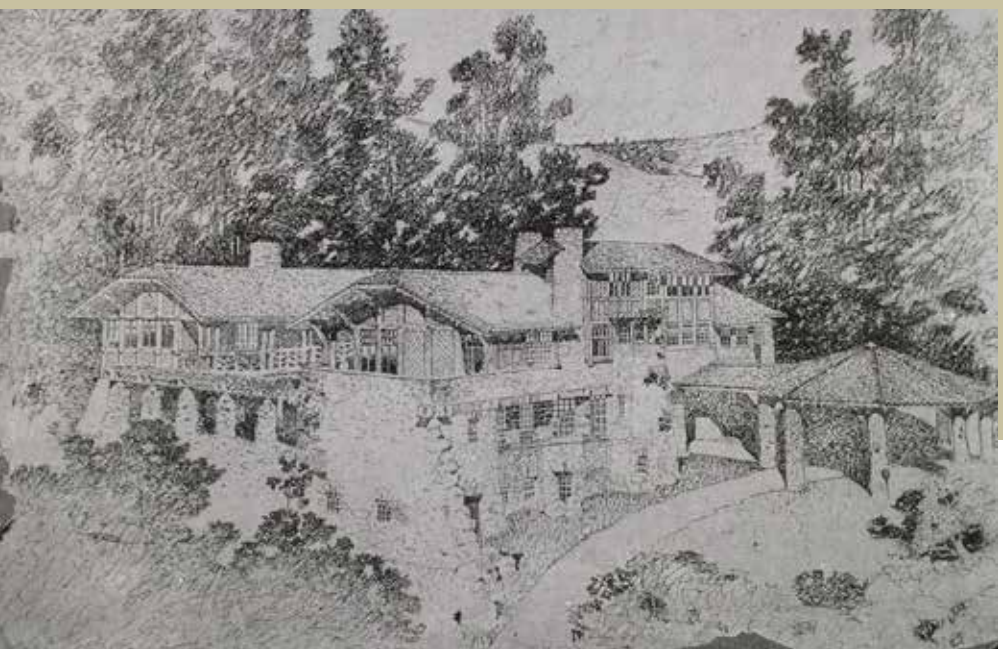
Sonoma County winemaking would be sustained by the abandonment of old Mission varieties for the introduction of European varietals initially grafted onto native stock resulting in resistant hybrids. Vineyards and wineries in Sonoma County soon would eclipse the yields in highly productive Los Angeles County for the first time despite the economic problems caused by a devastating phylloxera epidemic in Northern California in the late 1880s.

In 1872 the firm of Kohler and Frohling had purchased the Tokay Vineyard. The partnership played a major role in the development of the California wine industry. As early as 1860, a mere decade after California statehood, Kohler and Frohling company was the first to distribute California wines on the East Coast and around the world. Although these successful wine merchants had several facilities, cellars, and distribution outlets throughout California the old Tokay Vineyard, as the name persisted, became the Kohler and Frohling's Northern California center. Many of the attendant winery buildings from this era are still extant on the Jack London Ranch.

Much of the land London purchased consisted of vineyard parcels, property where the soil essentially had been exhausted and abandoned. Jack bemoaned the destruction left behind by the first settlers. It fell to London to reverse a half-century of damage, disease, and neglect that the land had suffered. He relished the challenge and launched a full-scale effort to restore the landscape.

> "Humanity's great social experiment—America—had once been 'a new country bounded by the oceans, situated just right in latitude, with the richest land and vastest natural resources of any country in the world.'" Yet its settlers had despoiled the new Eden: "They had moved over the face of the land like so many locusts, destroying everything—the Indians, the soil, the forest, just as they destroyed the buffalo and the passenger pigeon. So they gobbled and gambled from the Atlantic to the Pacific, until they'd swined the whole continent."[16]

Building a primary residence for himself



and Charmian remained London's overriding goal. The setting was to include a home orchard and vineyard, surrounded by and placed within and surrounded by a mature coastal redwood forest (***Sequoia sempervierns***,) with sweeping vistas of the lower Sonoma Valley. The topography dictated the site he chose for the house, set in a small clearing closest to the creek with panoramic views of the valley below. A cluster of redwood tree 'fairy rings' would provide a backdrop behind a yet-to-be constructed Arts and Crafts era house. In a letter to Herbert Folder, author of ***Jack London: A Man of a Thousand Lives*** London wrote, "I am very heavily in debt, and am only just now beginning my first feeble attempts of building a house for myself. That is to say, I am chopping down some redwood trees and leaving them in the woods to season against such time, two or three years hence, when they will be used in building the house."[17]

To improve his bottom line London participated in the sweeping introduction of an Australian tree, the genus "***Eucalyptus***." From the mid nineteenth century and well into the twentieth the planting of ***Eucalyptus*** was a near mania. President Theodore Roosevelt and his chief forester Gifford Pinchot declared a "hard wood famine" in America, issuing government bulletins on methods of cultivating select species for greater yield.[18] The fast growing, aromatic tree became an urgent cause especially in California. Beginning with the La Motte property London planted tens of thousands of trees in waves. Ultimately, he planted a total of five groves, some 140,000 seedlings.[19] The impoverished old vineyard property along Graham Creek was destined (or as it turned out ill-fated) to become London's future 'cash crop.'[20] Jack planted the recommended species, ***E. globulus, E. viminalis, E. tereticornis. E. camaldulensis, E. rudis***. However, it was found as early as the 1910s that the maturity of the wood—decades, if not centuries—was the key to financial success. Many of the ***Eucalyptus*** growers throughout California arrived at the same conclusion and many groves were abandoned thereafter. The hundreds of thousands of trees planted from the gold rush era into the 1920s were abandoned up and down California, and left to acculturate themselves into a different soil, a different continent, and a different hemisphere. Several mature Eucalyptus trees remain in Jack London State Historic Park and can be seen on walking trails on the northside of the Ranch.

While awaiting house plans from Albert L. Farr, a San Francisco master architect specializing in the Arts and Crafts style, Jack returned to address the larger land acreage for farm productivity and livestock breeding. For several years Jack and Charmian worked diligently on their emergent ranch. Meanwhile they lived at Wake Robin Lodge and later the small K&F Winery cottage. Netta Eames, Charmian's aunt and mentor, wrote of London's penchant for writing in the outdoors at Wake Robin: "A few yards from the lodge, down a steep bank of wild water, a makeshift table, backed up against a stump, stands deep in the ferns and vines. Alder, bay, and buckeye canopy curtain this brookside study. The spot embodies the all-tenderness of Nature."

"In the mornings he had his hours apart,

Opposite: Jack London, at right, stands with Luther Burbank, left. Photograph from 1906. Courtesy the City of Santa Rosa and the Luther Burbank Home & Gardens Association.

Above left: Jack and Charmian London's "Wolf House" Rendering by Architect Albert Farr, circa 1907. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Above right: The resting places of Jack and Charmian London, as well as Lillie and David Greenlaw. Photograph circa 1916. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

sternly guarded from interruption while he wrote. His table was set in a nook among the trees. From a string stretched above it hung bunches of his notes, fluttering scraps of paper clamped with clothes-pins to hold them secure against the breezes which ruffled his hair. All about him were the tiny ceaseless voices of the forest, the whirr of insect wings, the conversation of the birds, the murmur of innumerable leaves."[21]

London immersed himself in both projects, his idyllic residence and the restoration of the lands of Beauty Ranch. Further to the west, and upslope from the house-site London replenished the soil and contoured the land in 'level terraces,' an ancient farming method he observed while on assignment covering the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War for Hearst's ***San Francisco Examiner***.[22 23] "The hillsides are first ploughed (***sic***) along contour lines, and at intervals, depending on the slope of the land, balks, or small ridges, are thrown up. The process is slow, but its advantages from the start are great."[24] "A flurry of planting and terracing, London's 'farming-on-the-level,' was ongoing. London embarked on a massive soil restoration project by installing his terraces along the contours in the upper hayfields in the center 'bowl' of the ranch. He purposefully grew annual crops of wheat, barley, alfalfa, and maize only to turn them under for soil nourishment. It was all part of his ambitious plan to illustrate to the region, if not the world, how soil replenishment could be done naturally, without the use of chemical fertilizers, and in relative short order."[25 26]

After significant research into fruit-bearing trees for the house-site, London consulted noted agronomist Luther Burbank of Santa Rosa for recommendations. Ultimately, he planted a diverse house orchard, which included apples, pears, peaches, apricots, crabapples, persimmons, chestnuts, walnuts, cherries and mulberries, as well as a table grape vineyard as Burbank had suggested.[27]

The ornamental garden introductions for the house-site continued. Sweet-smelling lilacs and native ceanothus; Spanish, Scotch and Siberian broom; and a hedgerow of Japanese Hawthorn with bright orange and red berries, all were all designed to adorn the house and grounds.[28] London's orchard would be his first experiment in appreciable farming that would continue to pique his curiosity and his ever-growing restoration evangelism. Burbank was a significant resource for London in selecting his fruit trees for the house orchard. As the expert in originating new fruits of distinctive character, Burbank even performed grafting on some of the trees on site, a talent for which he was most recognized. The two men maintained a mutual respect for one another; London viewed Burbank as an important resource and Burbank recalled London as, "a big, healthy boy with a taste for serious things, but never cynical, never bitter, always good humored and humorous, and with fingers and heart equally sensitive when he was in my gardens."[29]

The resting places of the former pioneer-era children, Lillie and David Greenlaw, whose parents homesteaded the land in the late 1860s were above the house-site orchard. To the north was a horse trail, the couple's well-worn path to and from Wake Robin and their house-site. "We never wearied of riding Belle and Ban to the spot, in our minds' eye was the vision of a rugged stone house that was to rise like an indigenous growth from the grassy semi-circle."[30] Years later Jack would request of Charmian that when his time came he would prefer to be buried in the same location as the children. When that time came in 1916 Charmian dutifully had him cremated and buried under a boulder near the children. She joined him in 1955 in like manner.

London could easily go back and forth between planning the grounds of his future residence to larger aspirations of essentially a model farm. He conducted his own research into farm planting methods, adaptive plant species, animal husbandry, and farming techniques. He, again, read all available literature, U. S. government bulletins, and often consulted with his good neighbor Luther Burbank. He availed himself of the resources at the University of California Davis, the newly established 'University Farm' founded in 1905 by an act of the California Legislature as an adjunct to the UC Berkeley Agricultural Experiment Station. The UC Davis journal, ***Agricola*** was a must-read for London. In turn he would occasionally write short pieces for their

periodical. London ultimately became an exceptional, self-educated—albeit naive—farmer, and a picturesque landscape designer of the Wolf House grounds that would surround his future home with lush gardens and expansive views.

The orientation of London's house and gardens was eastward toward Glen Ellen. The front elevation and porte cochere of the house would be accessed from the east by Hill Road, the only carriage entry and exit coming to and from Glen Ellen at the time. A curvilinear retaining wall approximately four to five feet high was constructed of on-site volcanic stone, it traced the road through a canopy of majestic redwood trees. The entry provided a memorable sense of arrival. One entered under a rustic redwood Torii Gate, a traditional Japanese entry portal to a sacred place, and another cultural expression he learned from his Pacific travels. Further up, a natural portal of redwood trees clearly announced that one had officially arrived at the Jack London Beauty Ranch. On the left would be the "Wolf House."

Although the couple thoroughly enjoyed their new-found country life they continued to travel extensively. Jack's career was at its height and he was in demand from myriad sources. London, ever the sailor, built his own sailing ship in the salt marshes of Oakland, naming it, ***The Snark***. The couple planned an extended around-the-world trip for pleasure, adventure, and writing inspiration. However, due to London's recurrent bouts of his kidney disease uremia, they toured the Pacific instead, visiting Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, and Australia between 1907 and 1909. London left the ranch in the capable hands of Netta Eames giving her power of attorney to manage financial issues until their return.[31]

Upon return from the couple's voyage—which produced London's book *Martin Eden* (1909) and the *Cruise of the Snark (1911)*—Jack convalesced in a Santa Rosa sanitarium due to his interminable uremia as well as emergency surgery he had undergone in Australia. Despite his illness, London maintained a strict discipline of writing and producing nothing less than two to three books a year and several serialized essays for periodicals. Yet, this may have been a moment of truth for him. He was accustomed to making a certain level of income, however, but the pressure to produce 'copy' was now competing with his extravagant plans for Beauty Ranch. "I have been trying hard to get out of the writing game for many years," he explained. "I have never liked to write and only took up the profession as a third and last choice of life. It has been a miserable occupation, but I did it to make money and I made it."[32] London was known

Opposite, left: The original road to and from Glen Ellen from the Hill Property. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Opposite, right: Jack and the 'inspiring' Oak tree, circa 1913. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Above: The "Witness" Oak. Note Jack's library addition to the house. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Top: Jack London's 'Snark' on Alameda Estuary, 1906. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Bottom: The former restored Kohler Frohling Winery Cottage, circa 1911. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Opposite: Former Kohler & Frohling Winery Buildings. Luther Burbank's Spineless Cactus Interpretive by CA State Parks. Photograph by the author, 2022.

to write a thousand words a day. But now he wanted to prove the ranch could make money and thereby release him from the bonds of a demanding literary world.

In 1909 London purchased two additional properties, the Caroline Kohler Ranch, at twenty-four acres, and Fish Ranch, at nine acres, both abutting the La Motte parcel. He now had property that aligned along three major waterways in the Glen Ellen area; Sonoma Creek to the East, Graham Creek to the north, and Asbury Creek to the south. In May of 1910, he acquired the 700-acre former Kohler and Frohling Winery land. The following year, in May 1911, London purchased the built structures associated with Kohler and Frohling Winery from the California Winery Association. This included a distillery, a cooperage, a large winery building, a sherry barn, a cottage with a stone annex, and associated support structures. These substantial purchases assured a contiguous ranch of approximately a thousand acres, but more acquisitions would follow.

By acquiring the K&F Winery buildings Jack and Charmian could have a temporary home in one of the structures until the Wolf House was completed. Renovations began on a cottage and occupancy came quickly. London had a writing studio and library addition built that looked out onto a massive ancient native oak, *Quercus agrifolia*. He considered it an inspiration because of its resilience through decades of cultural passers-by: the Coastal Miwok and Southern Pomo tribes, the Spanish colonists, the Mexican rancheros and his least favorite people, the American Frontier homesteaders. He would stare out the window from his studio and conjure words and thoughts for his handwritten texts. The oak anchored the site and provided generous shade in the summer, but more so, bore witness to eras that had long gone by.

London now had all the makings of a working ranch. He was determined to make, or rather re-make the land as an example of progressive rehabilitation of California land in the twentieth century. His determination to implement the best possible methodology toward these goals inspired him for the rest of his life. He often wrote that he had cobbled together the worn-out ranches in order to rescue them: "At the present moment I am the owner of six bankrupt ranches, united in my possession. The six bankrupt ranches represent at least eighteen bankruptcies; that is to say, at least eighteen farmers of the old school have lost their money, broken their hearts, and lost their land."[33]

London's well-known socialist values of a strong work ethic and fundamental human fairness moved him to apply those tenets to a one-man 'back to the soil' movement. These sentiments were later reflected in his most revered agrarian novels, ***Burning Daylight*** (1910) and ***The Valley of the Moon*** (1913). Regardless of the strength of his convictions and his argument, he found it difficult to convince his peers that he was serious about his efforts. He wrote, "It is dreadfully hard for me to get my friends to understand just what the ranch means to me . . . From a utilitarian standpoint I hope to do two things with the ranch: (1) To leave the land better for my

having been; (2) and to enable thirty or forty families to live happily on ground that was so impoverished . . ."[34]

London employed the best labor he could find in the area to implement his plans. Two good men had been with him so far, Wiget and Bideaux. But because of his intense career demands and frequent absences, he realized he needed to hire a ranch superintendent. Up until 1910, Netta Eames had stewarded his property and professional affairs, but London was now entering a new phase of ambitious projects. He needed someone who could run the daily operations of a working ranch, one who could explicitly implement his ideas, and most importantly, someone he could trust unconditionally. His first and only choice would be his older sister Eliza London Shepard (1868-1939).

As children, Jack and Eliza had worked with their father, John London, on a small plot in the Livermore Valley. Eliza proved to be a great help, knowledgeable, curious, and possessing unusual stamina. Pleased with his choice and the fact that Eliza had accepted, London announced, "Eliza is the captain I have picked out to run this particular ship of mine."[35] Eliza arrived in 1910, separated from her husband, with her young son Irving in tow. She resided temporarily in a cottage near the Wake Robin Lodge, waiting for her brother Jack to build her a home on his ranch property. For the next three decades, until her death in 1939, Eliza would dedicate her life and energy to her brother's dream, balancing his vision with sound practical advice. Her son Irving Shepard and grandson I. Milo Shepard would pick up the gauntlet and follow in her footsteps thereafter.

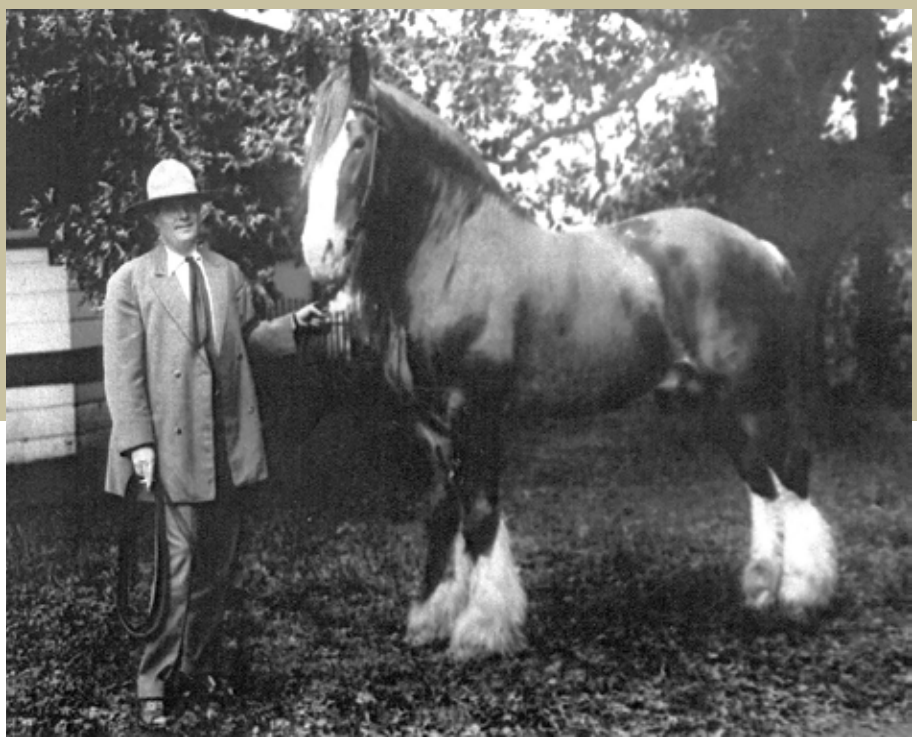
The first projects undertaken by Jack and Eliza were the repair and adaptation of the 1880s Kohler and Frohling stone winery buildings, which they converted to farm and ranch uses. The destruction of the large winery building that had been destroyed in the 1906 earthquake provided an opportunity to build atop the ruin of a Carriage House and boarding rooms. The former sherry barn, circa 1884, became London's stable for his workhorses. The old distillery building, circa 1888, was used as a repair shop and storage for farm equipment; the cooperage was turned into a blacksmith shop. Superintendent Shepard had her office in the southwest corner of the Carriage House—with her name and title prominently displayed on the display board. Clearly, Eliza Shepard was now central to and in command of the Ranch. Over the next two to three years the Ranch was reconfigured to accommodate its new mission.

London again consulted with Luther Burbank about his ongoing work on spineless

Above: Jack and Charmian's Cottage Residence. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Right: Jack London and his prized English Shire. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Opposite: Jack London's Wolf House under construction, 1913. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.



cactus *Opuntia spp*. for livestock forage. "Between 1907 and 1925, Luther Burbank introduced more that 60 varieties of spineless cacti. These were developed mostly from hybrids of varieties of the Indian fig (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) and the Mexican prickly pear (*Opuntia tuna*), and were offered in two main types: the fruiting varieties, grown for their variously colored and flavored prickly pears, and the forage varieties, grown for their edible pads (properly called thalli), which could be fed raw to livestock or cooked for human consumption."[36] London planted significant quantities of the cactus in the open field in and around the Kohler and Frohling cluster of winery buildings. While out of town on business, Jack wrote to Eliza, "Do your best by the spineless cactus. My heart is set on making a showing of it."[37]

All the while, London kept his sights on the construction of Wolf House on the far side of the Ranch. Between lecture trips back East, he and Charmian also sailed around Cape Horn. Other professional digressions would intervene but London maintained an unwavering commitment to the long-term vision of the Ranch, and his permanent home and retreat. The old Kohler cottage was to be rehabilitated as the couple's interim residence.

The energetic London now balanced a full plate of farm responsibilities: home building,

writing, traveling, and lecturing, while also responding to the hundreds of letters and unsolicited manuscripts that he received each year. Charmian was his right-hand woman, facilitating his heavy load at every turn. She was his editor, typist, secretary, psychologist, lover, and wife. The two were closest at this time when Charmian announced she was pregnant. London was thrilled and thought he might have a son to carry on his legacy. However, it was not to be. Charmian, at nearly forty years of age, and after a difficult labor, delivered a baby girl, Joy, in June of 1910. Joy lived for just thirty-eight hours.

The Londons moved into the Kohler Frohling-era Cottage in 1911 to be closer to the working hub of both the ranch operations and the ongoing Wolf House project. Eliza finally moved into her custom-designed house built in the center of the vineyards.

Finally, in April of 1911 London began construction, in earnest, of the 'Wolf' House—so named by his best friend and frequent guest, poet George Sterling. As noted before, Jack had felled a significant number of redwood trees—laying them out to 'season'—to be used as massive structural posts and beams. He quarried on-site lava stone and other fieldstone for construction materials.[38] He was determined to have this house rise out of the earth. London continued to work with his architect, Albert Farr, and the two working more as collaborators rather than as architect and client.

As important as replenishing the soil was to London, so too was the quest to have the most purebred livestock on the ranch for breeding purposes. "He became a scientific breeder, convinced that the livestock in the Sonoma Valley had gone to 'scrub.' Attending stock shows, he began buying purebred cattle, a prize bull for eight hundred dollars, eight heifers for three hundred fifty dollars apiece. He journeyed to Southern California to find the heavy draft horses he needed for clearing his fields of volcanic rock. He built a piggery and imported prize Duroc Jersey hogs for it, along with a herd of eighty-five Angora goats."[39] In a March 1, 1913 letter to his Macmillan Publishing editor, George P. Brett, he wrote, "I have just bought a stallion—oh, not a thoroughbred racing stallion nor trotting horse stallion nor a saddle horse stallion, but the finest draft horse stallion I have ever seen. It is an imported English Shire, and I have paid $2500 for it. Also accompanying this stallion I have paid $750 for an imported Shire mare in foal. You see, I have some 15 or 20 work horses or work mares on the ranch, and in this out of the way valley have been hard put to find proper stallions to which to breed these mares, in order to turn out the right kind of draft horse stock for the San Francisco market."[40] The grand stallion, 'Neuadd Hillside' and his companions were delivered to Beauty Ranch within weeks.

London practiced an empathetic approach to the care of his animals. "He built shelter sheds and houses for his cattle of the most modern type and improved upon many things. For instance, he would not tolerate the wooden or metal stanchions used in most dairy barns, which do not permit an animal to lick itself—a deprivation amounting almost to torture in hot weather. Each animal had a strap around its neck and was hitched with a short rope halter, fastened with a snap so he could stand in comfort in his stall and could lick and scratch himself, stand or lie down at will."[41]

By early 1913 the Wolf House was nearly finished. It was a grand home of four levels, with maroon lava stone, unpeeled redwood trees, and roof tiles that matched the dark fieldstone. Built to last forever it had a concrete foundation, blue-slate floor tiles, seven cobblestone fireplaces, and was seismically and structurally sound. The house had several guest rooms, separate suites for Charmian and Jack, a full library, and a dining room that could seat fifty people at a banquet. The south elevation was designed to maximize the picturesque views of Sonoma Valley.

The Londons were preparing to make the move to Wolf House when fate intervened.

Above: The Wolf House Ruins, after the tragic fire. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Opposite: The Wolf House Ruins. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Tragically on a hot August day turned to night the house caught fire and without a nearby water source was consumed, save the stonework. Rumors have persisted for over a century about how, and possibly why, the house burned. There has been some consensus that the highly flammable solvents used to treat the wood mixed with worker carelessness may have been the culprit. An alternative theory was that it was arsonists who wanted to destroy the socialist-turned-capitalist, Jack London. The mystery remains. London publicly took the loss in stride, but grieved deeply in private. He promised to rebuild and slowly began his redwood curing process once again. Jack lamented, "It isn't the money loss—though that is grave enough just at this time. The main hurt comes from the wanton despoiling of so much beauty."[42]

The Londons remained in the Cottage, resigned to their temporary fate. Jack added a 'den' to the southwest side of the building near the mature native oaks. This room held his vast library of books, curios, and ephemera, mercifully preserved. Over time ornamental and vegetable gardens were planted in and around the Cottage. A small pond in the front south-facing garden became a focal point and attraction. The garden retained remnant plantings that possibly pre-dated the London period, Canary Island Palm, ***Phoenix canariensis***, and Olive, ***Olea europaea.***

London's final purchase of the 400-acre Freund Ranch was an almost gratuitous addition to Beauty Ranch. Primarily acquired for scenic beauty and equestrian trails that seemed to trace the hills forever, London remarked "in order to get the uplands I had to buy the lowlands."[43] The transaction assured unspecified water rights from Graham Creek from the Kohler and Frohling period. After challenging and even demoralizing times on

the ranch, London reached again for limitless beauty as far the eye could see.

Inexplicably after the Wolf House fire London had a renewed sense of purpose. He was even more determined to continue his experiment by example and not necessarily for profit. London exhibited extraordinary energy during this period. A rash of construction followed from 1914 through early 1916: two concrete silos, the first of their kind in the country; a stallion barn, a liquid manure system and a manure pit, also the first of its kind; a Pig Palace (London's 'Sermon in Stone'); a smoke house; and a dam and lake with a rustic cabin bath house.[44] Jack's Pig Palace was a circular set of separate rooms, both indoor and outdoor, little apartments with an open patio. A central round brick structure held feed and tools.

The dam and lake, located in the western section of the Ranch and fed by Graham Creek and the lesser tributary of Kohler Creek were built to provide irrigation, fire protection, and recreation. "And all its paraphernalia will build a dam at the mouth of that natural sink up-mountain to impound 7 million gallons of water for irrigation and the pressure for fire protection."[45] The change impacted the surrounding neighbors whose land and water source abutted on Graham Creek. Collectively they sued London accusing him of siphoning off and perceivably compromising their water supply. The angry neighbors, led by none other than Charmian's Aunt Netta Eames, struck a hard blow of betrayal to the couple. The ensuing injunction proceedings continued for several months and required London to personally testify for hours on the stand in a Santa Rosa courthouse. He eventually prevailed and the matter was brought to a close.

In London's last year of life he suffered from recurring bouts of rheumatism and debilitating renal colic. Yet, his schedule continued apace, even until his death in November of 1916. His planning sessions with Eliza reached far into the future. However, after the long drawn-out lawsuit; the shocking and suspect demise of his prize champion Shire horse Neuadd Hillside found dead in a pasture; and the loss of Wolf House, it was clear both his health and spirit were spiraling downward. "Our Jack, said his sister Eliza, has not come back to us. He had, of course, physically, but Eliza meant that something was disturbing about his lackluster eyes; she had known him longer than any of them, and she was worried."[46]

Jack London died at the age of 40, on November 22, 1916. The death certificate stated, "renal colic and interstitial nephritis."[47] Sadly, only in retrospect was London's agricultural theory and practice lauded. London biographer, Earle Labor wrote, "Evidence indicates that London was regarded by the agricultural experts of his time as 'one of California's

Above, left and right: The Wolf House Ruins. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Opposite: The Pig Palace, London's "Sermon in Stone." Photograph by the author, 2022.

leading farmers' and that his model ranch was considered 'one of the best in the country.'"[48]

One of the last articles written about London while he was still alive was unusually upbeat and cast a positive light on his farming efforts against all odds. "Jack London is as proud of his ranch as he is of any book he ever wrote. He raises the biggest and best hay crops in Sonoma County. His livestock are the best bred, the sleekest and the fattest. His seventy-five acre vineyard produces good grapes. His prune orchard yields nearly twenty tons to its twelve acres and they are good, sweet prunes, too. His vegetable garden is a delight and a huge success."[49]

Charmian London, Eliza Shepard and Irving Shepard 1917–1974

The Jack London Ranch was now left in the hands of Charmian London. In London's *Last Will and Testament* he gave full discretion to Charmian as to the disposition of his estate. Charmian in turn depended on Eliza to carry out London's mission regarding the workings of the ranch. The year after his death Eliza remarked: "Jack's ambition was to develop a model farm; one of the best all-round ranches in the state, combining a stock ranch, fruit, grain, vegetables, vineyard and the like. He would have accomplished his plan had he lived, for his enthusiasm was unquenchable. His intense energy simply rioted in work. Success seemed only to stimulate him to greater and wider efforts."

The two women were extremely close and both dedicated to continuing his noble endeavor. Charmian would steward his literary legacy and Eliza would run the ranch. It was a perfect partnership between the two most important women in London's life. "They were very supportive of one another since they weren't real sisters, but they felt a bond of sisterhood because of Jack. They were both women of great independence and solitariness."[50]

A sizable debt remained after London's death. Almost immediately the women sold off portions of the property not pertinent to its operations, a difficult decision that probably saved the ranch. Charmian sobered by the thought of nearly losing the ranch wrote a series of plaintiff missives to London's closest associates about her perception of a "fitting memorial." "Is everybody going to lie down and mawk . . . and let the living

reality of his biggest, warmest work lapse on the hillsides? I am begging you now, with all my heart, not to let the work (and your words carry far) forget that he laid his hand upon the hills of California with the biggest writing of all his writing and imagination and wisdom. Don't seal your lips on this aspect of Jack London, which is too vital an aspect of him, living or dead."[51]

In late 1917 Charmian London, with help from Eliza, built the House of Happy Walls as an homage to her husband. A commanding naturalistic three-story, cobblestone Arts and Crafts building set on the hill above Wolf House, was intended to be a museum and to honor his life's work and their life together. Today it serves as the Visitor Center and Museum for the Jack London Historic State Park.

Eliza kept the ranch intact and continued operations as she felt Jack would have done. Her son Irving, after returning from service during WWI, was an immeasurable help to her. "Since his death these two women have not only freed the heavily involved estate of all entailment but have made it double in value. The difficulties they had to meet to accomplish this result in war times [WWI] is especially pertinent. Jack London worked unceasingly against all odds at his farm experiment, though never neglecting his prolific literary duties."[52]

Charmian London's House of Happy Walls exterior was complete, but the interiors were not finished until years later. Charmian had intended to occupy the upper floors of the beautiful building but couldn't bear to leave the Cottage where she and Jack spent most of their time together. At the onset of the Great Depression and the financially distressed years that followed the Shepards urged her to move into the new building so they could rent out the Cottage to help support the ranch. Eliza now lived at Wake Robin, a gift purchased for her by Charmian[53], and the Irving Shepards lived in Eliza's house in the center of the vineyards.

Eliza and Irving Shepard had long conceived of the idea of a tourist-themed "Jack London Guest Ranch." By the mid-1930s they had built extra cabins in and around the core area, just as Jack had planned several decades before. The Shepards finally convinced Charmian to move into the House of Happy Walls and began an ambitious marketing plan for their new venture.[54] Eliza Shepard passed away in 1939, and all ranch operations transferred to Irving Shepard with support from Charmian. The Jack London Guest Ranch was a success and sustained the ranch through one of America's most challenging financial periods. The Guest Ranch featured equestrian use as the primary attraction and maintained forty Thoroughbred horses at its peak. It operated from 1934 through World War II.

After WWII, the Shepards turned more toward ranching and large-scale dairy farming. Shepard leased the land for the dairy, eventually accommodating 300 head of cattle, and 150 milking cows.[55] The Jack London Dairy functioned from 1965 until 1975. Irving Shepard began a process of slowly donating parts of the ranch to the State of California Parks Department. The first donation would be the Hill Property with the Wolf House ruins.

Charmian London traveled worldwide dedicated to her self-imposed obligation to steward London's legacy. As a gift to London's first wife Bess and daughters, Charmian signed over the rights to London's American

royalties to them. She would retain all control of London's international royalties and rights. When Charmian was home she lived in the Cottage from 1917-1934, then in her House of Happy Walls from 1934-1944, and then moved back to the Cottage for the last years of her life. She passed away in 1955, leaving the property to Irving Shepard, who died in 1975 and later his son I. Milo Shepard died in 2010, the last surviving relative of Jack London who lived amid the rows of his picturesque vineyards.

In the brief eleven years that Jack London held the property a viable farming and scientific breeding operation emerged from the land. As if to single-handedly reverse the negative impacts of the nineteenth century exploitative American Frontier period, London committed himself through intensive research and trials toward the restoration of California's native soil, and the breeding of premium livestock—not for financial gain but as a model farm gift—to his home state of California. The love of his life Charmian Kittredge London and his beloved sister Eliza London Shepherd lovingly upheld his beliefs and worked for the rest of their lives as well.

"*In the solution of great economic problems of the present age, I see a return to the soil. I go into farming because my philosophy and research have taught me to recognize the fact that a return to the soil is the basis of economics."*

- Jack London, 1913

Postscript:

"At the center of London's philosophy were principles that linked his ethics and his aesthetics, allowing him to comprehend the landscape like a morality play. . . Thus, London's Marxian socialist perspective shaped his reading of the landscape; his belief in scientific agriculture provided the techniques to redeem the land for future generations; and his artistic vision, wedding beauty and utility, designated the form and materials for his improvements."

From "Utility and Beauty Should Be One:" The Landscape of Jack London's Ranch of Good Intentions, by Adrian and Mary Praetzellis. Historical Archaeology, Vol. 23:33-44, 1989.

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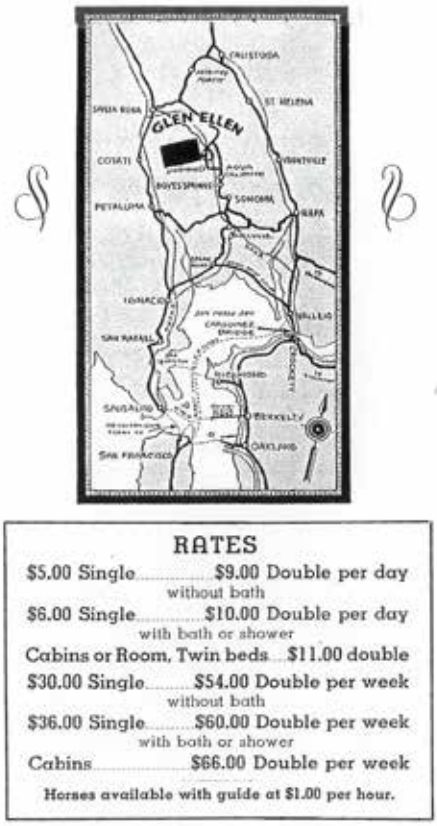

Opposite: Grain Silos, the first in California. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Left: Jack London Guest Ranch Brochure, Circa 1940s

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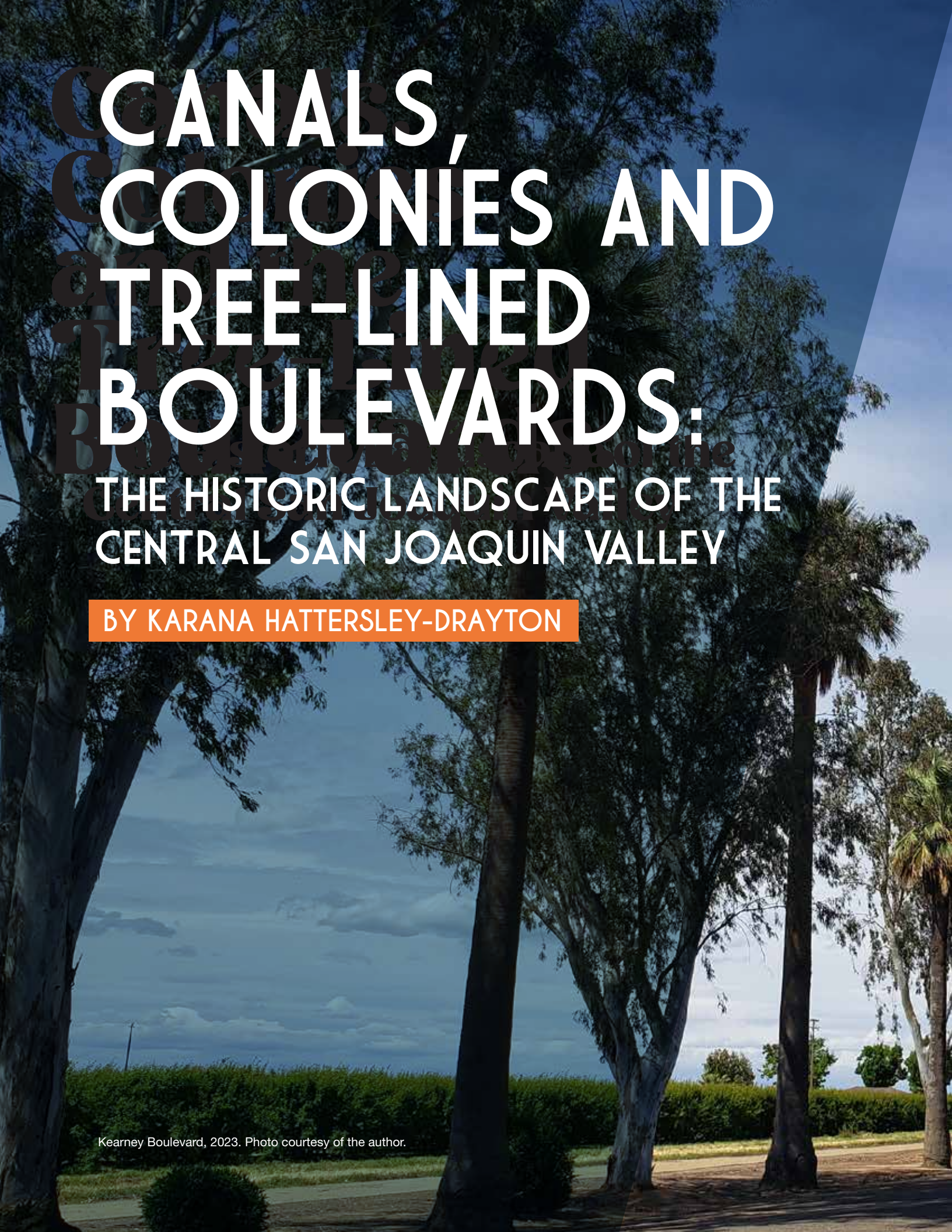
CANALS, COLONIES AND TREE-LINED BOULEVARDS:

THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE OF THE CENTRAL SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

BY KARANA HATTERSLEY-DRAYTON



Kearney Boulevard, 2023. Photo courtesy of the author.

An earlier version of this article originally appeared in the publication created for the 2008 VAF Annual Conference, ***Architecture, Ethnicity and Historic Landscapes of California's San Joaquin Valley.*** City of Fresno Planning and Development, 2008.

As we drove east across State Route 152 through Los Banos, car packed with luggage and a sedated dog and cat on the backseat, my son became increasingly alarmed. We were moving to Fresno, leaving the only home he had ever known. But this alert sixteen-year-old was also troubled by the landscape itself, which is remarkably different from the narrow, shadowed Petaluma Valley just 125 miles north. The San Joaquin Valley is so vast, the sky open and exposed. Tumbleweeds along the roadside remind you that you are in a semi-arid region. Grade B dairy barns and tankhouses (abandoned or in use for sleeping quarters) line both sides of the highway as you cross canal after Miller-Lux canal. At Fairmead, just south of the Madera County line, is the last of the Mammoth Orange hamburger and juice stands that once served motorists along State Route 99. And there is Fresno, with its neighborhoods built around canals—the Herndon, the Enterprise, Dry Creek—that loop lazily through palm, olive, and eucalyptus-lined drives and former agricultural colonies. Wait a minute: colonies, "you mean like Plymouth Colony?" Well, you know you are in a different place.

Although no one feature is unique to the San Joaquin Valley, these various elements—the railroad-gridded towns, the water conveyance systems, the tree-lined drives—cohere into a distinct regional landscape of great beauty and historic interest. It is also a landscape that is disappearing or is at least threatened. Fresno's Roeding Circle, with its 100-year-old trees, was bulldozed in 2005 to make room for a housing development, and it was not enough that some of the palm trees were moved to the new Save Mart Center at California State University, Fresno. Other housing projects encroach upon National Register-eligible Kearney Boulevard. Farm complexes that once were home to Swedish, Armenian, or Japanese immigrants are demolished every year. Tankhouses disappear. Politicians dream about placing the canals underground and out of sight. The best in new urbanism needs to consider and remember the past. But what is our region's past, and how is it articulated on the land?

The first residents of the San Joaquin Valley—that area of the Central Valley south of Stockton to the Tehachapi Mountains—were Miwok and Yokuts. Their buildings were "green" by today's definition: organic and gentle on the landscape, and as a result, easily erased with the onslaught of European and American settlers and traders in the nineteenth century. The missions, pueblos, and presidios of New Spain (and later Mexico)

hugged the California Coast, with relatively few land grants in the Valley. Although there were no missions in the Valley, there were small Mexican-era settlements, including ***Pueblo de las Junta***, located at the confluence of the San Joaquin River and the Fresno Slough.[1] The Spanish and Mexican influence is indicated through place names such as "Fresno," which means "ash tree" and was first applied to the Fresno River.[2] Following the Gold Rush of 1849, miners were drawn to the southern gold fields, and cattle ranchers and dryland farmers moved into the area.

MILLER AND LUX

Two grants, the Rancho Sanjón de Santa Rita (1841) and the San Luis Gonzaga (1843), were established around what is now Los Banos in Merced County. By 1865 the entire eleven square leagues of the Santa Rita were acquired by Henry Miller and Charles Lux.[3]

Miller was born Heinrich Alfred Kreiser on July 21, 1827, in Brackenheim, Germany. His father was the town butcher, and he trained his son in the art of "raising, slaughtering, and marketing livestock."[4] The young Kreiser left Germany and after two years in Holland and England came to San Francisco. He adopted the name "Henry Miller" from a friend who sold him his steamship ticket.[5]

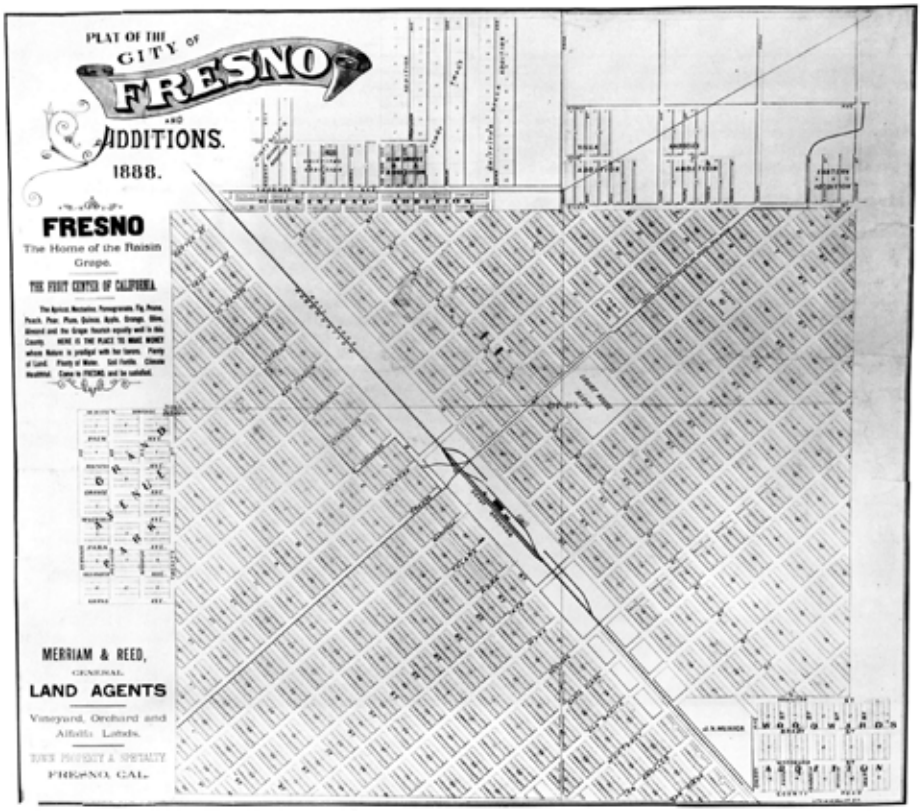
Miller was both saint and sinner. One early pioneer, William Jasper Stockton, described him simply as the "greatest man I ever knew…A giant among men."[6]

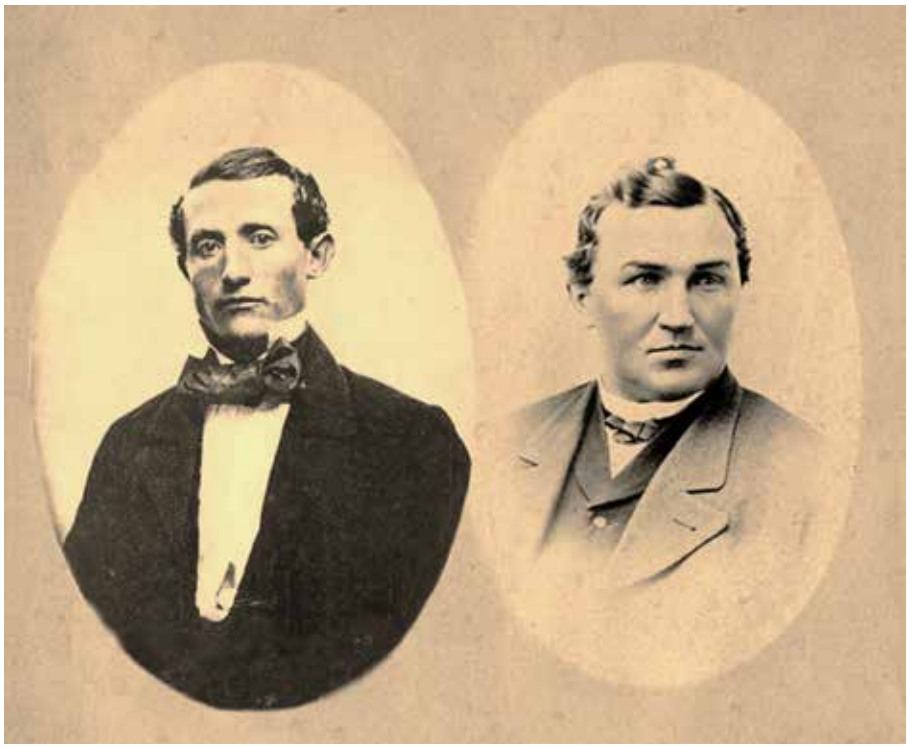
In contrast, John Clay recalled in his memoirs, ***My Life on the Range,*** that Miller was "selfish, grasping, indomitable, thrifty, with a wondrous brain that schemed and twisted and generally routed his opponent."[7] Both appraisals of Miller were apparently correct.

Charles Lux also was trained as a butcher and came to the United States from the Alsace region of France in 1838.[8] The two men formed a partnership in 1857 and began a "veritable orgy of land and cattle raising," which lasted until Lux's death in 1887.[9] By

Left: East side irrigation canal. Photo courtesy of the author.

Right: Roeding Circle after demolition. Photo courtesy of the author.





Opposite, top: The 1888 plat map of the city of Fresno.

Opposite, bottom: Henry Miller, left, and Charles Lux, circa 1870s.

Above: Map of a portion of Fresno County, showing some of its principal irrigating canals, colonies, vineyards, and orchards, circa 1885. Courtesy Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.

the 1880s, Miller and Lux ranked third in assets among businesses on the West Coast, with only the Comstock Lode group and the Southern Pacific's "Big Four" rated higher.[10]

Miller and Lux continued to use the Santa Rita Ranch for grazing, like the earlier *Californio* and American-born owners. Because of its central location and rich pasture, the ranch became the roundup spot for the Miller-Lux herds in the northern San Joaquin Valley.[11] The partners, however, also made changes that significantly impacted the region. At the Santa Rita, Miller installed feed lots—considered the first in California—large enough to accommodate 10,000 cattle at a time.[12] In addition to cattle, the company also managed enormous flocks of sheep that were kept at Firebaugh.[13]

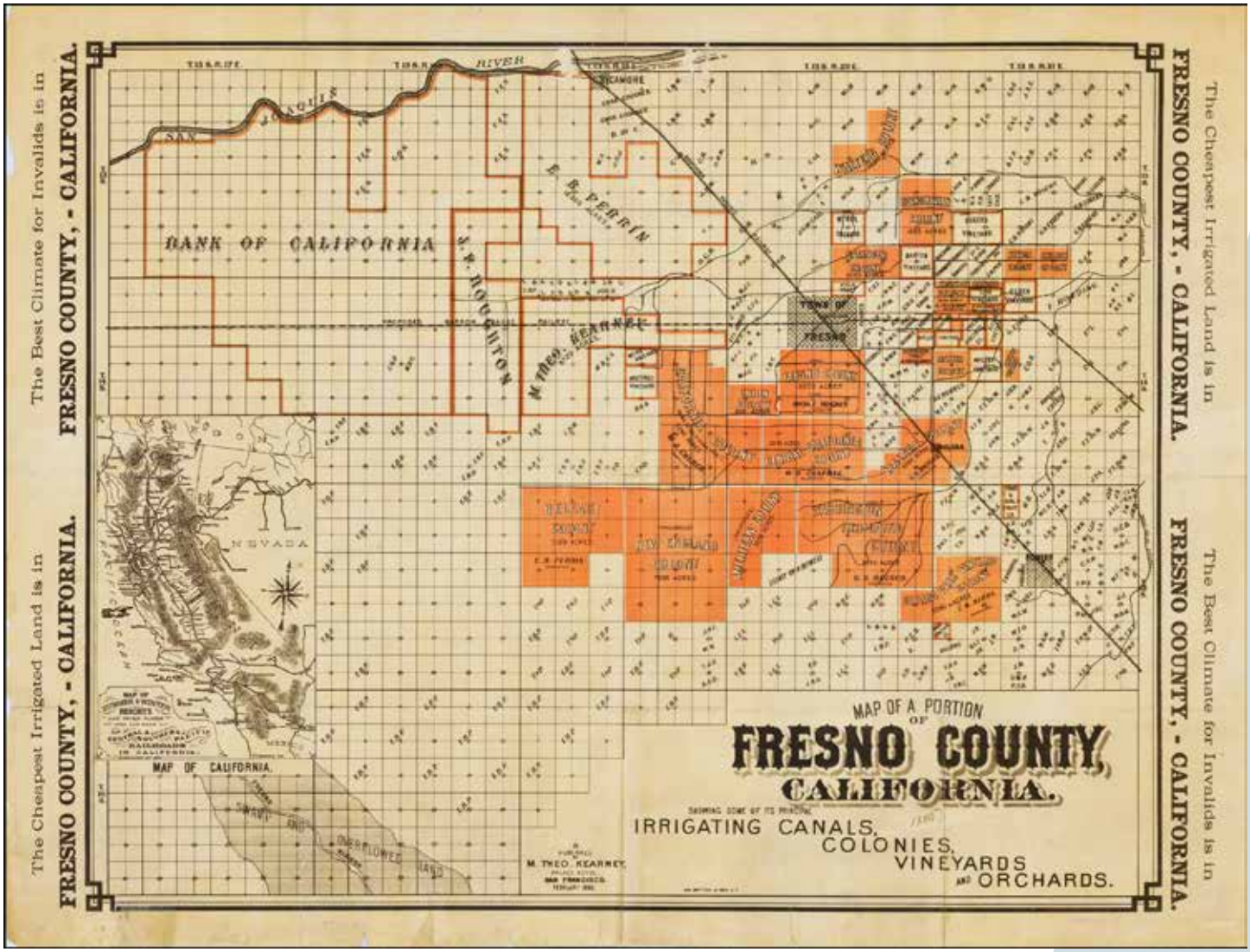
Fencing was another innovation. Although early photographs from the Miller-Lux archives identify willow pole corrals at the Santa Rita built by the "Dons," in fact, Hispanic California was mostly open range and fence-free. By 1870 Miller and Lux owned some 600,000 acres, of which 450,000 were enclosed by fences.[14] On the Santa Rita, they constructed a five-board-high fence that at one point was sixty-eight miles long, stretching from Hill's Ferry in the north to Firebaugh's Ferry to the South.[15]

Cattle kings such as Miller and Lux dominated most of the San Joaquin Valley through the early 1860s. A series of droughts in 1863-1864 decimated the herds, and the land was turned over to "wheat barons," who dry-farmed through the panic of 1893. For many of these landowners, irrigation was seen as an unnecessary expense.

CHANGES TO THE LANDSCAPE, 1870S

In the 1870s, three critical developments precipitated momentous change in the San Joaquin Valley: 1) the construction of the Central Pacific rail corridor, 2) the creation of canals and canal companies, and 3) the subdivision of large tracts of land into agricultural colonies. In 1870 the Central Pacific Railroad began its diagonal push down California. New towns were surveyed along the corridor—several were planned by the railroad itself—and earlier villages situated away from the tracks often vanished overnight. Three new towns—Modesto (1870), Merced (1871), and Fresno (1872)—were constructed as tight grids, parallel to the rail corridor, which cut a diagonal line through the US Rectangular Land Survey of the 1850s.[16]

In 1872 the railroad reached what is now Fresno. The Contract and Finance Company, a subsidiary of the Central Pacific Railroad, bought 4,480 acres in a



desolate area where Dry Creek drained into the plains. Surveyor Edward H. Mix laid out the new town in blocks 320 feet by 400 feet, with 20-foot alleys, in lots 25 x 150 feet fronting on eighty-foot-wide streets parallel, to and on both sides of, the tracks.[17] The grid plan was filed in 1873 and was remarkably rigid, broken only by the space reserved for a future courthouse and the broad swaths through the center of town for the tracks, depot, and yards.[18]

CANALS AND WATER CONVEYANCE SYSTEMS

During the 1870s, large-scale irrigation was introduced in California. The San Joaquin Valley is a semi-arid region with an average annual rainfall of just over ten inches. Prior to 1870, "sky farmers," depending only on rainfall, scratched out a meager existence. Even the cattle and wheat barons suffered devastating losses during dry years. The drought of 1870-1871, however, provided the impetus to reorganize the San Joaquin and Kings River Canal and Irrigation Company in 1871, with corporate backing out of San Francisco.[19] Most of the proposed canal went through Miller and Lux Property, and Henry Miller granted the company the right-of-way and a subsidy in exchange for water at a very low rate.[20] Henry Miller's biographer credits him with playing a vital role in the early construction of the Main Canal. Miller showed the company "how to build the canal and where to build it, and it was his horses, men, and tools that actually constructed it."[21] A Chinese labor force of 1,000 men was also put to work, and by 1872 forty miles of the Main Canal were completed from the Fresno Slough to Los Banos Creek.[22]

Today, travelers through non-irrigated sections of the San Joaquin Valley can appreciate how hard life was for early settlers prior to irrigation. Although fertile, the land is a virtual wasteland without water. William Jasper Stockton came through the

Los Banos area in 1869 and returned to settle in 1872. Years later, he vividly described the land prior to irrigation: coming over Pacheco Pass, one saw a vast, almost treeless plain with claim shanties, "where settlers were still trying to make a living or had already starved out and gone."[23] Stockton himself tried his hand at dry farming at Badger Creek until "I got so poor I didn't have a friend in the world." He was euphoric when he heard that the San Joaquin and Kings River Canal was proposed to bring water to Los Banos: "Talk

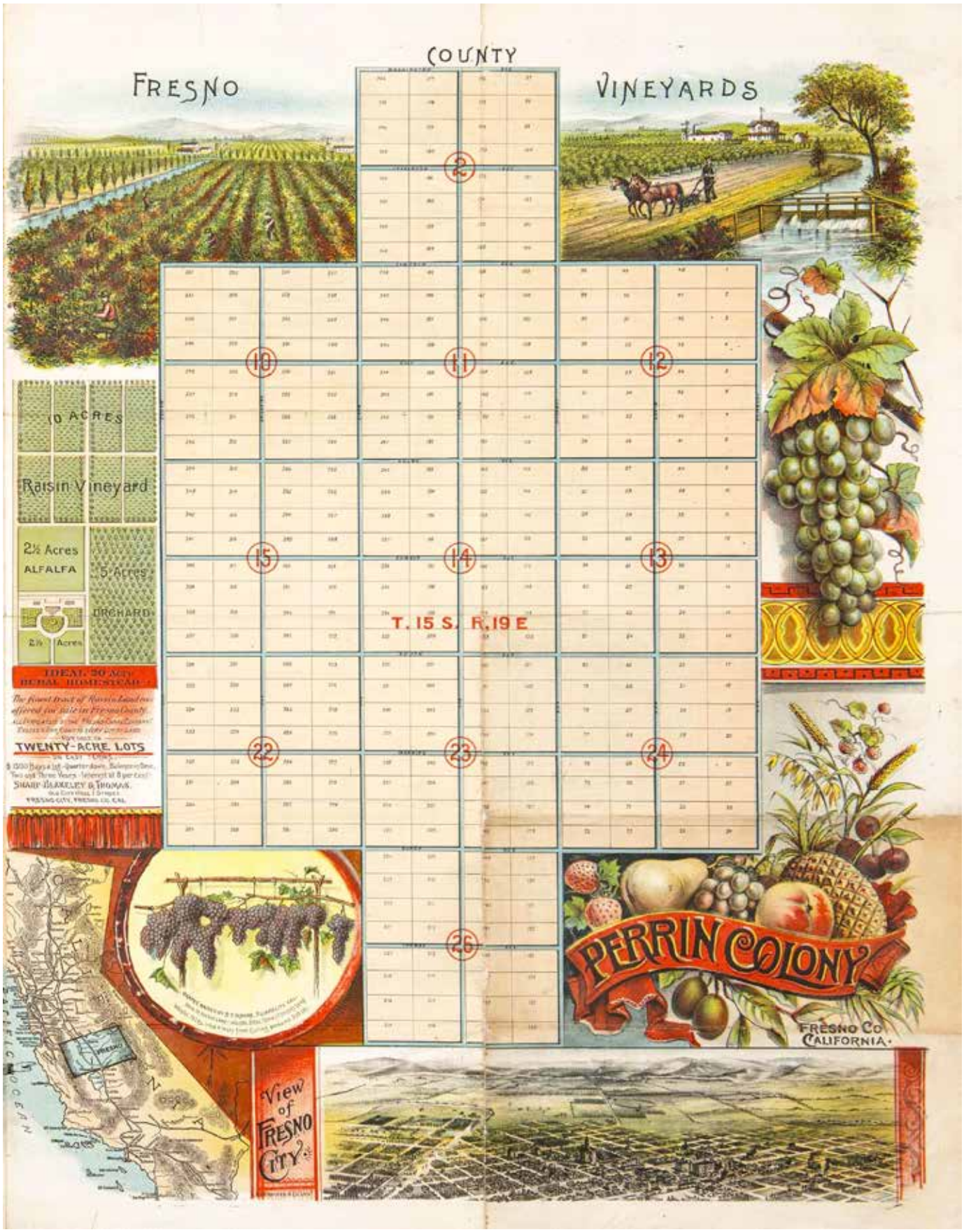
about the voices of angels, the music of an Aeolian harp; think about the first time your Sweetheart let you kiss her, kind of by accident—It was absolutely nothing compared to those words!"[24]

The Main Canal of the San Joaquin and Kings River Canal and Irrigation Company not only opened up agriculture on the Valley's "West Side," but it set a precedent for the possibility of irrigation on a grand scale in the San Joaquin Valley. By 1881 the company was bankrupt and under the control of Miller and Lux, who extended the Main Canal another twenty-seven miles, constructed miles of laterals and irrigation ditches, and constructed a second canal—the Outside Canal—in 1896.[25] Henry Miller also constructed numerous other water conveyance systems throughout the Miller-Lux

Opposite, top: Wittenberg Family, Fairmead Colonies, 1913. Courtesy Julius and Anna Siemens Papers Center for Mennonite Brethen Studies, Fresno Pacific University.

Opposite, bottom: An irrigation ditch in Fresno, circa 1920. Title Insurance and Trust and C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, 1860-1960. Courtesy University of Southern California Libraries and the California Historical Society.

Above: View of Diversion Dam on the Kings River in Fresno County, circa 1910. Title Insurance and Trust and C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, 1860-1960. Courtesy University of Southern California Libraries and the California Historical Society.



Above: "Perrin Colony. The Finest Tract of Raisin Land Ever Offered in Fresno County." This beautifully illustrated lithograph by the H. S. Crocker & Co. advertised the new Perrin Colony in Fresno, circa late 1880s. Courtesy Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.

Opposite: Koligian Farmhouse and Tankhouse, Circa 1910, Kearney Boulevard. Photo courtesy of the author.

holdings—the Arroyo Canal, the Santa Fe, the San Luis—so that today this section of the Merced County is a labyrinth of canals and laterals.

Near present-day Fresno, "Captain" Anthony Y. Easterby, a Napa capitalist, joined forces in 1871 with a Baptist sheepherder, Moses James Church and entrepreneurs William S. Chapman and Fredrick Roeding, to incorporate the Fresno Canal and Irrigation Company, which diverted water from the Kings River. Over the next twenty-five years, the company extended canals, laterals, and ditches through the Fresno area with the intent of promoting settlement on the investors' land.[26]

Water conveyance systems writ large continued into the twentieth century. In 1933 the State of California adopted the Central Valley Project Act, which provided for the construction, operation, and maintenance of numerous water control facilities, including Shasta Dam and Reservoir, the Contra-Costa Canal, Friant Dam (1939-1944), the Madera Canal (1940-1950), Friant-Kern Canal (1945-1951), and the Delta- Mendota Canal (1946-1952).

Although initially a state plan, the Central Valley Project (CVP) became a federal project under the Reclamation Bureau in 1937.[27] The CVP has been described as the most ambitious public works project ever built. As of 1990, overall costs for the CVP stood at $3.2 billion, with an annual delivery of eight million acre-feet of water. Termed the "Golden Faucet" by historian Donald Worster, the CVP has provided irrigation for three million new acres of privately owned land, "a bonanza greater than the Gold Rush."[28]

The California Aqueduct, snaking along the Valley's West Side for 444 miles, is the "longest stream in California—a man-made, concrete-lined channel that is visible from outer space."[29] Constructed in the late 1960s, it is another pivotal piece of the State Water Plan. The aqueduct began providing water in 1971 and has encouraged a "billion-dollar agribusiness to develop along what was previously considered a no-man's land."[30]

AGRICULTURAL COLONIES

A third momentous change for the Valley occurred in 1875 near Fresno with the development of the Central California Colony. Although mutual assistance colonies had been founded earlier by ethnic or religious groups, this was the first large corporate venture. Bernhard Marks of San Francisco purchased twenty-one square miles of land from William S. Chapman and subdivided six of the sections into 192 twenty-acre parcels. Three laterals from the Kings River and Fresno Canal were extended into the tracts, and water rights were sold to the prospective farmers. Twenty-three miles of roads were laid out and bordered with

trees.[31] Eventually, there were more than twenty important colonies in Fresno County, with 800 miles of canals and lateral branches of more than 2,000 miles.[32] Many of the earliest colony settlers were former miners as well as Scandinavian immigrants: Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians.[33] By 1903 there were forty-eight separate colonies or tracts in Fresno County representing approximately 71,080 acres.[34] These agricultural colonies helped to break up the vast estates and initiated what agricultural historian Donald Pisani had termed "the horticultural small-farm phase" of California agriculture.[35] Agricultural colonies were also the primary means by which the San Joaquin Valley was settled.

Not all agricultural colonies were irrigated. For example, the Co-operative Land and Trust Company that developed the Fairmead Colonies in Madera County advocated groundwater pumping. This lack of a central water conveyance system was partially responsible for the arrested development and ultimate decline of Fairmead. Extensive pumping lowered the water table, and by the 1940s, it became increasingly difficult to successfully farm in the area. This was the main issue that led to the formation of the Chowchilla Water District in 1948.[36]

Today, the market town of Fairmead is unincorporated and an economically depressed community. However, its original town plan (1912) is still evident and of some interest. Rather than a traditional grid—as with the railroad towns of the region—the Fairmead plan demonstrates an affinity for the Baroque planning principles of the City Beautiful Movement. Thus, as initially

Opposite: Woman in a car on palm-lined Kearney Boulevard in Fresno's Kearney Park, circa 1910. Title Insurance and Trust and C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, 1860-1960. Courtesy University of Southern California Libraries and the California Historical Society.

Above: Kearney Boulevard, 2023. Photo courtesy of the author.

designed, Fairmead included a trivium, with three radial streets meeting at a "piazza," or, in this case, a half-round that served as a park.[37]

TREE-LINED BOULEVARDS

The Central California Colony in Fresno established another precedent that has since become a ubiquitous aspect of the historic landscape of the San Joaquin Valley—tree-lined boulevards. The original colony was intersected by five broad avenues called Fruit, Elm, Walnut, Fig, and Cherry, all planted in accordance with their names. In December of 1882, M. Theo Kearney, the manager who successfully marketed these colony lands, purchased 6,800 acres of land southwest of Fresno that he called the "Fruit Vale Estate."

He intended this to be both a colony settlement and a grand estate, "Chateau Fresno," patterned after those he had seen in Europe. Although Kearney died before his chateau could be built, he did see the completion of the Chateau Fresno Avenue.[38] The fifteen miles of Kearney Boulevard, as it was renamed in 1984, has been described as "one of the most striking drives in all California."[39] In 1933, with funding from Fresno's Italian community, Charles Franklin designed an Art Deco-style gateway for the boulevard where it intersects Fresno Street.

City planners and landowners throughout the Valley adopted this idea of tree-lined boulevards as either an integral part of a new town plan or as a gateway to a city or ranch site. Las Palmas Avenue, which leads into Patterson, was planted in 1909 by Thomas Patterson himself, apparently in emulation of Chateau Fresno Avenue.[40] The town of Patterson was designed as a planned community and laid out in the shape of a wagon wheel with streets converging on a plaza. Robertson Boulevard in Chowchilla (1912) was developed as a bold diagonal slash across the section grids and served as a gateway to Robertson's new town. Robertson Boulevard, like Kearney Boulevard, functions as a beacon, a directional arrow on the landscape.

CONCLUSION

The landscape of the San Joaquin Valley has additional importance beyond mere historic interest and a "sense of place" for its residents. The tree-lined boulevards contribute both to the aesthetics and health-giving properties of an urban forest. Canal systems, such as the Herndon Canal, are being explored for their recreation potential as bike and pedestrian paths. Canals, small farms, and historic landscapes all contribute to quality of life and are important elements in sustainability.

A critical question is, "How can these landscape features be incorporated into new planned communities in a meaningful way?" The last Mammoth Orange juice stand along State Route 99 closed around 2008.[41] The eucalyptus trees along 99 are being removed. What will remain of the San Joaquin Valley historic landscape in fifty years? Long-term regional planning is certainly key: historians, preservationists, small farmers, and foresters need to be part of that conservation, now.[42]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Karana Hattersley-Drayton has a BA and MA and spent three years in the PhD program in Architecture History at UC Berkeley. She moved to the San Joaquin Valley in 1999 to work for Caltrans, and in 2002 was hired as the City of Fresno's Historic Preservation Project Manager. She retired from the City in 2017 and currently teaches Architecture History at CSU Fresno.

This spread: In 1933, with funding from Fresno's Italian community, Charles Franklin designed an Art Deco-style gateway for the boulevard where it intersects Fresno Street.

Endnotes

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[39] Hoover, 89.
[40] Hoover, 492.
[41] The Mammoth Orange was removed around 2008 when this section of State Route 99 was upgraded to freeway.
[42] In fact in late 2007 planning and preservation staff from the City of Fresno, with the Executive Director of the Fresno Historical Society, wrote the draft major plan concept, "Community, Culture and Identity" for the Fresno County Blueprint, as part of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Planning Process.

Friant Kern Canal looking west off Belmont. Photo courtesy of the author.

PALM SPRINGS WEEKEND

STEVEN KEYLON

On a perfect Palm Springs Sunday at the end of March, a group of CGLHS members arrived at the exclusive Smoke Tree Ranch to begin an exceptional day of tours and talks.

Eden Publisher's Circle Founder Tracy Conrad took the group for a walk around the beautiful grounds near the old Ranch House, ending up in the mature specimen garden. The snow-capped San Jacinto Mountain provided a gorgeous backdrop to fine old cacti and other native desert plants. With its gravel roads, low-slung ranch-style architecture, and commitment to an authentic Old Palm Springs experience, Smoke Tree Ranch is the last place in the Coachella Valley where one can get a feeling of Palm Springs in the 1920s and 1930s.

After our leisurely stroll, guests gathered at the Ranch House for a relaxed buffet luncheon, a Smoke Tree Ranch tradition.

After lunch, and a short drive away, we gathered in the Deepwell Estates neighborhood for a tour of the recently restored Koerner Residence (1955), which architect E. Stewart Williams designed in collaboration with landscape architects Garrett Eckbo and Francis Dean of Eckbo, Royston, and Williams. On hand were Maureen Erbe and Henry Blackham, who oversaw the meticulous restoration of the modernist house, and landscape architect JC Miller, who described the restoration of the spectacular garden, perhaps the finest restored Eckbo, Royston, and Williams landscape left. Many thanks to Publisher's Circle members David and Katie Wright for their generosity in opening the house and garden for our members.

Guests enjoying the recently restored Eckbo, Royston, and Williams landscape at the Koerner Residence.

Landscape architect and CGLHS member JC Miller describes the process of restoring the gardens at the Koerner Residence.

Adrienne Blackman and Libby Simon at Smoke Tree Ranch.

Lunch outside the Ranch House at Smoke Tree Ranch.

CGLHS members Michelle Zoryan and Jerry Bausman stand next to the pool at the Koerner Residence.

Touring the specimen garden at historic Smoke Tree Ranch.

Several members of the CGLHS board of directors attended the Palm Springs event. From left, new board member Luke Leuschner; Eden editor Steven Keylon; CGHLS board members Eleanor Cox and Ann Scheid; CGLHS member Duncan McCandless; CGLHS board members Janet Gracyk, Christy O'Hara, and Patrick O'Hara. Photograph courtesy Glenn Griffin.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

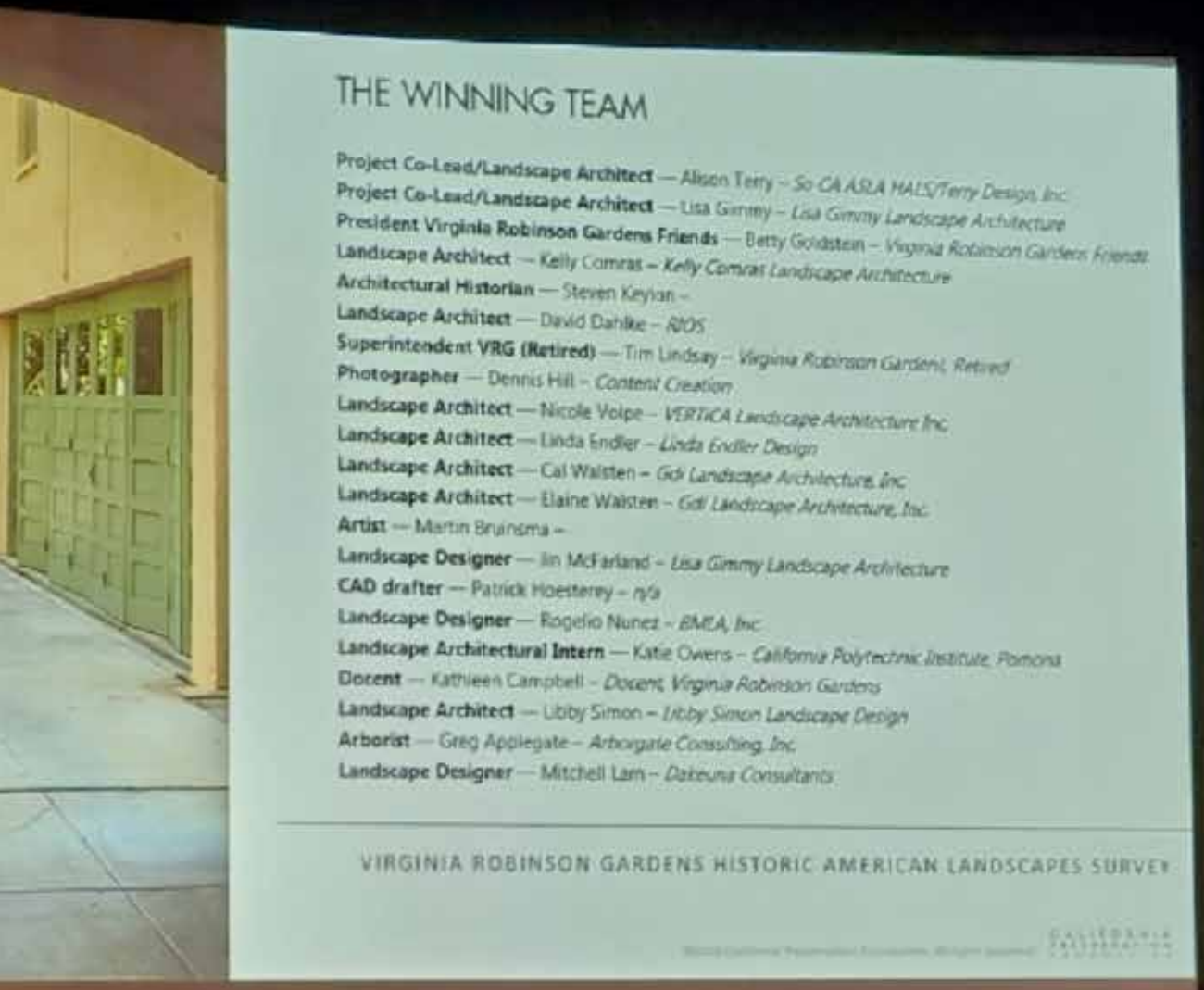
The California Preservation Foundation's 2023 Design Awards were held at San Francisco's Fort Mason on April 20th. Several CGLHS members received this year's award for Cultural Resource Studies, Reports for their work on the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) for the Virginia Robinson Gardens in Beverly Hills.

About this award, CPF said, "The Virginia Robinson Gardens is a 6.2-acre botanical garden, historic landscape, and residence. The property is owned by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and jointly managed with the Friends of Robinson Gardens. This HALS documentation represents a comprehensive survey of the development of the Virginia Robinson Gardens and includes historical hardscape plans and planting plans, site sections, fountain details, site furnishings, and site analysis. The project also includes an inventory of the site's existing hardscape, planting, and site amenities. Large-format photographs document important aspects of the site. A written history provides comprehensive scholarly documentation. Professional landscape architects, designers, photographers, historians, and many others contributed thousands of pro bono hours to complete this project."

CGLHS members present at the awards ceremony included landscape architects and project co-leads Alison Terry and Lisa Gimmy; Kelly Comras, FASLA; and *Eden* editor Steven Keylon. Other CGLHS members that contributed to the Virginia Robinson Gardens HALS report are board members Janet Gracyk and Libby Simon; and landscape architect David Dahlke.

We will feature the history of the Virginia Robinson Gardens and the work that went into the HALS report process in the summer issue of *Eden*.

Pictured on the stage at Fort Mason are, from left: Adrian Scott Fine, CPF President; Project co-leads, CGLHS members, and landscape architects Alison Terry and Lisa Gimmy; CGLHS past president, board member, and FASLA Kelly Comras; Landscape architectural intern Katie Owens; landscape architect Nicole Volpe; CGLHS past president and *Eden* editor Steven Keylon; photographer Dennis Hill. Photograph courtesy Trudi Sandmeider.


THE WINNING TEAM
Project Co-Lead/Landscape Architect — Alison Terry – So CA ASLA HALS/Terry Design, Inc.
Project Co-Lead/Landscape Architect — Lisa Gimmy – Lisa Gimmy Landscape Architecture
President Virginia Robinson Gardens Friends — Betty Goldstein – Virginia Robinson Gardens Friends
Landscape Architect — Kelly Comras – Kelly Comras Landscape Architecture
Architectural Historian — Steven Keylan –
Landscape Architect — David Dahlke – ROS
Superintendent VRG (Retired) — Tim Lindsay – Virginia Robinson Gardens, Retired
Photographer — Dennis Hill – Content Creation
Landscape Architect — Nicole Volpe – VERTICA Landscape Architecture Inc.
Landscape Architect — Linda Endler – Linda Endler Design
Landscape Architect — Cal Walsten – Gdi Landscape Architecture, Inc.
Landscape Architect — Elaine Walsten – Gdi Landscape Architecture, Inc.
Artist — Martin Brunsma –
Landscape Designer — Jin McFarland – Lisa Gimmy Landscape Architecture
CAD drafter — Patrick Hoesterey – n/a
Landscape Designer — Rogelio Nunez – BMEA, Inc.
Landscape Architectural Intern — Katie Owens – California Polytechnic Institute, Pomona
Docent — Kathleen Campbell – Docent, Virginia Robinson Gardens
Landscape Architect — Libby Simon – Libby Simon Landscape Design
Arborist — Greg Applegate – Arborgate Consulting, Inc.
Landscape Designer — Mitchell Lam – Daileuna Consultants
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Front Cover: "I wanted to be able to go up and down those beautiful green ridges and always be upon my own land. In order to get the uplands I had to buy the lowlands." Photograph circa 1910. Courtesy Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Digital Library.

Back Cover: This is the residence of Theodore Kearney (1842–1906), who called this site Chateau Fresno Park. The park was conceived by Kearney and laid out with the help of Rudolph Ulrich, Frederick Law Olmsted's chief designer for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Kearney had seen Ulrich's work while visiting the Hotel Del Monte in Monterey, California, where he had designed the grounds. For the Fresno property, the two men created a park with over a thousand trees of at least fifteen different varieties, including about 500 eucalyptus trees. Hand-tinted vintage postcard, circa 1925.