

Tales of Glen Ellen

Glen Ellen Historical Society • www.glenellenhistoricalsociety.org • Fall Issue 2011

Report from the Board—

GETTING INVOLVED

NEW OFFICERS OF THE BOARD will be chosen at our annual general meeting in Mayflower Hall next January, Saturday afternoon the 21st, at 2 pm. A good turnout of members who will help to chart our course for the year ahead is expected.

We want your suggestions and commentary, and pitching in will certainly be encouraged. There is plenty of room for help with producing this newsletter every three months, developing our quarterly presentations, and managing our online presence—in addition to assistance in gathering historically significant information and materials from around the community.

Throughout the summer and fall GEHS has had a table at the Glen Ellen Farmers' Market in Jack London Village, where many had gathered to chat up what's been happening around the valley. We plan to return to this popular venue when the market reopens in the Spring.

Along with the Sonoma Valley Historical Society and the League for Historic Preservation, GEHS serves on the executive committee of the Sonoma Valley Heritage Coalition. Tom Moritz, project manager, is developing a survey instrument for cataloging the archives of member organizations up and down the valley.

This is in preparation for applying for a larger grant to document artifacts and documents from the various collections of Sonoma Valley, which will make them more available to the public in digital form for research and display.

Many old photographs have been found and scanned for a new book titled *Around Glen Ellen*, which will be published next year by Arcadia Publishing as part of their *Images of America* series. Helen Webber is in charge of this project, which is similar to the one produced by the Sonoma Valley Historical Society several years ago. If you have any local snapshots that you think should be included, please let us know.



In this 1888 photograph we are standing in a far less populous Glen Ellen, just about where Warm Springs Road ends at Arnold Drive, looking south. The Glen Ellen Hotel stands across the street from the Northwestern Pacific Railroad station. Frank Thierkoff's house and barn is to the left at the end of the street, where it turns right behind the trainmaster's house to cross the railway and Sonoma Creek.

Town Hall Open Mike Show & Tell is Returning to Mayflower Hall

FINAL ARRANGEMENTS are being made for our sixth presentation at Mayflower Hall, next door to the Community Church on O'Donnell Lane in Glen Ellen, at 2:00 pm Saturday afternoon, November 19th. This will be another Town Hall Open Mike Show & Tell, just like the one held last spring. Neighbors who have been longtime residents of Glen Ellen will come to tell stories of what it was like in those fabulous days of YesterYear.



Building the Glen Ellen bridge in 1890. The sign says there's a \$5 fine for driving over the bridge faster than people walking.

We'll be using the town-hall open mike format, with a roving portable microphone that allows people to speak from where they are sitting if they choose. Speakers will each have five to ten minutes or more to tell a few stories about the Glen Ellen they remember, and there will be time for a few questions and comments by others.

Photographs and memorabilia may be brought for sharing, with the opportunity for them to be projected onto a screen at the front of the room while they are being discussed. They may also be scanned and digitized for sharing with friends who could not attend.

If you would like to speak, please contact Jim Shere at 935-3663 to reserve your ten minutes or so of fame. Like all previous presentations, this event will be taped for eventual distribution on DVDs—once we have found someone who can edit the tapes and transfer them into a digital format.

Admission to the event is free of charge, but come early to make sure you have a chair—these events are very popular.

Jack London Panel Astounds Audience

IF YOU WERE IN ATTENDANCE—and over a hundred people were there—you were at an amazing event. The panel discussion in August on the life and personality of Jack London played to a packed room at Mayflower Hall.

The audience was the usual highly perceptive and engaged crowd, including several students from local schools, neighbors who still had personal memories and strong feelings about the man and his family, and three of his great-grandchildren who spoke movingly about the impact his fame has had upon their lives.

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THE GLEN ELLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors: Anne Teller, Marge Everidge, Dorothy Johnson, Angela Nardo-Morgan, Archie Horton, Steven Lee, and Arthur Dawson; Jim Shere, Executive Director.

Come to our
**TOWN HALL
 OPEN MIKE
 SHOW & TELL**
 bring photos and stories of old Glen Ellen to share with your friends & neighbors
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, AT 2:00 PM
 in Mayflower Hall at the Community Church
 5311 O'Donnell Lane in Glen Ellen.
 Admission is free, but come early.

Ancient Royal Documents Discovered on Local Ranch

WHILE WE'VE BEEN AT WORK CATALOGING the extensive John Pierre and Myrtle Serres/Shirley Roberts Collection this past year, there have been several surprises. We were not prepared however for what was discovered just a few weeks ago.

We had grown accustomed to seeing artifacts from the Nineteenth Century, such as the Mexican documents of Alta California from the 1840's and the letters and diaries from the Watriss family in the 1850's. There wasn't much California history before that, except for the indigenous cultures; so the discovery of five royal Spanish documents on the local ranch, dating from 1659 to 1725, frankly stunned us.

During those years Spain was focused upon developing and establishing a presence in the far east, and considered the California coast primarily a means to an end, as support for ships embarking upon a long and hazardous voyage across the Pacific Ocean. They didn't give much thought to the California interior at the time, fully a century before General Vallejo first rode into Sonoma Valley. How these documents having to do with Spain's concerns in the distant Philippines came to be here— undiscovered until now— remains a mystery to this day.

First observations had noted the one blue cover sheet followed by 17 pale yellow sheets of formal Spanish handwriting, with flourishes typical of official documents of that time. The name Francisco Cardinas Pacheco appears on the blue cover sheet, and so the pages were referred to as the Pacheco Document and set aside for later study. When they were finally scanned in August and sent to a European expert for authentication and translation, the truth emerged.

"These leaves," Steven Dodd, a linguist and authority in Spanish history commented immediately, "seem to form a group of five... royal charters dating from between 1659 and 1725. Several of them are signed "Yo, el Rey" ("I, the King") in a different hand from the main text, so may well actually have been signed by the monarch ruling in Spain at the time, especially as they have the "rúbrica" or flourish that more or less had to be added to signatures in Spain in the past as a security measure." No less than five such signatures were eventually found.

Further study of the documents by Dodd has led him to describe them as "...a mixed bag, almost certainly kept because of the royal signatures and those of other dignitaries, since the only common strand seems to be the Philippines, with dates for the documents spread out over something like seventy years..."

To see the very paper upon which royal hands have set their mark, and to know how far in time and space they've come to be here, is deeply moving. And to touch what kings have touched brings us that much closer to comprehending the immediacy and meaning of history.

To encourage further study of these significant documents, a report including scans of each page has been

prepared in PDF format. Three earlier reports are also available, on the Alta California documents from Alcalde Guerrero and Governor Micheltorena, the letters from San Francisco written by members of the Watriss family throughout the 1850's, and the ranch journal begun by George Watriss when he purchased the Hooker Ranch in the Valley of the Moon in 1858.

A nominal fee is charged for each, but members of GEHS can receive them at no cost. Requests for further information may be sent to jshere@sonic.net.

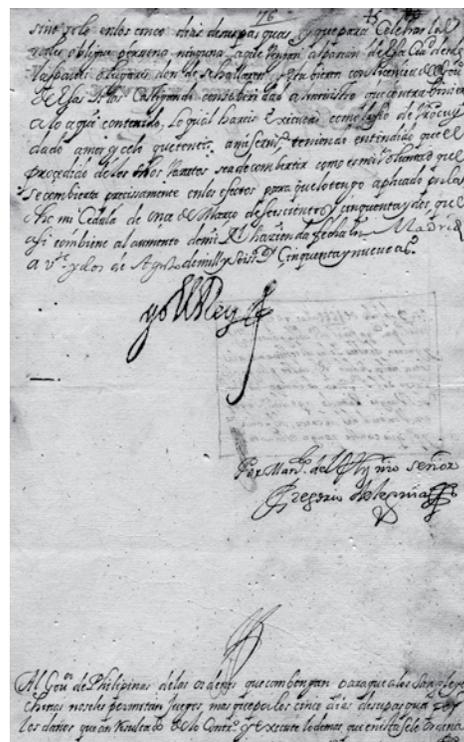


This group of young merrymakers rest near Sonoma Creek, a hundred years ago.

LONDON PANEL ASTOUNDS

Authorities on London's life—Jonah Raskin, Clarice Stasz, and Lou Leal— were articulate and diverse, disagreeing with one another at interesting times. They presented unique perspectives on the controversies of this very colorful man, addressing his politics, his view of women, and the popular rumors regarding his drinking and his death. The local writer who had become an international celebrity became much more than the caricature of a womanizing alcoholic suicidal wannabe adventurer who happened to write popular stories. The panelists detailed the way that legends can be inaugurated by biographers with agendas of their own, and described a more nuanced, layered sense of the man behind the legends.

All three presenters later spoke about the quality of the audience, saying "there was a lot of enthusiastic interest from all those attending," and "I learned a lot and enjoyed the afternoon," and "what an inspiring audience... what a great little community you have." It was in fact a thoroughly gratifying, stirring and satisfying afternoon. If you were there, you know.



The signature and rúbrica of Philip IV, clearly states "yo el Rey" —I, the King.

NAMING OUR VALLEY

STORIES HAVE LONG BEEN TOLD about the origin of the names Sonoma Valley and the Valley of the Moon. Mariano Vallejo popularized the legend that, in the Suisun language of the people that lived nearby, *sonoma* described the way the moon appears to rise as many as seven times over the jagged peaks of the mountains to the east.

The earliest Europeans to arrive, the missionaries from New Spain and the military of Alta California, called our valley *Valle de la Luna*. As the Americans arrived and settled it became known, with the help of Jack London, as the Valley of the Moon.

Vallejo's son Platon told of another Suisun meaning for the word *sonoma*: that it meant "big nose" and referred to a local chief who had been born with that remarkable feature.

However, the Suisuns were only distant neighbors to the east. Before the Miwok had come into this valley from the west some three thousand years before, the Wappo had already been here some 10,000 years. The last fluent speaker of Wappo said that *sonoma* referred to the valley as an "abandoned camping place" or, more likely "where we used to live".

But that romantic moniker, the Valley of the Moon, stuck firmly. Our best guess is that this name did originate with the Miwok, who had come from the foggy coastal lands west of Sonoma Mountain. Seeing the moon sail serenely and unimpeded through the deep transparent skies of our valley at night, they may well have thought of this valley as a place from which the moon can simply be seen.

Become an active member of the **GLEN ELLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY** today. Membership is \$25, or \$15 for seniors and students. Send your check to GEHS at PO Box 35, Glen Ellen CA 95442.