

Faded Evidence of Former Winery Exists

By Jerry Bowen

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I briefly mentioned an early stone building on a small separate seven and one-half acre parcel of land belonging to Samuel Martin who built the Stonedene mansion in 1861 in my last article. I also speculated in previous chapters of this article this was also the actual site of the Santa Eulalia Mission and that one of Indians in charge of the rancheria/mission was Chief Solano and that it was here that he returned to live out his final days.

Now, let's take a look at some more of the history of this piece of significant land.

The Indians no longer existed as a tribe in the area, Samuel Martin bought the property in the early 1850s and title to the land was secure as a result of the Land Grant litigations and resolution.

Stepping back a little, Giovanni (John) Canevascini was born in Ticano, Switzerland to parents Giacomo and Annuciata (Piantoni) Canevascini on February 17, 1847. In the "1912 History of Solano and Napa Counties" a short biography continues as follows:

"At the age of twenty-two years, in 1869, he came to the United States, landing on the Atlantic Coast, and from there coming to California. From San Francisco he came afterward to Solano County, finding employment in a vineyard; he also built twelve miles of fence in Monterey County. All of this experience was of untold value to him, not only giving a much-needed income, but giving him an excellent opportunity to see the country at the same time. In 1877 he purchased property near Suisun, and this has been his home ever since. His ranch comprises six acres and is planted to vines and fruit exclusively.

"Mr. Canevascini's marriage united him with Miss Rosa Nessi, who had come to this country from Switzerland in 1877, the year of their marriage. Two children were born of this union, but only one is now living, Ida, at home with her parents.' In a series of property transactions between Samuel Martin, and brothers Peter and Giovanni Canevascini from 1877 to 1880 Peter and Giovanni acquired the Santa Eulalia Mission property that had been on the southwestern corner of Martins Ranch.

Now we have to speculate again as to what was or wasn't there at the time. It is possible that the mission building itself was still standing at that time. In our last article we discussed whether or not the stone building that still exists today was also there.

Inside one of the rooms there is an unusual “sink” sculptured from the wall’s stonework with a hole that drained the contents onto the floor. Also embedded in the stone wall are cut nails that were probably used to hang articles or clothing on.

Cut or more commonly known as square nails are generally of three types; Hand-wrought nails made before circa 1800; Type A cut nails, circa 1790-1830; and Type B cut nails, circa 1820-1900. The wire nails common to today were manufactured beginning circa 1890. The nails in the wall are of the Type B cut nails dating from 1820 to 1900. This could possibly be used to help establish about when the stone portion of the structure was built.

Apparently the Canevascini’s constructed a wooden building on top of the original stone building. Barely visible today, painted on the front of one of the wooden sections of the building is a very faded “Peter Canevascini Winery”. The nails used in that part of the building are of the wire nail variety.

Rosa Canevascini died in 1929 and Giovanni in 1931 and were buried in Rockville Cemetery along with their daughter Mary who died in 1887 at the age of seven.

I haven’t found much else as far as the Canevascini’s history is concerned other than property sales between the brothers.

On November 15, 1904, Peter Canevascini sold two and one-half acres to Antonio Pienovi for ten dollars. The property has remained in the Pienovi family’s hands since then.

I’ll discuss some of the history and discoveries made since the property has been in the able hands of the Pienovis’ in my next article in this series.

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