

## Men and women of Solano County's past remembered

By Kristin Delaplane

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Captain Granville Perry Swift was born in Kentucky in 1821. His grandmother was Daniel Boone's younger sister. In about 1840, at age 19, Swift, a rugged individual, set out with a group of trappers headed for California. Once in California he trapped all along Cache Creek and the Sacramento River.

In time Swift located in Colusa County near Orland raising cattle and grain. In 1849, with news of the discovery of gold, Swift moved to the Feather River where he took gold out of his mine daily. In all, it amounted to over half a million dollars. He coined his gold into octagonal slugs of \$50 each bearing his private mark.

In 1856, Swift moved to Sonoma where his brother and his cousin Franklin Sears had farms. He lived there until his wife divorced him sometime after 1863. At that time he purchased the old stone house W.P. Durbin had built in Green Valley (it is now the Green Valley Country Club). This valley had long been famous and was known as "Green Hollow" in the 1830s.

Swift's two boys were cared for by Granville's older sister, Polly Jones, who, with her family, moved to Green Valley along with Swift. The family was close and Swift was well liked as is attested to in the following article that appeared in the Sonoma newspaper

"He was a loveable fellow. I knew him well during prosperity and adversity and all his life he was never known to turn his back on his old friends who were poor. He had, however, too large a heart to retain his own vast wealth, and through much generosity and misplaced confidence, much of his possessions were taken from him. It is a pity that the biography of such a man as Swift was not written during his life, so that the public might know to whom they were indebted for a series of untold value."

Swift returned to working his mines and accumulated a second fortune. Then in April 1875, he had a fatal accident near Berryessa. The mule he was riding lost its footing and both animal and rider were plunged down a steep embankment. Swift's skull was crushed. His body was returned to Green Valley and is buried at the Rockville Cemetery. At the time of his death he was worth about \$100,000.

In later years, when the Swift's Green Valley house was being remodeled, a chest inscribed with Captain Swift's name was found. It was full of his octagonal gold slugs. To this day, there are stories about possible treasures to be uncovered as Swift was known to have buried his gold in many places where he lived.

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The following is an excerpt from an interview with Edward "Bud" Ralph Freitas. His roots in Solano County go back to the mid 1800s. His father bought the Fairfield Meat Market in the 1920s and Bud worked there all his life, taking over in the late 1930s.

Tips Freitas gave to hunters harken back to the days when Bud Freitas went to the local ranches of Solano County to butcher the meat for the family's meat market. The method he uses when hunting is the same method he and his father employed. One place where they slaughtered animals was on the Waterman Ranch. There the animals were hung to dry from a giant eucalyptus tree.

"I do a lot of deer hunting. The first thing when we come in from hunting is to take care of the meat. Skin the deer out and then hang it off a pole hung between trees, so the animal is way off the ground. We wash it good and let it dry overnight. The next morning, while it's still cold, I put a sleeping bag around it to keep it cool and keep the dust and flies off it. The animal stays like that in the shade of the tree where it's nice and cool.

"When we get ready to come home, I put a lot of blankets on the bottom of the truck before putting the meat down. First thing in the morning, while the meat is still cold, I put blankets all around it. I have 15 or 20 of those moving blankets. It's simple if you know what to do.

"I see these hunters up there in Colorado. Their animals are dirty on the inside. They never clean it or wash it out. They put it on top of the camper and drive all the way back to east with the deer out in the sun and dust. They might as well throw it away. That's why a lot of people don't like wild game. When they get the game from certain people, it's spoiled already."

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The following contains more history on the Chandler family.

Anyone needing to find Lloyd McCrory Chandler of Chandler Furniture Co. knew just where to go. It was common knowledge that Chandler and a group of businessmen had a running poker game above a hardware store next to Chandler's shop.

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Here are additional excerpts of an interview with Lloyd Chandler. The first part of this interview appeared on November 8, 1998 in this column.

"My two sets of grandparents both settled in Vacaville; McCrory and Chandler. James and Katherine McCrory were from Missouri farm families.

"We'd go to Putah Creek and go swimming. That was quite a treat. You had to go up here nine miles to get to the river. We'd also go swimming out near Travis: We'd go out with the horse and buggy and go saltwater swimming there. It was indoors. (There was a saltwater swimming hole on Meridian road. It was a hole dug on a ranch with a shed built around it. Families used to go there for outings).

"For a time all the bars were over in Elmira. Vacaville was dry for many years. You'd see them getting on their horses to go over to Elmira to drink.

"There were always at least two doctors in town; Doctor Stanfield and Doctor Jenny. Lawyers generally did something else besides law business.

"There were the Baptist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches. We belonged to the Presbyterian.

"There weren't too many blacksmith shops, so the few stayed pretty busy. They didn't hire a lot of help. They did their own work.

"My folks had a buggy with two horses. I never had a buggy myself. I couldn't hitch one up if I had one. We kept the horses up at my grandfather's. He lived up on the hill behind Basic Foods.

"Sam Lum had a Chinese restaurant in town and we used to eat there a lot. That was good Chinese food; really good. He was in business a long time. There were a lot of people he helped support. He built a building and kept people there. Then when they had a chance, they sent them back to China. But Sam was afraid to go back to China in those days.

"Vacaville didn't grow much until the war. When the war came on, the soldiers came from Travis to the pool halls and places around town. Quite a few from Vacaville left to go in the service.

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The following are items considered newsworthy about the Chandlers that appeared in the paper in 1883 and 1884:

In Elmira in 1883 Milliner Mrs. K. Dally was located in the Chandler's building.

In Dixon there was a July 4th ball, the dancing lasting well into the daylight hours. F.B. Chandler and J.A. Huburt, both of Elmira attended the festivities.

In anticipation of the circus, F.B. Chandler erected a billboard 100 feet long by 14 feet high.

In Vacaville in 1883 a notable social event was the wedding of O.H. Allison and Ella Brock, daughter of L.H. Brock, a prominent Vacaville farmer. A large number of guests were invited, including the Chandlers and Dobbins, as the couple were said to move in the best circles of Vacaville's society.

In Elmira 1884 F.B. Chandler was operating a successful lumberyard and had branch yards in Madison and Winters.

In Vacaville in 1884 Corn succumbed to the competition and sold his lumber business to F.B. Chandler. Chandler had been in the lumber business for 13 years in Elmira. F.B.'s son, Harry, attended Heald's Business College and returned to take over the lumberyard in Vacaville. Harry had plans to build a two-story, 82 by 80 foot building in the Nevada Block. The upper story was to be designated as a hall for parties, meetings, dances and entertainment.

While digging for water at F.B. Chandler's lumberyard, a good specimen of coal was found and it was generally believed a strata could be found at no depth in that locality.

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