

TOWER VIEWS



August 2021

From the Archives

W.R. Cook Blacksmithing

During the late 1800s, the main mode of transportation was by horseback or horse-drawn wagon, and the man responsible for maintaining them was the blacksmith. The blacksmith was responsible for shoeing the horses, wagon repair, and when necessary, repairs to windmills and plows. Galt had numerous blacksmiths before the arrival of the automobile, and William R. Cook was one of those. Cook's establishment was divided into a blacksmith shop on the right and a wagon repair shop on the left.

Typically, a blacksmith was one who specialized in crafting tools and metal parts for a variety of uses and horseshoeing was a side job. When the automobile came along, blacksmiths became the first generation of mechanics. At the time of this photo, Cook's main competition was J.W. Iler and Son who was a block down the street. William R. Cook was also Galt's Constable between 1903 and 1905.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We welcome new members Frank Smith, Betty Vallon, John Maggy, Steve Magnasco & Marilyn Varriano.

Remember to please contact us for any address, phone or email changes that you have. We need to have updated addresses or it costs us each time a newsletter is returned for incorrect address. But more important is we want to keep everyone updated and informed of all our events and activities!

Contact Rhonda Smith with any concerns about membership. rhonda@galtsmiths.com. Or 209-745-4504.

A Message From The President



Dear Members,

I hope you are enjoying your summer. We have been experiencing our usual hot weather for this time of year. In a few months, we will be enjoying the fall weather and looking forward to the holiday season.

Preparations are underway for our annual car show, "A Drive Down Memory Lane," on August 28th. This year's car show is dedicated to the late Louise Loll Dowdell. Louise was not only our first President but also gave the name to our car show. Louise was an important part of our society and always will be. Along with the car show, we have added an Antique and Collectible Show that will be held in a different area from the car show. We are still looking for more vendors for the Antique Faire, as well as Car Show Vendors. Along with the car show, we are working on plans for our annual Wine, Beer, and Food event: Sip & Snack at the MAC. Luckily, this event has been moved to September 25th, away from the heat of July. Because of these events and the weddings held at the McFarland, our major funding is realized. Without these events, private donations, membership fees, and occasional grants, we would not be able to survive. But it takes more than a few people to organize and put on events. It takes many volunteers. Unfortunately, it seems like the same people volunteer. We have many various jobs for these events: Many jobs happen behind the

scenes and can be done from home preparing. Some happen setting up and tearing down events, and there is being a docent in the McFarland House. If you can give us some time, please contact me. It feels good being part of a successful event. Plus, many of you may have some ideas for improving events. We always welcome input from our members.

Another important announcement we should all be aware of is that Sacramento County came out yesterday with a mask requirement for all indoor activities whether vaccinated or not that took effect July 30th. We can only hope that this does not lead to what we all experienced in 2020. All we can do is continue to move in the direction of our plans and hope for the best. We realize that some bookings for weddings remain hesitant because of some uncertainty in this area. It becomes more important to support your local nonprofits and local businesses, especially small businesses.

Continue to enjoy your summer. Our first membership back from the summer break will be on September 27 and will be held in the rose garden at the Rae House Museum. Our membership meeting, Charter Night Dinner, and elections will be held on October 25th at the barn at the McFarland Ranch. Please put both dates on your calendars. Best wishes for a happy, cooler summer.

Janis Barsetti Gray

2021 Historical Society Executive Board

Janis Barsetti Gray - President
Lyle Lagge - 1st Vice President
Gale Webber - 2nd Vice President
Liz Haglund - Recording Secretary
Toni Gerling - Corresponding Secretary
Bobbi Lewis - Treasurer
Dan Tarnasky - Historian

Contact the Historian

- If you need or have Galt area historic information (includes Herald, Thornton, Liberty, Hicksville, Clay Station, Arno, Elliott, Colony, and Arno).
- If you have historic Galt area or family photos for us to scan and return.
- If you have area historical artifacts to display at the Rae House Museum.

Dan Tarnasky
Historian/Archivist
(916) 952-2368
blkcrssn@hotmail.com

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100-Year-Old Homes That Still Exist

*Most of the great old homes from Galt's past are long gone
but there are still a few you can see today if you look for them.*



*Oscar Wiles House
Built in 1880
McFarland Street
Oscar Wiles was a Galt real estate agent in the 1910s.*



*Joseph Still House
Built in 1900
A Street
Joseph Still had a large ranch southeast of Galt.*



*James Ferguson House
Built in 1875
Third Street
James Ferguson was one of Galt's first contractors.*



*Dr. James T. Christian House
Built in 1912
Church Street
Dr. Christian was a physician in Galt during World War I.*

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Calendar of Events

This calendar has not been approved by the board, but will be at our next meeting. Please look over the calendar and let any board member know if you see something that needs correction or added.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Aug 9 | Executive Board Meeting - 4pm |
| Aug 28 | Car Show & Antique Faire at McFarland Ranch |
| Sept 5 | Rae Museum Open House - 1-4pm |
| Sept 13 | Executive Board Meeting - 4pm |
| Sept 25 | Sip & Snack at the MAC |
| Sept 27 | General Meeting - 6pm |
| Oct 3 | Rae Museum Open House - 1-4pm |
| Oct 11 | Executive Board Meeting - 4pm |
| Oct 25 | General Meeting / Charter Night - 6pm |
| Nov 7 | Rae Museum Open House - 1-4pm |
| Nov 8 | Executive Board Meeting - 4pm |
| Nov 22 | General Meeting - 6pm |
| Dec 5 | Rae Museum Christmas Open House - 1-4pm |
| Dec 5 | MAC Christmas Open House - 12-3pm |
| Dec 13 | Executive Board Meeting - 4pm |
| Dec 20 | General Meeting and Christmas - 6pm |

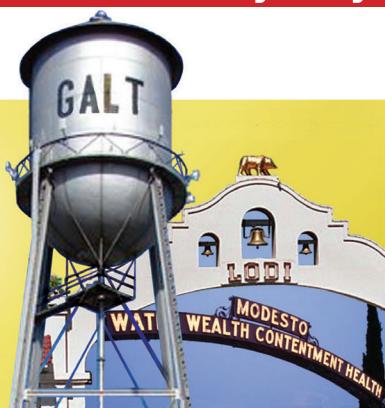
Thank you Rita Martin and Earl Frey for all your hard work!



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Bits & Pieces

Thanks to the Teen Center

Rita Martin, our Head Docent at the McFarland House, has been getting the house ready for visitors during our annual car show and for Sip & Snack at the MAC. She wants everyone to know how much help that some of the teens from the Center have been. She wants to especially thank Isabella Kuntz and Sophia McFadden for all the help in the yard and cleaning the house. We are so blessed to have formed such a wonderful relationship with the Teen Center. We want to give a special thanks to Annette and Sarah for finding us the help when we need it. If you have passed by our old meeting hall on C St, you can see all the work they have done to the building. We are so glad that they found a good home.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for the Car Show August 28th and for Sip & Snack at the MAC on September 25th. Contact Janis at 209 747-3861 or at ricjan@barsettivineyards.com for both events. I will let you know what areas we need help in.

Rae Museum

Dan Tarnasky, Rae Museum Historian/Archivist/Curator, has been working to finish the Museum. If you have not been inside yet, you will experience some extensive Galt history. The museum is set up for self-tours with signage explanations. However, if you have questions, our Head Docent at the Rae, Kathleen Amos, is there to give you a very knowledgeable history of Galt. Remember, the Rae Museum is open the first Sunday of each month unless that Sunday is a holiday.

Bookings at the Ranch

Heather Farmer has the McFarland grounds rented out almost completely to the end of this year; and many dates are already booked for next year. This is much needed revenue to keep us going.

Movie Night

Movie Night at the McFarland Ranch has been cancelled for the rest of the year. We hope to pick it back up next year.

Annual Car Show

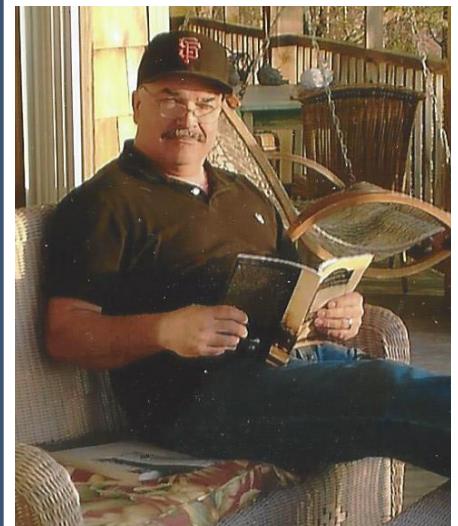
Our annual Car Show, A Drive Down Memory Lane, has quite a few cars already registered. We are hoping to have 75-80 cars this year. Based on registrations, that could happen. Along with the car show, we will be having our first Antique Faire in an opposite field. We are still looking for vendors for both the Antique Faire and for vendors for the car show. Contact Gale Webber for both events if you want to be a vendor. Gale: 209 471-1525. James Guthmiller is the Chairperson for the car show. If you know anyone who wants to participate and register their car (1972 model or older), contact James at 209 663-0268. We want as many as possible pre-registered so that the paperwork can be done in advance so no hold ups at the gate.

Sip & Snack at the MAC

We are still looking for more breweries and food businesses. We could accommodate a few more wineries too. If you know of a restaurant, wineries, caterer, grocery chain, pizza place, brewery who may be interested in giving out tastes or samples of their specialties, have them contract Janis for a participation form. This is a great opportunity for these businesses to advertise for themselves by not only giving out bite size samples, but handing out flyers, menus, etc. Tickets to attend for the general public can be purchased through Eventbrite.

Event Barn

The Event barn at the McFarland is slowly coming along. The Water Resource Board for the county did let us know that even though the ranch is in a flood plain, the barn had been designed to take that into account. We were concerned we would have to raise the level. But all is good. The County had the plans and going over it with our engineer. Nothing moves fast.



Contact the Historian

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Thornton Migrant Camp

In 1939, John Steinbeck published his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* about the plight of impoverished Southern Plains tenant farmers moving to California for a better life during the Great Depression. Chapters 22-26 have the Joad family discovering and then living in a government-run migrant camp in Weedpatch south of Bakersfield, California. Did you know that Thornton had a similar camp that existed during the same period as Steinbeck's story?

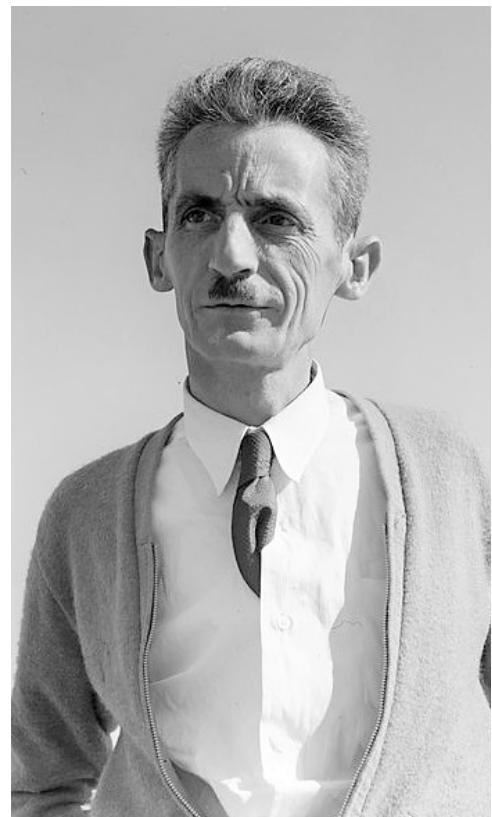
It all started with the Great Depression (1929-1939) when unemployment spiraled, and farmers experienced low prices. Drought added to the problem in the southern plains states of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri. Farmers couldn't produce a crop to provide for their families. Rumors of acres of fruits and vegetables needing to be picked convinced destitute farm families to pack up and head west to California.

Upon arrival, these families didn't find the opportunities they were envisioning. With the influx of workers trying to find fieldwork, low wages and few jobs followed. With little money in their pockets, homeless

migrants lived in squatter's camps (tents by the side of the road) or meager camps established by farmers. Sanitation and security became a problem.

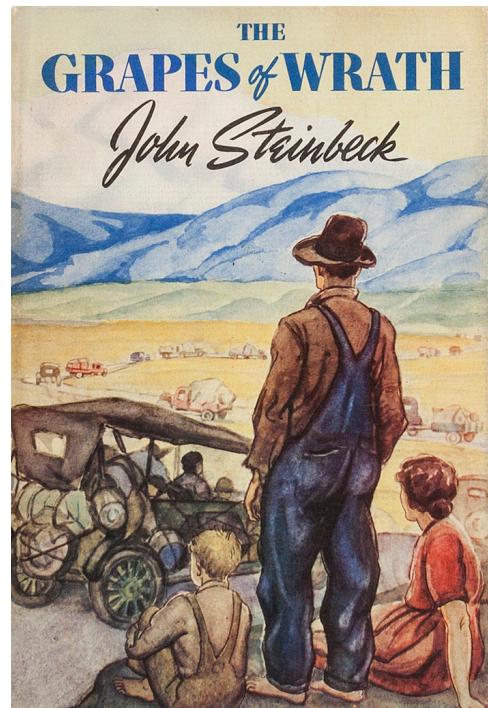
The condition of migrant families living in California came to the federal government's attention. Starting in 1935, both the Federal Security Administration and Federal Resettlement Administration built 18 camps in California's Central Valley from Arvin in the south to Yuba City in the north. The first camp was Arvin Federal Government Camp south of Bakersfield. The camp had an administration building, community hall, post office, library, and barbershop. Tents with plywood platforms made up the original housing for families, later replaced by small single-family wood-frame structures. A government-appointed manager was onsite, but the residents governed themselves. The man in charge, Tom Collins, developed the camp so well that he became the "set up" man for the FSA. He traveled up through California establishing migrant camps over the next four years, including Thornton.

The idea for the Thornton camp started to develop in 1936. Elmer Evers, superintendent of the Thornton Cannery and secretary of the Thornton Progress Club, became the contact for the Federal Resettlement Administration. He helped the federal government find the property to establish a camp. The camp was constructed on the southwest corner of Walnut Grove and Thornton Roads. The FRA wanted to experiment with a demonstrational camp. The area would have 30 modern three-room homes for permanent families and 100 steel tent-type shelters for transient families. Each permanent home was on one-tenth to one-quarter acre, and the ground surrounding each home had to be planted in garden vegetables for table needs. Rent was \$8.20 a month for a house and 10 cents a week for tent shelters.



Tom Collins

By July 1938, the Thornton Progress Club and the Federal Resettlement Administration had established the Thornton Migratory Labor Camp. Tom Collins organized the first 350 men, women, and children into three districts with a representative for a self-governing board of directors elected by the "campers." The community had piped water and sanitary facilities. A nurse made regular rounds, and a playground was provided for the children. Streets and roads were laid out in a grid and oiled. A community center building housed a recreation room, nursery, meeting room, kitchen, and clinic. A portion of the residents farmed a 320-acre ranch adjacent to the camp. Later, a dairy was added. Those not working on the Farm Center ranch were employed on Delta area ranches or the cannery. Once his job was complete, Tom Collins handed over the management to Frank McPherry.



The Thornton Migratory Camp operated efficiently for the next four years until the



Early days of the Migrant Camp

beginning of World War II. At that point, American factories recruited every able-bodied person, not in the military. Families were able to move out of the camp and into their own homes. The federal government auctioned off the camp ranch and dairy. Mexican nationals, the new farm labor force, moved into the camp and occupied it into the 1960s.

Most of the old camp has been replaced by new housing governed by the Housing Authority of San Joaquin County. A few of the steel tent shelters remain. In 2016, the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a bronze monument to commemorate the Thornton Migratory Labor Camp. The memorial is located on the fire district's grounds on Thornton Road, yards in front of the original site of the camp

An interesting side note to this story involves Tom Collins and John Steinbeck. Before establishing the other migratory

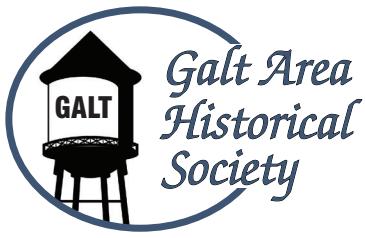
farm labor camps after Arvin, Collins and Steinbeck toured the Central Valley farming communities interviewing those families displaced by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Steinbeck used reports written about these interviews for his book *The Grapes of Wrath*. Inspiration for the

character, Jim Rawley, the camp manager in Steinbeck's book, was Collins, as was one of the two dedications in the book, "to Tom who lived it." There is a good chance that John Steinbeck visited Thornton with Tom Collins.

Historian



Children in the washing area



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