



TOWER VIEWS

Galt Area Historical Society, Inc.

Arno • Clay • Colony • Elliott • Galt • Herald • Hicksville • Liberty • Thornton

March 2023

From the Archives Ed Hall's Galt Motors



Ed Hall owned Galt Motors, a Chevrolet dealership located on Lincoln Way from 1948 to 1960. Seen here leaning against a Need Ranch truck with his chief mechanic Archie Skaggs, Hall serviced all makes and models of cars and trucks and would even wash your vehicle. Galt

Motors was located across from the Galt Theatre. Because of space constraints, Hall didn't keep many new vehicles on his lot. Some dealers only had a few models on display. Customers had to order the model they wanted and then wait for the car or truck to be delivered.

March 2023
Newsletter

GAHS Membership

Please contact us for any address, phone or email changes.

Contact

Liz Haglund

with any questions about membership.

aguire@hotmail.com

or (209) 327-1098

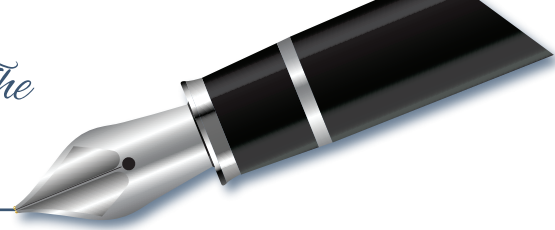
If you have received your annual dues invoice please remit payment. If not, let Liz know. She will gladly get you an invoice.

Consider gifting a membership!

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A Message From The President



Welcome to March! It has been a very interesting winter so far: Heavy rains, flooding, toppled trees, power outages and a very brisk cold spell. While winter is not over, we have daylight savings time beginning soon on March 12th and extending until November this year. This extra daylight is good for all the cleanup and repairs that we have to do at McFarland Ranch and the cemeteries. The Rae Museum did not sustain any damage. Later in this newsletter more in detail about all the damage.

According to one of the books written by Baxter Sperry, Jim Sawyer of Galt, born in 1875, told a story from his father "that one year there was a great flood along Dry Creek where the Liberty Township was located. He said the winds were so great it blew cattle from there to Clements." This sounds more like a folklore because moving a 1200-1300lb cow that distance would not seem plausible. But going forward, it is described in January of 1862, "the whole country for miles around was an unbroken ocean of wood, fences, bridges, lumber, wrecks of houses and debris of all kinds floated along the thoroughfares upon the flood." It was also reported the same occurred in other areas of San Joaquin County. It would seem that they did have tornado winds of great power through this area. Because of the flooding, you would see the Elliott and Liberty Townships rebuilding on higher bluffs from their original sites. I bring this story up for a couple of reasons. One, what we experienced recently was not unique.

Perhaps more devastating because of an increase in our population, buildings and businesses. The people in 1852 did as we do now: Rebuilt and moved on with life. Second, are these stories exactly true? Are they recollections to the best of someone's memory? Are they embellished? Who knows today. This is why we need to make notations of our life's occurrences and events; and those of our town and area. Perhaps someday someone will look back at our town and just try to fill in the blanks because stories were not saved or told; or a local news outlet told stories the best they could with the "facts" they had. Please start telling your stories to your families and encourage them to record or write down what you say. Check your old photos and write on the back who the photo is of and the approximate date. No one wants to guess wrong after we are gone. Guessing only changes the facts. Forward your recordings and notes to our Historian, Dan Tarnasky for archiving. Your words and remembrances will be read by many years from now; and you, too, will be remembered as part of our town and area history. Do we really think cows can fly in a storm like they had? Maybe, or maybe not. I was not here in 1862 so I have to "believe" what I read; or not. "A picture is worth a thousand words." There were no pictures in 1861. All we have are descriptive words; and they can be powerful. If only we knew it really happened as described.

Happy Spring, March 20th (Already)!!

Janis Barsetti Gray

2023 Historical Society Executive Board

Janis Barsetti Gray ~ President
Lyle Lagge ~ 1st Vice President
Gale Webber ~ 2nd Vice President
Liz Haglund ~ Recording Secretary
Tom Haglund ~ Treasurer



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Upcoming Dates

March 13:
Executive Board Meeting
4pm at Barsetti Tasting Room

March 27:
General Members Meeting
6:00pm at the Parks &
Recreation Building
610 Chabolla Avenue

April 1:
Kite Day / Eggstravaganza
9:00am to 2:00pm
McFarland Ranch

April 10:
Executive Board Meeting
4pm at Barsetti Tasting Room

April 24:
General Members Meeting
Time & Location TBD

May 8:
Executive Board Meeting
4pm at Barsetti Tasting Room

May 22:
General Members Meeting
Time & Location TBD

Trip Through the Cemetery

Last week's gravestone photo had the inscription Corporal Silas T. Merrill Company F 3rd Minnesota Infantry. Like the previous article, Merrill was a veteran of the Civil War.

Silas Timothy Merrill was born to Samuel and Rachel Merrill in Ohio but grew up in Wisconsin. As a young man, Silas followed the family to Minnesota, where he enlisted in the 3rd Minnesota Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War outbreak. He was assigned to Company F and participated in the Battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee (July 1862), where Nathan Bedford Forrest captured them. After being exchanged for Confederate prisoners, Company F participated in the defeat of the Sioux at the Battle of Wood Lake.

In July 1863, they joined Ulysses S. Grant's army at the Siege of Vicksburg. After the war, Silas Merrill married Lydia Porter and joined the family farm in Minnesota, where their three children (Silas, Milton, and Anna) were born. Sometime around 1898, the Merrill family moved to Santa Clara, California, and continued to farm. In 1905, they made their way to Galt, where they bought a farm north of Galt on the Sacramento/Stockton Road (later Stockton Blvd.). In 1908, Silas Merrill became the Justice of the Peace for the Dry Creek Township (Galt). In 1914, Merrill became the 6th postmaster in the short history of Galt. Silas T. Merrill passed away in 1916.



for next month's newsletter...

"Who was Jane Armstrong?"

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Bits & Pieces

Kite Day/Eggstravaganza

April 1st we will hold our second annual Kite Day/Eggstravaganza. We have had Kite Day for many years, but last year we added additional activities. We saw approximately 2,000 people visit the McFarland Ranch at our event last year. Many were flying kites, some hunting Easter eggs, others enjoying the vendors and some touring the historic McFarland House. We hope to have a day with clear weather and just the right amount of wind. Gale Webber (209-471-1525) is the chair of the event and Lyle Lagge will be heading the Kite area. Gale is now the organizer of volunteers for all areas of the Society. If you want to help with the kites, hiding Easter Eggs, docenting the house, greeting the people at the gate, let Gale know so she has you on her list and can make the assignments.

Tea at the Rae

Joan Werblun is our chair again for this great event supporting the Rae Museum. It will be held May 13th, the day before Mothers' Day. What a great gift for the mothers in your life. There is a flyer in this newsletter. If you want to volunteer to help, please contact Gale Webber (209-471-1525) for assignments.

Galt Saturday Market

The City of Galt is again hosting the Saturday Market series on the Promenade on 4th Street the first Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. from March through November. The Saturday Market is a fun and thrifty way to obtain farm fresh produce and other artisan made "farm to fork" goodies. The Society will host an informational booth on each of the Saturdays. If you would like to help tell the Society's story, encourage membership, sell some of our books, give out our literature, and talk about the events and weddings at McFarland, please contact Gale Webber. This is a great opportunity to encourage people to visit the Rae House Museum and McFarland Ranch and provide information about upcoming events such as Kite Day and let people know about the local history we support and preserve.

General Meetings Begin

The Society's Winter Recess concludes this month. In March we begin our General Member Meetings again, beginning Monday, March 27 at 6:00 p.m. This meeting will be held at the Parks and Recreation Building at 610 Chabolla Avenue at 6:00pm.

Email Addresses for Members

If your email address has changed or if we don't have your address, please notify us at gahs@galthistory.com.

Open Houses Begin

Open Houses at both the Rae House Museum and the McFarland Ranch will begin Sunday, March 5th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you are interested in docenting, contact Gale Webber (209-471-1525) for assignments and instructions. Please tell your friends and family about the historic homes. It is amazing how many times we hear from Galtonians that they did not know these two places existed.

Weather Damage at McFarland

During the heavy storms in January, McFarland Ranch sustained some damage to the roof on the main bathrooms, damage to the tractor shed, water damage to the bunk house, and lots of standing water. The storm also amplified the fact that a couple of locations have trees that require arborist related pruning or removal for safety purposes. Lyle and his crew have done what they can and will have to hire out additional tree work.

Major Upgrades at McFarland Ranch

Every so often our insurance company sends out an auditor to look over every building at McFarland Ranch. This time they went through everything and found many things that have to be repaired. If not repaired it can affect our insurance coverage. Items such as roofing, electrical, and safety are among issues noted. We will have to hire certified people to do this

work. As things get old, this happens. As our Treasurer and Bookkeeper Tom Haglund has been stating, we must have money set aside for unknown expenses. These items are an excellent example of that fact.

Liberty and Elliott Cemetery Damage

Both cemeteries sustained damage with falling trees. The Liberty has a large tree down toward the back and large limbs down from two other oak trees. The Elliott has three headstones damaged, one tree down, and a large oak branch that took out the fence. Eric Schneider, our Cemetery Chair is working on fixing the Elliott. We are getting bids to take out the downed trees from both cemeteries. If anyone needs firewood, let us know. You would have to cut the wood, take it, and clean up all branches, leaving nothing behind.

New Flags

New flags have been ordered for the Rae Museum and the Liberty Cemetery. Eric has replaced the flag at the Elliott Cemetery.

Your Stories

Our Historian and Rae House Museum Curator, Dan Tarnasky and his wife, Sonia have been brainstorming. They have suggested that our members should submit short stories to us about what they remember or have been told about Galt and our area. Each month we will print one of them in our newsletter. Dan would also archive your stories to be held at the museum for future generations to read. Start thinking now for April. Submit your stories to Dan Tarnasky to be put in the newsletter by email: historian@galthistory.com or address them to GAHS PO Box 782; Galt 95632.

In Memory

We recently learned of the passing of one of our past-presidents of the GAHS, Scott Lethbridge. Our sincere condolence to Susan and her family. Scott was our President in 2009 and 2010. Also, Maria Cabral, mother of our member and past Board member, Maria Spannuth, passed away. We would like to express our condolences to the Cabral and Spannuth families.

8th Annual Galt Drive Down Memory Lane

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Saturday, August 26, 2023



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Galt Area Historical Society
Eggstravaganza & Kite Day
Saturday, April 1, 2023
9 AM—2 PM
McFarland Living History Ranch 8899 Orr Road

Food * Vendors
Pie Eating Contest
Egg Hunt * Crafts * Egg Drop
Easter Bunny Pictures

Games & Activities
9 AM - 2 PM
Egg Hunt starts at 9:00 AM
Eggs are hidden all over the Ranch
Pie Eating Contest - NOON
Egg Drop ~ 1:00 PM

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Tea at the Rae

Saturday, May 13, 2023
1:00 pm ~ 3:30 pm
Rae House Museum 204 Oak Avenue

\$40 Per Person

Tickets
Joan Werblun 209-745-0726
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An Oral History of Eddie Ambrogio

Charles Del Ambrogio (b 11/6/1876), came to this country in 1890 from Bellinzona, Switzerland, at fourteen years of age. He dropped the “Del” in his name at that time. Upon arriving in California, Charlie worked at the Van Lobensel Dairy Ranch in Vorden. Then, Charlie became close friends with Mickey Valensin and G.B. “Germain” Sargenti. In 1906, the year of the San Francisco Earthquake, there was a great flood. The cows had to be moved from the ranch to Crocker; they were milked on a barge. After the disaster, Dr. Obed Harvey took Charlie in as a partner on the Harvey Ranch in Galt. It was the beginning of a fourteen-year partnership Charlie would share with Fred Harvey, Dr. Harvey’s son.

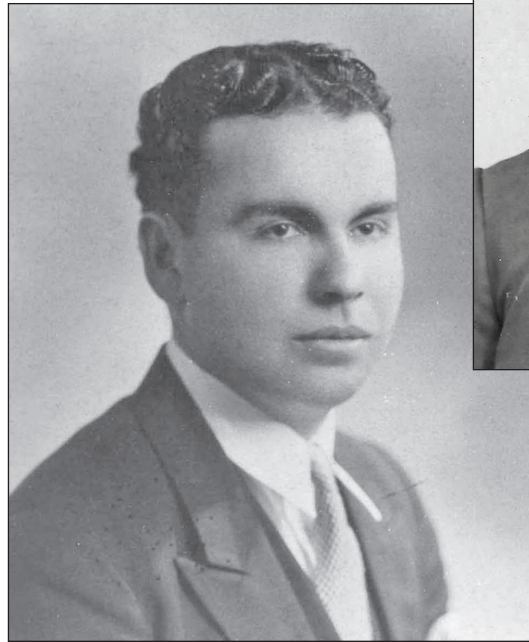
Clementina Sargenti, Eddie’s mother, came here from Quartino, Switzerland, in 1874 to live with her sister Adele who was married to G.B. “Germain” Sargenti, also from Switzerland. G.B. was not related. Germain, a close friend who leased land on the Harvey Ranch, introduced Charlie to Clementina. They were married in Vorden. On January 9, 1906, Inez Ambrogio became their firstborn. Eddie arrived two years later at the Harvey Ranch on September 9, 1908.

Ambrogio’s lived on the three-thousand-acre Harvey Ranch from 1906 to late 1918 on the old Hull-McClory place. They established a dairy farm of 250 to 300 cows. They shipped cream to San Francisco and made their cheeses. They were the first dairy to supply the Sego Milk Company in Galt. The Ambrogios also made 1000 to 1500 gallons of wine each year in the wine cellar in the house. They worked hard and saved. Mom pitched the hay and milked the cows in addition to cleaning the house, making cheeses, and scrubbing clothes in a tub with a washboard. For food, they grew vegetables and raised chickens. Since the ranch had no electricity, water was heated on a wood stove. Baths were sometimes chilly. They also had little money. Despite all the chores and hard work, Charlie and Clementina wanted Inez and Eddie to enjoy their childhood days, so they were often freed from chores.

At five, his parents bought Eddie a little rifle. It became common to see him in his patched bib overalls shooting squirrels that scared the cows and gophers that ruined the land. That was his job.

Since everyone needs some time off from work to pursue a hobby, fishing in Grizzly

Eddie Ambrogio



Charles Ambrogio

Slough became Eddie’s favorite pastime. Eddie remembered the four-mile jaunt to the grammar school on B Street with sister Inez in a horse and buggy. On not-so-lucky days, they hiked the distance to the grammar school that swayed in the wind- the two-story school located on B Street, between 5th and 6th.

Eddie also enjoyed telling the story about the Swiss picnics. Every year his father would organize a Swiss picnic at the site of what is now the Fairsite School. Herbert Hoover came every year to renew his old friendship with Fred Harvey, a fellow graduate from Stanford. Hoover also enjoyed participating in the ranch demonstrations and fun competitions. As the story goes, Eddie got drunk on steamed beer. He was two at the time. Mother was not pleased. When Eddie announced that he was going into town, the chase was on. Of course, mom won.

By the time Eddie was ten, several hundred hogs and a large herd of cattle were added to the ranch, and so were horses. One hundred horses were used for everything from hauling and raking to plowing the fields. Eddie also had a new job – cutting cattle- and

three saddle horses came with that job. Of course, ranching for a ten-year-old does come with its share of danger. Eddie remembered when he rode bare back, and his horse was stung by a bee. The horse reared and swam into Dry Creek, slamming Eddie into an oak tree. That tree saved his life. The sore horse and bruised Eddie eventually made it back home, neither of them worse for the ordeal. He remembered when he was cutting up pumpkins for the hogs, nearly cutting off his finger, and when Clementina’s younger brother, Uncle Kelly Sargenti, was caught in a flood with a horse team. He attempted to brave the water with the team but didn’t make it. He and the team were washed off the road. The horses drowned, and Uncle Kelly was saved by hanging on an oak tree. These were Edie’s memories of childhood in Galt.

On June 22, 1920, Charlie Ambrogio pitched hay all day by hand and milked 47 cows before sundown on the hot, sweltering day. At two in the morning his heart stopped. It took the doctor several hours to get there, but he could do nothing. At the age of 44,

- continued next page

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Charlie died in the old Hull-McClory house and left a wife and two young children, Eddie, 11, and Inez, 13. With his death, a chapter in each of their lives had ended.

With dad gone, the family moved to town. Mother bought a two-acre plot of land on Oak Street from Billy Hicks. Mom called it the Ambrogio Dairy. They grew alfalfa and kept ten cows. They purchased the cows from Roll Brewster, the town constable, who owned a dairy on A Street. And so, at the age of twelve, Eddie exchanged his horse for a bicycle – basket in front and one on the back- and made twenty-five to thirty trips to deliver milk to seventy-five customers in Galt. In 1921, Eddie delivered milk in a horse and buggy, and in 1922 he bought himself a young mare. In 1924, he wrote his first check for four hundred and nineteen dollars for a Model – T Ford that he bought from Mr. Barletta, who lived where Spaans's Cookies factory is today.

From 1920 to 1927 – Eddie's grammar school and high school days – he continued to go to sleep at 11 and rise at 3 am to milk the cows and run his route. Despite the grueling schedule, he became the star and Captain of the Galt High School basketball team and treasurer of the student body. When he graduated from high school in 1927, he even secured a basketball scholarship to Stanford. Since the scholarship only paid for one quarter each year, Eddie decided to attend Galt Technical Junior College of Aeronautics in 1928-29 and majored in aeronautical engineering.

After the college closed, Eddie attended Cal Berkeley from 1929 to 1930, his junior year. Then he ran out of money. In 1930, Eddie got his big break. Credit and financing were impossible in those Depression years, but Eddie managed to do it. Guy Foulke, the owner of the Valley Investment Company, placed his faith and confidence in this energetic young man with the gift for the dollar. At that time, Ed and Albert Hall owned Galt Motors. They sold refrigerators, washers, radios, and cars – Pontiacs and Oldsmobiles. The brothers also owned a rice farm that failed because of a flood. Times were hard, and the brothers could no longer hold on to the businesses. Guy made it possible for Eddie to finance the Galt Motors Company. And yes, the business was a great success. Between 1930 and 1949, Eddie sold appliances and installed and repaired them. Most of the pumps on New Hope Road and many others in this area are probably his handy work.

In 1932, Eddie was selling insurance at



229 4th Street; a building owned by Wallace Sawyer. The dance hall adjacent to his office caught fire. The Sawyer building and the Bradford Hotel burned to the ground. Only the walls remained. Eddie helped fight that fire. After Sawyer remodeled the building, he offered Eddie spacious quarters for his growing business. In 1945, Eddie bought the building from Sawyer's daughter, Marguerite White, and remained there until 1989.

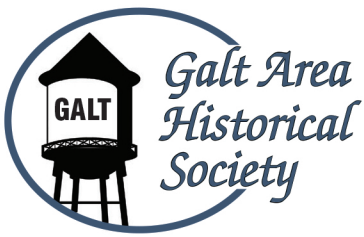
In 1932, Eddie's mother, Clementina, married John Smith, and the two renamed the dairy on Oak Street the Ambrogio-Smith Dairy. They stayed in business until 1942. In that year, Eddie bought three houses and five lots. One place was purchased from Fred Thomas, the Manager of the Sego Milk Company. We know it today as the "Headquarters" beauty salon. Another was the house next door, whose location today serves as the Headquarters parking lot. He also purchased Dr. Greer's medical office, which he eventually sold to Roy Marriott, whose son now owns Express Lane. The other lots were destined to change the map of the town to the east of Lincoln Way. In 1942, Eric Spiess wanted to build a shopping center, but there was a problem. C Street ended at Lincoln Highway. He asked Eddie to donate the lots for a through street. Eddie agreed, and with the approval of the City

Council, it was done. Bob Biederman, Ben Casado, and Laurence Littleton were on the Council.

In 1948-49, Eddie negotiated with Albert Osler for the property that was once the Shad McKinstry Livery Stable and the adjacent lots. It was then, as it is now, known as the Old Jail. Fred May was the Jail's first judge, and his son, Clifford May, was its last. In its walls are over 100 years of Galt's history. Eddie often talked about restoring it. He wanted it for his next office.

Eagle-Eyed Eddie never missed an opportunity somehow to better his life or the lives of others. He sponsored sixteen bowling teams, eight of them from the high school. Three years in a row, his league triumphed over Lodi. In Stockton, his company won a tournament. He sponsored softball teams and supported their activities. He was also an avid hunter who owned a pheasant club, a Labrador, and a Pointer. But not all his adventures were successful. At one time, he thought he would become an oil baron. He and his brother-in-law, Ted Veach, thought they would hit oil on Clay Station Road. Eddie bought oil leases. The only thing they hit was granite! Eddie lost his leases, and Ted Veach was no longer Head-Driller for the operation!

- Jane C. Bilello



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