

Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

Recent Discoveries in the Valley of the Moon

What follows is the text of a talk that I gave March 23rd, at the annual luncheon of the Sonoma County Historical Society at the Flamingo Conference Resort and Spa in Santa Rosa. The slides referred to will be incorporated into a future version of this PDF, as soon as possible.



Good Afternoon—

I want to thank you for letting me come to talk with you about the adventures and discoveries of these past two years over in the Valley of the Moon; I've been looking forward to telling you something about what I've found, but I'll really only be able to scratch the surface this afternoon. This enormous project is clearly a work in progress, and promises to be so for quite some time.

It's really good to have Diane Smith here with us today— you so completely deserve the award that you received, for what you've accomplished over the years. Thank you for all you've done.

I have a special thanks to Shirley Roberts for allowing me to come into her home to explore and index what has turned out to be a most amazing collection of documents and artifacts from the 19th and 20th Century— and some from even earlier— that have accumulated on her ranch, which is part of the original Agua Caliente land grant in the Valley of the Moon, dating back to 1839.

I'd also like to thank my accomplice and companion Peter Meyerhof, who has accompanied me on several visits to the ranch; his calm counsel has kept my head on straight during some very heady times.

Finally, of course, there is my good, patient, kind and hardworking backstage wife Maria, without whom none of this could have been possible, it goes without saying.

Due to the complexity and detail of this talk, it's been rather carefully prepared, so that I'll remember to say all the things I want to tell you. If any of you are interested, a PDF of it will be made available on my website at jimshere.com and the Glen Ellen Historical Society's website at glenellenhistoricalsociety.org— each

of which were designed and launched by Maria. This has to be a brief and cursory description of only a few of the things that I have found, which will not do justice to the thrilling experience of having found them. But you might hear that between the lines, and in my voice from time to time.

I first got to know Shirley Roberts two years ago, when she moved her fine art gallery and studio from Duncans Mills up on the Russian River, where it had been for many years, down to Jack London Village, where I keep my own office. As we got to know one another I learned that she still lives in the house where she grew up, on the original Watriss Ranch— now known as the Serres Ranch— down on the Sonoma Highway a few miles south of Glen Ellen. In fact, she lives in the original Watriss home, which was built there of native redwood and stone in the late 1850's.

[Slide #2: living room]

Shirley's home still has the original furnishings that had been brought around Cape Horn in 1850— the pianoforte, the massive armchairs and decorative occasional tables and great chesterfields, the paintings, the drapes and rugs— to enter her home is to reenter the 19th Century. She grew up there surrounded by a familiar heritage— but, some items still held puzzles for her. In particular, she said, there were a couple of papers handwritten in Spanish that could not be deciphered; and would I look at them to see if I could figure out what they were.

[Slide #3: scrolls]

They had been kept in a cylindrical weather-tight leather map case, which looked to me like just the container to keep documents safe and dry on long horse-back rides from place to place. I'll never forget the day she brought them to me. As soon as I spotted the names and dates I quickly put them back in their case. They dated from the turbulent 1840's, when Alta California— under the rule of a weakened Mexican government— was preparing for a seemingly inevitable confrontation with the growing population of Americans.

Realizing this was an extraordinary set of documents needing more deliberate study, I brought the leather case home and asked Maria to put on a pair of the gloves that she uses for doing housework, and while she unrolled them across our dining table I took photographs of whatever it was that was about to appear.

[slide #4: the Micheltorena document]

Then we went over the documents with a magnifying glass, to get a general sense

of them. That evening there was a meeting of the board of the Sonoma County Historical Society, so I brought the documents along for advice. It was quite an evening, when a dozen or so historians, seasoned in handling artifacts, seemed as surprised and excited to see them as I had been, and we discussed the next steps that had to be taken.

And here I want to voice my appreciation to the board for the encouragement and advice I've received throughout these months. The Sonoma County Historical Society has a remarkable, wonderful team in charge.

First they referred me to Dan Markwyn, professor of history emeritus at SSU, who recognized their significance and worked with me to translate a few of the words, and recommended that we call in Eric Stanley, curator of historic collections at the Sonoma County Museum. Eric confirmed Dan's opinion regarding the documents.

The next order of business was to see to their translation, in order to see what they said. The Sonoma County Historical Society donated funds so that Boris Bruton could begin the very arduous work of translating the two scrolls, after they had been painstakingly photographed and digitized by Sonoma County archive photographer Sean Bressie, with Maria and myself as his assistants in handling the fragile documents.

Two other experts that have been very helpful in this and the work that followed were Holly Anderson, a paper conservator who has worked with such documents for galleries and museums in the past, and Steve Blackmer, the antiquarian bookseller at Chanticleer Books in Sonoma.

The first document is an extremely damaged but still legible scroll handwritten in Spanish. No signature or date is evident, but it was clearly written by Governor Manuel Micheltorena (whose name appears in the opening lines), and who served from 1842 to 1845, during a very politically charged time in which he was attempting to establish an infrastructure that was desperately needed. I'll read the opening section:

"Citizen Manuel Micheltorena, Brigadier General of the Mexican Government, Adjutant General, Governor & Comandante General and Inspector for the Department of the Californias. The Supreme Government, having extended its protection over this fertile and delightful land, and desirous of furthering its growth, has granted me the powers to promote improvements to it, among which what has come to my attention most prominently are the foreign ships that transact business and trade in our ports. This freedom of trade is entirely against our law, though tolerated for many years out of necessity, and because of its benefits. I have called

together a Committee of prominent citizens to consult with me on this matter..." and he goes on to describe new regulations and tariffs to be imposed by the government, and the procedures established for collecting duty.

slide #5: the Guerrero document]

The second document is a moderately damaged scroll, also handwritten in Spanish. It refers to regulations established by Governor Pio Pico regarding the creation of a standing militia for defense of the Department of Alta California against the anticipated invasion by the Americans. It is dated October 16th, 1845, and signed by Sub-Prefect [regional governor] and Alcalde (magistrate) of Yerba Buena Francisco Guerrero. This was just a half year before the Bear Flag Revolt took place in Sonoma on June 14th 1846. Again, I'll read a few lines to give you a sense of the prerequisites that were established for serving in this militia:

"For the purposes of this enlistment, prospective enlistees will be subject to the following requirements: First, they must be citizens in full exercise of their rights. Second, they shall not be in the employ of the Public Administration [which means no civil servants, I suppose]. Third, they are not to be common day-laborers [perish forbid!]. Fourth, they are not to be ecclesiastics [separating conscientious objectors from the state, I suppose]. Fifth, they are not to be disabled or incapacitated, either physically or morally by any vice or grave impediment." The document goes on to detail the weapons and uniforms that the enlistees were expected to provide themselves, and the regulations that they were to live under.

[slide #6: title page of report]

I published a report on these documents, with reproductions and full translations, in a PDF that is available for downloading from my website.

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With the publication of these documents, we realized the need for a more systematic study of what came to be known eventually as the John Pierre and Myrtle Serres/Shirley Roberts Collection. At first there was no sense of order, and I was overwhelmed with the problem of organizing a consistent procedure, recognizing that things could easily slip into the cracks if there wasn't a comprehensive approach to identifying and cataloging the various artifacts, documents, photographs and so forth.

[slide #7: inventory page]

So as an amateur with no training in archive protocol but an eagerness to get to

work, I improvised a jury-rigged procedure on the fly, recording our conversations, photographing artifacts and scanning documents and photographs, and keeping a log of the work. A serial number was given to each item for later identification, with a descriptive page. At this time there are 90 specific items that have been cataloged; here is a page from the inventory to illustrate my methodology.

The study of each item is dated, and a serial number is attached for later identification. They are classified in general categories as artifacts, documents, books, photographs and so forth, with brief descriptions of each.

[slide #8: document description page]

Then, each item is given its own descriptive page, looking something like this.

[slide #9: first page of Rufus Document]

One of the earliest documents I found is a series of handwritten pages, the first one in Spanish and the rest in English but all apparently by the same person. The writer identifies himself as Ernst Rufus, who owned the ranch from 1847 until 1852.

[slide #10: diseño of Agua Caliente]

He tells how the ranch originated in the Agua Caliente Land Grant, seven square miles that were given to Lázaro Piña in 1839. Piña was a trusted officer under the direct command of General Vallejo, who arranged for him to receive this grant of the land immediately north of the pueblo of Sonoma from Juan Bautista Alvarado, governor of the Mexican department of Alta California and— conveniently enough — Vallejo's nephew. However, Piña immediately (and mysteriously) conveyed the land back to Vallejo, several months before Governor Alvarado was able to formally acknowledge the grant the following year.

[slide #11: list of owners of the ranch]

This list shows the ownership of the ranch as it passed from one person to another down to today, as it is described in the Rufus document and from what we know since then.

1839: Lázaro Piña & Mariano Vallejo
1846: Andrés Höppner
1846: Jacob J. Döpken
1847: Ernst Rufus & Wilhelm Böniz
1852: Joseph Hooker

1858: George Ellis Watriss

1925: Jean Pierre Serres

In those days names were variously spelled; I've kept to the original spellings here, and indicated some of the more popular variations.

By now the story is pretty well known about how Vallejo had "conveyed" the entire Agua Caliente land grant to Andrés Höppner during the tempestuous year of 1846 "for a consideration" — the consideration being the understanding that, in exchange, Höppner would teach the piano to everyone in General Vallejo's family over the following five years.

Far from being what many have considered an "impecunious German professor of music... passing through Sonoma" as he was described by early historians, Höppner was in fact a very successful entrepreneur and prominent, influential businessman, who was already quite well established in San Francisco. Being a fluent speaker of several languages and an accomplished musician, he had quickly established himself as a professor of music and languages.

Höppner immediately sold sections of the land grant off to several pioneer farmers, and became the first person to develop the natural springs of Agua Caliente commercially, calling them the "warm springs of Annenthal". It was only a few weeks after his agreement with Vallejo to exchange the land for music lessons that Höppner sold one square mile (640 acres) to Jacob Döpken, defining the boundaries of the ranch as they are known today. Döpken was a tailor with whom he had served in the volunteer militia that had been put together by Commodore Sloat that same year to protect Yerba Buena during the opening days of the Mexican-American War.

It's uncertain how much effort Jacob Döpken actually put into developing the property into a farm — probably not much, since he also owned property in San Francisco. After less than a year he sold the ranch to Ernst Rufus and Wilhelm Böniz. Döpken remained in San Francisco a while longer, but by 1850 he had relocated back to Ohio, where he is listed in the census as a 30 year old tailor originally from Germany.

Ernst Rufus and Wilhelm Böniz were officers in John Sutter's army and had been sent to manage Fort Ross after Sutter had purchased it from the departing Russians. In time Rufus and Böniz became partners in land speculation and management along the coast, but Rufus had an advantage over his partner Böniz, by being a naturalized Mexican citizen with influential friends in the Pio Pico administration. Furthermore, the Mexican authorities did not like making grants to multiple owners, and so Rufus and Böniz ended their partnership in 1849. Rufus

settled in Sonoma Valley, exchanging his share in their coastal holdings for Böniz' share in the Agua Caliente rancho.

[slide #12: Rufus home]

Here is a photograph of the Rufus home on the ranch, so I'm guessing that he was the first person to stay long enough to do some serious farming of the land.

[slide #13: Colonel Hooker on horseback]

After the Mexican-American War had finally ended, Colonel Joseph Hooker came to Sonoma and, in 1851, he bought the ranch from Rufus.

[slide #14: Rufus memo]

This memo is part of the Rufus Document, reading "Being [the] same piece of land sold by Andrew Hoepner to J. Jacob Dopkin by a document dated the 14th day of Nov A. D. 1846 and recorded in the Recorders Office Land County Book pages 188 & 189 which said document is refered to and [?] and by said Dopkin conveyed to me and William Bennetz and dated the 13 day of September AD 1847 and recorded in said book [?] pages 190 & 191"

[slide #15: Hooker's cabin]

Hooker arranged to have this prefab cabin shipped around the Horn and built on the property, which is still there today.

[slide #16: Hooker's medicine cabinet]

A fascinating artifact in the Roberts home is this medicine cabinet that Hooker had carried with him into the Mexican-American War. It is described as a locking rosewood table chest with inlaid brass fittings, and was manufactured in 1836. The bottles still contain medications, and surgical equipment can be found in the various drawers.

Thanks to Ray Owen I've read a series of articles written by John K. Jenkins, who had come out to California and ended up staying at Hooker's Ranch a while. This sort of first hand reporting captures the feel of the times, so let me read a bit of it to you:

"I worked for him for seventeen months and done every kind of work that I had said I could do, and more too, but the most interesting part of it all was, the

seventy-five dollars in gold, every month...

[slide #17: Jenkins' stirrups]

"The barley was all put snugly away in the barn just in time to escape the rains that commenced falling about the first of November, and now I found myself out of business... I went to Sonoma City and bought a case of tools and went to making wooden stirrups for saddles and cleared from six to eighteen dollars per day, while the other men were idle and could not work on account of the rain, and it rained forty-four days almost incessantly..." This stirrup carved by Jenkins apparently was not sold.

In 1858 Hooker sold the ranch to George Watriss, although his ownership of the land was not confirmed until President Andrew Johnson intervened on his behalf in 1866. There is a story that Hooker had previously promised the land to another buyer, and waited with Watriss on the steps of the courthouse until noon on the appointed day; when the other gentleman did not appear Hooker snapped his pocket watch shut and ushered Watriss inside to record the transaction.

[slide #18: Hooker memo]

This notarized memo found in the collection, dated several years later in 1872 and signed by both Hooker and Watriss, acknowledges this purchase and defines the boundaries of the property. Hooker stayed on at the ranch for some period of time while Watriss built the larger redwood home nearby his cabin soon afterwards.

[slide #19: George Watriss]

George Ellis Watriss, an educated, cultured and highly regarded man, had been the proprietor of the famed Astor House in New York City, where he developed an extraordinary reputation. The Knickerbocker, a popular magazine at that time carried the following review in 1848:

"Mr. George Watriss is a very gentleman-like man, and in his 'line' a very rare man. He probably has a more comprehensive idea of what is and what should be going on in that enormous tavern than any one connected with it. Call in at what hour of the day you please, there you find him, bland and smooth as oil, ready with unflinching courtesy to answer the thousands of interrogatories constantly addressed to him, and answering, too, in a manner that would lead many to suppose he 'didn't know anything less' than the matter upon which you were speaking..."

When gold was discovered in California, the Watriss family relocated to San

Francisco, George quickly via the isthmus of Panama, and the rest of the family by ship around the Horn with the family furnishings. Soon he took over San Francisco's fashionable Oriental Hotel at Bush and Battery.

[slide #20: silverware]

Among the household items in the collection dating from this period are sets of silverware for each family member, kept in lined traveling cases like this.

[slide #21: cartoon of pianist]

There are of course many books in the collection, from the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant down to this autograph and souvenir album kept by Emma Watriss, who at this time would have been 14 or 15 years old. This page demonstrates something of the character of the times, with a clever cartoon drawn by a guest at the hotel captioned, in French, "In the memory of happy moments at the Hotel Oriental." You can almost hear the music flying off the fingers of the piano player, and see the happy dancers moving across the floor. There are also poems, notes, pressed flowers, and other memorabilia of the time in this book.

[slide #22: photo of Watriss letters]

Among the documents in the collection are well over a hundred letters that were written by members of the family to one another during their stay in San Francisco between 1850-58, which include colorful descriptions of the routine and the traumatic events of the day: the fires, the earthquakes, and the vigilante proceedings against people who were considered worthy of either forced exile or the rope. Elegant as the Hotel Oriental was, it was still a hotel in a city on the edge of the frontier, with an infrastructure just barely keeping up with demand.

A cursory reading of the letters shows that Mrs. Watriss grew concerned about Mr. Watriss' increasing discouragement, and his talk about giving up and going back east. Perhaps the rats that had the run of the sleeping chambers, and the aromatic tidal effluent that crept under the foundations of the hotel twice a day were not especially beneficial to his mood. Then, on February 15th 1858, Martha wrote this to her son, who was at this time a surveyor in southern California:

[slide #23: letter]

"A farm or ranch was offered for sale in Sonoma containing six hundred and forty acres, or a mile square, called the Hooker Ranch, for the sum of ten thousand dollars; and it was so highly recommended that your father and Frank Brown went

to look at it and found it every thing it was represented. It is situated about two mile from the City of Sonoma, bounded on one side by Sonoma Creek where plenty of salmon trout are caught and on one side by mountains and on the other sides by splendid large oak trees laid out they say like a fine park; so you see there is plenty of wood and water and there are plenty of people who have spent weeks at the farm that declare it to be the Paradise of California..."

Five of these letters have been published, with reproductions and transcriptions, and PDFs are available for downloading from my website. I hope some day to return to scan and transcribe the remaining letters.

[slide #24: photo of Watriss cabin]

Joseph Hooker remained on the ranch after it was sold to Watriss, probably to their mutual benefit, while Watriss continued running the Oriental Hotel in San Francisco.

[slide #25: photo of Watriss house]

But soon a large home of native redwood and stone was built right next to Hooker's cabin, both of which are still standing today.

[slide #26: ranch journal page 1]

Their first years in Sonoma Valley were carefully documented in this journal of more than 500 pages,

[slide #27: ranch journal page 2]

which begins with a variety of designs for cattle brands,

[slide #28: ranch journal page 3]

and goes on to include plans for creating an accurate sundial,

[slide #29: ranch journal page 4]

recipes for treating illnesses of people and livestock alike,

[slide #30: ranch journal page 5]

diagrams for such ranch necessities as harnesses like this one,

[slide #31: ranch journal page 6]

and a record of daily events that help give insight to life here more than a century ago. Here it reads

"9. Thursday This AM Mr Bryant drove his cows back in again. It is supposed that Mr Bergreen's Indian drove them out last evening— Wednesday PM G.E.W. [George Ellis Watriss] M.C.W. [Martha Cabot Watriss] E. & C. W. [Emma and Charlotte Watriss] rode to Sonoma... John Garonier carried home a portion of his share of the hay for hauling [followed by tallies]"

What makes this diary most immediately astonishing to me, personally, is that I was reading it in the very same room, and at the very same dining table, where it was originally written. I was tempted to pinch myself whenever I lifted my eyes from its pages to look around the room, realizing that the journal may very well never have moved more than 150 feet in the 150 years they had remained in the original Watriss home.

Reproductions of the first 47 pages of this journal have been published, and again PDFs are available for downloading from my website. And again, I would like some day to return to scan and study the remaining pages. At this point the continued indexing of the entire collection takes precedent over the eventually necessary deeper study of each item— such as this journal.

[slide #32: Watriss family]

Here we see the Watriss family during the later 1860s, after having settled on the ranch for some time. Frank is seen holding the horse, the two young men wearing caps are probably guests from the city, and one of the two men in the far back is George Cabot Watriss— probably the one behind Emma. George senior is next with his wife Martha, with Charlotte beside her.

George Cabot Watriss, the older son, worked for a while as a surveyor helping to map the new state of California; then he began work as a civil engineer developing the infrastructure of a new society.

[slide #33: cable car]

A recent find just a few weeks ago is a 130 page notebook that was kept by him in 1880, while he helped design equipment for the Market Street cable car company.

[slide #34: cable car notebook]

The notebook includes various notes, calculations and diagrams that will probably prove to have great research value in the future.

[slide #35: cable car notebook]

According to Peter Meyerhof, the Market Street Cable Railway was one of seven cable railway systems that operated in San Francisco in the 1880s. The principal power house of the Market St. Cable Railway was at the intersection of Market and Valencia Streets. This particular railway included the first combination car composed of an open section for the gripman and an enclosed section for passengers. This is the type of cable car that we see in SF today.

[slide #36: Solano Ferry]

Just two weeks ago, two similar engineering notebooks belonging to George Cabot Watriss have emerged. One is for the design of the streetcar system in Oakland, and the other for the design of the Solano Ferry, the largest ferryboat ever built.

Because none of the Watriss children married, when George Cabot died in 1910 his brother Franklin, then aged 72, became the last living member of the family. Young John Pierre Serres— Shirley Roberts' grandfather— had been hired to help run the ranch; in 1913— at age 25— John Pierre became the manager and, in time, a full partner in the ranch.

An article about Franklin Watriss published later said, in part: "Prior to locating here with his folks the family had resided in the then turbulent San Francisco where Franklin Watriss participated in many stirring episodes of early history, including the activities of the Vigilantes of whom he was the youngest member... The wealthy and eccentric old gentleman was regarded as an authority on history and he was always sought out by those seeking first-hand information and data on early California and San Francisco affairs. He had a rare collection of newspaper clippings books and documents of the early days, and donated many rare things to the Golden Gate Park museum that they might be preserved to posterity."

[slide #37: scrapbook]

I believe it was Frank who created two enormous scrapbooks by pasting 19th Century ephemera— mostly Watriss memorabilia, menus and announcements— into large hardbound haberdashery catalogs of men's suits from that time.

The friendship between Frank Watriss and John Pierre Serres deepened throughout Frank's final years. There was a shared interest and respect, even stewardship for the land and its history. Upon Frank's death in 1925 John Pierre inherited the Watriss Ranch, which then became known as the Serres Ranch.

[slide #38: photo of John Pierre and Myrtle Serres]

John Pierre Serres was the grandfather of Shirley Roberts, and a significant and proud member of the local parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West. Here he is seen with his wife Myrtle; and it's after them that the collection has been named along with Shirley as the current owner. Serres wrote several articles about local history, and helped to establish the Sonoma Valley Historical Society in 1937.

[slide #39: *Bear Flag*]

In 1946 then governor of California Earl Warren appointed him to head up the committee for the Centennial celebration of the Bear Flag Revolt, of which this flag is a probably a souvenir.

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[slide #40: *cover sheet of Pacheco Document*]

Among the documents inventoried early on were a number of pages bound together, with the name Don Francisco Cárdenas Pacheco and the date 1726 prominent on the cover sheet. Pacheco later became the governor of Guam, but at this time he was captain of a ship sent by Spain to explore and establish trade routes to the far east.

I originally referred to this as the Pacheco Document, and set it aside for later examination. When I was finally able to scan the papers and send them to European linguist and historian Steven Dodd, he told me they were in fact "...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... [and] have the "rúbrica" or flourish that more or less had to be added to signatures in Spain in the past as a security measure..."

[slide #41: *page from Royal Spanish Document*]

This document is dated August 25th, 1659. It is a letter from Philip IV of Spain to the Governor of the Philippines confirming that, while all medical practitioners must be formally qualified through an examination, in the light of the shortage of such

personnel in the Islands the Royal Council of the Indies has decided to allow the Governor's proposed temporary measures while an order was sent to Mexico for professionally trained staff to be dispatched. The signature of Philip IV "Yo, el Rey" with its *rúbrica* is easily seen.

[slide #42: page from 2nd Royal Spanish Document]

This document, dated in 1726, is surmounted by a revenue stamp in black ink.

[slide #43: page from 3rd Royal Spanish Document]

This document, also dated 1726, has the signature (again "Yo, el Rey") and *rúbrica* of Philip V.

How these documents found their way into the Serres/Roberts Collection is at this time a mystery. They most certainly had been in John Pierre Serres' possession, and may have been collected by either Serres or by Frank Watriss, or even someone earlier. I'm keeping a weather eye out for notes that might document the provenance of these papers.

These five Spanish charters are each reproduced in their entirety and are available as a PDF for further study, but they are not yet translated.

The following slides are of various other items that have been identified and indexed so far.

[slide #44: British Consulate document]

This original Spanish document, dated July 11th, 1845, seems to have originated from the British Consulate of San Francisco. It is not yet translated.

[slide #45: Vallejo letter]

This letter is handwritten in Spanish, and signed by General Vallejo, and dated July 17th, 1844. It was apparently sent to Sonoma Alcalde Jacob Leese, and contains directions to file four accompanying dispatches for future reference.

[slide #46: minutes & bylaws of gold mining company]

This twelve page document contains the minutes and bylaws for the formation of the Los Angeles Gold Mining Company, and is dated August 8th, 1850. I am currently preparing a report with reproductions of it for future study.

[slide #47: lithograph view of San Francisco]

According to the caption this lithograph was "taken from a high point on the south side of San Francisco. I'm told this was the sort of illustration that was distributed to advertise the newly opened west coast and attract people to move there.

[slide #48: lithograph of San Francisco street scene]

This engraving has the following caption: "San Francisco in 1850/ from the corner of Clay and Sansome Streets./The Niantic was destroyed by fire in 1851."

These are of course only a few of the 90 items already indexed, and I believe those 90 items are only a small part of what remains to be discovered.

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It's been an incredible, unlooked for ride, these past two years or so, as I found myself becoming the witness to an unfolding narrative of our local history. At the same time I've become acutely aware of the need to preserve these artifacts and documents— and the information they provide. Howard Zinn had said that history is written by the victors; I believe the responsibility of historians is to make sure that what else had been written is not lost, and that what else had been dreamed is not forgotten.

We are fortunate here in Sonoma County, that our rich history is so recent and accessible— we've only been here some two hundred years— that the historical record is still quite easy to retrieve and preserve. But we must retrieve it and preserve it, or it will be lost. The Serres/Roberts Collection is only one example of what I can imagine is still undiscovered in other households around the county. The Glen Ellen Historical Society is promoting something we call the Legacy Project, in which we encourage the gathering and indexing of photographs, letters, scrapbooks and other historically significant memorabilia throughout the Valley of the Moon.

There's an exhilarating experience of the significance of historic events in handling things historic figures have handled, knowing something personally that we used to only knew something about. It's like suddenly dreaming in the language that we had studied for years in the classroom. To trace with our fingers the carvings of Jenkins' knife as he fashioned wooden stirrups on cold, wet winter evenings, to turn the pages of letters written by the kings of Spain to their far-flung emissaries in the Far East, to open the drawers of Hooker's medicine cabinet and find medicines still waiting to be used inside— by doing all this we find a place for

ourselves in this pageant of who it is we are, just after our parents, and just ahead of our children.