

**A HOMESTEAD ERA HISTORY
OF NUNNS' CANYON
AND CALABAZAS CREEK PRESERVE
c.1850 - 1910
GLEN ELLEN, CALIFORNIA**



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NOTE: Historically, what is now Calabazas Creek Preserve was referred to as Nunns' Canyon. These designations are used interchangeably in this report and refer to all former public lands of the United States within the boundaries of the Preserve.

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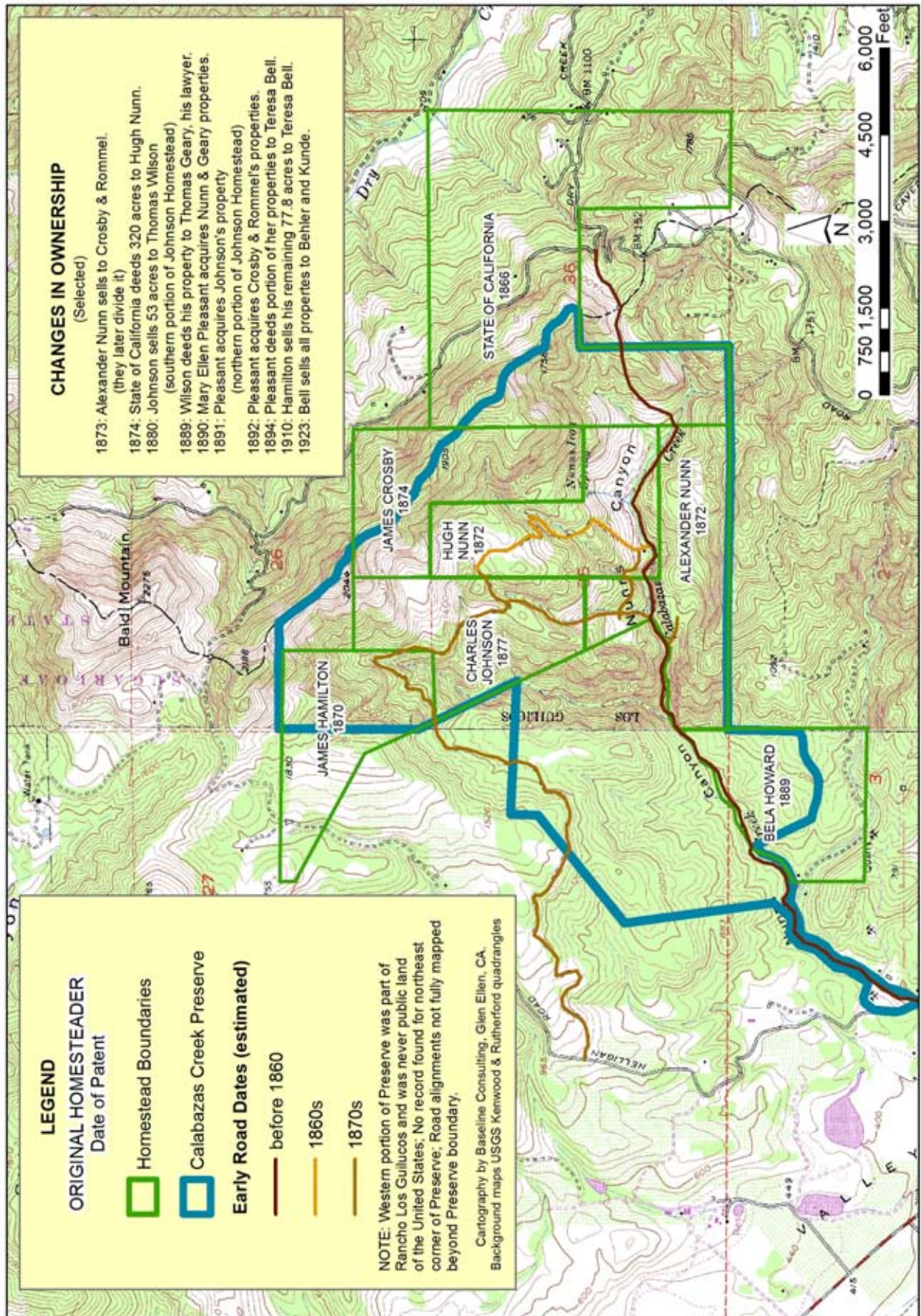
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Homesteads, Roads & Land Ownership, Calabazas Creek Preserve, c. 1860 - 1910

From General Land Office Patent Records, Bureau of Land Management & Sonoma County Records' Office



HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION

Time has erased much of the story of Nunns' Canyon homesteaders. The traces they left behind are faint, the clues sparse, but enough has survived to stitch together something of their lives. Hugh and Sarah Nunn arrived on the heels of the Gold Rush in the 1850s, built a home and a ranch, and raised two daughters there. Hugh was from Scotland and settled first in Texas when it was still an independent republic. There he met and married Sarah Rowe. After their son Charles was born, they headed west. Hugh's younger brother, Alexander, joined the family years later in California. James Crosby was also Scottish, while his wife, Amelia was German. Crosby's partner, Emmanuel Rommel, may have been Amelia's brother. The Crosbys also raised a family in the Canyon. John and Lucy Hendley were from Missouri and probably came west by wagon train. Besides the families mentioned above, several middle-aged men lived in the area. These included Charles Johnson, from Sweden; and Thomas Wilson of Norway. The last homesteaders were the Howards, who settled in the lower Canyon in the 1880s. Bela Howard was from Massachusetts, while her daughters, Lottie and Emily, were born in Sacramento.

Nunns' Canyon Homesteaders were ordinary folk for the time—farmers, laborers, woodchoppers, and at least one carpenter. They worked under circumstances we would consider difficult today, with only horsepower and human power to make a living off their land. Lottie Howard was probably the most well- educated, having gone to four years of college. She taught at the one-room Dunbar School for many years. Her step-sister, Emely Kurtz, was also a teacher. As many as a dozen children were born on the homesteads; perhaps half as many adults died there. With the possible exception of children who did not survive to adulthood, no one spent a whole lifetime in the Canyon. In the end, perhaps, life was too difficult and remote and there was not enough to hold them there.

It is one of the vagaries of the historical record that we have detailed accounts of several tragedies but no record of the daily lives of the Canyon's homesteaders. Several tragedies are recounted here because they are virtually the only events for which any specifics are known. Undoubtedly there were many joys as well—the birth of children, good harvests (at least occasionally), friendships between neighbors, the satisfaction of building a house or a barn, displays of spring wildflowers, taking a dip in Calabazas Creek on a hot day, catching trout in the lower canyon—but none of these have yet turned up in the record. Readers are encouraged to use their imaginations to balance out the story presented here.

ORIGINAL ENTRANCE TO NUNNS' RANCH
from old Nunn's Canyon Road



BEFORE 1850

Prior to European contact, a sizeable village existed along lower Calabazas Creek, between modern-day Highway 12 and the base of the Mayacamas Range. From there a trail likely went up Nunns' Canyon and over the ridge into Napa Valley. Few artifacts have been found in the upper Calabazas watershed, suggesting it was lightly used in native times and may have been mostly a pass-through area with a few, small campsites. Located on a boundary between Coast Miwok and Pomo speakers to the west, and Wappo speakers to the east, Upper Calabazas may have been thought of as a border area, possibly used by these groups as a place to meet and trade.

Because the Wappo language is unrelated to any other native California language, some anthropologists believe it may be the oldest language in the state. The ancestors of the Wappo could have been the first humans to reach the Calabazas area ten thousand or more years ago. The word *tsonoma* (Sonoma) is a Wappo suffix meaning 'village.' Thousands of years later, when ancestors of the Coast Miwok people arrived in the area, they may have pushed the Wappo into the Mayacamas, where they were living at the time of Spanish contact.

The village on lower Calabazas was likely abandoned in the early 19th century. Spanish soldier Gabriel Moraga and his men passed through the area in 1810 on their way from Bodega Bay to San Francisco Bay. The following year, the first of Sonoma Valley's native people left or were taken from a village near the mouth of Sonoma Creek to live at Mission San Francisco. Over the following years, this pattern of 'missionization' moved up the valley, reaching the City of Sonoma area by 1814 and upper Sonoma Valley by 1821. By the time Father Jose Altimira arrived in 1823, looking for a site to found a mission, Sonoma Valley appears to have been depopulated. After considering locations in the Napa, Suisun and Petaluma Valleys, he established Mission San Francisco de Solano about ten miles south of Calabazas Creek, in the lower part of Sonoma Valley.



GRINDING STONE, CALABAZAS CREEK PRESERVE
(courtesy of Anthropological Studies Center,
Sonoma State University)

Given the low population at the time and the fact that it sat on the edge of the church's sphere of control, Nunns' Canyon probably saw few human beings during the 1820s and '30s. In certain places in the Mayacamas, there may have been a few native people continuing to live a more or less traditional lifestyle. In 1834, Mariano Vallejo arrived to set up a military garrison at Sonoma and take control of the mission lands through the secularization process. Soon after, lands adjoining upper Nunns' Canyon came under

private ownership as the Agua Caliente and Los Guilucos land grants. In 1837 a smallpox epidemic is said to have wiped out 90% of the remaining native people in Sonoma County, whose numbers were already well below what they had been before contact.

AMERICAN ERA

The 1840s and '50s were a time of tremendous change. The Bear Flag Rebellion and U.S. takeover of California in 1846, followed by the Gold Rush two years later, had huge impacts on Sonoma Valley. Only 500 people were counted by the U.S. census in Sonoma County at the beginning of the 1850s; by 1860 the population had grown to over 11,000. Thousands of people arrived needing places to live. The valley floors, where the best agricultural land was, were already claimed under Mexican land grants. The

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican War in 1848, granted that the owners of these grants could retain their property if they could prove they had had legal ownership under Mexico. A system of Land Courts was set up to resolve these cases—it was a long process, in some cases taking several decades for a decision to be reached.

'Clear title,' as we now know it, did not exist in Sonoma County in the 1850s. Settlers who wished to own property had basically three choices: buy land from the owner—often a former Mexican land grant owner whose own title might be in question for years to come; squat on property without permission from the owner; or settle outside the land grants on what was considered public land. Squatting was common and many squatters eventually established legal right to property merely by living on it for a long enough time. The public lands beyond the boundaries of the Mexican grants were predominately mountainous and marginal, at best, for agriculture. In addition, before government surveys established

township and range lines in the 1860s and 1870s, ownership of public land was somewhat tenuous. However, settling public land did have two advantages—there was no required initial cost (though some settlers did buy parcels from the government rather than go through the homestead process, which took at least five years) and it was unlikely that anyone would try to kick you off.

Such was the situation that faced the earliest American settlers of Nunns' Canyon. The first General Land Office survey described the landscape as "very broken" with "but a few places



**'WASHING FOR GOLD IN THE SIERRA
FOOTHILLS OF CALIFORNIA, 1853**

(courtesy of fineartamerica.com.)



NUNN FAMILY HOMESITE

Susceptible of settlement or cultivation, the most of it precipitous Chamizo Mountains. There is some open ground near the streams and affords fine range for Stock and in some Spots there is a few redwood trees. The part Surveyed will make a few fine dairy farms. The hill sides will make fine vineyards and the Small bottoms on the creek will produce any kind of Grain or vegetables” (Millington 1866).

THE NUNN FAMILY

Judging by the fact that they occupied the best piece of land in a “very broken” country of “precipitous Chamizo Mountains,” the Nunn family were probably the first to settle the Canyon, sometime in the mid-1850s (the first record of the Nunns in the area appears on the 1859 Dunbar School Register). Hugh was born in Scotland in 1806 and immigrated to Texas in the 1830s and 1840s when it was an independent Republic. Sarah Rowe, his wife, was twenty-three years younger and born in Georgia or Texas (sources disagree). Their son, Charles, was born in Texas in 1849 before the family immigrated to California. By 1852, the Nunns were living in the gold fields of Sierra County. Of more than three hundred people in the vicinity, three-year-old Charles Nunn was the only child, and his mother, Sarah, was one of two women. Ninety-seven percent of the population were miners—Hugh was one of just six men who were not. His occupation was ‘Trader.’

In the mid-1850s, Hugh and Sarah, along with one or two of their children (depending on what year it was) came to Sonoma. Hugh was about 50 years old, while Sarah was still in her twenties. If he was still alive, Charles was a boy between three and nine years old. His sister Sarah was five years younger. She was either a little girl when they arrived or born in the canyon. Charles never reached the age of ten; he was gone by 1859. He may be the “little boy” said to be interred in a grave above the Nunn house. Hugh and Sarah lost two other children—nothing is known of their gender, birthdates, or whether they were born and died in Texas or California.



REDWOODS ALONG CALABAZAS CREEK

probably supplied wood for building materials at Nunn’s Ranch.

It appears the Nunns had the area more or less to themselves for ten or fifteen years. After 1862, when the Homestead Act was passed, settlers could acquire land from the federal government at no cost by “improving” and occupying it for five years. The 1870 census records their nearest neighbors as the Clark, Weise and Weingartner families, who lived near the mouth of the canyon on the valley floor. At some point in the early 1870s, Alexander Nunn arrived to join his older brother. Together they acquired 320 acres of government land on both sides of Calabazas Creek as well as a string of relatively flat meadows to the north (Hugh acquired his land



DRESSED FOUNDATION STONE,
Nunn Homesite

under the Homestead Act; Alexander purchased his under a different law).

OTHER SETTLERS

James Hamilton may have been the next settler in the area. He purchased 142 acres of government land at what is now the north end of Calabazas Creek Preserve in 1870. However, it appears that he was living elsewhere. Around 1872, Charles Johnson, from Sweden, claimed a homestead between Hamilton and the Nunns. His property included some relatively flat meadows on two tributaries of Calabazas Creek, though the majority of his land was quite steep. Just a year after Alexander Nunn acquired his land from the government, he sold it to James Crosby and Emmanuel Rommel (some sources give his name as Gustave). Crosby's wife was Amelia Rommel, so Emmanuel was probably an older brother or other relative of hers. Crosby and Rommel eventually split the property, Rommel taking the north half, Crosby the southern portion. In 1874, a year after buying the property from Alexander Nunn, Crosby patented 160 acres to the north and east of Hugh Nunn's property through the Homestead Act, suggesting he was in the area no later than 1869.



SQUARE NAILS in a fence post on the Johnson homestead.

By the early 1870s, the Nunn family included at least five members—Hugh and Sarah; their daughters Sarah and Mary (born in 1862); and Alexander (It is possible that two other children were born and died during this time. It is also possible that Alexander's wife was alive and with him). In its heyday, the Nunn Ranch included a “well-built . . . single-level dwelling,” a barn, and several other structures. The house was built on a foundation of dressed stone. The entrance drive may have been lined with olive trees (which are still there below the house foundation). The Nunns also planted a eucalyptus to the west of the house, positioned to shade it from the afternoon sun. The gateway to the Nunn's property was on Nunn's Canyon Road. At some point a family graveyard was placed nearby, enclosed by a white picket fence. As many as four or five members of the Nunn family may be buried there, including Hugh, Alexander, Charles (if location of his grave is misidentified in local folklore), and the two other Nunn children.

While some building materials, such as square nails, would have been purchased, most was likely produced on-site. The wood for the house and ranch buildings probably came from the redwoods along Calabazas Creek. The nearest mill in the 1850s was five miles away, across Sonoma Valley. Transporting logs that far would have been a near impossible task at the time, so these trees were almost certainly turned into lumber on-site by hand. Other wood products the Nunns needed, such as shingles and split-rails for fence posts, would have been produced with hatchets, wedges, and other tools.

narrative continued on page 13



CHARLES JOHNSON HOMESTEAD

(clockwise from top)

- Meadow used for agriculture
- Barrel hoop and iris (appears to be planted)
- Ceramic fragment
- Fence posts



In 1880, Johnson's operation had 4 acres in hay, 2 horses, 3 milk cows, 1 head of 'other cattle,' 12 chickens, and 4 acres of vineyard.

His homestead produced 3 tons of grapes, 100 dozen eggs, 100 pounds of butter, and 3 calves. The 'value of all production' was \$100.

(U.S. Census 1880b)





**JAMES CROSBY
& EMMANUEL ROMMEL PROPERTY**
(Clockwise from top. All but last are Crosby.)

- Stones along entrance drive
- Root cellar depression & stonework
- Glass bottle fragment
- Picket gate at entrance drive to Rommel's residence

In 1880, Crosby's operation had 2 milk cows, 2 head of 'other cattle,' 5 chickens, and 4 acres of vineyard.

His homestead produced 10 dozen eggs, 50 pounds of butter, and 1 calf. The 'value of all production' was \$11. (There was no recorded hay or grape production; Rommel is not listed.)

(U.S. Census 1880b)



Several lines of fence posts still stand in the vicinity of the Nunn home, so we know the central part of the homestead was partitioned by fences—probably to keep livestock away from the house and any fields or gardens they may have had nearby. At some point after the redwoods were cut, the Nunns planted an orchard east of their home, just north of Calabazas Creek. The ground in this area stays moist through the dry season, watered by underground flow from the spring on the hill above. According to later records, this orchard covered an acre and contained 40 apple trees, as well as some pear and peach trees. The Nunns also grew figs on their ranch.

James Crosby, who was a carpenter, built a two-story house in one of the few flat areas on his parcel, just below a spring. It had a circular drive with cherry and chestnut trees nearby. Crosby may have planted other trees about a half-mile east of his house—years ago there was an almond tree there which was visible from a long distance when it bloomed in the spring. Like Nunn, Crosby was Scottish. His wife Amelia was German, as was Rommel. Rommel may have built his house in Secret Meadow; a picket gate still exists on what looks like an entrance drive. He may have only lived there part time—in 1880 he was staying next to the Behler family on lower Calabazas Creek.

DAILY LIFE, NUNNS' CANYON ROAD & THE DEPARTURE OF THE NUNNS

There are no known first-person accounts of settlers' lives on upper Calabazas Creek. Walter (Walt) Ritzmann's grandfather homesteaded just a half mile north of Nunns' Canyon in the 1850s. His experiences were probably very similar to those of other early settlers. Walt's mother was born on the homestead in the 1880s, while some of the Nunns' Canyon settlers were still in the area. Family lore and her first-hand memories were probably the basis for the following impressions given in a 1979 interview:



THE ORIGINAL NUNNS' CANYON ROAD followed Calabazas Creek through the upper canyon. Parts of it can still be traced.

"In the wintertime if they couldn't get out any other way they had to walk and I've been told that up there on the old Nunn ranch, old Mr. Nunn he'd come down to town here and he'd carry a 100-pound sack of flour back up on his back, you know, when it was raining. And it must have been an awful hard life, but they didn't seem to think anything of it—hard work was something that they thought had to be done, that's all. They didn't have the machinery at that time like we do now, tractors to do the plowing, and it was all done by hand, like cutting down trees for instance. They didn't have chainsaws. They had to do it all by hand.

"They'd bring a cord of wood down to town and exchange it for staples, different kinds of groceries.

They'd raise chickens and have their eggs, bringing their eggs into town. There wasn't an awful lot of money changing hands at the time . . . people would [barter;] bring something to town and take something home."

"Fruit would be the same way, and , of course, the grain . . . they probably got money for the grain. Those that made wine, why they sold their wine . . . Now the women didn't have it as easy as today either. Everything was done by hand. They washed clothes by hand. They didn't have electricity to help them with everything..."

Assuming their ranch was typical for the era, the Nunns had cattle, milk cows, chickens, pigs and horses. Oxen served for heavy hauling and plowing. The Nunns also grew and harvested hay from open areas a half mile north of their home. Extra hay may have been bartered or sold to their neighbors or in town.

In the late 19th century, Nunns' Canyon Road was the main route between Glen Ellen and upper Napa Valley. From its likely beginnings as a native trail, the road was probably improved little by little for horse and wagon traffic. It was a dangerous road and at least two people died on it over the years. Travelers on Nunns' Canyon Road must have provided some variety and diversion for the settlers and kept them informed of what was happening in the wider world. Spur roads were gradually established, connecting scattered homesteads and agricultural areas—the Nunns would have needed a road to get a wagon up to their hayfields and extending this a short distance connected it to Johnson's. Other roads were established connecting Nunn's to Rommel's property and from there up to Johnson's.

Hugh Nunn was sixty-nine years old when he died at his home in Nunns' Canyon in the summer of 1875. He was probably buried on the ranch he had worked and lived on for twenty years, in the family plot by the front gate. Hugh was survived by his wife Sarah, who was forty-six years old; his teenage daughter Mary; her twenty-one-year old sister Sarah; and his brother Alexander. Sometime in the next five years the surviving Nunns moved to a house on Fourth Street in Santa Rosa. When Alexander died in the 1880s, it appears he was brought back to the ranch to be buried in the family plot. His gravestone (now disappeared) read simply 'Alec Nunn, native of Scotland.'

AFTER THE NUNNS

Once the family left, it appears that Sarah leased out the Nunn Ranch to one or more people. In 1880, John Hendley was renting 610 acres in the area. His farming operation included 170 sheep, 33 head of milk and beef cattle, 36 chickens, a three-acre vineyard, 8 acres in hay production, and forty apple trees (the Nunn Ranch apple orchard is the only one known in the area). William Evart, the Crosby's nearest neighbor (which the Nunns had been), was renting 87 acres. His operation was much smaller—a few acres of hay, a few cattle, a dozen chickens, and an acre of grapes. The Crosbys had a similar-size farm—the biggest difference was their four-acre vineyard and lack of a hayfield. The annual value of "all production" on these farms ranged from \$11 for the Crosbys to \$150 for the Hendleys. James Crosby was also supporting his family by working as a carpenter.

There was a brief flurry of mining activity in the Nunns' Canyon area, beginning with the 'discovery' of an alum mine in 1869. It's unknown whether it was ever exploited. A

cinnabar mine was also sunk, probably during the county's short-lived mercury rush in the early 1870s. When the price of mercury reached \$1 a pound, extracting the ore became profitable. The main mercury mines were located well to the north, in the vicinity of Mercuryville. Most mines were quickly abandoned when the price of ore dropped again.

Around the time the Nunns left, Charles Johnson received a patent for his homestead (1877). He later sold 53 acres of it to a Norwegian who went by the name of Tom Wilson (Wilson and Johnson were both listed as part of the Hendley household in 1880 in the 1880 census). While these acres were mostly steep and uninhabitable, Wilson did build some kind of a dwelling on a knoll about three hundred yards from Johnson's house. Even subsistence agriculture was not feasible on Wilson's land—in 1880 he had an acre in hay, one horse, one milk cow and three head of cattle. The annual production of Wilson's farm was recorded as two dollars (\$2). Wilson probably supported himself by chopping wood and working as a farm hand on nearby ranches. The demand for firewood and charcoal increased substantially when two railroads arrived in Glen Ellen in the 1880s, allowing these products to be easily shipped to other parts of the Bay Area.

THE MURDER OF JOSEPH WEBER



THOMAS GEARY "was district attorney, went to Congress, and narrowly missed a vice presidential nomination."

—Gaye LeBaron, *Santa Rosa: A Nineteenth Century Town*

(image from Geary Family Collection)

Wilson was later described as someone "with a rough exterior" who was "a very quarrelsome . . . a very bad man, especially when in liquor." His given name was Tura Olson, which he changed to Thomas Wilson when he became an American citizen. He had been in trouble "a great many times." While drinking in Glen Ellen, he claimed to have fled his native Norway after murdering two men there. Wilson had threatened to kill both his neighbor Charles Johnson and Mike Smith, foreman of the McEwen Ranch. He had also threatened James Crosby with a knife. Even so, what happened in the summer of 1889 came as a shock to the community.

Wilson had hired a German, Joseph Weber, to chop wood for him. Weber was described as a "quiet, peaceable man" who had lived in the area for around twenty years. He was said to be "addicted to drink, but was not quarrelsome." He was about sixty years old.

Around six o'clock on the morning of Sunday, June 30th, Wilson and Weber began quarreling over how much work had been agreed upon. After a lot of talk, the men reached an agreement to invest the disputed wages in liquor. They started drinking heavily the next afternoon. At five o'clock, Charles Johnson heard Wilson and Weber singing outside his house.

Sometime later, Wilson and Weber returned to Wilson's house. Weber, now quite drunk, lay on the ground. Wilson attacked him, trying to slit his throat with a knife. When this was unsuccessful, Wilson returned to Johnson's house, took Johnson's shotgun and finished off Weber.

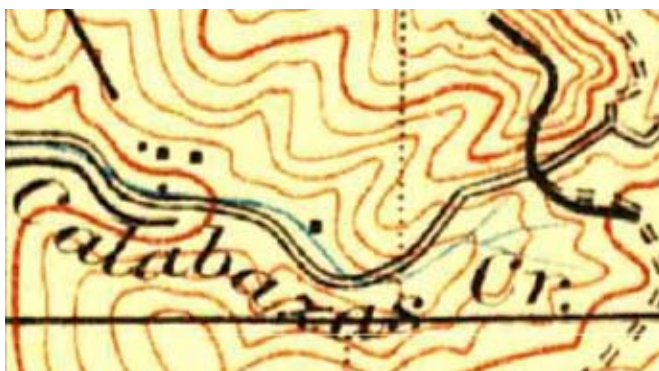
Wilson returned to Johnson's house and confessed that he had killed "the damned Dutchman Weber." Wilson had to show him Weber's body before Johnson would believe him. Then he said, 'Take me prisoner.' Johnson refused and told Wilson to 'keep away from me.' Wilson confessed again and said he wanted to be hung. Johnson went to his stable, took the harness off one of his mules, and put a saddle on it. Wilson suggested they both ride on it to Glen Ellen. When Johnson again told him to keep away, Wilson asked Johnson to tell Constable Crofoot in Glen Ellen to come arrest him. He offered to will Johnson his team and wagon, and his ranch. Johnson declined the offer and headed off by himself.

Johnson reached Glen Ellen and sounded the alarm. County Sheriff Colgan was telegraphed and several search parties were sent out. One of the parties caught Wilson 'on the road' and took him to Santa Rosa, where he was locked up in the County Jail. In Glen Ellen, there was talk of a lynching, but cooler heads prevailed.

The next day, July 2nd, Wilson recanted his confession. He claimed Weber was a friend and that after a quarrel they had gotten into a fight. Wilson said he only intended to cut Weber in the face—that after 'accidentally' cutting him in the throat, Weber had begged Wilson to put him out of his misery. 'So I got the gun and shot him.'

Wilson hired a well-known criminal lawyer, Thomas Geary, to defend him. Wilson deeded his property to Geary to pay for his legal services. The line of defense was 'temporary insanity while under the influence of liquor.' The case went to trial, and in September, "Tom Wilson, the Nunns' Canyon murderer" pleaded guilty to second degree murder. It is unknown where he was imprisoned, how long his sentence was, or if he was ever released.

THE END OF THE HOMESTEAD ERA



NUNN HOMESITE & VICINITY IN 1902, about ten years after it Sarah Nunn sold it to Mary Ellen Pleasant. One barn and possibly other buildings were constructed for the operations of Beltane Ranch. (U.S.G.S. 1902)

The murder of George Weber shocked the community; despite the warning signs, no one suspected Wilson was capable of such an act. While there were probably a number of factors at play, this event seems to mark a turning point in the history of Nunns' Canyon. The population had reached a peak of somewhere around twenty people in the 1880s; within ten years it had declined to less than ten.

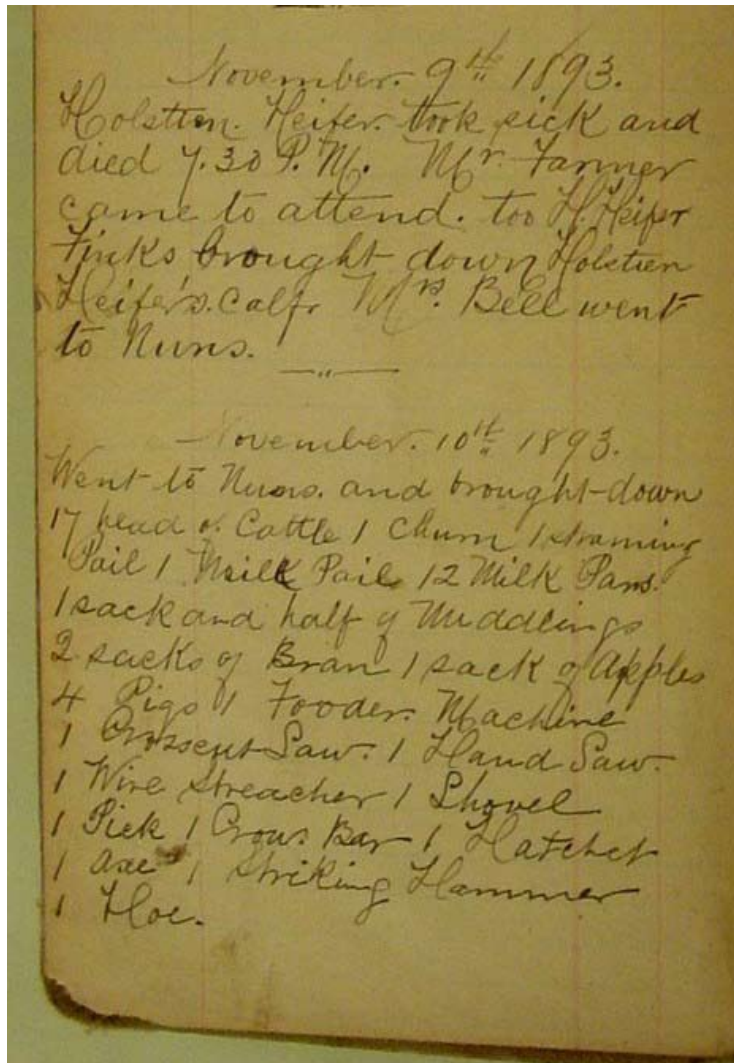
Mary Ellen Pleasant, beginning to piece together what would become Beltane Ranch, acquired Wilson's parcel from Geary in 1890. That same year, Sarah

Nunn also sold her family's ranch to Pleasant, who is said to have stayed at the Nunn house for a time. Likewise, Charles Johnson, perhaps shaken by his experience, sold his homestead to Pleasant and left the area. James Crosby passed away around this time; Pleasant acquired his property too from Amelia. In 1894, Emmanuel Rommel was killed when his horse backed over a steep grade on Nunns' Canyon Road and into the creek below. By 1900, only the Hendley and Howard families were still living in the upper Calabazas watershed.

The Nunn homestead continued to be used for agriculture after it became part of Beltane Ranch. The "Day Book of Beltaine Ranch," which begins in 1892 and is a record of daily occurrences, makes frequent mention of trips to "Nunns." Over the next few years, doors and fences were mended and a barn was built. Cattle, horses and pigs were kept there. Apples, pears, and peaches were harvested from the orchard and shipped out on the railroad which ran through the lower part of Ranch. In 1894, an inventory was taken of beds, mattresses and blankets, suggesting that the former Nunn home was being used to house workers. Dairy equipment and cows were moved back and forth, up to Nunns and back down to the main ranch.

Keeping the former Nunn Ranch in operation had its difficulties. The entry in the Day Book for February 26th, 1893, recorded that "Mr. Rankin and another gent came to see Dairy Ranch. Expected to see everything ready. Went to Nunns. Thought it in terrible condition." The following week is another: "Went to Nunns, found the door burst open, 2 quilts gone.

Went all through Johnson's also. Found Fridgar boy fishing there. Hendley's cows in there as usual." (Due to time limitations, research for this report was not able to trace Beltane Ranch's use of the Nunn homestead beyond this point). The Crosby property was also being used, at least occasionally—on May 15th, 1894, The Day Book recorded "Miss Howard came to see about using Crosby's for her picnic." Lottie Howard was teaching at Dunbar School at this time.



ENTRIES IN THE 'BELTANE RANCH DAY BOOK' for
November 9th and 10th 1893.

"THIS SCHOOL TEACHER HAD THIS OLD HORSE AND BUGGY and she wanted to take the youngsters on a picnic up in Nunn's Canyon. They got going up that road and she couldn't find a place to turn around and she just kept on a-going and got way up and just this side, in fact, right where you turn off to go on up to the Crosby ranch.

"The horse shied and wanted to turn around and go back, come downhill I guess. And she couldn't do nothing about it. And the horse started backing and backed the buggy over the bank and the horse and buggy and kids all went down into the creek and it was quite a drop-off.

"One little boy was pinned underneath the buggy. He had the horse and buggy and everything on top of him. So he got killed and there were several others that had broken arms and they were all pretty badly shook up and injured.

"My oldest brother was about ten years old at the time ... he had gone up there with the rescue party and brought them out." [c. 1911]

—Walter Ritzmann (Hawkins 1979)

Prior to 1850, Nunns' Canyon area was probably relatively open due to the intentional fires set by native people. Some American settlers in the Mayacamas used fire for the same purpose; it's unknown whether this happened in Nunns' Canyon. Because of their frequency, intentional fires tend to be of low intensity. By the turn of the twentieth century, vegetation had grown thick enough that a more intense 'wildfire,' was becoming more and more likely. The first known wildfire at Nunns' Canyon was set off by a spark from a locomotive in 1905. This may have been the fire which destroyed the Crosby home, said to be the first one to burn because "it was more or less in the timber, trees all around it" (Ritzmann, in Dawson 2013).

Nunns' Canyon Road continued to be used as a route to Napa Valley in the early 20th century. Walt Ritzmann recalled traveling it "all the way to Napa" around 1920. He described it as "a crooked road" that crossed Calabazas Creek on "ten or twelve bridges" (Dawson 2013, from Hawkins 1979). The catastrophic wild fire of September 1923 burned many of these bridges, making the road impassable. The county never did repair them and eventually the road was decommissioned. Walt also recalled the decline of the Nunn home. The first time he saw it, around 1916, he said the windows had all been broken out by "vandals" and "then the cattle started taking over the building." An unusual December fire in the late 1930s also damaged or destroyed homestead era structures. Twenty-five years later, the 1964 fire destroyed what was left of the Nunn home. Rosemary Wood, who first came to Beltane Ranch as a child in the 1930s, remembers how a corner of the house, about three or four feet high, was the last of it to go.

What legacy did the homesteaders of Nunns' Canyon leave us? There are tangible things, like stone walls and foundations sinking into the earth; remnants of ranch roads winding through the mountains; and a handful of charred fence posts and pickets. There are living

things, like fruit trees that still bear sweet apples more than 130 years after they were planted. There is still much that may be discovered and much that will probably always remain a mystery.



TIMELINE

7000 B.C. or earlier: First humans arrive in Sonoma Valley near the end of the last ice age. These may have been ancestors of the *guiluc* people. This tribe spoke the Wappo language, believed by some linguists to be the oldest language in California, and were living in the Mayacamas when the Spanish arrived (Hinton 1994; Milliken 1995).

c. 1000 B.C.: Ancestors of the *tchokoyem* or ‘Coyote Creek’ people arrive and settle in the area around the present-day City of Sonoma. This is the triblet of Coast Miwok speakers who lived here when the Spanish arrived in the early 19th century (*tchokoyem* is also spelled ‘*chucuien*’ in mission records. Collier et. al. 1996).

1806: Hugh Nunn born in Scotland (State of California 1852; U.S. Census Bureau 1870).

1810: Spanish soldier Gabriel Moraga and his party pass through the Glen Ellen area on their return from an expedition to Bodega Bay to reconnoiter the Russian presence there. This is the first record of the Spanish in Sonoma Valley (Sand 1988).

1811: Traveling by boat, Franciscan missionaries visit the *alaguali* village of *cholequebit* by the marshlands near the mouths of Sonoma and Tolay Creeks. One-hundred-twenty people of this Coast Miwok triblet go to Mission San Francisco and Mission San Jose over the next six years (Milliken 1995).

1814: First *tchokoyem* leave or are taken from Sonoma Valley to live at the San Jose Mission. Over the next two years, 135 people of this triblet are baptized at Missions San Jose and San Francisco (Milliken 1995).

1815: Alexander Nunn born in Scotland (U.S. Census 1880).

1821: First *guiluc* people leave or are taken from Sonoma Valley to live at the San Jose Mission. As many as 134 people from this triblet are baptized at Missions San Francisco, San Rafael, and San Francisco de Solano over the next eleven years (Milliken 1995).

1823: Father Jose Altimira passes through the Glen Ellen area during explorations to reconnoiter the site for a new mission. He describes Sonoma Mountain as “well-covered with trees fit for lumber,” which would be needed for building a pueblo. A few days later Altimira founds Mission San Francisco de Solano in the lower part of Sonoma Valley (Altimira 1823).

1828: James Hamilton born in Scotland (U.S. Census 1900).

1829: Sarah M. Rowe born in Georgia (U.S. Census 1900).

Joseph Weber born in Germany, approximate date (San Francisco Chronicle 1889a).

1834: Mariano Vallejo arrives in Sonoma to take control of the mission lands and properties under the secularization process. He claims the best of this property, 66,000-acre Rancho Petaluma, for himself (Smilie 1975).

1836: The Republic of Texas declares its independence from Mexico. (Wikipedia 2013).

1837: Los Guilucos Rancho granted to John Wilson (Smilie 1975).

1838: James Crosby born in Scotland (U.S. Census 1880).

1839: Hugh Nunn arrives in Galveston, Texas (White 1985).

Christine Rummel (later known as Amelia Crosby) born in Germany (Ancestry.com 2010; U.S. Census 1880).

1840: Charles Johnson born in Sweden. Tura Olsen (naturalized as Tom Wilson) born in Norway (U.S. Census 1880) or Sweden (San Francisco Chronicle 1889).

1844: Rancho Agua Caliente, comprising is granted to a soldier serving under Vallejo at the Sonoma garrison (Smilie 1975).

1845: Hugh Nunn patents 320 acres in Hardin County, Texas, about 90 miles north of Galveston. November 4 (Ancestry.com. 2000).

Texas annexed by the United States, December 29. Hugh Nunn is granted U.S. citizenship by virtue of being a citizen of the former Republic of Texas (State of California 1866. Wikipedia 2013).

mid-1840s: Hugh Nunn marries Sarah Rowe (State of California 1852; Hawkins 1979).

1846: California comes under control of the United States during the Mexican War, on the heels of the Bear Flag Rebellion.

1848: Gold is discovered in the Sierra Nevada in January, sparking the California Gold Rush, which lasts into the mid-1850s.

c. 1849: Hugh and Sarah's son, Charles, is born in Texas (State of California 1852).

1850: U.S. Census counts about 500 residents in Sonoma County. No Nunns recorded.

c. Early 1850s: The Nunns come to California during the Gold Rush and settle in the Gold Country (State of California 1852; U.S. Census 1850).

1852: California State Census counts about 2000 residents in the County.

Hugh Nunn, his wife Sarah, and their three-year-old son Charles are living in Sierra County. Hugh's occupation is listed as "Trader" and the family's last residence was Texas. This is the only record located for Charles (State of California 1852).

1854: Sarah Ellen Nunn (also recorded as Ella) born in California (County of Sonoma 1859;

U.S. Census 1870, 1880 & 1900).

mid-1850s: Hugh Nunn and his family settle in the Glen Ellen area, possibly up what would be known as Nunn's Canyon (County of Sonoma 1859; Dawson 2009; State of California 1852).

1859: H. Nunn is listed as the parent of one school-age daughter, between the ages of 4 and 18, and no other children. This would be 5-year-old Ella. Earliest known record of Nunn in Sonoma (Sonoma County 1859).

1860: U.S. Census counts about 11,000 residents in Sonoma County.

Ellenor Crosby born in New Jersey. Her parents, James and Amelia, are in their early 20s (U.S. Census 1880).

c. 1860: Nunns plant apple and pear orchard and olive trees (estimate).

1862: Mary Ida Nunn born in January (U.S. Census 1870, 1880 & 1900)

Congress passes the Homestead Act to encourage settlement. Settlers can acquire 160 acres by staking a claim, building a dwelling, and living on the property for five years.

Hugh Nunn applies for a homestead (Hawkins 1979).

1866: Hugh Nunn registers to vote in Sonoma County. Occupation is listed as "Farmer." (State of California 1866).

Seth Millington conducts first General Land Office (federal) survey in Nunns' Canyon area (General Land Office 1866).

1867: No Nunns appear on the first Sonoma County map. (Not unusual for this era since many titles were not secured until several years later. Bowers 1867)

"An immense alum mine" discovered in Nunn's Canyon (*The Daily Morning Chronicle* 1867).

1870: U.S. Census lists 'Harry' and 'Anna' Nunn with daughters Ella and Mary as neighbors to Christian Weise and John Clark. The other vital statistics match the profile for the family. Hugh is recorded as a 'Farmer' with \$800 of real estate and \$400 of personal property. Alexander Nunn is not recorded.

James Hamilton receives the first patent for property that would later become part of Calabazas Creek Preserve (General Land Office 1870).

early 1870s: 'Quicksilver Rush' happens in Sonoma County as mercury reaches \$1/pound. Most likely date for Cinnabar Mine (Dawson 2013).

1871: Hugh Nunn's voter registration transferred to 'Yount' in Napa County. His occupation is "Farmer" (State of California).

1872: General Land Office Survey by T.J. DeWoody.

Brothers Hugh and Alexander Nunn both patent property in the upper Calabazas Creek watershed. Hugh actually homesteaded, while Alexander bought his from the government (General Land Office 1872).

1873: Alexander Nunn sells his property to James Crosby and Gustave Rommel (Hawkins 1979)

1874: James Crosby patents a homestead that includes parts of Sections 26 and 35 (General Land Office 1874).

1875: Hugh Nunn registered to vote in Napa. Occupation is "Farmer." Living in "Yount" (State of California 1875).

Hugh Nunn dies at the age of 69 "at his home in Nunn's Canyon." (*Russian River Flag* 1875).

1876: Louisa Crosby born (U.S. Census 1900).

Late 1870s: The surviving Nunn family moves to Santa Rosa but keeps ownership of the ranch (County of Sonoma 1890a; U.S. Census 1880)

1877: "Crosby & Rommel" shown as owners of the property south of the Nunn Ranch in the first county atlas. James Hamilton has added onto his property and now owns about 240 acres (Thompson 1877).

Charles Johnson patents homesteads in parts of Section 26 and 35 (General Land Office 1877).

1879: James Russell Crosby listed in Voter Register as living in Sonoma District. Occupation is 'carpenter' (State of California 1879).

1880: Census records Alexander Nunn living with his widowed sister-in-law, Sarah Nunn and her two daughters, Ella Nunn and Mary Berliner on Fourth Street in Santa Rosa. Ella is working as a teacher Mary is married to George Berliner and has two children. Alexander is recorded as "widowed" as well. His occupation is 'Farmer.' This was the last record of him.

James and Amelia Crosby appear to be living in the canyon with their twenty-year-old daughter Ellenor, her husband Richard Potter and their 1-month-old grandson. James is a 'Farmer' (U.S. Census 1880).

Charles Johnson and Tom Wilson are recorded as living with the Hendley family, who lived a little north of their property. Both of them are listed as 'Farmers.' Besides them, the household has four Hendley children and their two parents, and two other men in their forties (U.S. Census 1880).

Johnson sells 53 acres of his property to Wilson (County of Sonoma 1890b; Hawkins 1979).

Emmanuel Rommel is living at the McKamy ranch on lower Calabazas Creek in the vicinity of modern-day Dunbar Road, working as a farm laborer (U.S. Census 1880).

Voter Register lists Alexander Nunn living in Santa Rosa (State of California 1880).

1882: Sonoma Valley Railroad completed to Glen Ellen (Parmelee 1963).

c. 1884: Anna Crosby born (U.S. Census 1900).

Howard family settles in lower Nunns' Canyon, applies for homestead.

1885: Transfer of Nunn property from daughters Sarah and Ellen to their mother, Sarah M. Nunn (County of Sonoma 1885).

1887: Southern Pacific completes rail line from Sonoma to Santa Rosa. Establishment of the Drummond (later Beltane) rail station (Parmelee 1963).

1888: James Russell Crosby listed in Voter Register as living in Sonoma District. Occupation is 'carpenter.' This is the last record found for him (State of California 1888).

1889: Thomas Wilson murders Joseph Weber in a dispute over his work for Wilson as a wood-chopper. Wilson hires well-known attorney Thomas Geary, paying for his defense by giving him his Nunn's Canyon property (San Francisco Chronicle 1889a & 1889b; Sonoma Index-Tribune 1889a & 1889b).

Bela Howard patents homestead in lower Nunns' Canyon (General Land Office 1889).

c.1890: James Crosby dies (Hawkins 1979).

1890: Mary Ellen Pleasant acquires Nunn property from Sarah. Said to have initially used the old Nunn house (County of Sonoma 1890; Hawkins 1979).

Pleasant acquires Wilson's former property from Geary (County of Sonoma 1890b).

1891: Pleasant acquires former Drummond Ranch from the Savings Bank of Santa Rosa (County of Sonoma 1891a).

Charles Johnson sells his Nunns' Canyon property to Aaron Barnes, who sells it to Pleasant six days later (County of Sonoma 1891b & 1891c).

1892: "By March of 1892, Pleasant had acquired the five major holdings that she incorporated into one and named 'Beltane.'" (Hawkins 1979)

1892 - 1894 (and after): Beltane Ranch uses Nunn's Ranch as a dairy farm, also for pasturing livestock, fruit production and probably other uses. Ranch house is used for ranch workers and a barn is constructed (Beltane Ranch 1892 - 1894).

1893: Sarah Nunn living in Seattle with daughter Ella (Polk's City Directory 1893).

1894: Sarah Nunn (Hugh's widow) living in Seattle. Ella no longer living with her or apparently in Seattle (Polk's City Directory 1894).

Pleasant transfers a portion of the ranch to Theresa Bell (County of Sonoma 1894).

1895: Bela F. Howard shown as owner on the lower part of Beltane (County of Sonoma 1895-c.1925).

1898: County Atlas shows Theresa Bell and Mary Ellen Pleasant as owners of Beltane. Hamilton is the only original settler, with 77 acres (Reynolds 1898).

1900: Sarah Nunn living in San Francisco with daughters Ella and Mary. Mary (Berliner) is widowed and has two children—George and Ronald, 12 and 10 respectively. Sarah is 70 years old. She is listed as having had five children, with two still living. Her birthplace is recorded as Georgia (U.S. Census 1900).

Amelia Crosby also living in San Francisco with her daughters Louisa and Anna. She is recorded as having had five children, with four still living. This is the last record located for her (U.S. Census 1900).

1902: U.S. Geological Survey Napa quadrangle map shows five buildings on the old Nunn homestead, all in the upper meadow area.

"Young Lady Has a Narrow Escape from Death on a Mountain Road:" A woman is seriously injured when her cart overturns on Nunns' Canyon Road. She and two companions met up with a four-horse team coming the opposite direction. Their horse shies away and the cart tips over. Her two companions escape serious injury. June (San Francisco Chronicle 1902a).

"Five Forest Fires Around Santa Rosa:" A Southern Pacific freight train between Warfield and Beltane stations starts a fire that burns "easterly through Nunns' Canyon and over into Napa county. Over 500 acres were devastated last night as the flames crept up the mountainsides. A heavy north wind has prevailed for two days, and until this subsides the flames cannot be controlled. Much anxiety is felt" (San Francisco Chronicle 1902b).

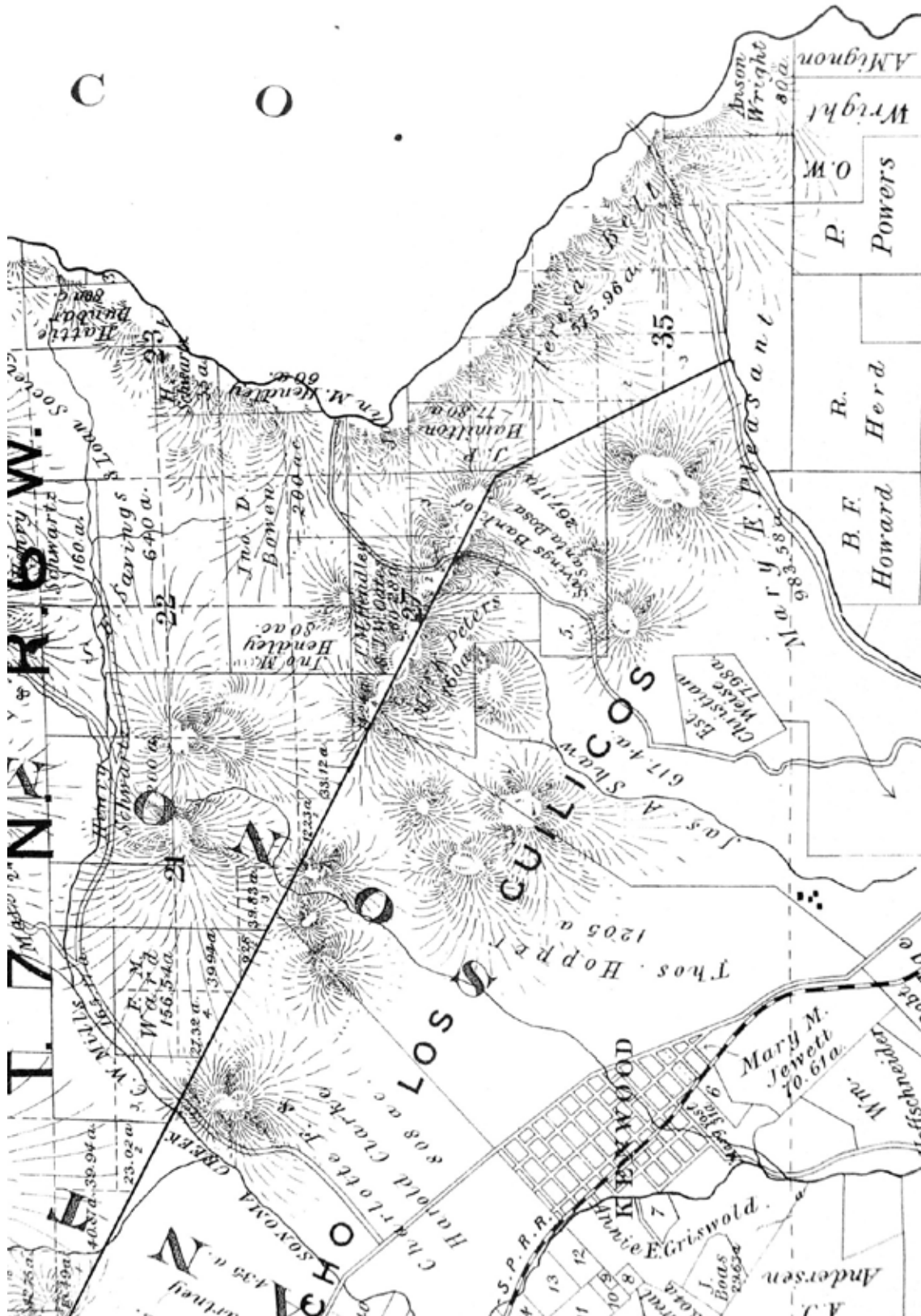
1903: Sarah Nunn dies in Los Gatos, where her daughters are living. Obituary in the Press-Democrat gives no new details about her or her family, but does state "She was well known here." January. (Santa Rosa Press-Democrat).

1910: James Hamilton sells his property to Theresa Bell. November 18. This is the last sale by an original settler (County of Sonoma 1910).

1923-1964: Several wildfires destroy the wood structures built by the 19th-century homesteaders and settlers (Dawson 2013; Hawkins 1979).

[illegible]

Note J.P Hamilton, C.W. Johnson and Crosby & Rommel shown as property owners. Nunn Homestead was recorded with the federal government, but there may not have been a record with the county. (Detail from page 40. Courtesy Sonoma County Historical Society)



REYNOLDS & PROCTOR'S ILLUSTRATED ATLAS OF SONOMA COUNTY, 1898

By this date, Mary E. Pleasant and Teresa Bell own the lands originally settled by Nunn, Crosby, Rommel and Johnson. Early settler J.P. Hamilton still owned 77.8 acres, which he eventually sold to Bell in 1910. John Hendley (who appears to have rented the Nunn Ranch for a time) acquired the properties shown here from the government through both the Homestead Act and direct purchase between 1884 and 1893 (Detail from page 52. Courtesy Sonoma County Historical Society).

NUNNS' CANYON RESIDENTS (estimated primarily from Census and Homestead Records)

X = documented presence, or between dates of documented presence; ? = possible presence

(NOTE: While James P. Hamilton bought government property in the vicinity, census records indicate that he did not live there.)

NAME	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	BIRTHPLACE
Hugh Nunn	? X	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXX				Scotland
Sarah Nunn	? X	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXX ?				Texas or Georgia
Ella Nunn	? X	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXX ?				California
Mary Nunn		XXXXXXXXX	XXXXX ?				Nunn's Canyon
Charles Nunn	?						Texas
Nunn Child	?	?	?				?
Nunn Child	?	?	?				?
Alexander Nunn			? XXXX ?				Scotland
A. Nunn's wife			?				?
James Crosby		? X	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX			Scotland
Amelia Crosby		? X	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	?		Germany
Ellenor C. Potter		? X	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	?		New Jersey
Richard Potter			?	XXXXXXXXXX	?		England
Potter Son				X ?			California
Louisa Crosby			XXX	XXXXXXXXXX	?		Nunns' Canyon
Anna Crosby				XXXXXX	?		Nunns' Canyon
Crosby child		?	?	?			?
Crosby child		?	?	?			?
John Hendley			?	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	Missouri
Lucy Hendley			?	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	Missouri
Lillian Hendley			?	X ?	?		California
Ioneth Hendley			?	X ?	?		California
Ralph Hendley			?	X ?	?		California
Harry Hendley			?	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXX ?		Nunns' Canyon
Ray Hendley				XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	Nunns' Canyon
Charles Johnson			? XXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	X		Sweden
Thomas Wilson			?	XXXXXXXXXX			Norway
Harland Brockman			?	X ?			Missouri
William Evert			?	X ?			Germany
Emmanuel Rommel			?	?	?		Germany
Bela Howard				XXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	X ?	Massachusetts
Lottie Howard				XXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	X ?	California
Emily Kurtz				XXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	X ?	California
George McGuire				?	?	X ?	Ireland
POPULATION	0-6	3 - 11	7- 24	15 - 25	6 - 17	3 - 7	

(Transcribed table edited slightly and contains information not visible on the lower portion of the original page)

NAME	Owner	Tilled & Pasture	Permanent meadows, pastures,orchards & vineyards		Woodland & Forest	Value of land, fences & buildings	Value of implements & machinery	Value Livestock	Wages	Value of				Wood Cut (cords)
			Rent	Calves born						Slaughtered or sold	Butter	Sheep	Swine	
John M Hendley	R	30	300		280	3000	25	700	\$20 for 4 weeks	150	8	4	16	
Charles Johnson	O	20	100		50	700	15	160	\$50 for 8 weeks	100	4	2	3	
Thomas Willson	O	1			80			500		2	1	1	1	
William Evert	R	5			82	1200	20	50		25	3	1	2	
James Crosby	O	8			72	1000		40		11			2	
James Hamilton	O	15	275			2800		40		408		1		
TOTALS		79	675		564	8700	60	1490	70	696	16	9	24	
	Other	Calves born	Slaughtered or sold	Butter	Sheep	Swine	Chickens	Eggs	Acres	Apple Trees/ Production	Vineyards acres	Grapes (pounds)	Wood Cut (cords)	
John M Hendley	17	4		200	170	7	36	200	40 / 50					
Charles Johnson	1	3	3 slaughtered	100			12	100	0.5	40 / 50	3	4000		
Thomas Willson	3	3		10				100			4	6000		
William Evert	1	1	1 sold	50			12	25			1			
James Crosby	2	1		50			5	10			4			
James Hamilton														
TOTALS	24	12	4	410	170	7	65	335	0.5	40 / 50	27	13,400	0	

EXCERPTS FROM VOLUMES 1 AND 2 "DAY BOOK OF BELTAIN RANCH"

(original spelling & capitalization)

1892

September 19: Mr Flury went to Nunns repaired kitchen door and fences . . . Ship 10 Bls pears, 2 Bls apples

September 20: ship 11 Bls pears

September 30: Ship 8 barrels Apples to town

November 13: Brought down apples and figs from Nunns

December 11: Dee[?] went to Nunns brought down old Patris hot house glasses and dug up 30 [?] orange Trees. Saw snowflakes. Heifer on the flat—saw no calf

1893

January 26 Went to Nuns, broken fence and cows in [undecipherable]

January 29: Fred Schell and Joe went to Nunns, carried stone and feed

February 12: Went to Nunns with Antone to lay foundation of the barn, Mr. Schell carried up 2 shake downs, Mattresses and Pillows.

March 3: Carried lumber up the mountain, two loads—shingles, made two loads in the afternoon, burnt brush and pulled up mustard in the small patch Peaches + Prunes

October 8: Frank went to Nuns took with him 7 Cows, two Calves, one Bull, one Churn, 1 Pail, 8 milk pans, 8 sacks of Bran, 4 middlings, one saddle and 8 blanket, one horse 1 [undecipherable]

October 21: Went to Nuns and took 4 bales of straw

October 29: "Went to Nuns and took 4 Pigs and brought down 2 sacks of Appels."

October 30: Peter went to Nuns and brought down Apples

November 10: "Went to Nunns, brought down 17 head of Cattle, 1 churn, 1 straining Pail, 1 Milk Pail, 12 Milk Pans, 1 sack and a half of Middlings, 2 sacks of Bran, 1 sack of Apples, 4 Pigs, 1 Fooder machine, 1 Crosscut Saw, 1 Hand Saw, 1 Wine Streacher, 1 Shovel, 1 Pick, 1 Crow Bar, 1 Hatchet, 1 Ax, 1 Striking Hammer, 1 Hoe.

1894

February 13th: "Went to Nunns. Found doors open and fields full of horses and cows. 6 quilts up there. 1 log cabin quilt. 6 mattresses there. 2 small mattresses and 2 men's spring cots in the upper kitchen. Bottle wine under [undecipherable word] a mattress. Some sheets and [undecipherable word].

February 26th: "Mr. Rankin and another gent came to see Dairy Ranch. Expected to see everything ready. Went to Nunns. Thought it in terrible condition."

March 4th: Went to Nunns, found the door burst open, 2 quilts gone. Went all through Johnson's also. Found Fridgar boy fishing there. Hendley's cows in there as usual."

May 15th: "Miss Howard came to see about using Crosby's for her picnic."

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NOTES ON THE APPROACH AND FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

The focus of this effort was the homestead era, from roughly the 1850s, when the Nunn family arrived, to 1910, when James Hamilton sold the last of his property to Teresa Bell. To put this period in context, a brief look at the native history of the area was also included, as well as a few events which happened afterwards. As for the geographical focus, it was the portion of Calabazas Creek Preserve that was once open to homesteading—that is everything outside the boundaries of original Mexican land grants. This is more or less synonymous with the place called "Nunns' Canyon" in the historical record, though there are discrepancies (such as the Pierratt homestead mentioned in the last paragraph).

Who was living there is less easy to define. The individuals who filed land patents with the U.S. government, and their families, are the prime candidates. In most cases their presence can be verified by other records such as the Census. But the record for some early landowners, like Emmaneul Rommel, is ambiguous. The 1880 Census shows him living outside the Canyon, and the 1890 Census data cannot be consulted—it was consumed by fire in the early 20th century. On the other hand, the Hendleys homesteaded outside the Preserve boundary in the 1880s, but are recorded as the Crosbys' nearest neighbor in 1880. This would most logically place them at the Nunn Ranch, which the family had left after the Hugh's death in 1875. The details of the Hendleys' agricultural operation, as recorded in 1880, also suggest they were renting the Nunn Ranch.

Why Charles Johnson, who had patented his homestead three years earlier, was living with the Hendley's in 1880 is a mystery. One possibility is that he was staying there temporarily as a hired farm hand. The Census was taken in June, a prime month for harvesting hay. The Hendleys are known to have hired help for a few weeks a year—this would also explain why three other single men were listed in their household.

The people covered in this study are those for whom the strongest evidence exists for their being residents of Nunns' Canyon. Others, who may have been part of the community, but for which the evidence is slim include the Fridgar and Wright families. The Pieratt family is mentioned in 19th-century newspapers as living in Nunns' Canyon, but since their property is outside the Preserve, they were not included here.