

Las Plumas

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THE BACCALAS OF NORTHERN PLUMAS COUNTY

by Nick Becker XNGH ECV, 7-11, Paradise, California.

Soldier Meadows, named for a military camp located there in 1850, is the beautiful setting of the Baccala Ranch. The troops had been stationed there to meet, assist, and protect incoming emigrants on the Lassen Trail, which runs through the eastern portion of the ranch. Soldier Meadows is on Soldier Creek, originally the North Fork of Butt Creek, just a few miles west of Lake Almanor.

Baptiste Baccala and his brothers, Victor and Joseph, were among the 20,000 Swiss-Italians who emigrated from Ticino, Switzerland, on the border between that country and Italy, to California. Baptiste arrived in 1850, and found his way up the Feather River, mining near today's Belden and Caribou. His younger brothers followed him to California in the 1860s.

Baptiste Baccala filed for a timber claim and homestead at Soldier Meadows in 1858. The 160-acre claim contained only fifteen acres of meadow, right along the creek. The timber was cleared through the years to form the meadow we see today. The Baccalas purchased many more timber claims and the ranch now consists of nearly 2,000 acres.

In the 1860s, Victor Baccala was a partner with three other men working the profitable Dutch Hill Mine near Seneca,

not far from Soldier Meadows. The four sold the mine, and split \$40,000. With his share, Victor bought the 160-acre timber claim from his brother Baptiste. In 1867, he started cutting timber for buildings and raising cattle. Baptiste moved over to Big Meadows, building a Baccala Ranch of 2,050 acres in Big Meadows, now Lake Almanor.

Victor tried wintering the cattle in the meadow during the first few years and found it to be unprofitable. He then bought some winter range on Pine Creek, north of Chico, in 1873. The cattle were driven up the old Campbell Trail in the spring, crossing Chico Creek to Butte Meadows, and from that place following the Humboldt Road to Faniani Meadows before trailing along Soldier Creek to the ranch. Every fall, the drive was repeated, in reverse. These days the ranch is leased to the Johnsons of the Oroville area, who truck their cattle up Highway 32 every summer, where they can be seen grazing in Deer Creek meadows and near St. Bernard Lodge on Highway 36.

In the early 1880s, Victor started the dairy that, although defunct, is still standing today. The dairy herd consisted of forty to fifty head of Durham cows, though later Devonshires were added. The dairy strain was strong enough that the later generations of Baccalas always had six or so milkers for bumper calves, and their personal use, up through the 1990's.



The Baccala Ranch at Soldier Meadows in the 1870s.

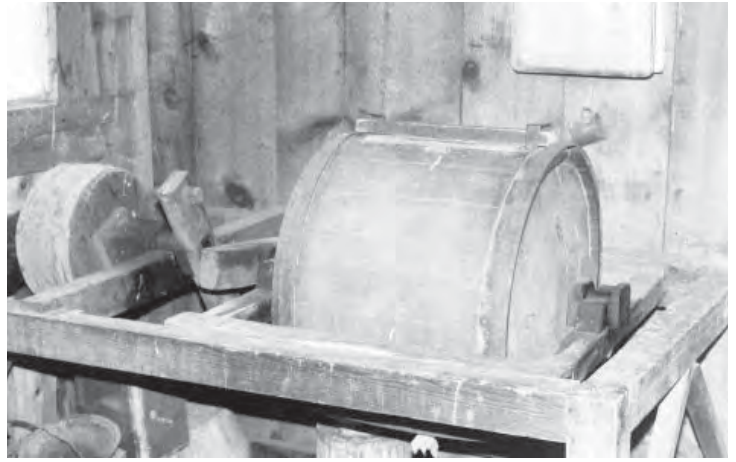
Carolyn Baccala called them her “Dairy Queens.”

The milk was turned into butter and cheese to be sold to the miners and lumbermen in the area. It was also hauled to the Sacramento Valley and sold in many communities.

The butter making process required that the milk be put in large milk pans and set on racks for the cream to rise. The cream was skimmed off to then be made into butter. The skim milk was mixed with whole milk and made into a cheese not unlike the Monterey Jack we eat today. The cream was placed in the churn, which was driven by a water wheel using Soldier Creek water. This agitation of the cream produced the thicker butter. The butter was salted, weighed and packed into tapered barrels, called firkins, which were made locally from white fir. Victor had traded a larger churn he had been using to his brother Baptiste for the churn that is here today, now well over 100 years old. Baptiste had been using this churn at his dairy in Big Meadows since 1860.

Facing increasing competition from large Central Valley dairies, as well as increasing government regulations requiring expensive modernization, the Baccalas switched from dairy cattle to strictly beef cattle about 1915.

The family ranching tradition continued until Pat Baccala died in 1994. Although they continued to drive cattle for the next three years or so, it became too much and the partnership split up. Carolyn Baccala got the ranch in Soldier Meadows, which she leases, except for a number of small cabins used as summer homes by various family members, and Tucker Baccala got the Pine Creek property of 6,000 acres.



The Baccala Dairy churn.



Interior of the Baccala Dairy at Soldier Meadows.

The Swiss-Italians who settled in this area had many things in common. Most were the younger sons; they were related to other immigrant families; most became dairymen or farmers, and all came from Ticino or very close by. There are descendants in this area that can trace back their heritage to a number of families such as Baccala, Dotta, Faniani, Guidici, Lemm, Papas, Peazzoni, Pedroni, Perini, Ramelli, Ruffa, Yori, and many more.



Victor Baccala

References:

Baccala, Clinton (Pat Sr.), interview in May 1986.

Hall, Jacqueline and Jo Ellen; Italian-Swiss Settlement in Plumas County. Plumas County Museum files.

Special thanks to Marilyn Morris Quadrio, Carolyn Baccala and Tucker Baccala.

Another Grave Occasion



This was such a popular event, we are holding it once again at the historic Quincy Cemetery, Saturday, September 17th from 3 p.m. till dusk. Dignitaries who will grace us with their ethereal presence will be John D. Goodwin, first Superior Court Judge in Plumas County; James H. Whitlock, '49er, County Surveyor and veteran of the 1860s Indian Wars; Martha & Fenton Whiting, dog sled mail operators and long-time county residents; Marguerite Foley, Quincy dance studio entrepreneur; Cecilia Chamberlain, Hogan family descendant and Indian Valley Bank president; James Betterton, casualty of a mad bomber; John Jenkins and Thomas Elder, the first leagally executed duo in Plumas County history, John Boyle, attorney, shot down on Main Street Quincy in 1913 by newspaper editor F.G. Hail over the county high school; and Mary Dunn, Meadow Valley native and long-time school teacher in Plumas County. A sumptuous dinner catered by Patrick and Dee LeCoq will follow, along with a presentation by Cheryl Nichols on paranormal research and Calin Turcotte on the Chinese Burial Question. A silent auction and other activities will also be a part of the occasion. Be sure to get your tickets soon as they will sell out. 283-6320 or www.plumasmuseum.org.

Volunteers Help Out at Museum & County Fair

Thank you to our volunteers at this year's Plumas-Sierra County Fair for keeping the Peppard Cabin and Pioneer School open. Len and DeAnne Mosley cleaned both buildings prior to the Fair. Mary Bird, Ann Castaldini, Eldora Duniphin, Paula Foster, Bob Janowski, Diane Lawson, Ray Nichol, Kathy Powers, Helen Roberti, Marvin Schmidt, Norberta Schmidt, Elsa Thomas, Jerry Thomas, and Lee Williams greeted visitors to both facilities.

Also helping out on the Museum front this past summer has been Marilyn and Sonny Bergum, Ann Castaldini, Lisa Hopman, Ken Green, Courtney Jackson, Ray Nichol, Sally Nichol, Carol Paoli, Kathy Powers, Karen Rhodes, Denise Russell, and Richard Stockton. We saw a little of docent Jim Shannon earlier this year before he made a permanent move to Colorado. Our volunteers are invaluable with their help in filing historic court records, maintaining the gardens, giving Variel Home tours, and providing historical research for patrons.

Around & About the Museum

Check out our new online store at www.plumasmuseum.org. You can now purchase new and used books, event tickets, mugs, jewelry, DVDs, and a host of other items with just a few clicks of your mouse. Members will also receive 10% off on most items.

A successful benefit dinner for the Museum was sponsored by Mary Ann & Jerry Crowe and Janet Canty of the Lodge at Whitehawk Ranch on July 26 and right on its heels was the Twain Benefit Breakfast, sponsored by the good folks of Twain. We are extremely pleased with the support shown by these local businesses. Please support them as well.

The following poem was written by Museum Docent Ken Green and is from his upcoming book of poetry:

THE PLUMAS COUNTY MUSEUM

by Ken Green

In the year 2000 I hiked around Quincy,
>> I took photos and found there was lots to see.
>> I wondered if there were any old gold mining stuff,
>> One object to take home would be enough.
>>
>> So I went to the museum one day to ask about the gold
mines,
>> The director said the county was a museum with no
signs.
>> All I found was a pile of old cans on a logging road,
>> But they would have to stay from what I was told.

The lady employee asked if I wanted to be a volunteer,
>> I needed more things to do and the museum was near.
>> So I helped in the garden sweeping and pulling weeds,
>> This would be always there for me to help their needs.
>>
>> It's a lovely museum from Indians to World War 2,
>> Lots of stuffed animals and gold mining things too.
>> Buses and children come from all over to take a look,
Enjoying the past there is better than any book.
>>

2011 Exhibits on the Stella Fay Miller Mezzanine

January & February: *Plumas County Museum Historic Artists*
March & April: *Ryan Willis - Inventive Creations - Mixed Media, Sculpture*
May & June: *Joe Willis - It's A Small World - Nature Photography*
July & August: *Willie Hyman - Fine Art Photography*
September & October: *Feather River Fine Arts Guild Show - Photography, Paintings*
November & December: *Malcolm Parkhurst, aka Xan - Paintings, Sculpture*

Hours: Tuesday - Friday 9-4:30, closed Sun., Mon., holidays.

Please call if you would like to exhibit on the Mezzanine in 2012.

TRUSTEES:

Ken Barnard, Graeagle
Charlie Brown, Quincy
Don Clark, Graeagle
Patrick Cook, Graeagle
Pete Dryer, Twain
Bob Edwards, Quincy
Jerry Holland, American Valley
Sandra Lee, Quincy
Gaye Porter, Quincy
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EASTERN PLUMAS, OPEN
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www.plumasmuseum.org

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If you would like to receive your newsletter by email, please let us know at pcmuseum@digitalpath.net.

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