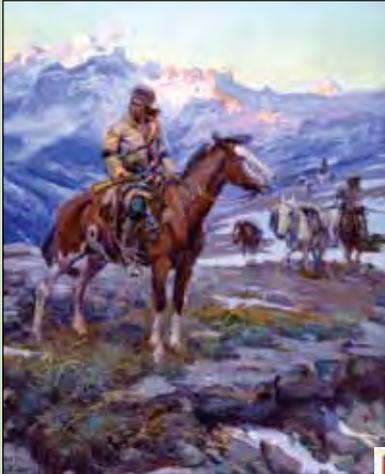


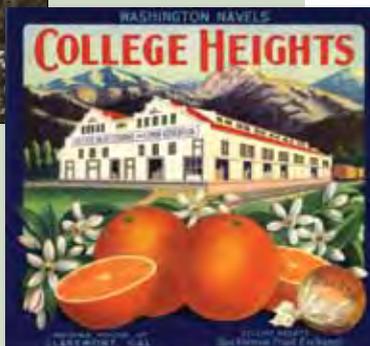
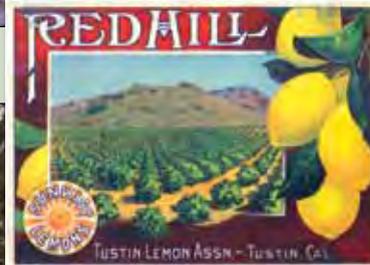
Citrus Roots

Preserving Citrus Heritage Foundation



Charles M. Russell
1864-1926
“Free Trapper”
“Symbolizes” the dynamic action as may have been perceived by Russell in the work of William “Billie” Wolfskill, Kit Carson, etc.

“Symbols” of Citrus...



By donating your citrus “Symbols” you are helping YOUR Foundation...

(citrus crate labels, citrus related Annual Reports, Sunkist and Pure Gold signs, books, photos, memorabilia, etc. and certainly cash.)

Check our website: www.citrusroots.com

Our “Mission” is to elevate the awareness of California citrus heritage through publications, education, and artistic work.

We are proud of our accomplishments as a volunteer organization, which means each donated dollar works for you at 100% [for we have no salaries, wages, rent, etc.]. All donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes to the full extent allowed by law.

Citrus Roots – Preserving Citrus Heritage Foundation

P.O. Box 4038, Balboa, CA 92661 USA
501(c)(3) EIN 43-2102497

The Life of William Wolfskill Part II

Judy Gauntt Liebeck

Wolfskill founds orange industry

Wolfskill started what would soon be his famous orange groves the year he and Magdalena married. He obtained trees from Mission San Gabriel and set them out on a two-acre site adjacent to his adobe. Fruit sold commercially proved so successful that Wolfskill increased his orange grove to 28 acres by the early 1850s.

In 1851, Wolfskill bought his neighbor’s 104-acre property. It had more than 40,000 vines, grown from prized French wine varieties, and 35 orange trees, the largest number of any private garden in Southern California. These trees had been transplanted from Mission San Gabriel and yielded 5,000 to 6,000 oranges per season.

Wolfskill believed the property had commercial possibilities, and within a few years he had a total of 70 acres devoted to orange trees. An official of the Orange Grower’s Union later remarked that Wolfskill’s profits “probably had more to do with stimulating orange growing in Southern California from that time forward than any other influence.”

Other neighbors planted nurseries of oranges and lemons. In 1855, Wolfskill bought them out and bought even more land to extend his orange orchard. In April 1857, there were probably not more than 100 mature orange trees bearing fruit in the entire county of Los Angeles. Wolfskill’s trees were not yet bearing fruit, since it takes seven years for a tree to produce enough fruit to be considered mature. He planted several thousand trees at this time and established what was then the largest orange orchard in the United States.

While his orange trees were maturing, Wolfskill was reaping the profits from his other fruit trees. In 1853, he began shipping fruit from San Pedro Harbor by ship. Of the 350 packages of fruit shipped that year, the largest number was shipped by the Wolfskill family – 98 packages containing 3,014 pounds of peaches, 487 pounds of apples, and 136 pounds of pears.

In January 1856, Wolfskill’s son-in-law introduced seedling strawberries to Los Angeles. That year, Wolfskill was awarded a diploma at the State Fair in San Jose for having the best vineyard in California. He was given a snuff-box by the California State Agricultural Society for producing the best lemons and grapes.

The views of the writer may not be the same as this foundation.



Profits stimulate orange growing... William Wolfskill made a fortune growing oranges. His considerable profits "probably had more to do with stimulating orange growing in Southern California from that time forward than any other influence." William's planting of his first grove of two acres was next to his adobe, and he always dated this orchard by saying it was the same age as his firstborn child, Juana. Photo courtesy of the Huntington Library.

Wolfskill's farm was considered the best in the state, with trees laid out in a pattern of neatness seldom equaled. In 1858, a committee from the California State Agricultural Society visited Wolfskill's orchards, vineyards and cultivated fields and made a detailed report of each. They had nothing but praise. The report said, "Perhaps no man in the fruit business of this state has realized a more complete and satisfactory success than the proprietor of this place."

By 1859, Wolfskill was producing 15 percent of the total state vintage of 340,000 gallons of wine. His 50,000 gallons were made from 449,000 pounds of grapes valued at \$337,000. In 1862, Wolfskill was listed as having 85,000 vines.

An announcement in the *Santa Ana Herald* in 1886 proclaimed that "in the Wolfskill orchard is a new orange, which promises to become a great favorite with the growers." This was the Valencia, a summer orange which would thrive only in California.

Citizen Wolfskill

On a list of the most wealthy landowners in Los Angeles County published in 1851, William Wolfskill was listed as owning 1,100 acres assessed at \$10,000. By comparison, Don José Andrés Sepulveda owned 102,000 acres assessed at \$83,000, John Temple owned 20,000 acres assessed at \$79,000, Abel Stearns owned 14,000 acres assessed at \$90,000, and John Rowland owned 29,000 acres valued at \$70,000.

With taxes of \$114, Wolfskill barely made the list, published the following year, of the 49 Los Angeles County people who paid taxes in excess of \$100. The four highest taxpayers were John Temple at \$912, Don José Andrés Sepulveda at \$723, Abel Stearns at \$719, and Antonio Maria Lugo at \$676. Within six years, in 1858, Wolfskill was number three on the list of highest taxpayers.

Wolfskill's fortunes were rising as Don José Andrés Sepulveda's were falling due to his extravagant living and gambling debts. In 1855, Wolfskill loaned Sepulveda and his wife, Francisca, \$10,000. This note, secured by a mortgage on Rancho San Joaquin, ran for one year, with interest at two percent monthly, evidently a much lower rate than some were willing to give. The note was paid when due and netted Wolfskill \$2,400.

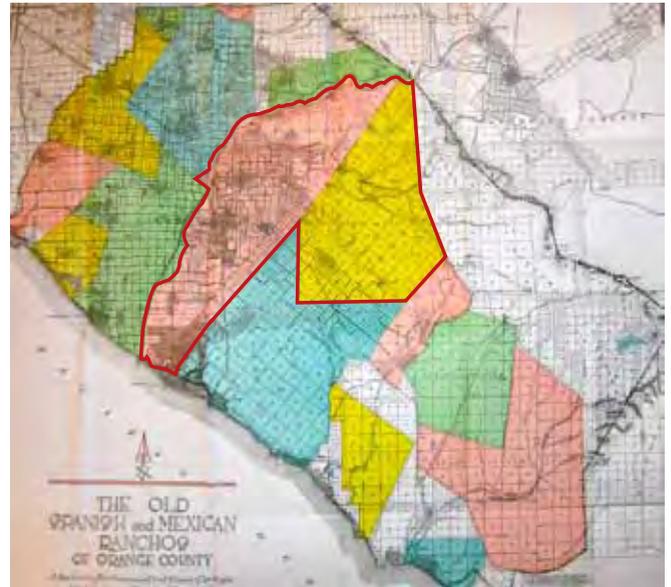
A firm believer in education, Wolfskill maintained a private school in his home for his children and the children of neighbors. In 1856, Joseph Edward Pleasants, whose parents were neighbors of William's brother John in Solano County, arrived to begin his term at the school and to work on the ranch. Pleasants would later be installed as caretaker of the land sold to James Irvine.

Wolfskill also subsidized the first public school in Los Angeles when a lack of funding threatened its closure after its first year of operation.

Wolfskill buys Rancho Lomas de Santiago

In 1860, Wolfskill purchased Rancho Lomas de Santiago from Don Teodosio Yorba and his wife, Doña Inocenciai Reyes de Yorba, for \$7,000. He purchased the 47,227-acre rancho to graze his newly acquired stock of cattle, expecting to profit from the high prices for beef being paid by gold seekers in the north. Joseph Pleasants was placed on the land as ranch foreman.

Rancho Lomas de Santiago was bounded on the north by the Santa Ana River, on the east by the mountains, on the south by Rancho Aliso, and on the west by Sepulveda's Rancho San Joaquin. The boundary of this rancho was subsequently the subject of much controversy. It was finally shown that the entire grant was unlawfully made by Governor Pio Pico and was nullified by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The United States Land Commission, however, had confirmed the grant to Yorba in 1854.



Wolfskill's holdings in Orange County: the (Old) Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, the outlined area in a pinkish tint, and Rancho Lomas de Santiago, the area shown in yellow. Courtesy of Sherman Library and Gardens.

Soon after the acquisition of Lomas de Santiago, Wolfskill brought carpenters and lumber from Los Angeles and began to construct a house for Pleasants on the banks of Santiago Creek. As the house was being built, the Yorbas contested the boundary. Wolfskill was indeed building the house on land that was not his. Not wanting to leave the house unfinished, he looked up several of the heirs to Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana and purchased their interest. Now he had as much right as anyone to be on the land. Throughout the six years he owned Rancho Lomas de Santiago, Wolfskill's stock had the

More legacies of the Wolfskill family...



Joseph, William's eldest son, donated a parcel (14 acres) to Southern Pacific to be utilized as their "future" station after receiving his inheritance of half the ranch (plus the adobe house). During the early 1870s, in order to secure the position of Los Angeles to be on the main line of the rail company, this was one of the inducements offered. In 1888, the "Arcade Station" was completed to serve Los Angeles' passenger and freight traffic. (Alameda between Fourth and Sixth Streets.) The gift of Joseph Wolfskill enhanced the value of all the neighboring properties. *Source: Family album.*



In 1865, William Wolfskill purchased the heart of the Rancho Santa Anita (including the home site [11,319 acres for \$20,000]) and planted some eucalyptus seeds which he received from a friend in Australia. The trees shown here (circa 1940) are now part of the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden.



Cecil B. DeMille, Academy Award-winning director and producer, and Mayor of Los Angeles Fletcher Bowron accept an orange tree from Amy Marguerite Wolfskill (circa 1938). *Photo courtesy of Marguerite Oates, who is Amy Wolfskill's daughter and a great-great-granddaughter of William Wolfskill.*



USS William Wolfskill, a WWII cargo ship. *Courtesy of Marguerite Oates, William Wolfskill's great-great-granddaughter.*

Another philanthropic legacy is the Wolfskill Experimental Orchards, a UC Davis-owned research center. John Reid Wolfskill worked for his older brother William. He wanted a ranch of his own and selected an area in the Sacramento Valley. Being an American, he could not obtain a land grant. William, a naturalized Mexican, secured the grant and owned the land, though his brother worked the ranch. In 1849, they divided the property, and William sold his half in 1856. In 1934, Frances Wolfskill Wilson donated 108 acres to the University, and in 1953 she donated an additional 28 acres.

Citrus legacies = Helping generations

right to roam the hills of the old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana Spanish land grant.

Unfortunately for Wolfskill, the severe drought of 1863-1864 followed shortly after his purchase of Lomas de Santiago. Cattle had sold for \$8.00 a head in January 1863, but a few months later the starving animals were being slaughtered for the value of their hides and horns – \$2.00 to \$3.00 an animal.

The late spring brought hot winds from the desert, and millions of grasshoppers devastated the country. Joseph Pleasants later recalled that “...not over four inches of rain fell from October 1863 to June 1864.” As soon as clouds would gather and rain appeared imminent, the Santa Ana winds would blow the clouds away and continue to blow for days, parching the already dry ground.

In the summer of 1863, Wolfskill traveled to Tonopah in San Bernardino County to look after some of his mining interests. While traveling down the Mojave River, he noticed that the bottom lands were covered with grass for a distance of some 20 or 30 miles along the river’s course. Pleasants transferred the stock to this pasture – east of the San Bernardino Mountains – in midwinter 1863. Wolfskill advised two of his friends and neighbors of the pasture, and they joined him in moving the herds, including their livestock as well. It took three months to move the 5,000 head of cattle and 1,000 horses. The animals stayed on the river bottom lands for more than a year, their return beginning in April 1865 after the rains had replenished the rancho. Though many ranchers lost up to 75 percent of their stock during the drought, Wolfskill and his friends only lost 25 percent.

Despite his comparatively minor cattle losses, Wolfskill began converting the rancho to raise sheep. Cattle, however, continued to be an important crop.

In 1864, William Wolfskill was listed as the second highest taxpayer in Los Angeles County, at \$7,215. Only Phineas Banning, founder of Wilmington and the creator of San Pedro Harbor, paid more. His taxes were \$20,000.

In March 1866, William Wolfskill sold Rancho Lomas de Santiago and his share in Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana to Llewellyn Bixby, Dr. Thomas and Benjamin Flint, and James Irvine. Wolfskill sold the property to Flint, Bixby & Company for \$7,000 – the same price he had paid the Yorba family six years earlier. The total acreage of Wolfskill’s Rancho Lomas de Santiago was 47,226 acres.

The change of ownership came just as the court commis-

sioners were dividing up the old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana. In the final adjustment, James Irvine and his partners were allocated a strip of land approximately three-quarters of a mile wide, running the full eight-mile length of the southeast line of the rancho from the ocean to the foothills. The total acreage received from the original 62,516-acre Spanish land grant was 3,800 acres.

At the time the Rancho Lomas de Santiago sale was approved by the Land Commission, its title was unencumbered by legal entanglements. The official survey carried the northern boundary of the portion of Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana purchased by Flint, Bixby & Company to the Santa Ana River, thus assuring water rights.

This new purchase, combined with the acquisition of Rancho San Joaquin from Don José Andrés Sepulveda two years earlier and several smaller acquisitions, brought the Flint, Bixby & Company land holdings in Southern California to 108,000 acres – 168 square miles. The partners paid about \$41,000 for all the land, approximately 38 cents an acre. Adjoining tracts later added increased their land holdings to approximately 125,000 acres.

William Wolfskill, the man to whom Los Angeles and Southern California owed much of their development, died in 1866, six months after selling Rancho Lomas de Santiago and his share of Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana to Irvine and his partners.

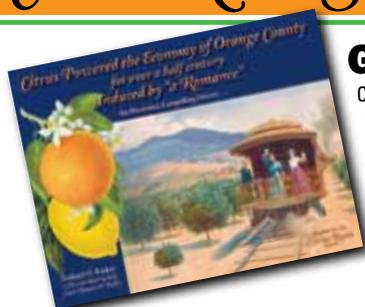
Judy Gauntt Liebeck has written extensively on the Irvine Ranch. Together with the Irvine Historical Society, she led the effort to save many historic buildings throughout the Ranch. Her friendship with Joan Hedding, William Wolfskill’s great- great-granddaughter, led to a special interest regarding Wolfskill’s many contributions to California history that have long been buried in historic archives.

Illustrations provided by Richard H. Barker, Citrus Roots–Preserving Citrus Heritage Foundation. ●



Monument at Calvary Cemetery, Los Angeles. Barker Collection.

Citrus Roots Series...

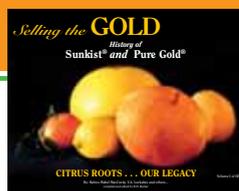


GIFT IDEAS!!

Citrus Roots...Our Legacy - Volume IV
*Citrus Powered the Economy of Orange County
 for over a half century Induced by a "Romance"*

All donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes to the full extent allowed by law.

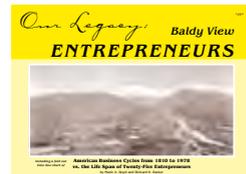
**For ordering information
 visit our website
www.citrusroots.com**



Citrus Roots...Our Legacy - Volume I
*Selling the Gold - History of Sunkist®
 and Pure Gold®*

Citrus Roots...Our Legacy - Volume II
Citriculture to Citrus Culture

Citrus Roots...Our Legacy - Volume III
*Our Legacy...Baldy View Entrepreneurs
 - 25 men & women who left a legacy*



Citrus Roots

Preserving Citrus Heritage Foundation

Keeping citrus heritage alive in the minds of those living in California through publications, educational exhibits and artistic works

(Fed. Tax ID # 43-2102497)