



WinePress Newsletter

Volume 52, Issue No. 1, Jan/Feb 2024

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Annual Meeting in January

Accomplishments, Goals, and Installation of Officers

Thursday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.

Come celebrate our **2023 accomplishments** and learn about **exciting new initiatives** in 2024! The agenda for our **Annual Meeting** includes adoption of next year's budget and election of officers. If you are unable to attend, check your email -- proxy information was sent on January 4th.

For the first time, the Annual Meeting will be conducted in **hybrid fashion** - at the NVGS library and on Zoom. **The Zoom link will be emailed prior to the event.**

We hope to see many of you in person or on screen!

[Learn More](#)

February Education Program

Local History & Genealogical Research at the Library of Congress

by Candice Buchanan

Thursday, February 15, 1:00 p.m.

This presentation will highlight the collections, services and resources at the Library of Congress that may assist in genealogical research. Candice will give an overview of the collections; discuss basic genealogical research methods; and describe how to research the library's online catalog and access digital collections.

~ Attend via Zoom or in person at the NVGS Library ~

Non-members MUST register

[Learn More & Register!](#)

Roundtable Conversations

January: **Bring Your Brick Wall**

Monday, January 8, 11:00 a.m.

[Learn More](#)

February: **Patriots & Public Servants**

Monday, February 5, 11:00 a.m.

[Learn More](#)

*~ Attend via Zoom ~
All members are welcome: Join us!*

Available Now: A New Membership Benefit!

Ask-A-Genealogist team ready to help with YOUR research challenges

A knowledgeable team of volunteer researchers has been formed to assist fellow members with their research questions and brick walls. Led by member Chris Burditt, the Ask-A-Genealogist team has a wide range of expertise, which they are excited to share with fellow members.

If you are facing a challenge in your genealogical research, the team might be able to help.

[Learn how to access](#) this service (login required).

RootsTech by FamilySearch

RootsTech

February 29 - March 2, 2024

Two Options to Attend:

1. A free online pass, or, 2. an in-person pass in Salt Lake City, Utah

RootsTech is the world's largest genealogy conference. It is a place to learn, be inspired, and make connections through family history. Get online research help and join over 200 NEW on-demand class sessions. Join RootsTech online for free or attend RootsTech in person in Salt Lake City, Utah.

[Learn More](#)

Everyday Historic Napa Pioneers

by Linda Jesmok and Sue Ziemski

As a partner for the new exhibit at the Napa County Historical Society, *City of Immigrants: An American Story*, the Napa Valley Genealogical Society dove into our records and those available online to build stories around four individuals who lived in the Valley between the 1830s and 1920s. One of our goals was to choose a variety of everyday people who represent the diversity of the Valley but are different from the historic individuals usually covered in the histories of the time. We searched through governmental records, photographs, and newspapers building out chronicles of facts from birth to death. Joseph Chenette, Araminta Blake/McComb/Sawyer, Enos Anthony Valencia, and Levi Asa Chapman came from different backgrounds, but all lived and worked in Napa Valley during the first hundred years of mass historic immigration. All but one were born elsewhere.

Although we found photos of all three men, there is no known photo of Araminta McComb Sawyer. The seven US censuses of the period between 1850 and 1920 do not always capture everyone and we are missing the important 1890 federal census which was destroyed by fire. We found often confusing and contradictory information because families shared names and the spelling of these names varies by document. Without a doubt, the information assembled is uneven but it is enticing and we are excited to share it.

Our assembled information was taken by the Historical Society's Exhibit Committee and translated into a visual exhibit for each person. The Historical Society's Tidings article showcases some of the challenges we were confronted with when researching these four Napa Pioneers. The full-length article delves deeper to help clear up some misnomers and further build out the lives of Joseph Chenette, Araminta Blake/McComb/Sawyer, Enos Anthony Valencia, and Levi Asa Chapman.

The first challenge we ran into was searching out international and other state documents. Joseph Chenette was a shoemaker by profession who owned a shoe shop in Napa and lived on Vallejo Street between 1880 and his death in 1904. He was born in French-speaking Quebec, Canada in 1825 (St. Denis-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, Canada Baptismal Records). Joseph lived in Illinois, Oregon, and Washington before coming to Napa. We were able to trace marriage records and births of his children creating a chronicle of where he lived and when. We also found references to Chenette's patents for an extendable shoe last (a tool used for crafting and repairing footwear) and a self-threading sewing machine. Possibly the most interesting story regarding Mr. Chenette was about his huge diorama of the City of Babylon that he offered to the Chicago World Fair (Napa Journal 27 October 1890). Unfortunately, the model was rejected and its fate was lost to time.

Another challenge we ran up against was the similarity of names and spelling of names. Araminta Blake and Levi Asa Chapman were particularly challenging in this respect. Araminta Blake came to Napa from Indiana in the early 1850s with her brother Aaron. At age 14, Araminta married Isaac McComb in 1856 (Napa Marriage Records). Isaac's family came to Napa in 1848 with James Clyman's wagon train (Clyman Wagon Train Roster 1848). He had a sister named Araminta who also immigrated to Napa in 1848 at age 34. In subsequent documents, Araminta's name is spelled Aramenta, Amita, and Arimintha. To make it even more confusing after divorcing her first husband in 1870, and remarrying John Earl Sawyer, Araminta went by her middle name Henriette.

Levi Chapman came from a large extended family in Connecticut. Within the family the name Levi and Asa were very popular, making it often confusing who was who. Cousins and brothers Lyman, Asa, Solon, Levi, William, and Stephen all immigrated from Ledyard and Groton, Connecticut between 1848 and 1860. Levi's father Levi came to California in 1848 prospecting at Hawkin's Bar (St Helena Star 28 January 1938). The Chapmans owned farms, hotels, and grocery stores, as well as managed banks and insurance companies. The fact that Levi's

middle name was Asa makes it easy to confuse who did what in Napa. His cousin Asa had a big house that is captured in a lithograph by Smith & Elliot (Illustrations of Napa County, California), but Levi and his wife Pauline lived on Randolph Street throughout most of their marriage and ran the grocery on the southeast corner of Brown and First Streets (Polk's Napa City Directories 1898, 1900, 1904, 1906).

Finally, avoiding being captured in the government census is not a modern phenomenon. No census is perfect, individuals were claimed to be living with families when they had already left and not claimed when they might have been absent the day the census taker arrived. Evidence of prevailing racism, chauvinism, and political preference is evident in who was recorded and who was left out. The US Federal Census of 1850 only records around 400 people living in Napa Valley, none of which are Mexican or First People, yet the California Economic Census of 1852 records over 400 Mexican and First People living in the Valley. The City Directories of the late 19th century omitted women and their professions mainly due to the political fight for Women's Suffrage at the time.

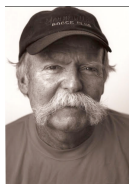
Enos Valencia is the only one of the historic pioneers that we researched who was born in Napa. He was born on George Yount's rancho in 1860 and although he was not captured in a census until 1900, Enos was a well-known hunter and hunting dog trainer. Numerous articles in the local paper remarked on his exploits and through his connections to Martha Higuerra Frias we learn of his parents and childhood (Napa Journal 10 December 1891). It is also through the newspaper that we have a picture of Enos (Napa Journal 9 February 1936). His life is also captured in marriage and voting registrations and thus we know that it was his second wife Flora Rojas Valencia who sold the popular tamales from her home and later ran a tamale parlor.

Although the information we were able to assemble for these four historic Napa pioneers is uneven, we were able to use the documents available online and in the archives to build out their lives, catch glimpses of their trials and successes, and gain a perspective of early historic Napa Valley. These individuals saw great changes in Napa Valley through the course of their lives, experiencing mass immigration into the Valley that dramatically transformed the region. They witnessed the transfer of governance from the First People to Mexico, to the United States, and they contributed to everyday life.

We hope you enjoyed this glimpse into the lives of Joseph, Araminta, Enos, and Levi, and that you will visit the full-length online article found at the following link:

<http://napahistory.org/historic-napa-pioneers/>

Volunteer Spotlight



Chris Burditt

Since age 5 when he found his first bike under the Christmas tree, Chris Burditt has felt at home behind a pair of handlebars. At age 8 he rode solo between towns on Long Island while his mother worked. He progressed to 100-200 mile bike rides by the time he landed in California as an adult. Like many achievements in his life, Chris credits the people who gave him the initial push, in this instance his family.

Another defining moment came in 7th grade when a teacher, Ruby Gibbs, selected him to attend a weekly brown bag lunch program for math enrichment. Her belief in him caused him to believe in himself. “Maybe I am good with this stuff.”

The seed planted in junior high became a BA and MA in Math at the University of Michigan and later a PhD in Math Education at Cal Berkeley. Chris then launched a 52-year career teaching math and statistics at Napa Valley College. Endurance seems to be a trademark.

Like bike riding and teaching, Chris got into genealogy for the long haul. He has researched family in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and multiple states for over 20 years. Along the way he has helped friends trace their ancestors here and abroad. He especially enjoys finding genealogical diamonds in the US Census and wills.

Some of us know Chris from his stints of staffing at the NVGS library. Others may recognize him from his facilitation and generous contributions at our Zoom Round Table conversations. His love of learning, sharing, and helping others is another trademark.

Starting this month, Chris will use his skills to benefit members of NVGS through the new Ask-A-Genealogist program. Details about the service appear elsewhere in this newsletter. Chris gave the following explanation for his choice to start this program: “It’s easy to get discouraged doing genealogical research. I hope to show people what’s available at the library and how much talent we have among our members. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience waiting to be tapped.”

It’s been a long ride for Chris from Long Island to Michigan to Napa Valley. He knows the people who helped him along the way. Now we are grateful that Chris has chosen to share his talents, patience, and humor with us at NVGS.

Library Happenings

Please Note: The Library will be closed until January 10, 2024

Holiday Reception December 6th

We had a wonderful turnout for the holiday reception held at the Library on Dec. 6th. Thirty-four folks came to share some holiday cheer. It was wonderful to put faces with names and get to know and re-connect with our members. We hope to see many more of you in person at the Library in 2024!



Mary's Book Corner



Family Crimes: Ellie McLellan Genealogy Mystery

by Beth Farrar

Author Beth Farrar has created a new and sympathetic character - Genealogist Ellie McLellan. I was able to get all four of her books; Family Secrets, Family Mistakes, Family Promises, and Family Crimes on Kindle Unlimited at the same time and read them as if they were one book. These are great cozy mystery stories with a little romance, engaging characters, a little conflict, and some good research advice.

FREE Online Genealogy Classes at SRJC

Registration Now Open - Spring Semester Classes Begin Jan 16!

- Beginning genealogy
- American and European migration
- Database tools
- Roadblocks & DNA

Santa Rosa Junior College offers **FREE, semester-long genealogy classes** through its Lifelong Learning Program. Topics include:

All classes meet via Zoom. Participants must have a California address. New students need to register first as an SRJC student, then enroll in one of the six classes offered.

For further assistance, contact SRJC at (707) 527-4533 or email the instructor, Denise Beeson: dbeeson@santarosa.edu.

[Go to SRJC website](#)

Welcome New Members!

Marcella Rivera

Surname Searches: Rivera, Native American names

Susan Little

Surname Searches: Eisan

Member Reminders



Recycle to Help NVGS

Ongoing Fundraiser: We collect **aluminum cans and plastic bottles** (no glass please) to recycle for cash. Please remember NVGS when you recycle these items. It's amazing how your recycling donations can add up!

Collect the items in a plastic bag and bring them to the NVGS Library any time. If the Library is not open when you are ready to drop off, simply **toss the bag(s) over the fence** at the back of the building.

Has Your Contact Info Changed?

Please let us know as soon as possible if you change your email address, phone number, or street address. [Contact Us](#)

Did You Miss a Past Speaker?

Members can view **education program recordings** on our website! Click this link, then log in: NapaGenSoc.org/Program-Videos

Monthly Program recordings are available for a limited time

NVGS Events Summary

Please note: the Library will be closed until January 10, 2024

January 2024:

Jan 18 (3rd Thurs): **Annual Meeting** in lieu of Education Program, 7 p.m., via Zoom or in person at NVGS Library

Jan. 8 (2nd Mon): **Round Table Conversation, "Bring Your Brick Wall"**, 11 a.m., via Zoom

Jan. (Every Wed except Jan. 3): **Library Committee Work Party**, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Jan. (2nd & 4th Tues): **Family History Writing Group**, 12 p.m., NVGS Library

Jan. 12 (2nd Fri): **Board meeting**, 10:30 a.m., NVGS Library

February 2024:

Feb. 15 (3rd Thurs): **Education Program, "Local History & Genealogical Research at the Library of Congress"**, presented by Candice Buchanan, 1 p.m., via Zoom or in person at NVGS Library

Feb. 5 (1st Mon): **Round Table Conversation, "Patriots & Public Servants"**, 11 a.m., via Zoom

Feb. (Every Wed): **Library Committee Work Party**, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Feb. (2nd & 4th Tues): **Family History Writing Group**, 12 p.m., NVGS Library

Feb. 9 (2nd Fri): **Board meeting**, 10:30 a.m., NVGS Library

[Full NVGS Calendar](#)

[Other Bay Area Genealogy Events](#)

NVGS Links:

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[Ask-A-Genealogist](#)

[Order Publications](#)

[Leadership](#)

[Renew Your Membership](#)

[WinePress Archives](#)

[Other Bay Area Genealogy Events](#)

We hope you enjoy the new WinePress format!

Please be patient as we iron out the kinks in using this new communication tool.

Contribute to WinePress:

Deadline: 26th of each month

Email submissions to: Info@NapaGenSoc.org

Subject line: Newsletter item

About Napa Valley Genealogical Society:

The Napa Valley Genealogical Society is dedicated to the promotion of genealogical, historical, and biographical research, and the preservation of family history. The society serves as a medium to share knowledge through workshops and educational programs.

Napa Valley Genealogical Society & Library

(707) 252-2252 | Info@NapaGenSoc.org | NapaGenSoc.org

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