

# GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust  
Dedicated to the Preservation and Restoration of Our Unique Rural Landscape  
Fall-Winter, 2018

## The Missouri House/Hotel

Edited from writings by Jeff Burroughs

The Missouri House, with all of its character, is probably the most forgotten landmark in Anderson Valley history. The story of the Missouri House begins sometime after the year 1884, when Thomas Jefferson Vestal and Martha Evelyn Vestal purchased the land and building next to where the present day Boonville Post Office sits.

The Vestals, along with their two children, Fodie and Hetty, came to this area on September 19, 1881, by train from Virginia. This date could be confirmed because Martha had purchased a newspaper upon arrival at the train station in San Francisco that she kept for many years. It included the announcement of President Garfield's death, which occurred on that day.

The family was picked up at the Cloverdale train station by Martha's uncle, J. O. McSpadden, who took them by buggy to the Bell Valley on the Ukiah-Boonville Road. Jeff Vestal soon began working on the toll road and ranch, while Martha collected the toll – 25 cents for a horse and 50 cents for a horse and buggy.

For three or more years the Vestals saved money, and soon they had enough to buy a building in Boonville. They bought an existing home owned by the Superintendent of Schools, W. K. Dillingham, on September 22, 1884. This home eventually became the Missouri Hotel. There were six rooms to rent, two upstairs and four downstairs. The family also had their living quarters within the hotel. In the year 1888, Martha gave birth to a third child named Burnham, and in 1890 their fourth child, Blossom, was born. Both children were born in the old Missouri Hotel.



Missouri Hotel Approximately 1907  
Note the stage steps for wagons in front of the hotel



Townfolk in front of the hotel, 1905-1907  
Martha and Blossom Vestal are on the far right

The hotel became a social gathering place, and for many years it was a stage stop. Martha and Jeff charged 25-50 cents for a room for the night. There was a special room for poker games, which rented for five dollars in gold coin per night. Locals such as Bill Rock, the Robinson boys, the McGimseys, and others regularly played and carried on until dawn.

One of the rooms in the very front of the hotel became known as the Bill Rock Room. Bill was a well-to-do fellow who owned a ranch in Yorkville just south of Boonville, now known as Ragland Ranch. He would gamble and drink at the hotel well into the night, and rather than drive his horse and buggy home, he would reserve the front room and stay overnight. He died in that room one night and in his honor it was named for him. Ironically, in later years that room would be used for funeral viewing by local families paying their respects to dearly departed loved ones.

Martha did the cooking for the hotel, and Jeff took care of the laundry and wood cutting, maintained the stage and did any repairs needed. The Vestals added a large livery stable to the hotel some years later to accommodate the stage stop that was situated where the Boonville Post Office is now. They also added a dining room to the north side of the hotel.

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## Presidents Message: A Brief and Not So Spectacular Message

The fires that occurred this summer and fall have been devastating to our county and state, to say the least. We know many of you reading this newsletter have been affected by these events or know someone that has. We hope that you and those that you care about are safe.

The recent rains offer those of us in the valley a welcome break from the anxiety of the extreme late dryness, the fires, and the stress of the smoke in the air. That said, the changing climate, both in nature and in the uncertainty in broader environmental policy, make it more important than ever to make preservation and the ways we interact with our cherished landscapes a priority.

With a new year ahead and the [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act](#) passed by Congress in 2017 taking effect many non-profits are facing the end of the year sort of sitting on pins and needles. At first blush, the new rules and regulations for some of you may mean fewer tax incentives when you donate to organizations like AVL, whose operating budget relies almost solely on your donations.

Anderson Valley and the Navarro River watershed are a unique and spectacular place and we all want it to stay that way. Your contributions enable us to continue our work and advance that cause. We appreciate your generosity and valued support.

Best wishes for the new year and thank you!



Patrick Miller  
President, AVL Board of Directors

## Mendocino County Resource Conservation District: Strategies for Improving Water Security for the Navarro Community

To safeguard the health and well-being of the Navarro River watershed now and into the future, the [Mendocino County Resource Conservation District](#) (MCRCD) is stepping up its efforts working with the community to implement projects and strategies to improve water supply security that also benefit the health of our rivers and fish. To turn the tide of increasing vulnerability and diminishing stream flows, we are enlisting the help of landowners, farmers and vineyards and leveraging partnerships with the [Nature Conservancy \(TNC\)](#), [Trout Unlimited \(TU\)](#), [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), [University of California Cooperative Extension](#) and [Shippensburg University](#). But success will depend on broad support and active participation of the Navarro watershed community. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, by kicking-off an event at the Grange in Philo from 6-9pm, the partners shared a variety of useful information and water management strategies and to encourage local participation.

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## The Missouri House/Hotel *(Continued)*

Jeff Vestal died in 1929, and was long remembered as a much beloved character of days long since passed. Martha passed away in 1939. She is remembered as a wonderful person and community member, a favorite among the young people in the community.

The Missouri Hotel closed its doors about the time of Martha's death, and she willed the property to Blossom Vestal, who lived to be 100 years old and lived most of her life in the Missouri House. Blossom's granddaughter, Joan Burroughs, still owns the place and Joan's son, Jeff lives on the property.

The Anderson Valley Land Trust offices are located in the Missouri House. We would like to thank Joan and Jeff Burroughs for sharing some of the history of the old hotel for this article.



Missouri Hotel Early 1900's

## Field Notes and Farm Bites at Filigreen Farm

September 30, 2018, was a brilliant autumn day for AVLTL's Field Notes and Farm Bites at [Filigreen Farm](#), where Chris and Stephanie Tebbutt have been farming for over 36 years. Chris Tebbutt took us on a tour, which began at the pond, crowned with the aquatic fern called [azolla](#), which is an important component of this [Demeter Certified](#) farm's closed biodynamic system of nutrient recycling. A harvest of the azolla equals the manure power of a small herd of cows. Our guests saw how the farm-made bio char locks in the water around the plants, absorbs and stores nutrients, and promotes biodiversity. We explored the von [Kårman vortices](#)—a whirlpool mimicking the sinuosity of a natural water cycle that delivers water to the bountiful orchards, olive groves, vineyard, blueberries, and other crops. With bio-swales and gabions Chris and Stephanie have transformed a broad, aggraded floodplain in Anderson Creek, turning it into a narrower channel with micro habitat for plants and animals and an over-story of trees to keep the creek temperature cooler as well as hedge against future flooding and erosion.



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## Sambucus Nigra Caerulea: Elderberry

By the time you receive this newsletter, the visual appeal of *Sambucus nigra caerulea* might be considered an acquired taste, as the look will be like a pile of bare and tangled twiggy branches, albeit with attractive shreddy bark on older specimens. These shrubby small trees lose their leaves fairly early in the autumn, relative to other deciduous plants, but during the growing and fruiting season, elderberries can provide quite the display. Fairly small in overall stature, elderberries generally attain heights of 5-20+ feet. In spring, the foliage begins to unfold as pairs of leaves that resemble light green robust feathers, composed of 3-9 oval leaflets each. Later in the spring, or even early summer, the plants become quite showy when covered with masses of creamy white, flat-topped clusters of tiny flowers, each cluster a few inches across, which adorn its crown and are noticeable from afar. The flowers are followed later in the summer into the autumn by bunches of dark blue, small berries covered with a whitish “bloom” that lends a slightly frosty appearance to the fruit. The berries are edible, and are perhaps best known for being the primary ingredient in elderberry wine. But there are many other uses, including jams, pies, syrups...and the wood was historically employed to craft musical and ceremonial instruments by Native Americans, who also made medicinal remedies from virtually all plant parts.



Tracking down the origins of the genus name, *Sambucus*, makes for interesting research. Depending on the source consulted, it may derive from just “the Latin name”, the name for “elder”, for ancient instruments resembling either a harp or a flute made from its wood, or after a liqueur distilled from the fruit. Take your pick! As far as the specific epithet and subspecies names go, the literal translation would come out to “black blue”. Hmm...

Elderberry isn't terribly fussy about where it grows, although preferences include sun and some available moisture. *Sambucus nigra caerulea* can be seen around and about growing naturally in Anderson Valley, but also thrives under cultivation. The caveat for nurturing one in your garden is how tidy a look you prefer, because elderberries do require regular and rather determined pruning to stay looking neat. An added bonus: birds are very fond of the fruit, so you will attract feathered friends - in particular grosbeaks, nuthatches, tanagers, warblers, orioles, flickers - but maybe that's only a bonus if you are not intending to harvest the fruit for yourself!

Last, but certainly not least, there is a lot of folklore surrounding the elderberry, varying by geographic region. But perhaps one of the most fun tidbits is that J.K. Rowling initially was going to call the last book of her famous series by the title of “Harry Potter and the Elder Wand”, (although that wasn't the published name). So on top of all its other features, guess *Sambucus nigra caerulea* wields magic as well!

Article by Jane Miller; Photos by Zoya Akulova

## FOREVER WILD

*Adapted from an article written by Barbara Goodell in 2007*

Bill Chambers has lived in Anderson Valley on his land southwest of Boonville for over forty years. Since the recording of his conservation easement in 2007, he's known that his land will be forever protected according to his wishes. Almost 95 acres of rolling and steep grass and forestland will remain wild to allow the redwood, Douglas fir, madrone, California bay, buckeye, and oak habitat, along with its accompanying wildlife, to flourish. All the water flowing in the seasonal creek with its boulders and waterfall will remain as it flows into an unnamed tributary to Robinson Creek, itself a tributary to Anderson Creek, which flows into the Navarro River. No subdivision of the parcel will be allowed and the scenic viewshed it provides from Highway 128 is preserved. Bill has chosen to use the easement to further protect the conservation values of his property by limiting the extent and location of future development and building as well as prohibiting timber harvests and vineyard development.



The bed of the original coach road from Mountain House to the Mendocino coast, known at the time as the McDonald to the Sea Highway, traverses the property close to the unnamed seasonal creek. The road was built in the 1850s, but was abandoned in the 1920s when State Highway 128 was built higher up the hillside. Bill has a copy of a fascinating article called "A Motorlogue over the McDonald to the Sea Highway to Fort Bragg in the Redwood Empire." It's of unknown origin and date, but published some time before Highway 101 went north of Cloverdale and -- judging from the automobiles in the photos -- probably just after the McDonald to the Sea Highway was constructed. The article begins, "Motor tourists into the Redwood Empire will never regret their decision to leave the Redwood Highway at the big sign at Mountain House, which is at the Junction of the McDonald-to-the-Sea Highway nine miles north of Cloverdale . . . and traverse the scenic wonderland adjacent to this newly developed route, along the Navarro River, over the famous Navarro Highway and on up Mendocino's picturesque Coast line to Fort Bragg: thence north over the route of the Shoreline Highway to the Redwood Highway again at Laytonville... to the complete delight of newcomers into this land of Virgin Redwoods, with its varied recreations of forest and stream."

In 2007, Bill remarked that he felt relieved to have the easement in place, confident that future generations can live and work on this land while protecting its natural resources. His conservation easement is consistent with the Open Space and Conservation Element of the 1981 General Plan's goal to avoid fragmenting larger parcels of forestland. The easement added to the thousand acres already under protection by AVLT in Anderson Valley in 2007. AVLT currently stewards 27 conservation easements totaling 2400 acres.

### **Strategies for Improving Water Security for the Navarro Community** *(Continued)*

The solution to the Navarro's water supply problems seem obvious -- reduce reliance on dry season diversions by storing the wet season rainfall for use during the dry season. But implementing water management projects can be difficult. Issues related to permitting, water rights, flow requirements, project design and cost have kept many water users from taking steps to improve their water security. The MCRCD and its partners are focused on strategies to overcome these challenges and empowering water users to implement solutions and management strategies to meet their needs while also enhancing the natural value of the streams and rivers. We have two main strategies. Our first strategy is to store wet season water for use in drier months and reduce the cumulative impacts of dry season diversions. Our second strategy is to increase storage of water naturally - in the ground.

Over the next two years MCRCD will be advancing our groundwater and soil health strategy in two ways. As part of our "Navarro Farm to Water Table" project we will be collaborating with our partners at Natural Resource Conservation Service and Professor Christopher Woltemade of Shippensburg University to work with farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices that build soil health, sequester carbon, increase water holding capacity, and projects addressing water-use efficiencies such as replacing failing or leaking irrigation systems and conveyance. To further build our knowledge of local streams, we'll be engaging local volunteers in a citizen monitoring program where landowners will participate in gathering stream temperature data throughout the watershed. Together with TNC and TU we'll also be designing and constructing large in-stream wood restoration projects in several tributary streams. We'll also be implementing an infiltration study to better quantify the benefits of increasing recharge of shallow groundwater storage to enhance stream flow.

For both people and fish, now is the time to begin thinking like a watershed, do our part, however small or large, to return the Navarro to a healthy, productive river ecosystem.

For more information you can email or phone Linda MacElwee at [linda.macelwee@mcrcd.org](mailto:linda.macelwee@mcrcd.org) (707)895-3230, or Patty Madigan at [patty.madigan@mcrcd.org](mailto:patty.madigan@mcrcd.org) (707) 462-3664 ext. 102, or go to [www.mcrcd.org](http://www.mcrcd.org).

*Article by Patty Madigan and Linda MacElwee*

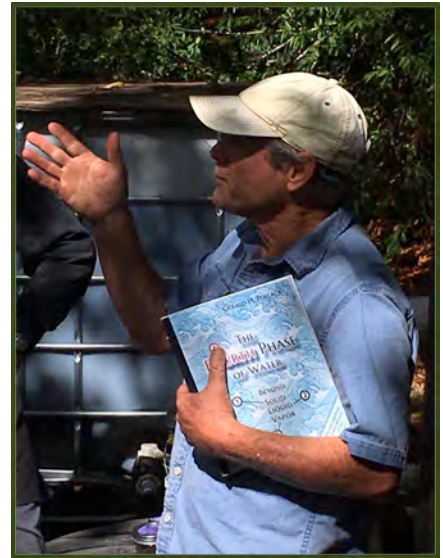
**Filigreen Farm** (Continued)

Following the tour guests gathered at Filigreen’s state of the art packing shed where Stephanie Tebbutt presented an apple tasting featuring a dozen heritage apples grown on the farm. Each variety included the place and date of origin for reference. In addition to apples, the farm also produces a multitude of other crops and Chef [Christina Jones](#) prepared a lunch to savor from the farm’s bounty served in the recently planted redwood circle where the temperature was viscerally refreshing. Along with some fantastic food and estate olive oil we had a sampling of wines and ciders produced from fruit grown in Filigreen’s vineyard and orchards. [Bee Hunter Wines](#), [Balo Vineyards](#), [Donkey and Goat Wines](#), [Sin Eater Cider](#), and [Yamakiri Wines](#) were all available for tasting. Winemakers Lisa Bauer and Ali Nemo and Andy DuVigneaud joined us in person to talk about their very special offerings.

All of us at AVL T are incredibly grateful to Stephanie and Chris Tebbutt, Christina Jones and family, as well as the fantastic wine and cider makers whose time and generosity made this event a terrific success.

Filigreen Farm’s 87 acres are protected by a conservation easement stewarded by AVL T.

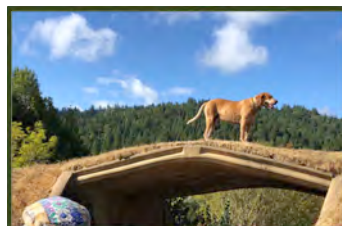
Article by Barbara Goodell



Chris Tebbutt



Stephanie Tebbutt makes things perfect!



Photos: Andy Balestracci, Patrick Miller, Trey Petrey



## **INSIDE DIRT**

**MISSOURI HOUSE**      **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**      **ELDERBERRY**  
**FOREVER WILD ON HIGHWAY 128**      **FIELD NOTES AND FARM BITES**      **IMPROVING WATER SECURITY**

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### **Save the Dates**

*Conservation Landscaping: Native Plants and Grasslands for Wildlife Habitat*

Early April, 2019

*Date TBD*

Rose Room at the Anderson Valley Museum

Wildflower and Native Grasses Walk

Saturday, May 4, 2019

10AM – 2 PM

Galbreath Preserve

Reservation information and further details are coming. Sign up on our email list (if you are not already) by contacting us at [avlt@mcn.org](mailto:avlt@mcn.org) or call 707-895-3150.