

# PLUGGED IN

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A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY AND ART

## This Month's Theme: Santa Barbara County Agriculture (Part II)

### Santa Barbara County Has A Rich Agricultural History

By Connie Buxton, Ganna Walska Lotusland

Although many of the fields that once grew crops now have houses on them, agriculture is still the #1 industry in Santa Barbara County.

Before widespread irrigation, many farmers and ranchers dug reservoirs to catch and hold rainwater. In the late 1800s, Englishman Kinton Stevens bought 37 acres in Montecito and planted lemon orchards, as well as an olive orchard. He provided local ranchers with varieties of lemon and other citrus trees. Eventually he stopped growing lemons and created a nursery of rare plants. Needing more water to care for his plants, he dug a large reservoir on his property. In this reservoir, he grew lotuses and was the first person in the west to grow the sacred Indian lotus. Stevens experimented with tropical fruits and grew bananas, pineapple, and other fruits that were unusual at that time. Today Kinton Steven's property is Lotusland. The reservoir has become the Japanese garden pond, in which lotuses still grow. Kinton Steven's son, Ralph, was the first paid Santa Barbara City Park Superintendent, and Steven's Park in San Roque is named in honor of Ralph Stevens.

Another important early plantsman in our area was Ellwood Cooper. In 1872 with 7,000 olive trees, he ran the largest olive mill in the U.S. and was called "America's Olive Oil King." He introduced eucalyptus trees to the area, and he was the first plantsman in the area to use ladybugs for pest control, im-

porting thousands of ladybugs from China. His eucalyptus trees are now home to thousands of monarch butterflies in the area named for him (Ellwood) in Goleta.



Lotusland's Japanese garden pond was originally a reservoir for Kinton Steven's plant nursery.

### Early Irrigation at Rancho La Patera

By JoAnne Treloar, Goleta Valley Historic Society

Sherman Stow was one of the many pioneers who came to the Goleta Valley wanting to make a living with agriculture. He bought land with a good water source because he wanted to irrigate his rancho, which became an experimental farm to many crops and was named Rancho La Patera.

"Dry crops" were being grown here on our central coast that did not require any irrigation. Tomatoes, grains, and various types of beans were among the dry crops grown locally. Around 1890, an irrigation system was established that allowed more types of crops to be planted. Stow used a spring on his property plus San Pedro Creek to create his own irrigation system. Ditches were dug by hand to lay large pipelines that would bring water from the Goleta foothills down to Rancho La Patera.

Lake Los Carneros, as it is known today, was the destination of the water and formed the reservoir to irrigate the crops. With water in place for distribution, lemon orchards became very popular with many local farmers. As early as



Lemons being delivered by horse team to Johnston's shed during the 1890s.

1890, lemons were on their way to the local Johnston Fruit Company.

Edgar Stow, son of Sherman Stow, became the new manager of Rancho La Patera around 1915. During that period the irrigation system was modernized. The dam was raised to hold more water and to provide necessary water during the dry season. New ditches for pipelines were dug, this time by the Buckeye Ditch Digger. This large piece of equipment has been restored and can be seen at the Sexton Museum on the Rancho La Patera grounds.



A view from the foothills of Goleta looking down on Rancho La Patera around 1954.

Buckeye Ditch Digger



### CROP QUIZ

Can you identify these crops by their water needs?

Which require irrigation and which can be grown with rain water alone? **Bonus:** Which are the top five crops grown in Santa Barbara County? You'll find the answers below.

CROP	Needs Irrigation	Dry Crop (Rain Only)
Broccoli		
Cauliflower		
Corn		
Hay		
Head lettuce		
Lemons		
Lima Beans		
Oranges		
Strawberries		
Tomatoes		
Wine grapes		

Answers: Broccoli (I), Cauliflower (I), Corn (D & I), Hay (D), Head lettuce (I), Lemons (I), Lima Beans (D), Oranges (I), Strawberries (I), Tomatoes (D & I), Wine grapes (I). The top five crops in order of production are Strawberries (#1), broccoli, wine grapes, head lettuce, and cauliflower.

### Lake Los Carneros

The Lake Los Carneros area is a preserve that has been left in its natural state as a home for wildlife and for us to enjoy. Part of the old irrigation system can still be seen as you walk the path around the lake. Come and take a stroll! You can also visit Stow House, the farmhouse that Sherman Stow built for his family in 1874, as well as the Sexton Museum, which is right next door.

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