







# YESTERYEAR

by Bill Neubauer

## A Man From Missouri

In the early 1860's in the San Lorenzo Valley the Boulder Creek area was thought to be 'back of the beyond'—a sprinkling of rude dwellings and lumber camps that formed an outpost of civilization in a vast, primeval forest of redwood trees.

But in olden days, as now, big timber and money were almost synonymous; and in olden days, as now, folks were not reluctant to earn fortunes, or at least a day's wage, even in a wilderness.

And so it was that when the hills beyond today's Boulder Creek were opened up by the Federal government in 1865 for timber claims, settlers moved in with their families, axes and saws to begin one of the greatest lumber booms yet recorded in Central California history.

However, not all who pioneered the Boulder Creek area came slogging north from Felton or east down the Saratoga Grade to harvest the ancient redwoods.

Consider, for example, the bearded Christian Horstman of Missouri.

Mr. Horstman was a unique pioneer in that the 160 acres he took up in 1875 off the Bear Creek Road out of today's Boulder Creek had been logged over and left, for the most part, bare.

But Mr. Horstman believed that crops other than redwood trees could be grown and harvested profitably in the rich Valley earth. So while others brought the big trees crashing down, Mr. Horstman planted vineyards and orchards. In the fullness of time, he earned the distinction of being among the first to prove that grapes and other fruit could be grown profitably in the region.

And some of the harvests gleaned laboriously by Christian Horstman made him a most respected man, indeed.

Sauvignon, Verdel, Zinfandel, Rose of Peru: Mr. Horstman's knowing hand with these grapes created for him a broadly-based market that brought other than lumber money into the region.

Mr. Horstman's wines were sold in San Francisco, and some even found their way to lands across the seas.

Mr. Horstman's Rose of Peru grapes and other fruits were exhibited with honor at the Sacramento Fair as early as 1880.

And, in the wilderness area, the Horstman orchards produced with a nice regularity, apples, pears, cherries, peaches and German prunes both for home use and local sale.

But first and foremost, there was the wine . . .

The old Horstman winery stands yet, evocative of an age and an October hustle-bustle still recalled vividly by George Pilger of Boulder Creek — a grandson of Mr. Horstman.

The two-story winery, Mr. Pilger recalls, was built into a hillside so that gravity could spare the family and hired hands considerable work. Grape crusher and wine press were located on the top floor, reached by a road, along with appropriate vats. The vats stood over trapdoors, under which casks were placed on the lower floor to receive the juice as the grapes were crushed and/or pressed. Cut into the hillside was a storage area in which the wine could be kept at correct temperature until shipment.

The grape crusher was rudimentary but highly effective.

"All it ever was," George Pilger reports, "was a log with one end on the floor and the other end slung up in a block-and-tackle. You filled the vat with grapes, then stuck blocks of wood onto the cover. You lowered the high end of the log, and the full weight came down to crush the grapes."

If the crushed grapes were Zinfandel, the vat was



A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST ---- With understandable pride, pioneer Christian Horstman exhibits around 1885 the produce of the Boulder Creek area ranch he established in wilderness. The place is the Sacramento State Fair.

emptied directly into the casks on the first floor, for Zinfandel grapes ferment on the skin. In the case of the Sauvignon and Verdel, however, the grapes were put into the wine press, after crushing, for final extraction of juice.

October was the wine-making month, Mr. Pilger recalls. Some 3000 to 4000 gallons were made, most of which were sold in 150-gallon puncheons to buyers from San Francisco. The puncheons were hauled to the Boulder Creek railroad station by four- and six-horse teams for shipment to San Francisco and the world markets.

"That was the hardest part of the job," Mr. Pilger reports. "To roll a puncheon onto a wagon took three men in front and two behind. A puncheon of wine weighs a lot more than air, you know."

But Christian Horstman of

Missouri, who came to the San Lorenzo Valley 92 years ago, had a way of doing whatever he set out to do. He covered bare wilderness earth with vineyards and orchards, he made wine that was agreeable to educated palates, he grew fruit worthy of sale, and he got his har-

vests to market.

And in the process, Christian Horstman of Missouri did more: he played a significant but oft-ignored part in making the Boulder Creek area of yesteryear infinitely more than the rude outpost of civilization he found in a primeval forest in 1875.

"Appelthorpe Farm" - Bear Creek, Calif.  
Built in 1894 by George Pilger  
Home of Geo. & Anna Pilger + Family

~~"Appelthorpe Farm"~~  
Bear Creek,  
Built in 1894

Home built on 180 acres  
by Anna's parents, Mrs.  
Christian Lossman  
that they homesteaded  
in 1862.



Size 18" x 24"







