

The Novato Historian

The Quarterly Publication of the Novato Historical Guild, the Novato History Museum, and the Hamilton Field History Museum
Preserving Novato History



Feature Section

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July—September 2022

The Novato Historian

Volume 46 Number 3

Oct 11, 1978

The Ignacio bar that just won't quit

By LINDA SALDANA

Bartender Ed Jewell moves behind the counter with an ease born of years of experience. This is his second time 'round, he tells you. He used to be the owner of the Town Club, but after bulldozers leveled one corner of Grant and Redwood Highway, he came back to the Meadows.

Ignacio's own, it's eyeballed every day by shirt-land-tied commuters along Highway 101 inching their ways towards the Golden Gate. They wonder who could possibly be easing onto bar stools in a saloon that so boldly proclaims in large letters, "Open 6 a.m."

The Meadows is a white boxy building, with cars where the horses used to stand. "Italianate commercial style" to those who know their architecture. "Early disintegration" for those who don't. The place hasn't been bothered by paint in many years.

City planners talked about designating the Meadows an "historical preservation zone." Then they checked into it and decided it was more historical than preservation.

Inside, the Meadows has just settled into a comfortable afternoon. Ed Jewell is gliding back and forth between customers, chatting congenially over the click of the pool table and the rattle-rattle-rattle-BAM! of the dice cups.

"We get all kinds in here," he says. "Doctors, lawyers, Indian Chiefs—we get 'em all." He ticks off a list of regulars with

names like Eddie Alphabet, horse John and Sweet John Tesser, Johnny "Tarzan" Weismuller used to be a frequent denizen. The language gets pretty rough sometimes, he cautions. "Like try in" to tell some of the guys to cool their language, then you have to turn around and tell the girls."

But the place has calmed down quite a bit since the G.I.'s left Hamilton. There's a small bat kept behind the bar, but Jewell says they never use it.

Behind him, hanging like fringe around the back bar mirrors, are 300, maybe 400, motel room keys.

"When Hamilton was open, a lot of G.I.'s used to come in here after a night on the town," Jewell explains. He brings out the latest acquisition, a key on a brass disk. It's from a motel in Iran.

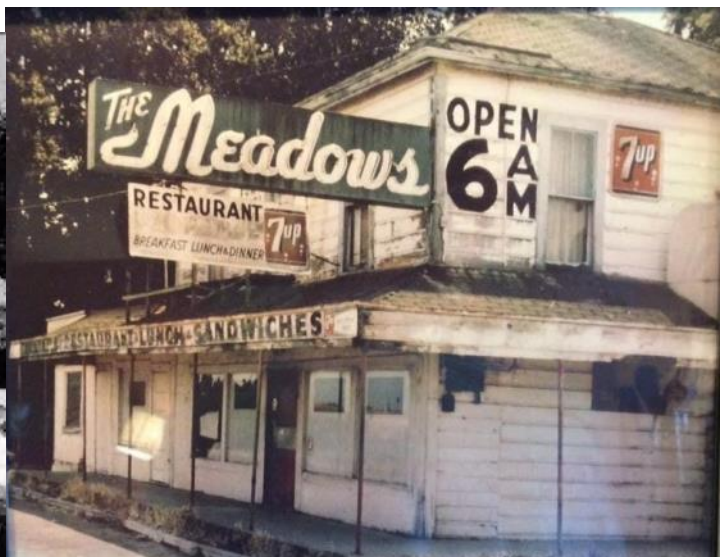
"We've had motel owners complain because one of their keys wasn't hanging there," he says.

Someone goes in the men's room. As the door swings open, it reveals a painting of a well-endowed woman showing everything but her age. "Queenie of the Meadows," has titillated many a patron.

It doesn't take Jewell long to come up with a story about the Meadows. He's almost afraid to tell it because the S.P.C.A. might get upset.

"There was a drunk goat in here," he recalls.

It seems a guy came in with a goat once and he was feeding her beers on the side. The goat got drunk and started attacking everything that walked through the door.



The Meadows sometime in 1970's

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Bartender Ed Jewell serves up an afternoon brew.

So a G.I. offered to take her over to Hamilton to dry out. Now comes the sad part: "The guy tied her to a picnic table and the goat jumped over the table and hung herself." There's a moral there somewhere. Jewell's shift is from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dave McCoy relieves him at 6 p.m. and Sully handles the 6 a.m. crowd, which might number "five, six, seven, eight—we might have a full bar," according to Jewell. The favorite morning drink? "Bloody Marys," Jewell says without hesitation. Genevieve Donham DeLucchi Suggs remembers the 6 a.m. crowd from her time as bartender-cook at the Meadows in the 1940's. "All the customers were soldiers," she recalls. "I would open the bar up at 6 a.m. and they'd be waiting." The favorite drink then was "straight shots and beer—or a highball." Gen—then 19 — had been married to Al DeLucchi about a year when his parents gave him the money to buy the bar. She worked the day shift while he slept upstairs where there were four rooms and a bathroom that are now used for storage. He relieved her for the night shift. "The place always looked old," she remembers. Highway 101 was a two-lane road then, and the old depot was across the street. Gen cooked hamburgers in the afternoons, and there was a Chinese cook there for a while. And once a week, DeLucchi's mother would make Italian

ravioli's and he would serve them. A man called Swamper Charlie was one of the occupants of the four cabins out back that were rented by the month. He used to come in and mop the place and keep it dean. Gen lived in the Meadows a little more than a year, before she and her young daughter, Sharon (now Sharon Harrison) moved out in in 1942. DeLucchi stayed on at the Meadows until he

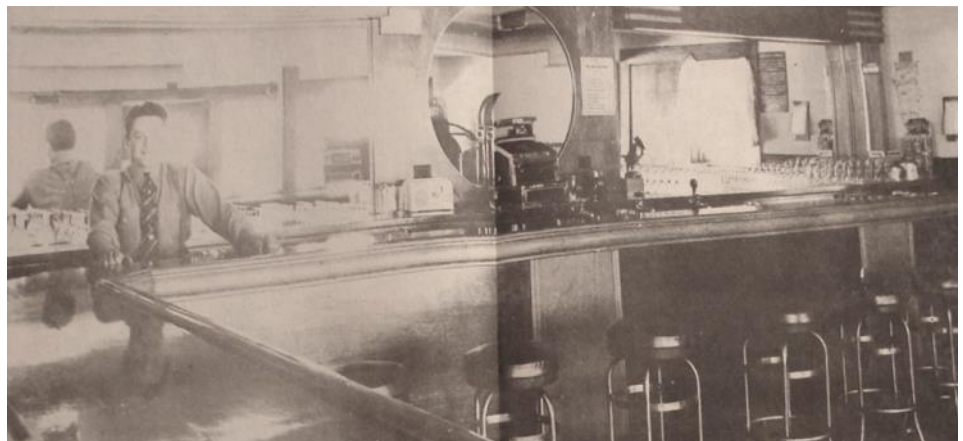
went into the service. Agnes Nathenson's memories of the Meadows go back even further—to the 1920's, when her father, George Jones, operated it as a grocery store, post-office, garage, and saloon. The building—erected in 1895— was Ignacio's rallying point. It was known as the "Eight Mile House" because it was eight miles from San Rafael. Mrs. Nathenson —who now lives in Greenbrae- was just a small girl when she, her parents and her two brothers lived in the rooms upstairs. Men would drop their laundry off in canvas bags, she remembers, and it would be sent away by train to be laundered. She remembers, also when there was a dance pavilion out back, and young

people would come from San Rafael and all over for "real country dancing like they used to have at Penngrove and Cotati." There would be "prize waltzes," and everyone would get out and compete. Mrs. Nathenson says she hasn't been by the Meadows in years. Her brother went buck hunting recently, though, and told her she wouldn't like it. Fred Landa now owns the Meadows business, but ninety-eight-year-old James Story owns the land. Story says he has owned the place for 39 or 49 years, I can't remember which. "I bought it from the man who bought out George Jones," he says. Al DeLucchi rented the bar from Story; so, did Fred Apostali, the world champion middleweight boxer who ran the Meadows in the '50s. Asked if he would mind having his picture taken for the paper. Story replied, "I don't know why you'd want to do that. I'm 98 years old, just as homely as I ever was."

Story still lives in a house on property behind the bar, and rents the building to Landa on a month-to-month basis. That's one reason, according to bartender Ed Jewell, why the Meadows looks like it does. With no lease, it's risky to make improvements. But maybe it's just as well. "If he improves the place," Jewell conjectures, "he'd probably ruin the atmosphere."

By Michael Read

According to a 1995 Ij story "Salvador Pacheco family gave their housekeeper a gift of 10 acres near Enfrente Road along southbound Highway 101. In the early 1890's, the housekeeper built a general store with living quarters on the second floor." August 23, 1890 Tocsin, "John Canepa is



The Meadows in the 1940's: Al DeLucchi tends bar.

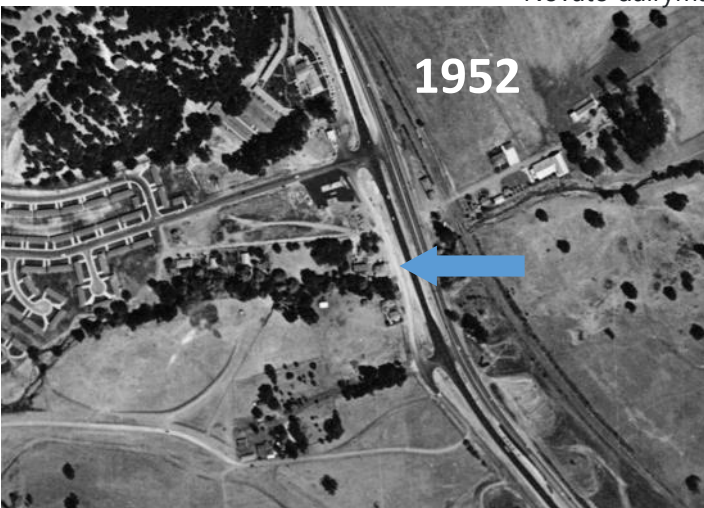
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about to build a lodging house, restaurant and saloon at Ignacio Station. A liquor license was secured, and soon the thirsty railroad trotter will be able to "wet his whistle" at a most convenient point." John Canepa (1852-1907) along with his brother Alexander (Alesandro) (1862-) and his sister Assunta Biocina (1860-1908) where born in Switzerland. John came to the American in 1866 was a guard at San Quentin in the 1870's for seven years. Then a dairyman in Bolinas in 1880's, and the bridge tender for Novato beginning in November 1890. John would marry Susan Mary Smith November 30, 1873. John and Susan would have three children: Leonard Alexandro (1875-1965), Edward Joseph (1877-1955) and

Emma Josephine Canepa (1880-1964) Jan 23, 1892 Tocsin - J. **Canepa**, bridge tender on the S. F. & N. P. at Novato, while trying to board a passing train there, missed his footing and fell through a trestle. He was seriously hurt about the head as was indicated by severe vomiting and other symptoms of concussion. The sufferer was brought to San Rafael and lodged at the Central Hotel where he was attended by Doctor White. Mr. **Canepa** is progressing favorably and he will almost certainly recover. Alexander (Alesandro or Alex) came to American on November 24, 1877 and was Naturalized August 3, 1882. Dec 26, 1895 Ij - Alexander **Canepa** has bought out the interest of Will Kynoch, the Novato dairyman in business with

Mr. Blodget, and has taken possession of the ranch opposite the station at **Ignacio**, which is considered one of the finest in this county. Oct 8, 1898 Tocsin - Application for license to sell liquor granted to A. **Canepa** at **Ignacio**. Dec 12, 1898 Daily - Canepa Bros. have issued invitations to the opening of their new saloon at Ignacio on the 17th inst. Aug 24, 1899 Arugs - John and Alex Canepa, well-known residents of Ignacio, have recently opened a wayside resort at that which they have named "The Eight Mile house ." Nov 20, 1903 Daily - A. Canepa has made an addition to and raised the building of his eight mile house at



Ignacio.

April 22, 1907 Daily -John Canepa for seven years guard at San Quentin, lies in a critical condition at the sanitarium in San Rafael. He would die on November 16th. He was 48 years old.

May 9, 1908 Daily - Local relatives have received news of the death of Mrs. Assunta Biocina who died in San Francisco May 6th. The deceased was well known here where she formerly resided. She was the mother of Mrs. Mamie Webber, sister of John and Alexander Canepa of Ignacio, aunt of Agnes Grandi and Henry Auzini of Petaluma, Mrs. Remene Terrebillini of Marshalls, Leo Canepa of San Rafael, Edward Canepa of Yuma, Arizona.

George Sherman Jones

I found no records, but I assume that after the death of Alex's brother and sister he sold the bar to George S. Jones (1886-1962) and his father sometime after this.

Found this record – July 20, 1918,

Petaluma Daily "Catherine Jones (his mother) to Geo. S. Jones tract of land adj. Pacheco tract at Ignacio known as Assunta Biocina place."

Note: Canepa's owned the land where Hamilton Air Base is on.

Sept 16, 1916 Tocsin: S. Stromberg vs F.C. Tanforan. T. P Bodkin and wife— To quiet title of plaintiff interest in 547.326 acres, less 4 acres known as the Capena Ranch. By Jack Mason – Ignacio's principal citizen for years was slender zealous George Jones. Sausalito-born, he moved here in 1907, ran a store, garage, small bus line, creamery and post office.

Dec 31, 1957 Ij "The year was 1918. The candidate, George S. Jones of Ignacio. ... ran for supervisor lost to Sweetser. ... When the political bug hit him back in 1918, Jones was running virtually a one-man town. He operated the first garage and service station between Ignacio and San Rafael and owned a general store, barber shop, butcher shop and telephone exchange. He was also the Ignacio postmaster. And that year he grew 1,000 acres of sugar beets on property that is now Hamilton Air Force base,,"

Aug 8, 1925 Daily "George S. Jones has sold to Albert Bierman and Charles C. Howland, the personal property in their general merchandise store, Ignacio." Bierman and Howland would sale the land and the Meadows to James Story (Storey). He would run the Meadows until he sold the business only to Delucchi.

May 18, 1939 Argus "Alfred Delucchi (1916-1966) has purchased the bar and restaurant through his father, Fred, real estate broker, from Story at Ignacio."

January 1946 Alfred DeLucchi, only son of former Constable and Mrs. Alfred DeLucchi, has been released from army service and reopened "The Meadows."

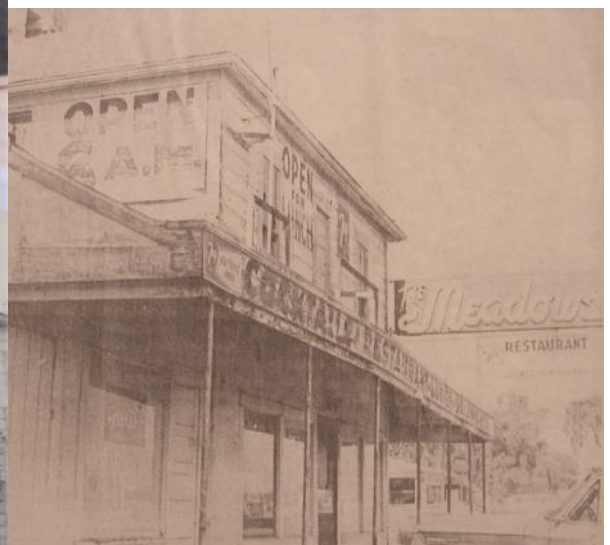
May 7, 1957 ij: "Sale of the Meadows cocktail bar and restaurant in Ignacio to former middleweight champion Fred Apostoli of Fairfax was announced.

The Business is being sold by Alfred Delucchi, who operated the landmark establishment for 18 years. He is also proprietor of Al's Liquors Store in Ignacio. Apostoli, who was world middleweight champion in the late 1930's, formerly owned a cocktail lounge in San Francisco."

Fred J. Landa & Ralph J. Schooley would operate the Meadows bar sometime after this, until Ralph died unexpectedly in 1967. He was 49.

September 1981 the "Meadows" was torn down and a Shell Gas station is there now.

The Meadows Bar was at 5965 Redwood Highway.



Sept. 29, 1981 The Meadows bit the dust with the help of Bob Schram, who charged into it with a bulldozer that brought it to the ground.