

After the Gold Rush

Tarnished Dreams in the Sacramento Valley

DAVID VAUGHT

The Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore

© 2007 The Johns Hopkins University Press
All rights reserved. Published 2007
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

The Johns Hopkins University Press
2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363
www.press.jhu.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Vaught, David, 1958-

After the Gold Rush : tarnished dreams in the Sacramento Valley /

David Vaught.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8018-8497-9 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8018-8497-7 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Agriculture—Economic aspects—California—Sacramento Valley—History.

2. Sacramento Valley (Calif.)—History. I. Title. II. Series.

HD1775.C2V38 2006

338.109794'5—dc22

2006017407

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

To my mother and in memory of my father

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Prologue. "Glorious" i

PART ONE MAKING A SETTLEMENT

- 1 Removals ii
- 2 Seduced 27
- 3 Farms without Titles 45
- 4 "A Very Public Place" 57

PART TWO DISASTER AND PERSISTENCE

- 5 "To Begin Again" 73
- 6 Favorite Son 89
- 7 Prominent Citizens 104

PART THREE THE SECOND GOLD RUSH

- 8 "As Good As Wheat" 127
- 9 "A Devil's Opportunity" 150
- 10 Looking Back 172

PART FOUR THE NEW GENERATION EMERGES

11 Gold—Wheat—Fruit 197

12 Legacies 220

Epilogue. Remnants 229

Notes 233

Essay on Sources 295

Index 301

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have happened without the wonderful people at the Yolo County Archives in Woodland, California. Like most repositories of local records, the Yolo County Archives operates on a shoestring. It is open one day a week and only for a few hours at that. When I first walked in the door in June of 2000 not expecting much, Howard Moore, one of the many volunteers who keep the place running, showed me Deed Book L, which contained a detailed hand-drawn map of the Big Ranch on Putah Creek. Wow, I thought, there might be something for me here. The archivist, Mel Russell, a true professional in every sense of the word, agreed a few months later to keep the small reading room open for me every day for two weeks. Seventy-two days later by my count (in two-week trips over the next four years), thanks in no small part to Mel's incredible patience and expertise, my research finally came to an end. On most of those days, volunteer Virginia Isaacs "supervised" me, photocopied countless documents, and kept me going with her wicked sense of humor. When Virginia could not come in, Shipley Walters, the historian of Yolo County, stepped in for her. I am most grateful to them as well as to the Friends of the Yolo County Archives, without whom there would be no archives. Thank you all very much.

Other individuals and institutions (in California unless otherwise indicated) also made the research possible. I extend my deep appreciation to the librarians and staffs at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; California State Archives, Sacramento; California State Library, Sacramento; California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento; Davis Public Library; Dixon Public Library; the National Archives, College Park, Maryland; the National Archives, Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno; Placer County Archives, Auburn; Solano County Administrator's Office, Fairfield; Solano County Archives, Fairfield; U.S. Bureau of Land Management, California State Office, Sacramento; and Yolo County Surveyor's

“As Good As Wheat”

William Dresbach's general store buzzed with activity throughout the summer of 1869. The twenty-sixth of June was a particularly busy day. Needing cash to pay harvest expenses and to begin settling the year's accounts, George W. Pierce, Charles E. Greene, James C. Campbell, Francis E. Russell, Bartlett Guthrie, and R. S. Carey all hauled in their first wheat of the season. While workers unloaded the 125-pound sacks (nearly 3,000 total) from the long line of wagons into Dresbach's huge warehouse, these six prominent citizens gathered out front for a lively conversation. Though disappointed with the \$1.50 per cental (hundred-weight) that Dresbach offered them, they were encouraged that the price had gone up 10 cents from the previous week. That was a sign, they told each other, that as the year wore on, the market for the rest of their crop would reach the \$1.75 to \$2.25 range to which they had become accustomed.¹

“Big crops and high prices,” they believed, were the order of the day. The large surplus from the previous season that accounted for the current glut was temporary, they assumed. There would always be markets, and profitable ones, for all that they would raise. “The high price brought by California wheat in Liverpool,” Greene had insisted a few months earlier, “is an assurance that it will always find sale, however full the market may be stocked.” They counseled one another to hold on to as much of their wheat as they could; with the impending war in Europe and a lighter crop in California predicted for the year, prices were sure to rebound. Their unbridled optimism stemmed not only from their newfound expertise in world affairs, which they gleaned from conversations among themselves, from the local newspapers, and from their own direct participation in the emerging global economy. They took immense pride in the knowledge that the wheat they grew on their farms moved in greater volume over greater distances than any product ever before in human history.²

As the conversation moved to more local matters, the tone and substance remained equally high-minded. How their community had “advanced in prosper-

ity," they boasted. Dresbach's store now offered them a full line of high-quality goods, from tools and implements, to expensive fabrics and ready-made clothing, to imported spices and plugs of the finest tobacco. Olive Street in Davisville had become the center of a thriving business district, which catered to the needs of farm families, townspeople, and visitors. Three churches and a public schoolhouse were either under construction or in various stages of planning. Three fraternal organizations offered men new means of fellowship and conviviality. Balls, dances, and "base ball matches" were held seemingly every week. The town would soon have its own newspaper to keep readers abreast of "local intelligence and improvements" (though it would last only a few months), and an ambitious canal project promised to reroute the volatile waters of Putah Creek away from the town, reclaim thousands of acres of swampland, and enhance the "air of business and prosperity" about the region.³

They owed it all to wheat, and they knew it. Putah Creek farmers resurrected the old proverb "as good as wheat"—the same spine-tingling phrase that had captured the imagination of Pierce and his fellow Kenoshans in the 1840s. Wheat, they preached, "was as good and even better than money." It was better, even, than gold.⁴

"Farming new land at two cents a pound for wheat is about as good an enterprise as a man can go into," wrote an early chronicler of California agriculture. Putah Creek farmers agreed wholeheartedly. From 1867 to 1877, they received that magical price more often than not.⁵ So profitable was wheat during this time that farmers rarely concerned themselves with calculating the exact cost of production, though \$1.50 per cental was widely perceived as the price they needed to break even. All they knew for sure was that the two-dollar benchmark allowed them not only to cover the expenses of producing their crop but also to clear their mortgage debts, pay their taxes, buy supplies, and still have something left over for themselves and their families. Wheat, they insisted, "ought to command \$2.00 per cental." After two decades of struggle, they firmly believed that they were entitled.⁶

On the basis of the ingenuity they continued to display in their fields, their presumptions seemed justified. Farmers in Putah Creek well understood that the sensational yields they had witnessed during the 1850s could not be sustained indefinitely. They feared soil deterioration every bit as much as bad weather and high interest rates. By the early 1870s, most had adopted the practice of summer-fallowing as "the surest remedy." Pierce employed the most common approach. He divided his wheat acreage into two fields of roughly equal size. Every year af-

ter fall plowing, he let one of the fields lie idle for the winter as well as the next spring and summer, before sowing the land the following fall—carefully harrowing periodically to keep the surface clean, loose, and free of weeds. In effect, Pierce used two years of rain to grow one crop on "the summerfallow," as he called the plowed but unseeded section. This allowed him, by means of the increased yield, to raise as much wheat from half of his land every other year as he could had he planted all of his land every year—and with half the cost of plowing, seeding, and harvesting. Summer-fallowing, above all, gave the land a rest on alternate years, which enabled Pierce and his neighbors to cultivate wheat year after year without a rapid decrease in yield. They gradually learned that changing seed periodically had the same desired effect, as did burning off the stubble in the fields after the harvest, which added potash to the soil. In this regard, most Putah Creek farmers demonstrated a keen environmental consciousness in their quest to increase production and maximize profits.⁷

Tenants, however, did not have the luxury of summer-fallowing—especially those who rented portions of the old Davis ranch now owned by the five promoters of the California Pacific Railroad (the "proprietors of Davisville," as they called themselves). Intent on reaping the benefits of wheat mania, John B. Frisbie, William F. Roelofson, Dewitt C. Haskin, James M. Ryder, and Dewitt C. Rice hired Dresbach at the end of 1867 as their "land agent" for their 4,000 fertile acres along Putah Creek. Over the next eight years, Dresbach rented the land (excluding the 200-acre town site) in parcels of 300 to 500 acres to at least fifteen different tenants. The terms of the leases and their effect on the productivity of the land accounted for the high turnover. William Wristen, Napoleon Miner, John and Burlin Cecil, and other tenants all agreed to produce a crop of wheat at their own expense for two-thirds of the proceeds, with the remaining third going to the five proprietors, less Dresbach's fee. Each lease could be renewed at the end of the season at the request of both parties. Renters, who found it difficult to turn a profit under these terms, had no incentive whatsoever to summer-fallow and every incentive to seed every last acre of land. By 1875, after retired Cal-P president John P. Jackson purchased four-fifths of the land (excluding Rice's interest), yields declined dramatically—as much as 75 percent, from more than fifty to fewer than twenty bushels per acre. When Jackson put the property up for sale, Wristen, Miner, and the Cecil brothers went heavily into debt to purchase their sections, believing they could revive the land's fertility. Ten years later, however, the once-rich soil remained, in the words of the county assessor, "of poor quality."⁸

Soil exhaustion was not the only problem that confronted farmers. The sharp rise in production after 1867 also precipitated an outbreak of smut, a fungus

whose spores could literally turn a berry of wheat into a ball of black dust. To guard against this "parasite," as Pierce called it, farmers washed the seed in a solution of "bluestone" (copper sulfate). A twenty-minute soak in hot water containing two to four ounces of this antiseptic for every bushel of seed, followed by a dip in freshly slaked lime, proved to be such an effective remedy that smut all but disappeared in the Sacramento Valley by the end of the 1870s.⁹ More wheat also attracted more predators. During the winter, flocks of geese descended from out of nowhere to peck away at the freshly seeded fields with such frequency that farmers often had to hire patrols of "goose herders" to shoot them or frighten them away. Stalk-chewing squirrels and gophers became such menaces that local merchants mixed and sold various "acid poisons" to help farmers keep their populations in check. "The rodent that eats it," one advertisement read, "never lives to get into his hole." When such measures failed, the county board of supervisors often established cash bounties—10 cents per gopher scalp in 1873, for example. A spirited competition ensued that year that remained close until December 10, when Nathan Grayson of Plainfield brought in 1,693 scalps, prompting the local newspaper to crown him the "gopher king" of Yolo County.¹⁰

The greatest terror of the farmer remained drought, which returned to the Sacramento Valley with a vengeance during the winter of 1870–71. Past experience prompted farmers to fear the worst in advance of every season. "We suspicion Providence and expect a dry year," one wrote. "We read it in the heavens, in the lapse of time, in the various phenomena of nature, and in the particular antics of the animal kingdom—anything to borrow trouble and make our minds as miserable as the nature of the case will possibly admit." Beginning in November 1870, their anxiety increased with each passing day of no appreciable precipitation. "No sines [sic] of rain," Pierce wrote repeatedly in his journal. "Everything is as dry as a powder horn. . . . Most farmers have stopped sowing. . . . The grain is past redemption." On April 3, he and his peers admitted defeat. "We have given up all hopes of raising a crop this year." "The wheat," echoed the *Yolo Weekly Mail* in May, "will be a total failure."¹¹

Their worst-fears-come-true notwithstanding, farmers were much better prepared this time around. The natural disasters of the 1860s had taught them the value of diversifying, and those lessons quite literally bore fruit in 1871. Without missing a beat, farm families such as the Pierces refocused their energies on producing butter, eggs, soap, candles, pickles, wool, pork, deciduous fruits, and grapes. Instead of cutting, threshing, and hauling wheat that summer and fall, the Pierces made sausage (at least 500 pounds), canned pears, plums, peaches, cherries, and apples, and packed grapes. The well and windmill that George had

constructed two years earlier came in quite handy for irrigating his small orchard and twenty-five-acre vineyard. He and Eunice peddled their products to merchants not only in Davisville but also in Woodland, Sacramento, Silveyville, and Vacaville. Farmers, they found, actually paid too much attention to their vineyards that fall. "Too many grapes," George wrote on October 6. "The winerys [sic] are all overrun with them." When the rains returned that November, farmers commenced plowing with both a great sense of relief and a surge of confidence, knowing that they could survive such an ordeal.¹²

Still, with the vast increase in wheat production, Putah Creek farmers had other fears, such as the possibility of labor shortage. "Will harvest hands be scarce in this county?" local newspapers asked before most every season, noting in one instance that a thousand "able-bodied men" were needed. Such fears, however, rarely materialized in the 1870s. While wheat production quadrupled in Yolo County between 1867 and 1875, only twice as many workers were needed to harvest the expanded crop. The reason was that mechanization increasingly dominated the harvests. More and improved headers and threshers significantly decreased the number of men needed to harvest an acre of wheat. Nor was the supply of labor much of a problem. By 1870, Putah Creek's 210 wheat farms, ranging from 40 to 1,400 acres, required 300 to 350 harvesters. As in the 1850s, some of them, though perhaps just 10 percent, were small farmers themselves who joined work crews on neighboring farms upon finishing their own harvests. Another 20 percent were full-time hands such as Luke Rogers, who worked on the Pierce ranch for ten consecutive years. The rest, often recruited by the full-time hands, were casual laborers primarily from Sacramento and smaller valley towns. They were not migratory, in the twentieth-century sense of moving from crop to crop, but tended to work in small groups that returned year after year to the same four or five ranches. From 1868 to 1875, for example, Pierce, Greene, Richard and Thomas Hext, James Campbell, and Hugh M. La Rue (who purchased Drury Melone's ranch in 1866) shared the same core group of harvesters.¹³

The most significant advance in farm machinery in the 1870s, and the implement with the greatest impact on farm labor, was the steam thresher, or "separator," as it was often called. Although its practicality had been demonstrated at the California State Fair in 1859, it took almost a decade for engineers to minimize the fire hazard posed by the hot, spark-spitting machine. The typical unit could thresh 1,200 sacks a day—six times as many as its horse-powered predecessor with the same size crew. Putah Creek farmers, long fascinated with new technology, quickly became enamored of steam power. In addition to its speed and efficiency, the separator eliminated all worries of wearing out horses or shutting

down operations entirely to change teams. The imposing straw-burning engine, with its locomotive-type boiler and smokestack, symbolized in no uncertain terms farmers' determination and capacity to, as one put it, "keep up with the times." At \$1,700 to \$2,000, however, few could afford one for themselves. The six or seven farmers in Putah Creek who purchased steam threshers at considerable risk (before their full value became known) each made a lucrative investment.¹⁴

Perhaps the most innovative farmer was Bartlett Guthrie of Tremont. Guthrie realized that threshing, which had always been a separate stage of production, would now become even more specialized. When he first set up his separator in 1873, he threshed not only his own crop but also all the wheat that his neighbors hauled to his ranch. Charging 12 cents per 100 pounds, Guthrie found that he could clear about \$100 a day. The problem was that after about three weeks, his amazing but immobile separator ran out of wheat to thresh. Realizing he had barely tapped the potential of his new machine, he made his entire operation portable and took it on the road the following year. Placing the steam engine, thresher, and even the bunkhouse (which he labeled the "Palace Hotel") on wheels, Guthrie and his eighteen-man crew drove from ranch to ranch offering their services. That farmers from Pierce and Greene to Campbell and Russell maintained this arrangement for years thereafter suggests their high degree of satisfaction.¹⁵

The enthusiasm among farmers for steam power and other new technology was not shared by the threshers and harvesters themselves. It was the money, pure and simple, that lured them back year after year. The going rate for harvesters and threshers—\$2 a day plus board for the former, \$3 plus board for the latter—was, in many cases, twice what they made the rest of the year. Harvesters and threshers kept careful track of their own time and did not hesitate to take their employers to court if they felt they had been shorted—as when William Francis sued R. S. Carey for \$299 in 1870. Wages were high because the work itself was exhausting, unpleasant, and very dangerous. Sunstroke, which debilitated many a Sacramento Valley resident every summer, was especially prevalent among workers who toiled twelve to fourteen hours a day with little or no shade. When swarms of black gnats infested the region, as they did almost every June, laborers in the wheat fields wore flour sacks over their heads, gloves tied over their shirt sleeves, and pant legs tied to boot tops, compounding the effects of the intense summer heat. Every season, newspapers reported workers being maimed or even killed by slipping under wagon wheels, stumbling into pulleys, impaling themselves on pitchforks, or simply standing too near an exploding steam engine. Nor was it uncommon for thresher feeders to place their hands a little too far in-

side the cylinder opening and make contact with the separator teeth. They could lose an arm, a hand, or a finger, or they could be pulled entirely into the machine and spit out the other end in a bloody pulp along with the threshed grain. Farmers' often-expressed, though largely unfounded, concerns about labor shortage might very well have stemmed from the perils of the work itself, which they feared would drive away even the most loyal employees.¹⁶

Conspicuously absent from the wheat fields of Putah Creek were Chinese laborers. By the early 1870s, farmers regularly hired them to build levees, plant fruit trees, and prune vineyards. They worked in disciplined gangs that contractors recruited and supervised, making them easy to hire and manage, and the ubiquitous one-dollar-a-day wage that prevailed for much of the late nineteenth century was already firmly in place. Chinese cooks, laundrymen, domestic servants, and vegetable peddlers had also become familiar figures in the region. When pressed on "the Chinese question," Putah Creek farmers invariably fanned the flames of racial fear and hatred in California by denouncing "the Heathen Chinese," objecting to "the mingling of the two races," and declaring the aliens "a curse to this fair land." Nonetheless, they could not resist the advantages of Chinese workers, except when it came to wheat. Farmers did not discharge their white harvesters and threshers and replace them with Chinese. There is no evidence that they ever tried or that it even occurred to them. To have done so would have been an enormous risk. The inflamed rhetoric of the times notwithstanding, Chinese immigrants were tolerated in the Sacramento Valley as long as they toiled in occupations not coveted by whites. Farmers, who already walked a fine line by hiring small numbers of Chinese orchard and vineyard workers, would clearly have crossed it had they put hundreds of them in the wheat fields. And even had they tried, there were not enough Chinese in the region to drive white workers out of the market. Nor, like the Indians before them, were the Chinese deemed capable of operating the new technology or worthy of participating in such an important endeavor as the wheat harvest. As long as wheat remained the cash crop, these racial preferences remained intact.¹⁷

While farmers in the late 1860s and early 1870s had no real reason to fear a shortage of labor, but did anyway, they rarely worried about the wheat market, but probably should have. Next to rain, the most popular topic of conversation among farmers was the price of wheat in Liverpool. Beginning in the fall of 1868, they had direct access to market quotations in the United Kingdom via the telegraph in Dresbach's store or the back pages of the *Sacramento Daily Union*. After every harvest, the question of when to sell became all-consuming. There was never a shortage of advice available. When prices were low—that is, below the magical

\$2-per-cental figure—farmers invariably heeded the call to “hold for something better.” There were a few “naysayers” who told farmers they were foolish not to accept the prevailing price if it allowed them at least to break even. One maintained that wheat stored in sacks in granaries dried out much faster than farmers realized—to the extent that their crop could lose fully one-fourth of its weight in a month or two. Another pointed out that storage costs and interest on outstanding loans “eats up profits”—again, much more than farmers realized. Yet, even those farmers heavily in debt, which is to say the vast majority of them, preferred to hold their breath and wait for the market to turn in their favor.¹⁸

Much to their delight, that strategy actually worked every year between 1867 and 1873, when rates for wheat in the San Francisco market averaged a little over \$2.00 per cental and reached as high as \$2.80. Putah Creek farmers received 25 to 30 cents less than the prices quoted by San Francisco merchants in order to cover shipping, storage, and handling costs as well as the buyer’s (Dresbach’s) profit margin. As long as they got their \$2.00, however, they rarely complained. Farmers knew that events overseas, 15,000 miles away, impacted the price of their wheat. They cheered when the Franco-Prussian war began in the fall of 1870, rooting openly for “a severe and protracted struggle,” just as they welcomed the news of drought in western Europe that same year. But they also believed that their own actions—holding out for better prices year after year, in particular—strongly influenced the wheat market. They would learn, in due time, that their ability to impact the Liverpool price was more an illusion than a reality. For now, however, as long as “big crops and high prices” prevailed, they had little reason to believe otherwise.¹⁹

Pierce’s experience during the 1873 season was classic, in this regard. Although a strong north wind in April and again in May threatened to ruin his crop, the end result—255 tons—was “very very good,” he wrote in his journal. On Tuesday, August 12, Pierce rode over to Dresbach’s store in Davisville to see how the market was doing. “Offered \$1.70 for wheat,” he recalled that evening. “Did not take it.” Two days later, he went back to see that the price had risen to \$1.75. “Did not take it,” he wrote again. It rose to \$1.82½ on Friday and to \$1.87½ the following Tuesday, but Pierce felt he could do better. On Friday, August 22, the price finally reached \$2.00, but Pierce still held out for more. It cost him. By the following Wednesday, Dresbach offered only \$1.90. When the price climbed back to \$1.92½ the next day, Pierce grabbed it. It was his first \$10,000 harvest.²⁰

Just three weeks later, after hauling the wheat to Dresbach’s warehouse, paying several hundred dollars in bills, and buying a new header for himself and a new buggy for the family, Pierce purchased another 448 acres of the Big Ranch

(Lots 9 and 11 along his west boundary) at \$30 per acre. The Pierce ranch, now totaling 1,192 acres, quickly became the talk of the township. The prestige of becoming one of Putah Creek’s largest landholders came at enormous risk, however. Although Pierce still owed several thousand dollars on his previous mortgage to the Capital Savings Bank, he jumped at the opportunity to take out another—this one for \$10,000, payable in three equal installments over the next three years. Many of Pierce’s neighbors also rushed into debt to buy more land and better equipment. And why not? A second gold rush had hit the Sacramento Valley. Unlike the first one, however, farmers in Putah Creek found themselves in the right place at the right time, in control, or so they thought, of their own destiny, and ready to strike pay dirt. Things were looking “very very good,” indeed.²¹

By 1873, Pierce and other Putah Creek farmers were making the short trip to Davisville with increasing frequency, and not just to check prices or to haul their wheat to Dresbach’s. The 500-odd townspeople, the stores and saloons, the hotels and restaurants, and the railroad itself generated excitement, anticipation, and a fierce, often bloated, sense of civic pride. One particularly enthusiastic farmer predicted that “at some future day [Davisville] will be numbered with the cities of the world.” Though it never, of course, became “a second New York,” Davisville’s boomtown prosperity, however modest or fleeting, complemented the boom mentality among the region’s farmers. Each drove the other, in many respects—so much so that by the mid-1870s, no one spoke any longer of the “Putah Creek” community but only of Davisville and “the great grain lands surrounding it.”²²

The strong ties between town and countryside would no doubt have evolved over time, but Dresbach left nothing to chance. The only grain purchaser in Davisville, he knew that farmers nevertheless had alternatives—in Woodland, in Dixon (another new railroad town nine miles to the southwest in Solano County), and in Sacramento.²³ Like Jerome C. Davis before him, Dresbach made his presence known in the community to secure his customers’ loyalty. He hosted “social balls” on New Year’s Eve, the Fourth of July, and other evenings throughout the year; donated \$100 to help finance the building of the first house of worship in Davisville, the First Presbyterian Church, and became one of its principal benefactors thereafter; organized the Democratic Club of Putah Township in advance of the party’s national convention in 1868; helped establish a town hall association; and led at least six drives to petition the Board of Supervisors for new or improved roads—all of which, of course, led straight to Davisville.²⁴ Dresbach’s immense stock of merchandise, both general and exotic, equaled that of any house

in the lower Sacramento Valley, save for much larger establishments in the city of Sacramento itself. And most importantly, he paid farmers cash for their wheat, often on the same day it was shipped, and gave them sizeable advances as long as their credit remained good. Through his efforts, Dresbach established a reputation for "liberality and enterprise," as one newspaper put. His "princely business" shipped 20,000 to 30,000 tons of wheat a year between 1868 and 1873, save the drought year of 1871. Virtually every farmer within an eight-to-ten-mile radius relied on him for their economic well-being.²⁵

Dresbach was not the only merchant in Davisville, however. With wheat "as good and even better than money," numerous other entrepreneurs invested heavily in the new town. Second only to Dresbach in the eyes of farmers was Isaac Steele. A squatter on Rancho Laguna de Santos Callé in the late 1850s and a successful merchant in Sacramento the following decade, Steele moved back to Davisville in 1868 and established a large lumberyard along the tracks. Business boomed. Farmers no longer had to make the long trip to Maine Prairie or Sacramento to purchase this scarce and valuable commodity. When Pierce, for example, needed to repair a fence or build a new barn, he now simply "went to Davisville [to get] a load of lumber." Catering to the needs of his customers, Steele sold them a reported 2.5 million feet of lumber in 1874 alone. Three other early settlers in Putah Creek also launched new enterprises. James T. Lillard leased the Yolo House, a "first-class hotel" with a large, elegant barroom for dances, meetings, and other gatherings. William Marden opened Davisville's first butcher shop and later became a hotel keeper himself, a hardware merchant, and postmaster. And E. L. Brown, still trying to recover from his farming debacle on Putah Creek in the 1850s, ran a saloon on Olive Street, one of nine in Davisville in the early 1870s. Two livery stables, a drug store, two doctors and a dentist, two shoe shops, a paint store, a steam mill, and a host of other small businesses all served to make farmers' lives considerably easier.²⁶

Davisville greatly improved farmers' social lives as well. During the first two decades of settlement, Putah Creek families were able to satisfy their religious, educational, and leisure needs, but only by traveling to nearby towns or forming their own makeshift organizations. Virtually overnight, Davisville became their focal point of activity. Indeed, the rapidity with which residents created new institutions reveals just how starved they were for a social center of their own. The region's prominent citizens, not surprisingly, took charge.²⁷

They turned first to their spiritual interests. Charles Greene, now widely regarded as the elder statesman of Putah Creek, along with Pierce, Marden, Joseph B. Tufts, and Dresbach, was instrumental in establishing the Davisville Presbyterian

Church in the spring of 1869. Services were held in a local blacksmith shop until the proprietors of Davisville donated several town lots to church trustees on November 12, 1870. Shortly thereafter, the congregation raised its new church building with such care and diligence that the structure remains intact today. A smaller but equally determined congregation led by Bartlett Guthrie organized a Methodist Episcopal Church in 1874, sparing no cost. Travelers from throughout northern California came to admire the edifice's beautiful seventy-five-foot tapering spire, built for no less than \$3,000. And Catholics, an even smaller group, constructed their own church (St. James), which the renowned Archbishop Joseph S. Alemany of San Francisco dedicated on Christmas Day 1875.²⁸

The Davisville School had a much tougher time getting started, in large part because prominent citizens had already organized their own rural school districts in the outlying regions. It was left to William Wristen, Napoleon Miner, the Cecil brothers, several other tenants on the old Davis ranch, and a few townspeople to petition the Board of Supervisors in September 1868 for their own school. Classes commenced later that fall in a small building across from Steele's lumberyard, where, as one resident observed, "there were more scholars than room in the house." Not much changed the following year when the school moved to the backroom of a grocery store down the street. Finally, in June 1870, the five proprietors of Davisville came to the rescue again, donating two lots for a permanent and more suitable location. The school trustees, Wristen, Miner, and the Cecil brothers among them, then raised the funds needed to build a substantial two-story schoolhouse, which served the community for the rest of the century.²⁹

While prominent citizens were establishing new churches, many of the same men, though with some reluctance at first, joined one of Davisville's three new fraternal societies—Yolo Lodge, No. 169, Independent Order of Odd Fellows; Athens Lodge, No. 228, Free and Accepted Masons; and Siskiyou Tribe, No. 19, Improved Order of Red Men. Lodges of this sort had been rare in farm communities in the Sacramento Valley but proliferated rapidly in many of the new railroad towns in the late 1860s and early 1870s. In Davisville, the Odd Fellows were the first to organize and proved to be the most popular and lasting of the three orders. Brethren from Woodland, Sacramento, Vacaville, Vallejo, and San Francisco—some 150 in all—gathered together with a hundred local residents at the Yolo House on April 12, 1870, for founding ceremonies—a gala procession, followed by a public installation of officers, a "bountiful supper," and a grand ball. Never before on the west coast, the local newspaper declared, had "so many of the high dignitaries of the Lodge [met] together"—and all for only twelve charter members, eleven of whom were town merchants.

The sole farmer was George W. Pierce. To become a member, Pierce had to withdraw from the Woodland lodge, which he had joined two years earlier but, because of the distance, had attended only rarely. He had no previous history with the Odd Fellows in Wisconsin or New York, but he and his wife might very well have received aid in the fall of 1853 from the large Sacramento association (the state's first), whose main purpose was to assist distressed gold rushers. Or, he may simply have longed for the friendship, harmony, and mutuality that Odd Fellowship offered. Pierce quickly assumed a prominent position in Davisville's lodge. He hosted the order's first picnic on his ranch, served as its first "Noble Grand" during the year 1871, helped lay the cornerstone of a new meeting hall on Olive Street in 1876, and recruited most of the forty to fifty farmers who had joined by the end of the decade. In a speech to his fellow lodge members on February 8, 1872, Pierce, upon accepting the prestigious "Past Grand jewel," employed the words *peace, love, joy, generosity, warmth, duty, and pride* repeatedly and with special emphasis—suggesting that these values were still fragile twenty years after the gold rush. He and his brethren, ironically, may have splintered the community more than they brought it together. The five-dollar initiation fee from every new member and the steep annual dues used to finance the hall, buy regalia, and pay for charities and benefits insured that only substantial farmers and successful merchants could become Odd Fellows.³⁰

Other diversions emerged as well that were far less exclusive. Horse racing, Putah Creek's favorite pastime for two decades, became that much more popular when a group of entrepreneurs led by William Montgomery built their own track on the outskirts of town, just east of the railway depot. Beginning in 1875, Davisville held an annual pigeon-shooting tournament, which attracted contestants from as far away as San Francisco and Virginia City, Nevada. In 1877, 200 "shooting sportsmen," participating in teams from various localities, competed for the championship, with Davisville taking home the trophy and cash prize—though it hardly seemed a fair contest given that local farmers dominated the panel of judges. Billiard matches, sponsored by local saloons, also captured the attention of local residents. "There are more good billiardists [here]," boasted one newspaper, "than any town of its size in the State."³¹

The most popular sport of all, however, proved to be baseball ("base ball"), which, like horse racing, also arrived in California during the gold rush. Informal games were played on local ranches as early as the late 1850s between peak periods of the production cycle and in Sacramento at the state fair and on other special occasions. But when the Cincinnati Red Stockings, the country's first openly professional team, barnstormed their way through Davisville in the fall of 1869,

baseball quickly became a local obsession. Playing their home games in the middle of the racetrack, the Davisville "Haymakers"—mostly farmers' sons, as the name implies—competed against teams from throughout the lower Sacramento Valley, often for purses of \$100 or more. When playing their chief rival, the Dixon Silver Stars, free-for-alls often broke out, both on the field and in the stands, in close games such as the 62 to 54 contest in May 1885, when the Haymakers won both the match and the fight. For players and spectators alike, baseball grew into something more than an afternoon at the "ballfield." Citizens found another, perhaps even stronger, way of identifying with their new town.³²

The railroad itself enhanced farmers' lives and expanded their horizons. Most obviously, shipping their wheat became cheaper and more convenient. Just as importantly, however, the outside world became much more accessible. At first, farmers were so enamored of the train that they often rode to Vallejo or Marysville and back just for the fun of it, gladly paying the round-trip "excursion fare" of \$1.50. Gradually, however, they learned to take better advantage of this new mode of transportation. It was now possible to go to Sacramento almost any time of the year (save during a flood) for shopping or business. San Francisco, once a very distant place, was now only three-to-four hours away. The Pierces made the trip to both cities several times a year, often for pleasure alone. "Went to the Cliff House to see the sights, the seals, etc.," wrote George in May 1872. Other trips took them to Yosemite and Big Trees in the Sierra Nevada mountains and, later, to Pacific Grove on the Monterey peninsula. George Jr. began attending the new state university in Berkeley in 1871, in part because the railroad made it feasible. And perhaps most significantly, the railroad allowed visitors from around the country to travel to the Sacramento Valley, many for the first time, including Pierce's brother, Elijah, Eunice's sister Anne and brother Charles, and a number of old friends from Kenosha, all of whom they thought they would never see again. It became commonplace, moreover, for farmers from miles around to crowd around the depot to catch a glimpse of the many famous people whose trains stopped in Davisville, if only for a moment—as when Ulysses S. Grant passed through town in the fall of 1879.³³

For all its advantages, the railroad also brought considerable controversy. As a major junction in the Sacramento Valley, Davisville was the site of many injurious, even deadly, collisions. Early on, families of the victims often filed lawsuits against the California Pacific Railroad, but they rarely prevailed, which frustrated the community no end. "Someone is to blame, and ought to be punished," remarked one exasperated "sufferer" after a particularly gruesome accident in 1872. The Cal-P seemed to get away with murder on other occasions as well. When the

company laid down its tracks through eight acres of Robert Armstrong's property in Tremont in 1868, it neglected, by some administrative oversight, to secure his prior consent. Armstrong sued for both the cost of the land and \$1,200 in damages but received only the former. Even when trains ran over farm animals in front of eyewitnesses, the Cal-P was rarely found liable. The company hired the finest lawyers from San Francisco, and in one instance, it did not help that the plaintiff's attorney arrived in court intoxicated. The main reason that the Cal-P got off so often, however, was that, upon its incorporation, the railroad became the leading taxpayer in both Yolo and Solano counties, pumping almost \$200,000 a year into both their treasuries. Judges and district attorneys in both counties simply found it imprudent to bite the hand that fed them.³⁴

Drunkenness, as the incident in court suggested, also became more of a problem—at least, more of a perceived problem. Davisville, with its nine saloons, now served as the region's drinking center. While these establishments catered primarily to construction workers and farm laborers in their off hours, more than a few farmers took a drink while in town. Early on, residents complained more about the effects of drinking than about drinking itself. "If a day passes without a knock-down or two, or somebody being shot or stabbed, a screw is thought to be loose in the social order of [Davisville]," wrote one newspaper reporter. That the number of criminal trials in Putah Township increased almost tenfold between 1867 and 1875 seemed to confirm this observation and the town's reputation as "Bloody Davisville."³⁵

As long as drinking remained relatively dispersed and behind closed doors, efforts to curb it were few and far between, and even with the sudden concentration of saloons, the main impetus for reform came initially from outside the community. By 1871, Davisville had become a regular stop for temperance lecturers from Woodland, Sacramento, and San Francisco touring northern California on the railroad. Their message was powerful, especially to women, who, as one lecturer preached, "suffered the most from the effects of intemperance." Reform moved slowly, however. In June 1874, citizens voted down a "local option" measure on the question of whether or not licenses should be granted for the sale of liquor. Two years later another such measure to close the doors of Davisville saloons on Sunday narrowly passed, but only after all businesses had agreed to observe the Sabbath (baseball was still allowed, however). By the end of the decade, small chapters of the Sons of Temperance and the Independent Order of Good Templars were holding picnics and rallies and bringing in more speakers, but they had not, as yet, come close to achieving their goal of shutting down the saloons, even though the area was overwhelmingly Protestant.³⁶

The Pierces help explain why. Both George and Eunice heard the Reverend Strong of Sacramento preach in Davisville on the evils of drink on February 28, 1871. For Eunice, the lecture was an awakening. She became an active member in the local temperance movement, riding from ranch to ranch trying to persuade her neighbors to pass the two local-option measures and rallying members of the First Presbyterian Church to the cause. George, though still a devout Presbyterian and not a drinker himself, remained cautious. It was more difficult for him to remove himself from liquor; he purchased it for his workers (no doubt on their demand), sold his grapes to wineries, and faithfully attended Odd Fellow meetings and balls where the booze flowed freely. Given Eunice's strong will and forceful personality, a spirited conversation or two on the subject no doubt took place in the Pierce household. In the end, of course, only George had the vote.³⁷

Spirited conversations were taking place between husbands and wives in households throughout the region—and not just about temperance. Davisville and the railroad expanded the horizons of women every bit as much as men. When rural women traveled, with or without their husbands, to Sacramento, San Francisco, or even just to Davisville, they could not have helped but imagine different lives for themselves, especially if they were being mistreated at home. Their increasing unwillingness to tolerate abusive behavior from their husbands revealed itself in the rising divorce rate of Putah Township in the 1870s. While only one case (*Heinz v. Heinz*) went on the books prior to the coming of the railroad, twelve were filed the following decade. These small numbers, such as they were, in part simply reflected rising marriage rates, which tripled over the same period. Nor did they constitute a "divorce crisis," as one newspaper opined in 1876. They did signify, however, slowly changing perceptions of marriage and slowly expanding opportunities for women—as demonstrated by two cases that husbands and wives talked about for years to come.³⁸

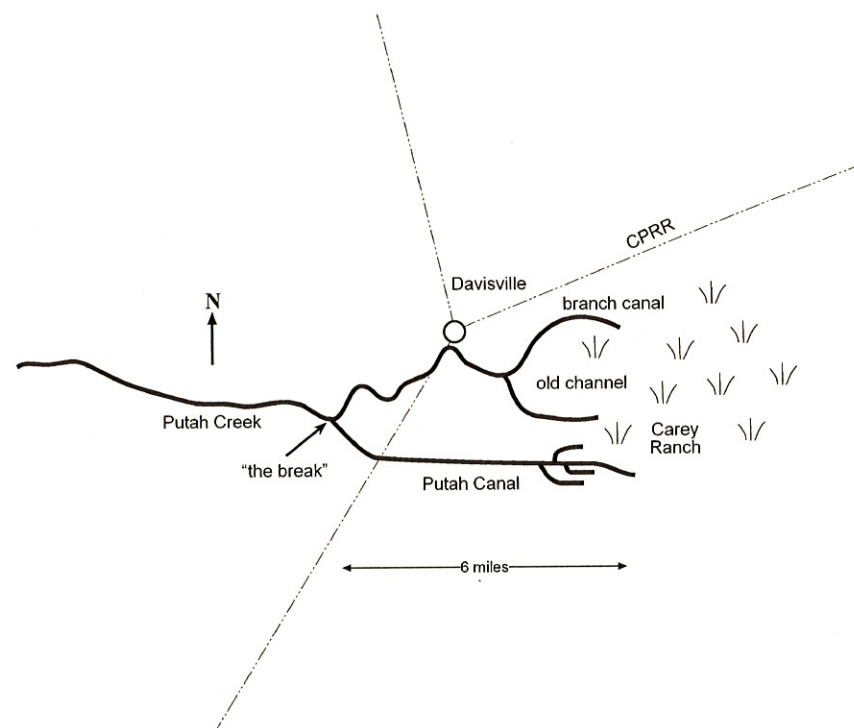
Magdaline Glockler filed proceedings against her husband, Charles Glockler, on April 21, 1872, on the grounds of desertion and adultery. The couple married in 1862 and had six children over the next ten years. They began their lives together as squatters on Rancho Laguna de Santos Callé before purchasing 640 acres of the old Davis ranch in October 1870, borrowing \$12,000 from the Odd Fellows Savings Bank in Sacramento. Less than a year later, however, Charles ran off with the family nanny to "parts unknown," leaving Magdaline alone with the children and with no means to pay the mortgage and no resources to run the farm. Although the law required a period of two years before charges of desertion or neglect could be considered, the judge went ahead and awarded Magdaline everything she asked for and more—the divorce, custody of the children, all the

couple's real and personal property, and substantial alimony. The problem was that Charles was nowhere to be found. Undeterred, Magdaline sold the land (along with the mortgage), the furniture, and the farm implements, and hopped on a train to San Francisco, taking all her children but the oldest. What she did there is not known, but given the boldness she displayed in escaping Putah Creek to start afresh, one might assume that she got along just fine.³⁹

For sheer boldness, no one could match Caroline Greiner, the former Caroline Heinz, who found herself in divorce court once again in 1879. Just months after her successful suit in 1869, Caroline married Jacob Greiner, another German immigrant who treated her only marginally better than had her first husband. Unlike her first marriage, however, her second proved to be economically prosperous. Riding the wave of the wheat boom, the Greiners turned their modest Plainfield farm into an estate worth at least \$30,000. After several years of enduring Jacob's physical and emotional abuse, Caroline decided to take him for everything he was worth. She waited patiently, gathered evidence, and secured witnesses who would testify against him.

Filing suit was only the beginning. Just when it appeared that she was about to win her case, Caroline accused Jacob of understating the couple's net worth to defraud her of a proper settlement. Over the years, she told the judge behind closed doors, Jacob had made several loans, totaling \$10,000, that he had not disclosed. Jacob maintained that the money financed several wheat transactions. Much to his astonishment, his wife then presented several documents and depositions proving that he had transferred every last dollar to his illegitimate daughter, a nineteen-year-old living under an assumed name in Cache Creek. She then dropped her suit, knowing that Jacob's little secret was worth more to her than any amount the judge might award. She and Jacob stayed married, keeping the terms of their arrangement to themselves. It was clear to anyone who cared to notice, however, that Caroline's fortunes improved dramatically shortly thereafter. Title to all but a few acres of the property were put in her name. Caroline continued to live in the main house, but Jacob moved into the worker's bunkhouse behind the barn. She took over the management of the farm, and he worked as her foreman. Both became objects of local scuttlebutt, but for once the wife reaped the benefits while the husband incurred the humiliation.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, R. S. Carey was waging his own personal battle—not with his wife or his neighbors but with Putah Creek itself. By 1870, he owned, courtesy of the Green Act, over 10,000 acres of swamp and overflowed land—none of which would amount to much unless he could contain the creek's raging winter waters.



Putah Creek reclamation, 1870s. Based primarily on maps and information in *S. H. Cowell v. Lydia T. Armstrong* (1930), California State Supreme Court, no. 4341 (SAC), California State Archives, Sacramento, and Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisor's Record, 1866–1873," Yolo County Archives, Woodland.

The wheat boom raised the stakes even higher. If he could protect even a small portion of his empire and plant it in wheat, Carey stood to be a very wealthy man. His fellow swamplanders and, eventually, many landowners further upstream also came to believe that controlling Putah Creek was every bit as important as controlling the wheat market if they were going to strike it rich in the Sacramento Valley.

With that motivation, and with the 1867–68 flood still fresh in their minds, farmers in Swampland District 18 doubled their efforts to reclaim Putah Sink. Employing gangs of Chinese laborers, they not only rebuilt the branch canal that had washed away; they dug it deeper and wider and actually made it *the* creek by raising a levee across the mouth of the old channel and redirecting the flow. That, along with at least ten miles of levees along the tule line on the east side of the

sink, created approximately 3,000 acres of new farmland, half of which belonged to Carey and the rest to the Montgomerys, Drummonds, and half a dozen other swamplanders. Carey considered this engineering triumph to be his and his alone, and not without good reason. When the district's swampland fund dried up toward the end of 1869, he contributed several thousand dollars of his own money to finish the job. The first crop of wheat in 1870 seemed to make it all worthwhile. Everyone knew that the reclaimed swampland would be fertile, but the reported sixty to seventy bushels per acre exceeded all expectations. The drought the following year brought these new devotees of wheat back to earth a bit, but the dry conditions also reinforced, in their minds, the effectiveness of their levees and canals.⁴¹

This time, just one storm was all it took to burst their bubble. Twelve inches fell in four days in December 1871, almost half the total rainfall for the season. Though nothing compared to the floods of the 1860s, the deluge was enough for Putah Creek to rise eighteen feet and "fill the Sink," as one newspaper put it. Gathering force in the coastal mountains to the west and roaring across the prairie, a raging torrent rushed toward the man-made barrier standing in its way across the "old" channel. Rather than veering northeastwardly into the branch canal, the creek, on the morning of December 17, slammed into the levee, burst through, and "spread out" over the freshly plowed land, "playing havoc" with the farms that stood in its way. Putah Sink, the paper continued, "is, to use an expressive phrase, afloat." Just what expressive phrases Carey must have uttered that day, one can only imagine. Judging from his subsequent actions, his vendetta reached Ahab-like proportions, with Putah Creek becoming his great white whale.⁴²

Indeed, Carey did not give up, even for a moment. Just two days after Putah Creek drowned his wheat fields, he resumed his offensive with a plan that dwarfed all previous ones in scope and ambition. Another break in the levee five miles upstream inspired him. Putah Creek flowed across the valley floor without any sharp meanders until it reached the boundary between Pierce's property (the old Big Ranch) and La Rue's (the old Brown and Melone ranches). At that point, it veered roughly forty-five degrees to the southeast for half a mile before making a full right-angled turn northward. In flood, the creek often spilled over at both bends, prompting landowners, funded by District 18, to construct two huge levees. Though neither contained the floodwaters of 1867, the rebuilt versions held on December 17, 1871. On December 19, however, the creek exploded through the second levee with such a roar that it woke Pierce out of his sleep two miles away. The full force of the creek then maintained its southeasterly course for half a mile before running up against the railroad, where it spread along the

banks of the tracks for miles in both directions. Eventually, a crevasse opened up, through which a narrow stream of water began flowing straight eastward down an old farm road right along the section lines. It ran across the Tremont district, and all the way to the Tule, six miles from "the break," as locals called the breach in the levee for years to come. Carey surveyed the situation intently. Putah Creek, he believed, had just provided him with a blueprint for a new and more efficient flood-control system.⁴³

When Carey soon thereafter proposed excavating a canal from the break to the Tule, many of his neighbors supported the idea enthusiastically. William Montgomery and most other Putah Sink farmers, whose ranches were two feet under water at the time, did not need much encouragement. If successful, the proposed canal would steer future floodwaters of the creek to the far southern reaches of the sink, past their farms, and out of harm's way. For Tremont farmers as well, any possibility of controlling the overflow was worth a try. Those whose land would border the canal were also pleased that it would run along the section lines and thus not burden any one of them excessively. Several Davisville merchants, who watched their town be inundated for the first time, very much liked the idea of rerouting the creek one-and-a-half miles to the south. And a number of farmers upstream from the break observed that they too might benefit. When the levee broke early that fateful morning, "the water," Pierce wrote, "did not raise anymore" in front of his ranch. By straightening out the creek's channel, the proposed canal, he hoped, would have the same effect. It would eliminate a major pressure point, prevent the creek from backing up, and thus reduce the chance of overflow. Constructing a six-mile canal would not be simple, its advocates knew, but that too appealed to their unbridled optimism and entrepreneurial spirit.⁴⁴

The problem—the initial problem—was how to pay for it. No one knew what such a project might cost, only that it would be much more than the \$14,000 it had taken to build the earlier branch canal and levees. And because District 18 had been drained of all its funds, they would have to start from scratch. Carey's first inclination was to organize a new swampland district, and on February 7, 1872, he presented a petition to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors to do just that. The board's collective hands were tied, however. While the vast majority of the farmers who would benefit from this project resided in Yolo County, the proposed canal itself lay south of the creek, almost entirely in Solano County. Neither the new swampland law of 1866 nor the Green Act of 1868 accounted for such a scenario. Who would authorize it, who would pay for it, and who would even survey it? When the bewildered board members postponed consideration of

such questions, Carey turned to Frank S. Freeman, his state assemblyman, who recommended legislative action.⁴⁵

Carey and Freeman moved quickly—Carey because he wanted construction to begin as soon as possible, and Freeman because Carey was among the biggest taxpayers in the county. In less than a month, they drafted “An Act to provide for the protection from overflow by Putah Creek of certain lands in the Counties of Yolo and Solano.” In the process of trying to please each other, Carey and Freeman made promises that neither could keep. In particular, Carey assured Freeman that landowners in the proposed “Yolo and Solano Canal District” would overwhelmingly approve the bill’s provisions, while Freeman insisted that nothing in the bill was unconstitutional. Freeman introduced it at the tail end of the legislative session, persuaded his fellow lawmakers to suspend most of the rules of deliberation, and presided over its passage on April 1—all in the course of just four days.⁴⁶

Had they simply created a new swampland district across the two counties with the usual provisions—especially the “half or more” approval clause—the canal act might have flowed smoothly. Instead, the new law created almost as much disruption as the flooding itself. It was bad enough that the rectangular-shaped district encompassed much too large an area—approximately 50,000 acres starting well west of the Pierce ranch and extending well east of Carey’s and covering five to six miles both north and south of Putah Creek. Landowners on the outer portions of the district—perhaps a quarter to a third of the total—stood to benefit far less from the canal than the canal would from their tax dollars. Worse yet, no landowner would get a say in the matter. The law simply imposed the district upon them. It gave a three-member board of trustees (two appointed by Yolo County’s board of supervisors and one by Solano’s) full power to “levy assessments . . . anytime they deem necessary,” to rule on appeals, and to bring suit in the name of the district against delinquent taxpayers—“the same power,” the law proclaimed, “as is possessed by County Courts.”⁴⁷

Opposition to the district emerged slowly, but when the Yolo board appointed Carey as one of the trustees on April 22 (the other was H. M. La Rue), cries of “inquisition” and “swindle” began to fill the air. On May 4, some 150 landowners met in Davisville to band together against the law. They found it “odious and oppressive,” especially the implied power of the trustees to seize their farms if they refused to pay what they were told. “Had the Act been entitled ‘An Act to confer the property of all parties within a radius of ten miles to the Trustees of said Land District,’ the meaning would have been plain and explicit,” declared Justice of the Peace James O’Neal. Many in the crowd—L. C. Drummond and Bartlett Guthrie,

among them—very much wanted the canal, but not on these terms. When someone made known that just a few days earlier Carey had been spotted at the meeting held by the Solano board to appoint its trustee, talk changed to action. Pledging to “use all honorable means at our command to prevent any of the provisions of said act from going into effect,” they adopted their own code of bylaws, elected officers, and subscribed “several thousand dollars to fight the infamous bill in the several Courts of the State.”⁴⁸

Unbeknownst to the angry farmers, the Solano board had already sealed the fate of the law by refusing to appoint a trustee. Never particularly attentive to affairs in “the extreme northeastern portion of the county,” board members could not have been happy to be called to a special meeting on April 30, with just this one item on the agenda. They took all of ten minutes to denounce the canal act. Already burdened with several other swampland districts in their jurisdiction, they did not want to take on another one. When they discovered that the canal would serve farmers primarily in Yolo County, that the Solano board would appoint only one of the trustees, and that the law itself was undoubtedly unconstitutional, they declared it a “gigantic fraud” and dared its supporters to take legal action. When Carey tried to convince them otherwise, he quickly found that he had nowhere near the pull that he had in his home county. Though the law would not officially be repealed for another two years, Carey knew that day that it was a dead letter.⁴⁹

Furious but all the more determined, Carey called his own meeting. Most of the attendees were Putah Sink and Tremont farmers—the ones most vulnerable to floods. If the Solano board and a few wayward farmers insisted on being obstinate, Carey told them, then they would simply have to build the canal themselves. Exactly how much they subscribed to the cause that day was not disclosed, but it was enough, apparently, to get started. Exactly how this informal group financed the canal thereafter remains even more of a mystery. No records have survived, if indeed any were kept. The available evidence suggests, however, that whenever funds were tight, Carey stepped in to make up the difference. He had already invested too much of his money and too much of himself to do otherwise. Carey’s detractors could have taken him to court to stop the project but chose instead to take a wait-and-see attitude. Few were against the canal; they just did not want to pay for it. And no one wanted to stop the annual overflows that replenished their fields; they just wanted to control them.⁵⁰

Construction began that summer. The first step was to block the break to prevent the creek’s floodwaters from interfering with work on the new channel. Hop-

ing to make a stronger barrier, they built a bulkhead with boards and lumber and reinforced it with earthwork. Work on the canal was then divided into segments, with the adjacent landowners themselves serving as "contractors." Starting at the break and heading eastward, the owner on each side of the section line agreed to remove a 100-foot strip of ground to a depth of six feet, thus making a 200-foot-wide channel—the widest, to date, of any canal built in the Sacramento Valley. Contractors did most of this work with horse teams pulling slip scrapers (similar to those used in the construction of the Erie Canal). They then employed Chinese laborers to raise levees with the earth from the dug-out channel. The heavy, tedious work progressed slowly but surely over the next two years, with few interruptions or problems.⁵¹

The calm before the storm ended on December 30, 1873. That evening, Putah Creek ripped through the bulkhead into the Tremont district. This time, it did not back up at the railroad but instead rushed under the trellis built by the Cal-P the previous year and down the unfinished canal, "taking out fences and everything as it went," recalled one eyewitness. "Everything" included a good portion of the levees and much of the heavy excavation equipment. Worse yet, the floodwaters deposited thick layers of sediment and debris in the channel, literally washing away several months work. Frustrated but not discouraged, farmers built a bigger bulkhead across the break and resumed the scraping. The same cycle of events occurred again the following winter, in January 1875, and then again one year later, in November 1876. The rebuilt (and still bigger) bulkhead held for the next two years before being obliterated in January 1878 by "a torrent that roared by like the Amazon," as one exasperated farmer put it. The canal levees, wrote a newspaper reporter, were "destroyed on both sides, the channel was filled with sand, and farms for miles were entirely under water." The work resumed, only to be wiped out once again by heavy rains the following year.⁵²

The sequence repeated itself, though not always every year or with such force, for the rest of the century and beyond. In the end, Putah Creek—not Carey, not the boards of supervisors, not other farmers—decided where it wanted to go. The more often the creek burst through the break, the more the new channel gradually deepened. By 1880, the two channels were more or less the same depth, which allowed Putah Creek to flow "naturally" in either direction. By the turn of the century, the new channel, observed one farmer, "has to be half full before it goes into the old channel." Recalled another, "Nothing had to be done to turn the water out of the old channel and into the new. It turned itself out." It is little wonder, then, why mapmakers since 1878 could not reach a consensus on what to call the new channel—some labeling it a "ditch" or a "canal," others insisting on "South Fork

Putah Creek" or simply "Putah Creek." Part natural and part man-made, the new channel proved just as confounding as the old.⁵³

The doggedness of Carey and the other farmers seems, on the surface, difficult to fathom. In hindsight, their obsession with the canal, given their inability to control the creek's floodwaters long enough to complete it, appears no more rational than their insistence that when it came to their wheat, supply created its own demand. Yet, without the new channel and without the \$2-per-cental just price, they knew that there would be no sustained second "gold rush." By the mid-1870s, consequently, building and rebuilding the new channel became part of their day-to-day lives—something they talked about in front of Dresbach's store, along with the weather, the price of wheat in Liverpool, steam power, I.O.O.F picnics, baseball games, and railroad excursions. The topic of conversation that perplexed farmers the most, perhaps, was Putah Creek itself, which, they gradually came to realize, could make them or break them—or both. Farmers depended on the creek's annual overflows to deposit fresh soil on their land and to provide, in essence, a cost-free form of irrigation. But they also knew that the "fickle stream," with little warning, could drown thousands of acres of growing crops. "It is both a builder and a destroyer," remarked one perceptive farmer.⁵⁴

That statement reveals the extent to which wheat dominated their lives. Indeed, no one had even thought about diverting the waters of Putah Creek when cattle ranching was their main concern. Just how central the grain had become was captured by an editorial in the *Sacramento Daily Union* in 1876: "The whole [region] seems to stagnate when there comes a poor harvest. No kind of business prospers, and each man looks blank discouragement in his neighbor's face. But let there be sun and rain enough and at last a fine crop, and then what a change! A magical life awakens smiles and bright looks cheer the heart of the stranger, field hands trudge in from everywhere with the dust of travel on their feet, mowing machines flash in the sun, the thousand implements of farm labor set to work, the housewife sings in the kitchen, the daughter promises herself a long coveted piano, dry goods stores send for new goods, the streets are busy with brisk trade, clients seek their lawyers, patients their physicians, debts are paid, friendships formed and everybody is happy."⁵⁵ Too happy, it turned out.

ifornia Press, 1989), 47-48; McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 1:284; Richard H. Peterson, "The Failure to Reclaim: California State Swamp Land Policy and the Sacramento Valley, 1850-1866," *Southern California Quarterly* 56 (Spring 1974): 50.

41. *California Statutes* (1861), 355-61 (quotes); *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 16, 1861; Jan. 1, 1862; Kelley, *Battling the Inland Sea*, 48-50; Peterson, "The Failure to Reclaim," 50-51.

42. A small portion of the southern end of the district (less than 10,000 acres) lay in Solano County.

43. Yolo County, "Swampland District No. 18 Boundary Petition Description," YCA; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Mar. 15, 1859 (quote); "Annual Report to the Governor by the Board of Swamp Land Commissioners," draft MS, Dec. 1, 1864, Land Grant Litigation, A-Z, Land Office Papers, Governor's Office, California State Archives; *First Annual Report of Swamp Land Commissioners for 1861* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1862), 23-24; *Annual Report of the Swamp Land Commissioners for the Year 1862* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1863), 3-6; *Report of the Board of Swamp Land Commissioners for the Years 1864 and 1865* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1866), 10-11; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Jan. 1, 1862; Jan. 1, 1864; Nov. 24, 1864; Jan. 2, 1865; Jan. 1, 1866; Dec. 25, 1866; Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County*, 57; Peterson, "The Failure to Reclaim," 53.

44. Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisors' Record, 1866-1873," 81-159 (quote at 157), YCA; Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County*, 54-55; *Woodland News*, Mar. 9, 1867; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Jan. 20, 1868; Apr. 10, 1869.

45. Kelley, *Battling the Inland Sea*, 52-53; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisors' Record, 1866-1873," 159-61, YCA; *California Statutes* (1865-66), 799-801; *California Statutes* (1867-68), 514-21.

46. *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, June 19, 1895; U.S. Census, Agricultural Schedules for Putah Township, Yolo County, 1860; *Mail of Woodland*, Oct. 6, 1911; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisors' Record, 1866-1873," 3-80; Yolo County, "Assessment Rolls," 1866, YCA; *California Statutes* (1865-66), 799-800; Kelley, *Battling the Inland Sea*, 57.

47. Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisors' Record, 1866-1873," 79-80, 119-26; Kelley, *Battling the Inland Sea*, 57-59.

48. *California Statutes* (1867-68), 514-21; Kelley, *Battling the Inland Sea*, 560-61.

49. *Yolo County Democrat*, May 30, 1868; Yolo County, "Swamp and Overflowed Lands Record Book," YCA; U.S. Census, Agricultural Schedules for Putah Township, Yolo County, 1870.

50. *Knight's Landing News*, Nov. 14, 1863 (quote); *California Statutes* (1863-64), 170-71 (quote); *California Statutes* (1865-66), 440-43; Wilson Flint, "The Fence Question," *Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society during the Year 1863* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1864), 146-55; *Solano Herald*, Jan. 18, 1862; Hazel Adele Pulling, "California's Fence Laws and the Range-Cattle Industry," *Historian* 8 (Spring 1946): 144-45; Bentham Fabian, *The Agricultural Lands of California: A Guide to the Immigrant as to the Productions, Climate, and Soil of Every County of the State* (San Francisco: H. H. Bancroft & Co., 1869), 20; *Solano Press*, Jan. 8, 1868; *Yolo County Democrat*, Dec. 14, 1867 (quote). The Township Tract Books for T8NR1E, T8NR2E, T8NR3E, T9NR1E, T9NR2E, and T9NR3E and Yolo

County, "Swamp and Overflowed Lands Record Book," YCA, confirm the *Democrat's* assessment.

51. Horace Davis, "California Breadstuffs," *Journal of Political Economy* 2 (Sept. 1894): 526-29; Rodman W. Paul, "The Beginnings of Agriculture in California: Innovation vs. Continuity," *California Historical Quarterly* 52 (Spring 1973): 22; Paul, "The Wheat Trade between California and the United Kingdom," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (Dec. 1958): 396-97; Morton Rothstein, *The California Wheat Kings* (Davis: University of California, Davis, 1987), 3-5; Yolo County, "Assessment Rolls," 1866, 1869, YCA.

Chapter Eight. "As Good As Wheat"

1. "Unidentified Store at Davisville," 2 vols., Aug. 1868-Sept. 1868 and May 1869-Sept. 1869, Yolo County Archives (YCA), Woodland, CA (hereafter Dresbach ledgers); *Solano Press*, Oct. 2, 1867; June 23 and 30, 1869; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Nov. 24, 1870. By this time, wheat merchants in California had adopted the English cental as the standard unit of measure rather than the more familiar bushel.

2. *Sacramento Daily Union*, Aug. 20, 1868 (quote); Dec. 24, 1868; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Nov. 5, 1868 (quote); *Yolo County Democrat*, Feb. 15, 1868; May 15, 1869; *Weekly Solano Herald*, Aug. 14, 1869; *Davisville Advertiser*, Dec. 11, 1869; *Solano Press*, June 23, 1869; Morton Rothstein, "Frank Norris and Popular Perceptions of the Market," *Agricultural History* 56 (Jan. 1982): 53.

3. Dresbach ledgers, passim; C. P. Sprague and H. W. Atwell, *The Western Shore Gazetteer and Commercial Directory, for the State of California . . . Yolo County* (San Francisco: Press of Bancroft, 1870), 126 (quotes); *Davisville Advertiser*, Mar. 12, 1870; Apr. 16, 1870; *Yolo County Democrat*, July 31, 1869; *Weekly Solano Herald*, Nov. 25, 1869.

4. *Yolo County Democrat*, Aug. 21, 1869 (quotes).

5. Horace Davis, "Wheat in California: A Retrospect and Prospect," *Overland Monthly* 32 (July 1898): 61 (quote); Davis, "California Breadstuffs," *Journal of Political Economy* 2 (Sept. 1894): 529; Kenneth Aubrey Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1969), 202-3, 284-85.

6. *Pacific Rural Press*, Sept. 9, 1876; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, July 25, 1872 (quote, my emphasis); Aug. 31, 1876.

7. George W. Pierce, Daily Journals, 1867-90, entries for June 8, 1870 (quote); Oct. 1, 6, 12, 19, 1870; Mar. 11, 1871; Apr. 6, 10, 11, 12, 1871; and Aug. 30, 1871; Pierce Family Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of California, Davis (hereafter Pierce journal); *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Oct. 13, 1870; Nov. 24, 1870; May 30, 1872; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Aug. 6 and Nov. 25, 1870; *California Farmer*, Jan. 7, 1870; June 1, 1871; Joseph Hutchinson, "California Cereals," *Overland Monthly* 2 (July-Aug. 1883): 148-49 (quote); Horace Davis, "Wheat in California," *Overland Monthly* 1 (Nov. 1868): 448; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 54-56, 210; Hugh Myron Hoyt Jr., "The Wheat Industry in California, 1850-1910" (M.A. thesis, Sacramento State College, 1953), 2, 13-15, 33-40; Michael Frederick Magliari, "California Populism, a Case Study: The Farmers' Alliance and People's Party in San Luis Obispo County, 1885-1903" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 1992), 126.

8. *Henry Linton v. William D. Wristen* (1872), Yolo County, County Court Case Files, Civil Case no. 689, YCA; *William D. Wristen v. Henry Dawson and Robert Dawson* (1869), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 601, YCA; *John P. Jackson v. Henry K. Mitchell* (1875), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 1046, YCA; *William Dresbach v. William Minis and William D. Wristen* (1872), California Supreme Court, no. 3475, California State Archives, Sacramento; *Yolo County Democrat*, May 18, 1872; *Weekly Solano Republican*, Sept. 7, 1871; *Pacific Rural Press*, June 1, 1872; Yolo County, "Assessment Lists," 1885, YCA (quote); Hutchinson, "California Cereals," 150; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 212–14. On the convoluted title history of the Davis ranch, see Yolo County, "Title Abstracts," R-40, YCA; and Abstract D-32, box 1, Davis Land Records and Abstract D-344, ledger no. 2, City of Davis Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of California Library, Davis, California.

9. Pierce journal, Sept. 10, 1870 and Sept. 4, 1871; Davis, "Wheat in California" (1868), 448; *Pacific Rural Press*, Dec. 6, 1879; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 58, 81; Magliari, "California Populism," 95.

10. Pierce journal, Mar. 10, 1877; Jan. 2, 1879; Jan. 21, 1882; Feb. 15, 1884; *Davisville Advertiser*, Feb. 26, 1870; *Yolo County Democrat*, Dec. 12, 1873; *Pacific Rural Press*, Dec. 20, 1873; Feb. 12, 1887; Mar. 3, 1888; *Dixon Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1877.

11. Pierce journal, Nov. 21 and Dec. 2, 1870; Jan. 5, 6, 7, 28, 1871; Mar. 15, 21, 30, 1871; Apr. 3, 1871; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Dec. 22, 1870 (quote); Apr. 13 and 27, 1871; May 25, 1871 (quote); *Sacramento Daily Union*, Apr. 25, 1871; *Pacific Rural Press*, May 27, 1871.

12. Pierce journal, Mar.–Nov., 1871 (quote, Oct. 6); *Yolo Weekly Mail*, July 27, 1871. On farmers' efforts to diversify, see esp. Yolo County, "Assessment Lists," 1871, YCA.

13. *Yolo Democrat*, June 8, 1872; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Apr. 18, 1872 (quote); June 18, 1872; *Dixon Tribune*, June 21, 1879; Aug. 14, 1880; *Report of the Surveyor-General of California, from November 1, 1867, to November 1, 1869* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1870), 16–17; *Biennial Report of the Surveyor-General of the State of California, from August 1, 1875 to August 1, 1877* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1877), 20–21; Yolo County, "Assessment Lists," 1868, 1875, YCA; U.S. Census, Agricultural Schedules for Putah Township, Yolo County, and Tremont Township, Solano County, California, 1870, on microfilm in the California Room, California State Library, Sacramento; George W. Pierce, "Monthly Time Book for Employers and Workmen," 1868–82, no pagination, box 3, Pierce Family Papers, Department of Special Collections, University of California, Davis (hereafter Pierce Monthly Time Book); Pierce journal, Feb. 1, 1871; Oct. 4 and Dec. 28, 1872; July 7 and 9, 1873; Mar. 17 and May 25, 1874; Joseph A. McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1961), 1:250.

14. *Yolo County Democrat*, June 27, 1868; June 26, 1869 (quote); May 15, 1874; Yolo County, "Assessment Lists," 1875, YCA; McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 1:249; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 177–81; Reynold M. Wik, *Steam Power on the American Farm* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), 52–59.

15. *Dixon Tribune*, June 9, 1877; July 10, 1879; July 21, 1883; May 21, 1887; Pierce journal, July 24, 1872; Joann Leach Larkey, *Davisville '68: The History and Heritage of the City of Davis, Yolo County, California* (Davis: Davis Historical and Landmarks Commission, 1969), 35; McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 1:249.

16. Pierce Monthly Time Book, passim; *William Francis v. R. S. Carey* (1870), Yolo County, County Court Case Files, Civil Case no. 631, YCA; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, July 1, 1875; *Yolo County Democrat*, July 3, 1869; *Davisville Advertiser*, Apr. 23, 1870; *California Farmer*, July 11, 1872; *Dixon Tribune*, Jan. 25, 1878; Aug. 16, 1879; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Apr. 22, 1870; Pierce journal, July 26, 1870; McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 1:249–50; Richard Steven Street, "Tattered Shirts and Ragged Pants: Accommodation, Protest, and the Coarse Culture of California Wheat Harvesters and Threshers, 1866–1900," *Pacific Historical Review* 67 (Nov. 1998): 581–83.

17. Pierce journal, Oct. 3 and Nov. 7, 1871; Feb. 28, Mar. 8, Sept. 29, and Nov. 10, 1873; June 15 and Oct. 8, 1874; Pierce Monthly Time Book, esp. entries for Sept. 1870; *Yolo County Democrat*, Aug. 6, 1870; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Oct. 27, 1870; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Jan. 1, 1862 (quote); *Dixon Tribune*, May 13, 1876 (quote); *California Farmer*, May 21, 1874; Michael J. Gillis and Michael F. Magliari, *John Bidwell and California: The Life and Writings of a Pioneer, 1841–1900* (Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 2003), 311–42. In other, more isolated regions in the Sacramento Valley with less access to large numbers of urban white workers, farmers were more likely to hire Chinese laborers—but even then usually as binders or cooks, not machine operators. See Davis, "Wheat in California" (1868), 449–50; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 181–83; Richard Steven Street, *Beasts in the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769–1913* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), 235–36.

18. *Yolo County Democrat*, Sept. 26, 1868; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, July 25, 1872 (quote); Aug. 22, 1872 (quote); July 13, 1873; Aug. 31, 1876; *Pacific Rural Press*, Jan. 14, 1871; Oct. 2, 1875; Sept. 9, 1876; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 196–200; Gilbert C. Fite, *The Farmers' Frontier, 1865–1900* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), 171.

19. *Yolo Weekly Mail*, June 23 and 30, 1870; July 21, 1870; Sept. 1, 1870 (quote); Dec. 1, 1870; Nov. 7, 1872; *Yolo County Democrat*, July 23, 1870; Oct. 1, 1870; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Dec. 24, 1868; Nov. 18, 1870; *Pacific Rural Press*, Sept. 23, 1874; Smith, "California: The Wheat Decades," 196–200; Magliari, "California Populism," 122.

20. Pierce journal, Apr. 5, 6, 22, and 27, 1873; May 22–27, 1873; June 14, 1873 (quote); Aug. 12–28, 1873 (quotes).

21. Pierce journal, Aug. 29, 1873; Sept. 1, 12, 14, 16, 22, and 29, 1873; Yolo County, "Deeds," Book Q, 45, YCA; Yolo County, "Mortgages," Book K, 244, YCA; George W. Pierce, Agreement with Capital Savings Bank, May 31, 1870 (scribbled payment notations), box 1, Pierce Family Papers; Yolo County, "Assessment Lists," 1871, 1875, YCA; *Yolo County Democrat*, Feb. 6, 1869; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, July 17, 1873.

22. *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Feb. 16, 1871 (quote); *Yolo County Democrat*, Oct. 9, 1874 (quote).

23. *Solano Press*, June 23, 1869. Pierce, for example, often solicited bids from dealers in these locations; see Pierce journal, Apr. 11, 1870; Aug. 16, 1873.

24. *Yolo County Democrat*, Mar. 27, 1868; June 13, 1868; Oct. 17, 1868; Dec. 4, 1869; *Weekly Solano Republican*, Dec. 2, 1869; *Dixon Tribune*, Nov. 9, 1878; Clare L. Childers, transcriber, "Presbyterian Church of Davisville, California: Minutes of the Session and Register of Communicants, 13 November 1873–14 April 1918," 1997, 3, 6, 7, YCA; Yolo County, "Articles of Incorporation," Davisville Town Hall Association, Sept. 28, 1876, YCA; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes—Roads and Highways," Book A, 116, 137–38; Book C, 48–51, 72–78, 269–83, 286–88, 357–58, 400–406, YCA.

25. *Dixon Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1874; June 23, 1877; Nov. 9, 1878; *Yolo County Democrat*, July 17, 1869 (quotes); July 31, 1869; *Solano Press*, Aug. 26, 1868; *Davisville Advertiser*, Feb. 19, 1870; Dresbach ledgers, passim; Sprague and Atwell, *Western Shore Gazetteer*, 126.
26. *Dixon Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1874; *Solano Press*, Oct. 14, 1868; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, July 31, 1869; Oct. 16, 1869; Jan. 5, 1871; *Yolo County Democrat*, July 31, 1869; *Davisville Advertiser*, Dec. 4 and 25, 1869; Sprague and Atwell, *Western Shore Gazetteer*, 238, 388, 462; Yolo County, "Assessment Rolls," 1858, YCA; Pierce journal, Jan. 8, 1870 (quote); *Davis Enterprise*, Dec. 19, 1969; Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 57.
27. My thanks to Professor John Lofland, for sharing his unpublished research of Davisville with me in the summer of 2002. His work, now in print, is entitled *Davis: Radical Changes, Deep Constants* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004); see esp. 13-44.
28. Clare L. Childers, transcriber, "First Presbyterian Church of Davisville, California: Board of Trustees, Minutes of the Meetings, 22 June 1873-3 March 1897," 1997, 1-10, YCA; Childers, "First Presbyterian Church of Davisville: Minutes of the Session," 1-7; Yolo County, "Deeds," Book J, 458, YCA; Yolo County, "Miscellaneous Records," Book A, 75, YCA; *Dixon Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1874; Jan. 9, 1875; Apr. 24, 1875; May 31, 1877; *Davisville Advertiser*, Jan. 22, 1870; Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 105-7; John Lofland and Phyllis Haig, *Davis, California, 1910s-1940s* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 65.
29. Frank T. Gilbert, *The Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County* (San Francisco: De Pue & Co., 1879), 70; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book C, Sept. 7, 1868, YCA; Yolo County, "Deeds," Book K, 67, YCA; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Apr. 14, 1870; Jan. 5, 1871; *Yolo County Democrat*, Nov. 21, 1868; Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 83.
30. Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County*, 62-64; *Davisville Advertiser*, Apr. 16, 1870; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Apr. 14, 1870; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Sept. 9, 1876; Feb. 7, 1878; *Davis Enterprise*, Apr. 9, 1970; Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 118-19; Pierce journal, Apr. 9, 12, 29, and 30, 1870; June 15 and 29, 1871; July 6, 1871; Feb. 8, 1872 (draft of his speech). See also Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 210-12.
31. *Dixon Tribune*, Dec. 12, 1874; Feb. 6, 1875 (quote); June 23, 1877; Oct. 27, 1877; Nov. 24, 1877; *Yolo Daily Democrat*, Mar. 5, 1875; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Apr. 18, 1878.
32. *Weekly Solano Herald*, Oct. 2 and 16, 1869; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Sept. 28, 1869; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, May 11, 1871; May 8, 1879; *Weekly Solano Republican*, May 1, 1878; *Dixon Tribune*, Feb. 6, 1875; Apr. 17, 1875; Aug. 28, 1879; May 16 and 23, 1885; June 6, 1885; Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 121-22; Kevin Nelson, *The Golden Game: The Story of California Baseball* (San Francisco: California Historical Society Press, 2004), 2-11.
33. Pierce journal, May 7, 1870; Jan. 9, 1871; May 7, 1871; May 13, 1872 (quote); June 7, 1872; July 13, 1874; Aug. 21, 1874; Oct. 20, 1882; Aug. 21, 1886; *Davisville Advertiser*, May 7, 1870; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Nov. 6, 1879; *Dixon Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1887.
34. *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Oct. 3, 1872; *R. B. Armstrong v. California Pacific Railroad Company* (1872), California Supreme Court, no. 3340, California State Archives; *S. M. Enos v. California Pacific Railroad Company* (1870), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 810, YCA; *Jonathan A. Sikes v. California Pacific Rail Road Company* (1871), Yolo County, County Court Case Files, Civil Case no. 672, YCA; *William H. Marden v. California Pacific Railroad Company* (1870), Yolo County, County Court Case Files, Civil Case no. 624, YCA;

- Yolo County, "Articles of Incorporation," California Pacific Railroad Company, 1869, YCA; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book C, Aug. 23, 1870, YCA.
35. *Yolo County Democrat*, June 19, 1869 (quote); *Davisville Advertiser*, Feb. 19, 1870 (quote); Yolo County, County Court Case Files, Criminal Cases, 1867-75, YCA; *Dixon Tribune*, July 6, 1878; Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 76.
36. Pierce journal, Feb. 28, 1871; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book D, June 8, 1874, YCA; *Yolo County Democrat*, June 12, 1874; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Feb. 8, 1877; May 8, 1879; Oct. 16, 1879; *Dixon Tribune*, Apr. 13, 1877; May 4, 1878; Sept. 28, 1878; Oct. 26, 1878; Apr. 12, 1879; Mar. 27, 1880; Apr. 10, 1880; Childers, "First Presbyterian Church of Davisville: Minutes of the Session," 14, 19; Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County*, 65-67 (quote 66); Larkey, *Davisville '68*, 119.
37. Pierce journal, Feb. 28, 1871; July 20, 1874; Childers, "First Presbyterian Church of Davisville: Minutes of the Session," 19; Childers, "First Presbyterian Church of Davisville: Board of Trustees, Minutes of the Meetings," 8, 10-11; Dresbach ledgers, passim; Pierce journal, 1870 (worker accounts at end of volume); *Yolo County Democrat*, June 12, 1874; *Dixon Tribune*, July 28, 1878; Nov. 9, 1878.
38. Yolo County, "District Court Case Files," 1869-79, YCA; Yolo County, "Marriage Documents," box 1, YCA; *Dixon Tribune*, May 20, 1876; Robert L. Griswold, "Apart But Not Adrift: Wives, Divorce, and Independence in California, 1850-1890," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (May 1980): 265-83; Susan Gonda, "Not a Matter of Choice: San Diego Women and Divorce, 1850-1880," *Journal of San Diego History* 37 (1991): 195-213.
39. *Magdaline Glockler v. Charles Glockler* (1873), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 987, YCA; *Odd Fellows Bank of Saving v. Charles Glockler, Magdaline Glockler, and Carl Strobel* (1873), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 878, YCA; Yolo County, "Deeds," Book K, 222, YCA; *California Statutes* (1869-70), 291; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Mar. 19, 1870.
40. *Caroline Greiner v. Jacob Greiner* (1880), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 1575, YCA; Yolo County, "Assessment Lists," 1885, YCA; Yolo County, "Deeds," Book 31, 504, YCA; *Mail of Woodland*, July 28, 1916.
41. Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisors' Record, 1866-1873," 161-232, YCA; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Accounts," 228, 230, YCA; *Henry Cowell v. R. S. Carey* (1895), Yolo County, Superior Court Case Files, no. 1531, YCA; *S. H. Cowell v. Lydia T. Armstrong* (1930), California State Supreme Court, no. 4341 (SAC), "Transcript on Appeal," 73-75, 312, California State Archives; *Biennial Report of the Treasurer of California for the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Fiscal Years* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1871), 23; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Jan. 20, 1868; June 2, 1868; *Weekly Solano Republican*, Feb. 16, 1871; *Davisville Advertiser*, Feb. 26, 1870; *Pacific Rural Press*, July 5, 1875.
42. *Yolo County Democrat*, Dec. 23, 1871 (quotes); *Dixon Tribune*, Nov. 5, 1887; *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 73.
43. Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County*, 50; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book C, Feb. 4, 1868; Mar. 9, 1868, YCA; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Supervisors' Record," 39, 50, 60, 81, 166, YCA; *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 66-75, 85; Pierce journal, Dec. 19, 1871; "Why

Putah Creek Changed Its Course," undated clipping (1968) from the *Dixon Tribune* on file at the Dixon Public Library, Dixon, California; *Woodland News*, Mar. 9, 1867; *Yolo Weekly Democrat*, Dec. 23, 1871; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Jan. 4, 1872; *Dixon Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1886; Nov. 5, 1887.

44. *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 68, 80; Pierce journal, Dec. 19, 1871; "Why Putah Creek Changed Its Course"; *Yolo Weekly Democrat*, Dec. 23, 1871; *Dixon Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1886; Nov. 5, 1887.

45. Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors, Swampland District No. 18, Accounts," 230, YCA; Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book D, Feb. 7, 1872, YCA; Yolo County, "Reclamation District Formation," Book A, 23, YCA.

46. *California Statutes* (1872), 941; *Sacramento Daily Union*, Mar. 28, 1872; *Weekly Solano Republican*, May 2, 1872; *Yolo County Democrat*, Aug. 21, 1869; May 11, 1872; *California, Journal of the Assembly* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1872), 833, 846, 875.

47. *California Statutes* (1872), 941-45 (quotes); *Yolo County Democrat*, May 11, 1872.

48. Yolo County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book D, Apr. 22, 1872; May 7, 1872, YCA; *Yolo County Democrat*, May 11, 1872 (quotes).

49. Solano County, "Board of Supervisors Minutes," Book 4, Apr. 25 and 30, 1872, County Administrator's Office, Fairfield, California; *Yolo County Democrat*, May 11, 1872 (quote); *Dixon Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1886; Nov. 5, 1887; *California Statutes* (1874), 84.

50. "Why Putah Creek Changed Its Course"; *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 312-13; *Dixon Tribune*, Nov. 29, 1884; Sept. 18, 1886; Nov. 5, 1887.

51. "Why Putah Creek Changed Its Course"; *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 69-75; *Dixon Tribune*, Jan. 19, 1878; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, May 16, 1878; *Historical Atlas Map of Solano County, California* (San Francisco: Thompson & West, 1878), 27.

52. *Sacramento Bee*, Dec. 31, 1873; *Marysville Daily Appeal*, Jan. 3, 1874; Pierce journal, Nov. 25, 1874; *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 69-87 (quote at 85), 312-13; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Jan. 21, 1875; Feb. 21, 1878; May 16, 1878; *Dixon Tribune*, Nov. 11, 1876; Jan. 19, 1878 (quotes); Feb. 2 and 23, 1878; Mar. 8, 1879; Mar. 15, 1879; Jan. 17, 1880; Apr. 24, 1880; Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County*, 55-56.

53. *Dixon Tribune*, Mar. 15, 1879; "Why Putah Creek Changed Its Course"; *Cowell v. Armstrong*, "Transcript on Appeal," 69-76; *Historical Atlas Map of Solano County, California*, 27; Edward Nelson Eager, *Official Map of the County of Solano* (San Francisco: Britton & Rey, 1890); California Commissioner of Public Works, *Yolo Basin* (San Francisco: Britton & Rey, 1895); P. N. Ashley, *Official Map of the County of Yolo* (San Francisco: Britton & Rey, 1900); C. F. Weber, *Weber's Map of Solano County, California* (San Francisco: C. F. Weber & Co., 1914); Edward Denny, *Denny's Pocket Map of Solano County, California* (San Francisco: Edward Denny & Co., 1915); Jeffrey F. Mount, *California Rivers and Streams: The Conflict between Fluvial Process and Land Use* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), 52-82.

54. *Dixon Tribune*, Feb. 23, 1878 (quote).

55. *Sacramento Daily Union*, Jan. 3, 1876, quoted in McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 1:244.

Chapter Nine. "A Devil's Opportunity"

1. *Wheat: An Illustrated Description of California's Leading Industry* (San Francisco: Commercial Publication Co., 1887), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (author unknown); Rodman W. Paul, *The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition, 1850-1900* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 225-31; Morton Rothstein, "West Coast Farmers and the Tyranny of Distance: Agriculture on the Fringes of the World Market," *Agricultural History* 49 (Jan. 1975): 275-76; Michael Frederick Magliari, "California Populism, a Case Study: The Farmers' Alliance and People's Party in San Luis Obispo County, 1885-1903" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 1992), 84; and esp. Forest G. Hill, "Place of the Grain Trade in California Economic Development, 1870-1900," Social Science Research Council, Western Committee on Regional Economic Analysis, Proceedings, 1954, 13-33, Bancroft Library.

2. Ezra S. Carr, *The Patrons of Husbandry on the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft & Co., 1875), 66-67; Morton Rothstein, *The California Wheat Kings* (Davis: University of California, Davis, 1987), 2-5 (quote 5); Rothstein, "A British Firm on the American West Coast, 1869-1914," *Business History Review* 37 (Winter 1963): 395-96; Horace Davis, "Wheat in California: A Retrospect and Prospect," *Overland Monthly* 32 (July 1898): 60 (quote); Joseph Hutchinson, "California Cereals," *Overland Monthly* 2 (July-Aug. 1883): 10-11; Albert Shumate, "Isaac Friedlander, Wheat Merchant," in *Breadbasket of the World: California's Great Wheat-Growing Era, 1860-1890* (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1984), no pagination; Rodman W. Paul, "The Wheat Trade between California and the United Kingdom," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (Dec. 1958): 400-401; Paul, "The Great California Grain War: The Grangers Challenge the Wheat King," *Pacific Historical Review* 27 (Nov. 1958): 336-39; *Wheat: An Illustrated Description*, 34 (quote); Magliari, "California Populism," 131.

3. "Unidentified Store at Davisville," 2 vols., Aug. 1868-Sept. 1868 and May 1869-Sept. 1869, Yolo County Archives, Woodland, CA (YCA) (hereafter Dresbach ledgers); *William Dresbach v. William Minis and William D. Wristen* (1872), California Supreme Court, no. 3475, California State Archives, Sacramento; *William D. Wristen v. Isaac Friedlander and William Dresbach* (1873), Yolo County, District Court Case Files, 2nd ser., no. 690, YCA; Yolo County, "Chattel Mortgages," Book A, 122, 135, 139, 157, 213, YCA; *William Dresbach v. His Competitors* (1879), Yolo County, County Court Case Files, Civil Case no. 788, YCA; *Yolo Weekly Mail*, Sept. 25, 1873; Jan. 2, 1879 (quote); *Yolo County Democrat*, Oct. 9, 1873 (quote); *Dixon Tribune*, Nov. 21, 1874; Dec. 5, 1874 (quote); Oct. 8, 1887; Nov. 2, 1894.

4. "The Terrible Seventies" is the title of chapter 19 of Gertrude Atherton, *California: An Intimate History* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1927). Frank T. Gilbert, *Illustrated Atlas and History of Yolo County* (San Francisco: De Pue & Co., 1879), 46 (quote); *Yolo County Democrat*, Nov. 23, 1876 (quote).

5. *Solano Press*, Apr. 29, 1868 (quote); *Sacramento Daily Union*, Apr. 23, 1868; Aug. 24, 1868; *Yolo County Democrat*, May 2, 1868; Jan. 1, 1870; *Wristen v. Friedlander and Dresbach*; Margery Holburne Saunders, "California Wheat, 1867-1910: Influences of Transportation on the Export Trade and the Location of Producing Areas" (M.A. thesis, University of Cal-