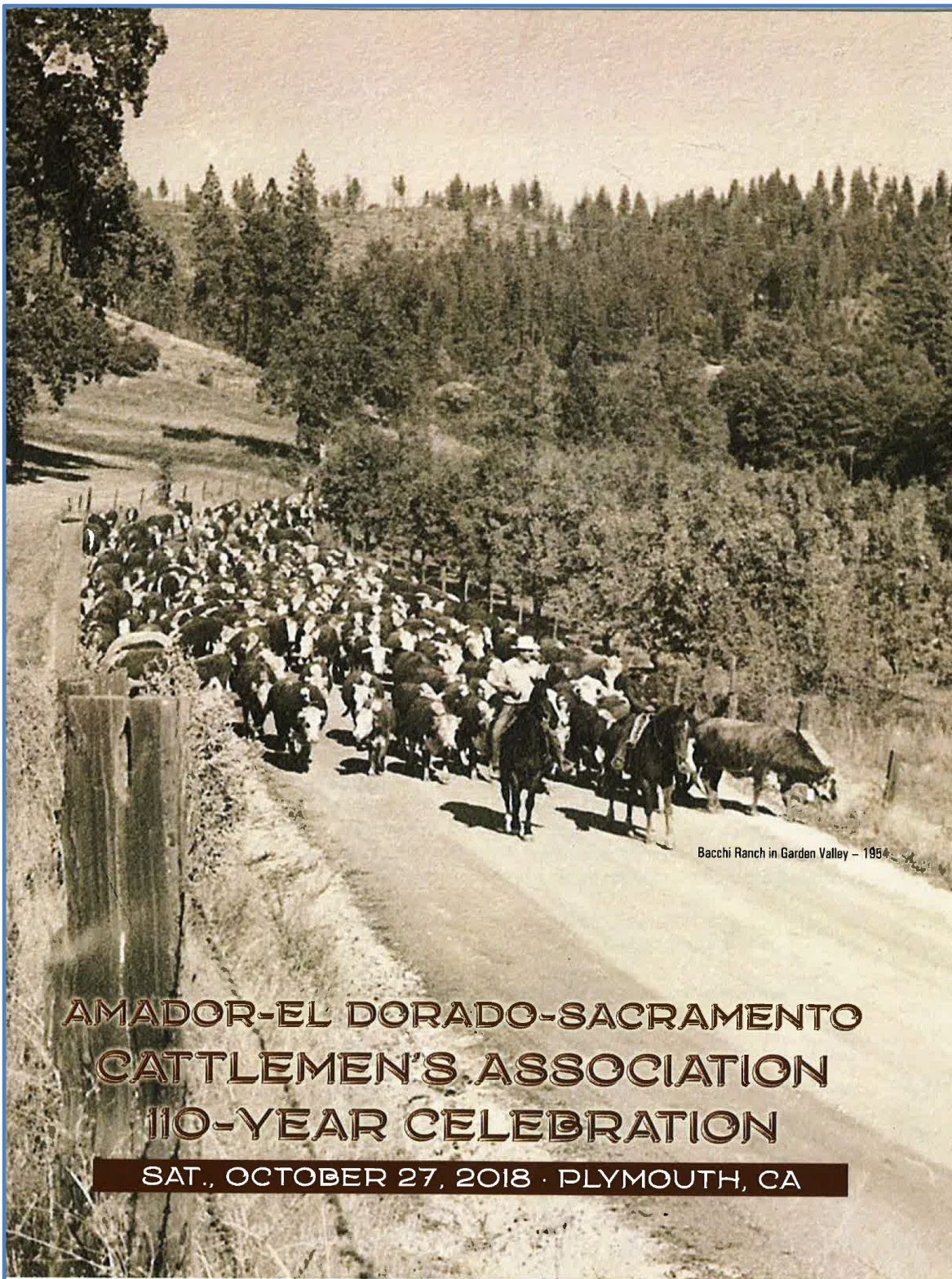






The Bacchi Ranch is a long-standing family-owned cattle operation that has maintained holdings in the area for over 150 years. Lifestock is an important part of the local economy. The county's 2024 gross livestock value was \$21.2 million out of \$77.8M total agriculture value.

The Bacchi family owns thousands of acres, and also uses several National Forest allotments for seasonal grazing. The operation is homegrown, and has persevered thru multiple existential threats pover the years. Five(?) generations in, multiple family groups continue to manage separate herds, with strategic cooperation and sharing of seasonal pastures.

Here's how it happened.

William Bacchi leaves Rodi, Switzerland for California in 1851. He lands in New Orleans on December 8. By 1851 there's scheduled steamship service from New Orleans to Panama. Getting across the Isthmus could be a problem, however. William rides mules and paddles a canoe to the Pacific port, and books passage to Sacramento with the Pacific Mail Steamship Co.

He makes his way to Mud Springs (now El Dorado), which is on the old Carson Emigrant road. It's a mining center, freight point and a crossroads for stagecoaches and travelers. Within a few years William is operating a store and has acquired 160 acres.

An 1856 transaction record notes the purchase of "17 head of cows and a yearling bull." The Bacchis were in the cattle business ... 170 years ago.

In 1859 William marries Elizabeth (Isabella) Pini. The couple grew up a couple miles apart in Switzerland.

Generation 2 – Louise, Virginia, Lisabeth, William, Henry

Daughters Louise, Virginia and Elisabeth J. come along in the early to mid-1860s. William S. follows

The family relocates to Garden Valley in 1867 and buys a 160-acre ranch for \$3,010.

On March 4, 1877, William purchases the huge Peavine Ranch, which adjoins Peavine Ridge in the mountains east of Georgetown.

William and Elizabeth's last child, Henry Frank Oswald, is born at Garden Valley in 1879.

In the Swiss tradition, William begins summering his cattle in the mountains around the meadow, milking some cows and making cheese and butter. At the dawn of the 20th century he's paying tax on 1,550 acres of winter and summer grazing land.



The El Dorado Lumber company begins harvesting the huge sugar pines that are landlocked on the divide in 1902. William sells them a 15-year right to harvest trees on his Peavine ranch.

Youngest son Henry's formal education ends abruptly in the fourth grade after his teacher administers a firm whipping.

In true cowboy fashion, Henry goes to work. He tends cattle and works for miners. In 1894 he takes a job with the lumber company dragging logs out of the forest with a team of bulls – at 15. Henry sees what's going on up there and realizes that lumber is the new gold. He's surrounded by thousands of acres of stuff

Two years earlier the American River Land and Lumber Co started buying timber rights and building a transportation system to get timber off the divide.

Realize how isolated the divide was. There were no roads that could handle vehicles capable of hauling trees that size. The logs he was dragging out of the woods were to be loaded onto freight cars. The lumber company was building an extensive, and expensive, narrow gauge railroad through brutal mountain terrain, just to get the logs to the edge of the American River canyon, where they would be slid down a chute into the river and floated downstream during high water to the lumber mill at Folsom. What could possibly go wrong?

Two hundred workers were employed just to build, operate and maintain the railway system. And then there were the lumberjacks, doing the hardest, most dangerous work imaginable. With no towns nearby, the timber company had to provide housing and meals to all these guys. Young Henry saw that the logging company was going to need a lot of beef.

The railroad worked, the chute worked, but the river failed to deliver the logs to Folsom. If the water was too low, they got hung up on the way down the river. If it was too high they blew by Folsom to points downstream.

The lumber company changes hands and strings a cable across the canyon toward Camino. The Folsom mill gets moved up to the divide and becomes the Pino Grande mill. Roughcut planks are loaded onto specially built railroad cars, dragged to the lip of the canyon, clipped onto the cable and swung 2,700 feet across the canyon at a height of 1,200 feet.

All the while, Bacchi beef fuels the enterprise. The demand is tremendous. Henry buys cattle from neighboring ranchers, builds three slaughterhouses and expands his reach to area butcher shops, including Tom Raley's store in Placerville.



Generation 3 – Byron, Francis and Bethel

Henry meets his future wife, Marie De Avila Silvera, later anglicized to Mary Silva, at a dance right here in Pilot Hill. They have a lot in common: both are first generation, literate, hardworking and ambitious. Each drives cattle to the mountains each summer. Perhaps most importantly, both are over 30 and want children. They are motivated. The wedding is in July, 1908, and the children follow: Byron in 1909, Francis in 1912, and Bethel in 1915.

Between 1910 And 1942, Henry and Mary expanded the ranch dramatically, adding more than 12,000 acres in 36 separate transactions, each with their own mortgage. Mary's letters from the era reveal tremendous anxiety and austerity over this debt.

Third generation Bacchi boys Byron and Francis graduate from the eighth grade at Uniontown School in Lotus and go to work clearing pastures.

Byron becomes a self-taught engineer and mechanic. He keeps all the machinery and vehicles running, clears land and builds roads, dams, and entire water systems.

Brother Francis develops complementary skills. At an early age he builds up, and then sells, a sizeable sheep herd by hand-raising lambs given to him by passing herders on their way to summer range. He becomes a sought-after sheep shearer. At age 12 he famously slaughters eight animals in one day... singlehandedly. Francis becomes the family butcher.

By 1935, Bacchi meat is being sold to butcher shops throughout Placer and EL Dorado counties, including Tom Raley's first market in Placerville. Mountain beef sells well in butcher shops because the animals are "on the gain." The fat is white and firm from their diet of sweet birch.

Beef earnings steadily whittle down family debt. Francis later recalled the day the family paid off the last mortgage as one of the happiest of his life.

Generation 4 - Eddie, Carla and William. Chuck, Henry, Nikki, Cheri and Jim.

Byron marries Carol Walgamott and launches the fourth generation of Bacchis: Eddie, Carla and William in the late 1940s. His brother Francis marries Betty Burgess. Her son **Chuck**, age 5 at the time, was soon the older brother to Henry, Nikki, **Cheri** and Jim.



Byron Bacchi (center) secures his daughter Carla on a steer while Carla's uncle, Francis Bacchi, helps to steady the animal. Byron and Francis were William's grandsons. In the 1940s, the family used Caterpillar equipment to clear land, build networks of roads, and sculpt farm ponds for their livestock. (Courtesy of Bill Bacchi.)



The 1950s presented four distinct existential threats to the burgeoning Bacchi multi-generational ranch dynasty.

First, the mill at Pino Grande closed in 1951, taking a huge source of income with it. The family shuts down operations at Peavine.

Next, parts of the ranch near Salmon Falls are lost to the Folsom dam is built. The family rejects the Army Corps' valuation of the property, but takes ten years to settle the matter in court.

Henry Bacchi dies in 1954 at age 75. His children and grandchildren are running the day-to-day operation at this point, but he is still making the big decisions. That role falls to his widow, Mary.

The fourth blow is the hardest. It lands shortly after Henry's death. The Georgetown Public Utilities District takes 600 acres of critical Bacchi land for the construction of the Stumpy Meadows dam project. Another legal fight ensues and is eventually settled. Stumpy Meadows is strategic to the operation. Cattle are gathered from far-flung summer pastures and held for a month or so before being driven to the winter pasture in the mountains. Without Stumpy Meadows, there is simply no place for the month-long gather.

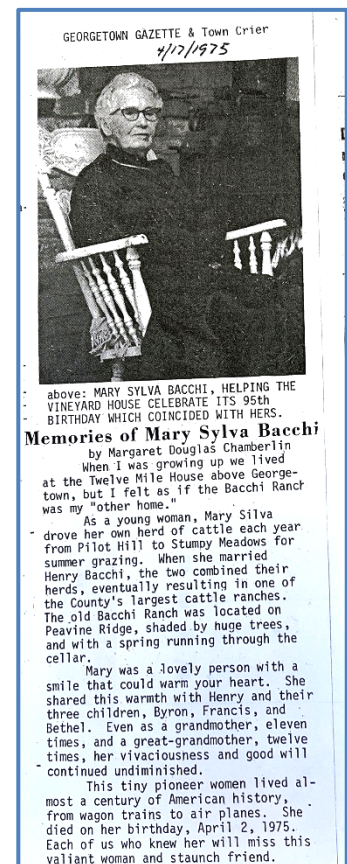
The solution is 350 miles north, in Fort Klamath Oregon. In 1962 the family purchases a ranch there and for the next 35 years the entire herd is trucked 350 miles north in early May and 350 miles back in late October, just before calving season.

Francis (third generation, remember?) and his family follow the cattle, living 6 months in Oregon, 6 months in California.

In 1975, Mary Bacchi - the matriarch of the family and still an important decision maker, passes away. Her oldest son, Byron, passes away two years later. Chuck steps in, returning to the ranch in 1979. He and his wife Judy purchase a quarter interest in the Ranch.

Francis and Byron's families divide the remaining ranch assets and keep going, with Francis and Chuck operating as Bacchi Ranch and retaining the original HB brand.

Chuck's sister, Cheri, and her husband, Paul, purchase a share of the Ranch in 1984. The ranch expands as winter and summer pasture became available through Forest Service grazing allotments. The family works together, leasing winter and summer pasture over the next 25 years, doubling the size of the herd.





Generations 5&6 – Marcus, Charles. Taylor, Braydon; Livia, Julia; Anthony, Matt, Sophie, Stephanie

More Forest Service allotments follow. Chuck and Judy's youngest son, Marcus, graduates from UC Davis in 1996. With Marcus as partner, the Ranch purchases the Barney Dobbas herd and acquires an important allotments near French Meadows Reservoir and Old Pino, the original Bacchi allotment. After a 35-year absence, the Bacchi Ranch is back in the mountains.

Marcus marries Shannon Silva from Rio Vista in 2004. They have daughters, Taylor and Braydon, both cowgirls.

Sadly, Marcus passes away in 2014. Shannon continues ranching, adding leased ground and increasing the size of her herd.

Chuck and Judy's oldest son, Charles, is president of a trade association. He lives in Sacramento with his wife Andrea, an attorney, and two children, Livia and Julia. Like everyone in the family, they take pride in their ranch heritage.

Chuck and Cheri have remained active in local agricultural organizations. Chuck was a longtime member of the El Dorado Agricultural Commission and a past president of the AES Cattlemen's Association. Cheri was president of both the AES CattleWomen and Klamath County CattleWomen.

The ranch is smaller today. Chuck and Judy are semi-retired. Cheri and Paul live in Lotus. Sons Anthony and Matt work with their parents. Daughter Sophie is a roper and horsewoman. Daughter Stephanie ranches near Buellton with her husband Jeff Mathis. Cheri and Paul ranch the home place and the allotments.

Shannon Bacchi and her two daughters, Taylor and Braydon, have their own herd. Chuck's nephew, Jon Bari, also has a herd. The Peavine acreage William purchased in 1877 continues to be held by the Bacchi family.





BACCHI

between Grandfather Henry's and Uncle Francis' house, where the family would gather in the evenings after dinner, said Carla. We often had visits from the other families living in the area: the Vicinis, Wagners, Bassis, Veerkamps and Fornis," Carla said.

"The county was so much smaller then," Chuck said. Everyone knew one another from the grange, from school, from dances and other community events. People were pretty close."

Carla talked about the community spirit that prevailed at the time when she was a young girl. "Helping your neighbor was automatic. It seems there were a lot of fires then, and whenever someone was burned out, neighbors would gather together to provide the victims with shelter and food. I can remember one fire in the '50s that lasted a week. My father Byron and Chuck and Cheri's dad Francis were gone much of that time."

Carla said that her grandparents, Henry and Mary Bacchi, were displaced three times by fire in the early part of the century. "It's a wonder so many of our grandparents' possessions survived to be passed down to us," said Cheri.

A comment that one of the properties their grandparents lived on had a vineyard, prompted Chuck to comment on the alcohol produced in the early days of the county.

"They weren't concerned with taste back then; they didn't care about zinfandels or merlots. They were interested in grapes that produced the highest sugar content. A neighbor, George Andreas, had over 28,000 vines and a brandy distillery. They wanted the biggest bang for their buck."

All three Bacchi family members commented on the strength and vision of their grandparents Henry and Mary.

Carla told of how Mary – all of about five feet tall – drove her buckboard down the hill above the river 15 miles over rough roads to Russell Hollow to have

winning a rather large sum, he decided to quit, but in those days you couldn't take your winnings and run. So he excused himself to go to the bathroom, but instead he left the building, mounted his horse and rode to Salmon Falls." Henry was quite a trader as well, looking for a deal wherever he could find it.

Chuck told of how his grandfather worked out a culinary deal with some Chinese who had a mining camp nearby his house.

"The Chinese had no chickens, but Grandfather did. So he made an arrangement whereby he provided the chickens and the Chinese did the cooking for him."

Carla told a story about how Henry Bacchi – in his late teens – made extra money by helping the local undertaker.

"Once Henry had to take care of a deceased man whose body was discovered some time after his death. The story goes that the smell in the man's house was so awful, that grandfather took three days to get him buried. After digging a grave outside the wall of the dead man's one-room cabin the first day, Henry returned the next and cut a hole in the cabin's wall just above the grave. On the third day he returned, tied a rope around the dead man's bed, pulled the bed to the hole, then tipped the bed over. The corpse fell through the hole in the wall and into the grave."

Although the family patriarch, William Bacchi, who came to the county in 1951, raised cattle for sale, it was Henry and his sons, Francis and Byron who developed the beef business, which Chuck and Cheri carry on today.

away, but he couldn't do much else mechanically. But he was so wonderful with the animals, even doing much of the vet work himself. On the other hand, my father designed and constructed all the buildings and corrals and performed all the maintenance on the vehicles. But together, the two brothers provided all the knowhow to keep the ranch running smoothly."

Chuck added, "When Uncle

"Grandfather realized that sooner or later the mining boom in the county would die, and that a market for beef would develop. He got contracts with the mining and lumber camps for his beef. Whenever land became available, he would buy it up. Later, he and my father (Francis) would travel around buying up small herds from local people, to later sell. Among their early customers was the first Raley's store in Placerville," Chuck said.

Carla said Henry bought a lot of land (the Bacchi ranch once extended over 12,000 acres) and in the early days paying off all the purchases required a family effort.

"My father Byron and Uncle Francis contributed to the family with everything they did. Father ran a trap line that he would check every morning before walking to the one-room Uniontown Elementary School three miles away. And Uncle Francis traveled to Galt to shear sheep for \$5 a day, which he would bring home to the family."

But the Bacchis shared what they had with people in need.

"I remember back when Highway 49 ran right past our property and homeless people would stop by our house asking for something to eat. We never refused them," Carla said.

During the Depression the family took in several men and provided them with room and board for their work clearing the hillsides behind the ranch. They were mostly men who came out here alone and had no families.

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