

# Pioneer Hutchings family will celebrate 100th anniversary of founding the ranch

By ELINOR BALDWIN

A long-awaited dream will come true on Sept. 28 for Mrs. Rhoda Hutchings, who will be hostess to a large contingent of the Hutchings family at the centennial celebration of the ranch her father-in-law, Lyman Hutchings, acquired in 1869. He was the first lettuce-grower and shipper in the Pajaro Valley.

About a month ago, Mrs. Hutchings, who is 85 and lives at the ranch, sent invitations to branches of the family that she has been able to trace. From the response, she's anticipating quite a crowd.

From Mrs. Hutchings' family Bible and numerous records, most of the family history is known. Lyman Hutchings guided two wagon trains to California, rode for the Pony Express, fought Indians and homesteaded in Santa Cruz County.

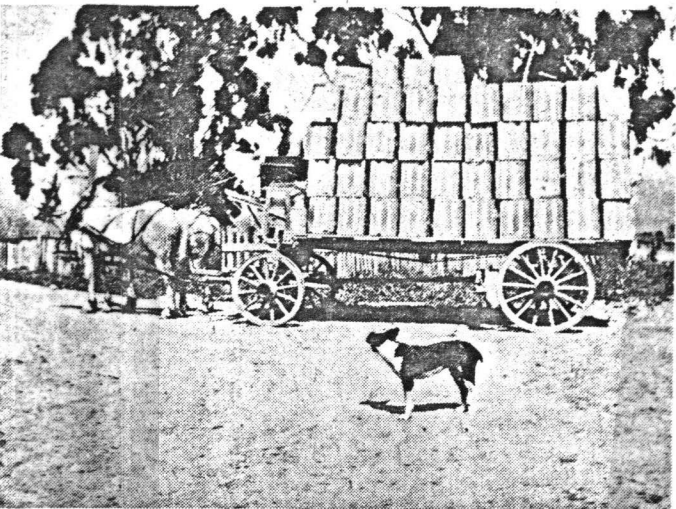
He was born in Orange Township, Ohio, in 1828 and married Mary Rigby of England in 1854. With his wife and son accompanying him, he captained his first wagon train west in 1856. The family settled in the Santa Clara Valley and later moved to Corralitos, where Lyman became a rider for the Pony Express. On his final express ride, he and his companion ran into Indian trouble and took different routes. His friend was never seen again, although his horse and mail pouch were found.

In 1866, Hutchings became ill and thinking he wouldn't recover, moved his family of six children, four boys and two girls, back to Iowa to live with his wife's family. He recovered, and led a second wagon train to California in 1868.

During the trip, the Hutchings were warned of an impending Indian attack by a young Indian whom Hutchings had saved from torture by white men on his previous trip. As captain, he directed his wagons to form a circle and successfully warded off the attack.

The wagon train reached Promontory, Utah, in 1869 just in time to see the completion of the transcontinental railroad with the driving of the gold spike which joined east and west.

The family, now with seven children, settled on land Hutchings bought from John Maxwell in 1869. Maxwell had acquired the homestead from the government with the original deed signed by Ulysses S. Grant. The ranch is now located at 350 San Miguel Canyon Road, then known as "the road from Vega to Monterey."



First lettuce shipment of Pajaro Valley leaving the ranch of Eva E. Rowe, Moses Hutchings' mother-in-law, on San Juan Rd., in spring 1916.

Hutchings built his first home of redwood from trees cut near here. In this two-story house the Hutchings' last four children were born. The last, Moses, arrived in 1877. As was the custom in those days, neighbors came in to help when a child was born. When Moses came, neighbor Mrs. William Rowe came to help and little did she dream that the baby would someday marry her future granddaughter, Rhoda Rowe, who lives in the house where Moses was born.

Most of the ranch land was used for general farming and for orchards. But a book published about Santa Cruz County in 1879 listed Hutchings as "one of the most noted strawberry producers in this section," although he had planted only three acres of strawberries.

As the Hutchings' 11 children grew older, a second house was built on the section of the ranch bordering Lewis Road. While clearing brush from the land, Lyman found horns shed by elk that once roamed here. Once he sighted a pair of mountain lions, and it was from this same home a few years later during the 1906 earthquake that he recalled

watching the eucalyptus trees bending so far their tops whipped the ground.

Lyman Hutchings died in 1889 at 61, when his youngest son Moses was 12. From that time on, Moses took over a bigger role in the farming operation. In 1908, he married Rhoda Rowe, and they moved to Bard, Calif., across the Colorado River from Yuma.

After clearing the land with the help of Yuma Indians, he raised

alfalfa and sold eggs to miners in the area. Three children were born; one of them Foster of Watsonville.

In 1914 they returned to Watsonville to live and farm for 10 years on the San Juan Road ranch belonging to Moses' mother-in-law, Eva Rowe. Three more children were born, one of them Roland, of Watsonville.

Moses gained distinction by planting and shipping the first

commercial lettuce raised in the Pajaro Valley: three acres were planted in the fall of 1915 and a carload was shipped in the spring of 1916. The lettuce was shipped by rail by the Wells Fargo Express out of the Pajaro Depot to San Francisco, selling for \$2.50 per crate. His acreage increased by the year.

Moses' first lettuce was cut before daylight by lantern-light so it could be packed in ice in the fields and loaded on the early morning train for the city. The ice was an unaccustomed treat for the Hutchings children, who were able to have home-made ice cream, frequently.

In 1924, after enlarging and renovating the San Miguel Canyon house, Moses moved his family there and planted a 20-acre pear orchard. Active in community affairs, he worked with Matt McGowan of Trafton Rd. and A.A. Tavernetti (both deceased now), and together they brought the Farm Bureau to the Pajaro Valley.

Moses also instigated the establishment of the rural free delivery mail service in outlying areas such as Hall and Vega districts and years later, he arranged for the high school bus service to those same areas.

During 12 years as trustee of the old Carrolton School on San Juan Road, he kept the boys out of trouble by coaching them in baseball at noon and after school and was rewarded with the team becoming champions over most of the rural schools.

Years later, Moses became a trustee of Watsonville High School, and also served as a member of the Mission Trails Committee which established the Mission Bell markers along El Camino Real. For 20 years, 1932 to 1952, he served as Monterey County Supervisor. He died in 1952.

His widow, Rhoda, continues an active life. She belongs to a number of local organizations and enjoys her large garden and home on San Miguel Canyon Rd. Her six children have presented her with 16 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, who will be present at the centennial celebration at the ranch on Sunday.

REFERENCE

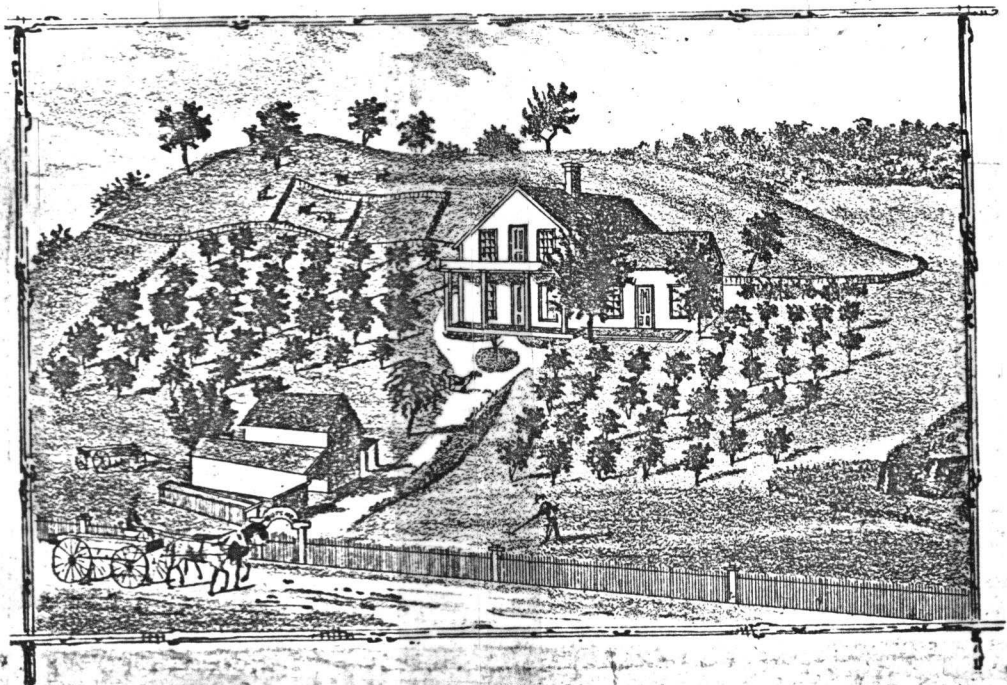


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of the Hutchings  
left, son of Rhoda,  
4, her great-  
and Ken, Rhoda's  
n in the background  
y Lyman Hutchings,

Rhoda's father-in-law, when he  
established the homestead on San  
Miguel Canyon Road. Julie has a new  
sister, born Sept. 2 and named Robin  
Lynn, who will also be at the reunion.

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Lyman S. Hutchings' 'fruit ranch', Carlton district, about 1870