

NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

THE STAR

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2021

North Star Landscaping

Arthur De Wint Foote, the North Star Mine Superintendent, had interests that went beyond mining and engineering. Two of his major hobbies were photography and horticulture. We have benefitted from his (and his son's) photography because the pictures are helping us restore the house to the original design and interior decor.

The Footes lived in the North Star Cottage from 1895-1905 (the cottage no longer exists). There are some trees and shrubs around the Cottage location that were probably planted by Arthur.

The family moved into the North Star House when it was completed in Fall, 1905. Arthur must have been delighted with the landscape opportunity ahead of him.

The North Star House was surrounded by acres of gentle hills and surrounding woods, with a sunset view from the front terrace. The setting and style of the Arts & Crafts home lent itself beautifully to Edwardian woodland landscaping. Arthur's design moved comfortably from the house through the nearby garden areas and out into the open areas and woods.

The North Star House Proudly Introduces our Self-Guided Legacy Landscape Tour

Designed by Lisa Robinson, based on research by Carole Miller

Come for a walk and learn more about the North Star Landscape.

There are two parts of the tour:

Part 1: Heritage Garden – level, with close parking

Part 2: A Walk About the Grounds.

Uneven footing; wear sturdy shoes.

Open the tour on your smartphone, tablet or computer from our website
www.TheNorthStarHouse.org

Click on "North Star Legacy Landscape Tour" in right sidebar.

If you cannot come to the House for the Tour, you can view it at home.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The gate to the Heritage Garden will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10am-12pm. It is locked most other times to keep deer and other critters from eating everything.



Magnolia Tree



Deutzia Scabra



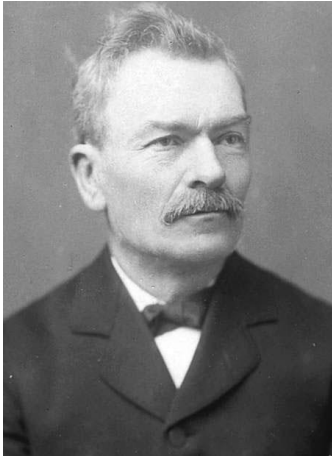
Baronne Prevost

Two Giants of Agriculture in Nevada County

by Joan Clappier

Western Nevada County was not just the home of the richest gold mines in California, it was also the home of major agricultural advancements in the Western U.S. and beyond.

Felix Gillet (1835-1908): Father of most of the perennial agriculture in California and the Pacific Northwest.



Felix Gillet was born in Rochefort, France. In the early 1850's he was a sailor making transatlantic trips. He settled in Boston in 1852 and learned to be a barber. By 1858 Gillet was living in San Jose, CA, working as a barber. He observed French orchardists establishing fruit and nut farms in the region.

In 1859, Gillet moved to the prosperous gold mining town of Nevada City and opened a barber shop. A couple of French friends bought land and turned it into French-style farms on which they grew fruit and nut trees, grape vines, beehives and roses. The land which they purchased was mostly granite bedrock which had been surfaced-mined and logged. And yet, their gardens were doing well.

Gillet had now seen French-style farms successfully growing perennial crops in both the favorable growing conditions south of San Jose

and the poor growing conditions of the Sierra foothills after the land had been mined. In 1864 he returned to France for 10 months to study the nursery trade and French horticulture. Upon returning to Nevada City, he bought 16 acres of barren, mined-out and timbered land and created the Barren Hill Nursery. He still had his barbershop as a source of income. Gillet then placed a large order of walnut, filbert, chestnut, mulberry, prune and fig nursery stock and scion wood from France. This was a gamble because he didn't know if the shipment would still be alive when it arrived. It was! [Definition of scion: a young shoot or twig of a plant, especially one cut for grafting or rooting.]



Gillet Colossal Chestnut Tree.

*Planted on North Star property in 1880s (est.)
Still bearing nuts.*

*(Next to BYLT office,
formerly Gardener Cottage)*

Gillet began importing hundreds of select fruit, nut, and grape varieties, initially from France. He ultimately introduced plants from more than 30 nations, primarily in Europe and Asia. Between his importations and his creation of new varieties through grafting and hybridizing, he greatly expanded the selection of perennial food crops in America. Another of his goals was to produce crops that would grow well in a

variety of locations. He experimented with grafting varieties of fruits to hardy wild specimens, and he grew multiple generations of his varieties at Barren Hill to be sure that the descendants would also thrive there.

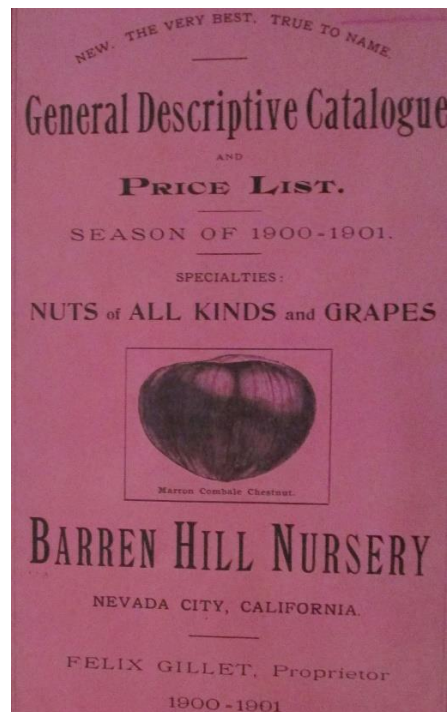
Felix Gillet provided the plant material that established these industries in California and the Pacific Northwest: Almonds, Walnuts, Filberts, Chestnuts, Cherries, Apples, Pears, Prunes, Wine Grapes, Table Grapes, Raspberries, Strawberries and others. Many of his new varieties shipped to other parts of the US as well as other countries. He put out catalogs every year.

Gillet expressed disdain for delicate crops that required too much care and tolerated only a narrow range of growing conditions. A quote from the Barren Hill Nursery 1900-01 Catalog:

So far, and for the last fifty years, in California and as well in Oregon, the walnut mostly propagated was the Los Angeles walnut, the most delicate, unproductive and worthless kind known; and for the last twenty years or so another delicate kind, though an improvement on the Los Angeles, the "Improved Soft-shell" of Santa Barbara, a seedling of the Chili walnut, has been largely propagated in Southern California, without any regard to the best grades of walnuts imported to this country from Europe, which should have been taken as a guide by our walnut growers as to what varieties best to plant.

Gillet went on to describe the 28 varieties of walnuts he had for sale in that catalog – all developed from French walnuts. He gave detailed descriptions of the attributes and

nuances of each variety to help you choose just the right one(s) for your garden, small orchard, or large farm operation.



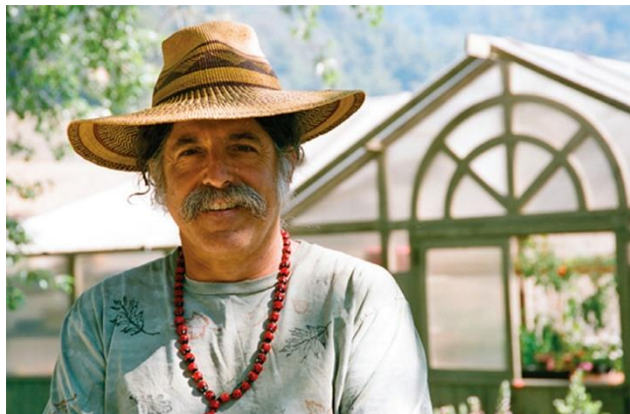
1900-1901 Catalogue

When Felix Gillet died in 1908, his wife continued the Barren Hill Nursery operation. When she died in 1913 the nursery was sold to Charles E. Parsons, who renamed it the Felix Gillet Nursery. He and his son continued operating the nursery until the son retired in 1968. The property was then sold to a private party and later developed for multiple homes.

Gillet's work lives on in the agriculture of the western United States and beyond. But what became of all of the heirloom trees that were planted throughout the Sierra foothills at mining camps and small settlements that supported the mines? Many of those places have been abandoned and left to decay.

But the trees live on ... and that leads us to the next part of this story.

Amigo Bob Cantisano (1951-2020): Leader in Organic Farming Movement



Amigo Bob Cantisano grew up in the Bay Area and was exposed to growing and preparing food while living communally in the late 1960's. This started his thought process that *how we grow* our food is important to the healthiness and nutrition of what we eat. By 1972, he was living in Truckee, where he helped start the We The People Natural Foods Cooperative. Amigo Bob worked on creating a certification process for organic farms and products, founding California Certified Organic Farmers, organizing the first EcoFarm Conference and much, much more.

Amigo Bob enjoyed learning, and he was always thinking and planning how to make things better. He became a sought-after expert in organic farming and was a dynamic speaker and educator.

Along the way, Amigo Bob stumbled upon an old, abandoned orchard of Felix Gillet trees. It was 1970, and he was driving through the Sierras on an abandoned dirt road, when he came to a clearing in the forest and discovered the orchard. The trees were old and gnarled, but they were alive and still bearing fruit. "Piece by piece, talking to old-timers and reading newspaper archives, he reassembled its history. The trees were older than he imagined, the last

vestige of a trading post that served the mining camps of the Gold Rush—which meant the orchard had survived, apparently untended, for more than 150 years.”[3]

This orchard was an amazing find which led Amigo Bob down an additional path in his search for improving food production. If there was one abandoned orchard from the gold rush era there had to be more. Food had to be grown near some of the difficult-to-reach mining camps. These were heirloom trees and plants that needed to be preserved and studied.

As Amigo Bob learned more about Felix Gillet and the Barren Hill Nursery, he realized that these old trees embodied tremendous genetic diversity.

Aside from being an interesting historical observation, why was that important?

In the twentieth century, the agricultural industry changed from the model of farms being near their markets to shipping food in large quantities over long distances and using machines to do as much of the work as possible. The goals for breeding fruits, nuts and vegetables changed. Food crops were developed to meet goals like the following:

- Last longer and not get bruised in shipping.
- Ripen at more predictable times.
- Be very similar in size/shape for efficiency with processing equipment.

With these breeding goals, taste and nutrition were not priorities. Growing and shipping as much as possible made financial sense. Genetic diversity fell by the wayside. And so did a lot of the wonderful taste of old foods and delightful fragrances of old flowers.

Rare plants and animals are being studied by academic scientists. In heirlooms they see

treasuries of biodiversity and resilience, protection against heat, drought, diseases, and pests that will be needed as a changing climate makes current crops and animals—which have been reduced to a narrow genetic range—harder to grow.

The large range of Gillet varieties may pave the way to successful agricultural production if “hotter and drier” becomes the new normal, which appears likely.

“We know these trees are growing in an environment that may be more like the environment we’ll have in the future: hotter, drier,” says Charles Brummer, director of the Plant Breeding Center at University of California, Davis, where scientists are beginning to study Cantisano’s orchard.

Amigo Bob recognized the value in the hidden orchard treasures. He founded the Felix Gillet Institute with the mission of locating,

cataloging, determining heritage and documenting information on the Gillet plants. Here are a couple of items on their “Accomplishments” list on their website:

- Collected propagation materials from hundreds of heirloom mother plants on more than 75 sites in four Sierra Nevada counties
- Created a database of observations of varietal resistance and susceptibility to fire blight, powdery mildew, codling moth, blister mites, productivity, scab, flavor and drought in heirloom varieties of the Sierra

Among all of Amigo Bob’s accolades should be: **Re-discovered Felix Gillet’s heirloom treasures.** Amigo Bob worked tirelessly for decades towards the betterment of food and farming. Although he lost his battle with cancer in 2020, his work continues at the Felix Gillet Institute.



The Felix Gillet Institute propagates and sells heirloom fruits, nuts and grapes.

Place orders in October.

Ordering details:

<https://felixgillet.org/ordering-details-2>

References:

- [1] Primary Source: Felix Gillet Institute website: <https://felixgillet.org/>
- [2] Primary Source: Amigo Bob’s Organics website: <https://amigobobsorganics.com/>
- [3] National Geographic, October 16, 2018: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/california-agriculture-food-drought-resistance>
- [4] LA Times, June 2, 2017: <https://www.latimes.com/food/dailydish/la-dd-amigo-bob-cantisano-organic-farming-20170309-story.html>
- [5] The Union, December 28, 2020: <https://www.theunion.com/news/organic-farming-pioneer-amigo-bob-cantisano-dies/>

President's Message

Paula Campbell, President



First, a confession. I like marigolds. Not just the sweet little yellow ones but the splashy, in your face, stubby little orange ones. Let me explain.

Several years ago while walking through a lovely garden, I came upon a couple dozen orange marigolds nestled up to a wide stand of light yellow tickseed. I just walked around the corner and there it was. Beautiful, and changed my vision of color and plants. Serendipity meets the promise and grace of a growing garden.

I have been fortunate to experience the joy – and fun – of working with our very productive Garden Crew at the North Star House. We come from all different backgrounds, taking many different paths to this beautiful garden. I'm not certain how it happened and yet, here we are together.

We have members with a wealth of garden knowledge and ideas gained over years of experience, rose gurus, plant breeders, weed whackers, garden shed organizers, gopher chasers, plant historians, fence stainers, irrigation specialists, pond fixers, dead headers, compost spreaders and all willing to do just about anything to support and grow our Heritage Garden.

No one could have planned a better crew and I am blessed to have my name on the roster.

My thanks to all of our volunteers and supporters. I am grateful that our varied paths have come together. Our interests, talents, and delights have renewed the promise and grace of our North Star House.



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NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Joan Clappier

AutumnFest
at the North Star House
 Sunday, October 17, 2021
 12 - 4 pm \$10 admission
 presented by
 Soroptimist International
 of the Sierra Foothills
 &
 North Star Historic Conservancy
 Artisan Craft Shop
 Music by: Harmony Groove

TOURS	FOOD & DRINK
Historic Julia Morgan House*	Sweeney's Weeneys
Heritage Garden	Dr. Sarah's Pies
Self-guided Landscape	Lazy Dog Ice Cream
*Proof of vaccination and mask req'd in House	Wine, Beer, Soda, Water

12075 Auburn Road, Grass Valley
 1 mile south of Fairground


 DOZER DOG FARMS

PORCH POTS

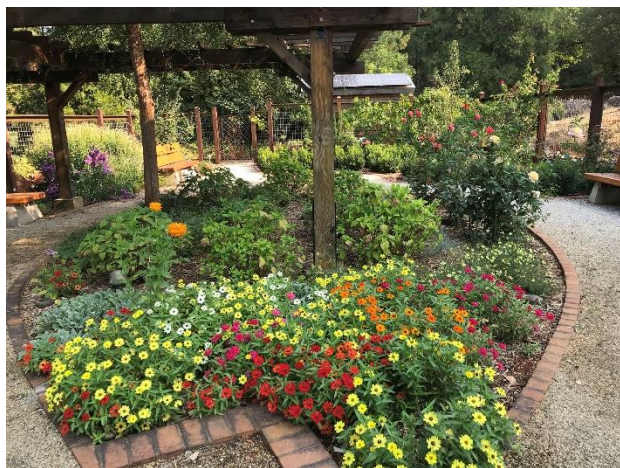
for a cause

Annual & Perennial Pots
 Japanese Maples
 Mahogany Hibiscus Pots
 PRICES FROM \$20-\$35

ALL PROFITS WILL BE DONATED TO:
 Soroptimist International of the Sierra Foothills
 North Star House Heritage Garden
 Bright Futures for Youth Garden

Pre- Order by emailing
dozerdogfarms@gmail.com
 Or stop by Oct. 8th & 9th from 11-3
 for pickup
 11755 Coyote Ct.
 Nevada City, Ca 95959

www.dozerdogfarms.com



September
 in the
 Heritage
 Garden



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Just go to the eScrip website,
www.eScrip.com/signup. Please
 consider designating The North
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 The North Star House.


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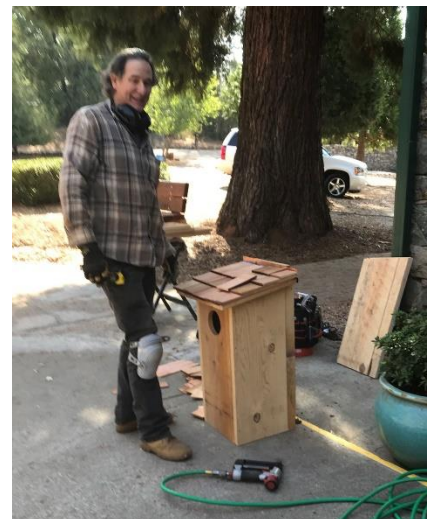
Ken planes more boards for the Library



In an old house, things are never simple. Adding a frame around a door can require removing and squaring up many parts.

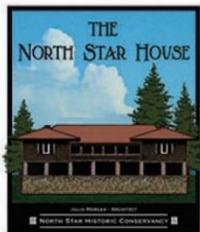
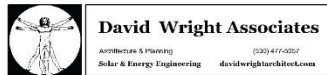


And what is Mark building here?



Oh... an Owl House.
Look out, ground squirrels!

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

P.O. Box 1538, Grass Valley, CA 95945

www.TheNorthStarHouse.org 530-477-7126

Our Vision is to restore the unique rural roots of Julia Morgan's North Star House as a center for exchanging ideas, nurturing the arts and fostering learning. Your support makes this possible.

We invite you to join us: Become a Member ❖ Make a Donation

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Addr _____

City/St/Zip _____

- ☐ Shooting Star \$ 50 +
- ☐ Rising Star \$ 100 +
- ☐ Morning Star \$ 250 +
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Online Membership or Donations can be made on our website. Use Links on upper right side-bar.