

Highlights of History-Conaway Ranch, Woodland  
(Including Reclamation of Sacramento Valley)

*Draft*

The following is a result of research I have made regarding the history of the Conaway Ranch, initially about 22,000 acres of undeveloped farm land located about 5 miles east of Woodland, Yolo County, California, USA. Some of the information comes from personal recollections of the author, as the brothers R. E. (Ike) Plank and Elmo B. Plank farmed as one of several tenants of the Conaway Ranch between 1934 and 1958. Ike Plank was my father and Elmo Plank was my bachelor uncle. While going to high school in Woodland, my father Ike Plank worked summers at the Conaway Ranch including being a "swamper" and later an operator of one of their Holt 75 tractors.

Since I was born in Woodland in 1930, my formative years in farming were centered on the Conaway. Considerable of the information also comes from the archives of the Woodland Daily Democrat from the time the property was purchased by Benjamin Franklin Conaway at about 1915 from the following named individuals: **Haines, Chapman, Lawson, Morris, Nelson, Paleson and Gallup**. As yet, no information has been generated about these individuals other than a classified ad in the **September 29, 1915** issue of the Democrat advertising the following:

**REAL ESTATE FOR SALE**

ALFALFA, bean, rice, corn, hops, Buckwheat, flax, cotton, vegetables, tobacco and general farming lands for sale, in 40 to 1000 acre tracts. In the great Sacramento Valley; gravity water; mile of electric railroad; near large city; land all level; good soil. On crop payments, no cash required. If you are able to farm. See W. S. Shee at the Haines ranch, 5 miles south-east of Woodland.

The only other clue as to these individuals is the name, Morris, who I take to be the same Asa Morris, owner of the famous dairy, just north and west of the Conaway Ranch. Tillie Alcartra was the famous dairy cow owned by Morris. In later years when the 2035 Reclamation District was being formed, Morris petitioned to remove his remaining lands from inclusion in the new district. The name Gallup is also attached to the current warehouse and ranch headquarters located along the west Yolo By-Pass levee at the end of the private road extension of County Road 25. Lawson and Nelson were also well known names of landowners north of Woodland and along Cache Creek.

The actual date of the transaction has not yet been located. The information regarding the purchase and the previous ownership was obtained from the death notice on the front page of the July 31, 1935 issue of the Woodland Daily Democrat, stating that he was a

Pasadena oil man that arrived in Woodland in 1914 and purchased the 22,000 acres from the aforementioned individuals. In 1927 he deeded the ranch to his son-in-law, A. Otis Birch, also of Pasadena. Mr. Conaway was 86 at the time of his death in 1935. Following in approximate chronological order, mostly from archived articles in the Woodland Daily Democrat, are information and facts relating mostly to the Conaway Ranch or items important relating to rice growing and reclamation of the Sacramento region.

*Note: To put history of rice growing in California in to perspective the following facts are important. Trials of Japonica rice were first made in the Biggs/Richvale area in 1911/1912 and the first commercial fields were grown in 1913, also in the Biggs/Richvale area. For many years prior to this time, the long grain Indica strains of rice had been tried, mostly in the Sacramento Delta. Because of cool nights, Indica rice would only make straw with no viable grain being produced. Because most of the Chinese of those days came from southern China and consumed the long grain rice, considerable tonnage was imported from Asia and thus the emphasis on the Indica Type.*

*Political groups and individuals were clamoring for a rice industry in California as early as the 1860s as the importation of rice was straining the economy. It is also thought that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1886 was a factor as there was an increase in Japanese and Korean immigrants who replaced the Chinese and they were used to the short grain Japonica rice.*

*Around 1910 the US Government Agriculture Department proposed an incentive in the way of cash subsidies to establish a California rice industry. In addition, an important factor was the establishment of a massive irrigation in the Biggs/Richvale area promoted by PG&E, owner of the water from the Feather River plus considerable real estate. When rice became a proven crop, real estate salesmen swarmed to Kansas to recruit wheat farmers to relocate to the area. The Lundberg family is a good example.*

*Interesting though, was the importance of Oriental and Indian ethnic communities in rice production relating to the irrigation of the crop. Water control was key to weed control in rice as no chemical sprays were available until after WWII. Nearly every rice farmer had a Hindu or Korean irrigation crew. Most banks would not finance a rice crop in the early days unless the landowner had an Oriental or Indian partner or tenant. Naturally, some of the Oriental and Indian families became rice farmers, particularly during WWI when it is estimated that over a third of the rice was produced by Oriental or Indian farmers. The operation of Fazel Mohamed, north of Colusa and west of Gridly was the largest independent rice farmer in California as late as the 1950's. A Japanese family named Koda farmed in Colusa and Sutter counties prior to WWII and later re-settled in Dos Palos. Both above families are still in the rice business. Across the river from Colusa on the east side where Butte Creek joins the Sacramento River was a Japanese and Korean community of about 500 souls back in the 20's, all associated with growing rice.*

*The massive reclamation progress, the promotion by PG&E in Richvale and WWI were important factors in the progress in the rice industry through the teens and twenty's. In the beginning rice was cultivated using mules, horses and men with the harvesting done with binders, wagons to haul the bundles and stationery threshers. Sacks*

*of rice were then hauled away from the thresher to storage. The rice was sun dried in the shocks prior to threshing.*

*Planting was initially done by broadcast and harrow or by grain drill. But weed soon became a problem, and the fields were flooded and seeder wagons were pulled through the water to broadcast in to the water. In 1927 the first airplanes were used for seeding and by 1936 nearly all California rice was seeded by air. Almost from the start of rice cultivation, tractors were beginning to replace horses. This was very evident on the Conaway, River Garden Farms and other big outfits in the area and followed by the smaller farmers. Rice farmers were quite innovative in this regard up and through WWII.*

*By the time my family started farming rice and I became aware, tractors were used exclusively, rice was windrowed using push headers and pull swathers and harvestors were built out of old stationery separators and mounted on old Cat tracks. Sacks were replaced early in WWII due to scarcity of burlap and bulk handling was initiated. By the end of WWII rice was being combined using commercial and on farm drying facilities. Self propelled combines also took off at the end of WWII.*

*Other innovations in land leveling, fertilizer, chemical weed control and laser leveling have changed rice farming dramatically.*

*The development and progress on the Conaway Ranch is tied simultaneously to the development of the rice industry in California which accompanied the taming of the Sacramento River through a levee and overflow by-pass system and, later, the Shasta Dam plus massive reclamation Districts formed to develop the land adjacent to and on the flood plain of the river.*

**November 3, 1915** in Daily Democrat is report of condemnation hearing against lands of Ella Hershey, et al by the Knights Landing Ridge Drainage District. In fact, the case never went to trial as both sides settled out of court on the day of the trial. Judge Peter J. Shields, the jurors and scores of witnesses were on hand. The plaintiff sought to condemn 80 acres of the Hershey lands for reclamation purposes. Hershey wanted \$ 250 per acre for the 80 acres and claimed 5,000 was to be damaged for which they wanted another \$50 to \$100 per acre. Because they were close to a settlement, the judge postponed the trial until next day.

Same day news headline "SURVEYOR PROCTOR TO INVESTIGATE PLANS OF BY-PASS". Yolo county's supervisors instructed County Surveyor Proctor to make a thorough investigation of the Sacramento by-pass. Supervisor Edson expressed the opinion that the proposed reclamation work would render the levees in the vicinity of Reclamation District 900 useless, and would be detrimental to the lands of many Yolo county ranchers. Although the board is likely to oppose the plan, no final action will be taken until the county surveyor has made a complete investigation.

Also same day headline "LIVELY TIMES IN YOLO COUNTY'S BIGGEST RICE FIELDS". The Knights Landing Growers Optimistic Over This Year's Returns. Trying to get through before the rainy season starts, a force of a hundred men are engaged harvesting Yolo county's largest rice field, 11,041 acres on the Fair ranch, near Knights Landing. Forty wagons and teams are being used. It is expected that the work will be finished next week.

As a result of the heavy crop this season, the Knights landing rice growers are optimistic and are already preparing to plant a larger acreage next year. An average of 50 sacks per acre was the yield.

The Knights Landing growers and their acreage follow:

Herdarge and Peterson, 320 acres

J. Henson, 225 acres

C. R. Peterson, 116 acres

Q. Dalquerst, 100 acres

G. Nelson, 80 acres

J. Cramson, 30 acres

On **January 3, 1919** the application for reclamation district on lands including Conaway Ranch was presented to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. George Easton, engineer for opponents, was on the stand. Also called to testify as to water conditions were Ralph Dinsdale, J.R. Turner, Jacob Snyder, G.H. Hansler and W. H. Blanchard. Elmer W. Armfield appeared for the proponents and Arthur C. Huston, attorney, appeared for the opponents.

At a second meeting of the Board of Supervisors on **January 8, 1919**, the issue of the Reclamation District was postponed a month when A.W. Morris & Sons filed an objection to the district formation to include their lands. The next meeting was set for February 8, 1919.

In the **January 31, 1919** issue of the Daily Democrat there was an interesting article about the landowners west of the Sacramento protesting the \$ 10,000,000 assessment which is a \$ 20.00 per acre cost to the landowners for the 50,000 acres in Yolo County. A total of 125,000 acres lies on the west side as far as Glenn County. The argument is that the west side owners have already developed their lands and the money will be spent on the east side (apparently the Sutter By-Pass).

Elmer W. Armfield, attorney for Conaway Ranch, stated that an action would be started by the Conaway interests to enjoin the Sutter Basin by-pass project from carrying water across the Sacramento River and dumping it in to Yolo County. According to Armfield, no flowage rights had been obtained and it would be illegal to complete the system. Present at the meeting of the landowners this date were John S. Parridge, San Francisco attorney; Mr. Dow, President of River Garden Farms Company; Jesse Poundstone and J. W. Browning, Colusa landowners; E. W. Armfield representing Conaway Ranch; Supervisor F. B. Edson, representing Knights Landing; and George Clark, representing the Hershey Estate.

Members of the Assessment Commission were F. C. Hermann, B. A. Echeverry and Max W. Enderlein.

On the **January 31, 1919** as a result of Conaway Ranch filing suit against the City of Sacramento to prevent the Sacramento by-pass from dumping water on the Conaway lands, Judge Plummer of San Joaquin County heard the demurrer of City of Sacramento where he ordered the argument submitted in briefs.

*Note that in the 2/10/1919 Daily Democrat it was reported that the record of Tillie Alcartra of Morris Dairy Farm had her record of 40+ pounds of butterfat broken by Adrionis Westlake Dairy Maid who produced 41.07 pounds from 8,831.7 pounds of milk. Tillie still held the long time record.*

In the classified section of the Daily Democrat on **April 10, 1919**, the Conaway Ranch advertised 4000 acres of rice land for rent. "Abundant water furnished all season. Land all plowed, water delivered to each quarter section. New land, proven good rice land by test crop last year. Prefer to deal with Americans".

Cash rental. 2,000 BAGS 1304 RICE SEED FOR SALE AT RANCH. Apply to C HAROLD HOPKINS, Porter Building, Woodland.

Again on **April 16, 1919**, the Conaway Ranch advertised 2500 acres of rice land to rent. "Land all plowed, water delivered to each quarter section. New land, proven good rice land by test crop last year. Prefer to deal with Americans. Cash rental".

2,000 BAGS 1564 RICE SEED FOR SALE AT RANCH. Apply to C. HAROLD HOPKINS, Porter Building, Woodland.

On **June 25, 1919** the newspaper noted that several college men from Stanford, UCLA and USC had taken up summer jobs on the Conaway Ranch, including Robert Hopkins, brother of the ranch manager, C. Harold Hopkins.

On **July 3, 1919** in the Daily Democrat was NOTICE OF HEARING BEFORE THE RECLAMATION BOARD, to wit: Notice is hereby given that on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919 there was filed in the office of the State Reclamation Board, an application signed by C. Herald Hopkins, Manager of the Conaway Ranch, for approval by said Board of plans for a reinforced and concrete inverted siphon under the Tule Canal and adjacent levee, the Sacramento Northern Railroad trestle and the County Road leading from Elkhorn to Woodland, Yolo County, California, as more fully shown and set forth by maps and plans filed with the application in the office of the State Board of Reclamation.

And notice is hereby further given that the hearing for said application has been set for Tuesday, July 22, 1919 at 10:30 o'clock a.m. before the State Reclamation Board, at it's office in the Forum Building at the southeast corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and K streets in the City of Sacramento, State of California, at which time and place any objections to the granting of said application will be heard.

Dated July 2nd, 1919.

STATE RECLAMATION BOARD

By W. T. Ellis, Secretary

**July 23, 1919** Daily Democrat article noted "Construction of a tidal canal in the Yolo by-pass by Holland Land Company and Liberty farms approved by the Reclamation Board. Request for Conaway Ranch for permission to construct a siphon under a canal near Elkhorn was continued until August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

State Reclamation Board lets contract for additional drag line excavator for work on east levee of Sutter by-pass to Ross Construction Company which already has two machines at work.

Democrat dated **August 7, 1919** had an article whereby E.J. Sharp Estate filed a formal protest against the Sutter Board of Supervisor's approval of \$ 5,000,000 assessment for Reclamation District 1500 for costs associated with the Sutter By Pass project. Mrs. Rosamond A. Lamb of Sacramento and W. H. Saylor of San Francisco represented the Estate. The assessment was prepared by Edward von Geldern, D. D. Green and E. W. Stanton who were appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

**August 8, 1919** headline article in Daily Democrat " Music on Conaway Ranch Lulls Workers to Better Effort; Concerts Weekly". "For instance, the Conaway company, which is developing by leaps and bounds a large tract of land between Woodland and Elkhorn, in this county, discovers that it obtains best results and more earnest labor from it's employees by furnishing recreation in the shape of a two-piece orchestra composed of a saxophone and a piano.

Every Monday and Friday evenings, the young employces of the 22,000 acre ranch assemble to hear a repertoire of song and rag ranging from the old ballads and classics of the yesterday to the war songs and shimmey of today.

Frang Storment and brother, Arthur, compose this very select orchestra. They are both college boys from the University of Southern California and are talented and skilled musicians. Arthur was called away a few days ago, but if he is not at the ranch for the next recital, a substitute will be employed.

The best part of it all is that the two young men are on the payroll of the Conaway company, not registered as drivers, trackmen, or cultivators, but as "musicians" and they receive jointly about \$ 125 a month for the eight nights' work.

The result is that the Conaway company has a large crew of young men, most of them college boys who work together and are pleased with their environments and the interest their employer has in their welfare. The idea is not a novelty, but an innovation in the Sacramento valley".

**October 13, 1919** describes E. Moffitt herding ducks from rice fields near Willows with his airplane. S. Christianson, of Christianson and Bermester, was supposed to be the first man to grow rice in the Sacramento valley. He planted 12 acres in Butte County in 1911. He paid Moffitt \$ .50 per acre to patrol the rice fields. Mr. Christianson was against using guns to kill the birds which would lie rotting in the fields he said.

**October 20, 1919** Democrat article quotes duck hunters complaint when Aviator working for Conaway interests flew over the duck blinds and frightens away the ducks.

On **October 25, 1919** the State Reclamation Board authorized a test case of \$ 3,000,000 for building of the Sutter By-Pass. A claim is being prepared and is expected to be rejected by the State Controller at which time the Reclamation Board will institute proceedings in the Third District Court of Appeal.

**December 13, 1919** headline in the Daily Democrat announced that C. Herald Hopkins, manager of Conaway Ranch for many years was resigning to devote his time to running

one of the finest livestock plants in the country. Hopkins had recently purchased the LaRue holdings near Davis. A. Otis Birch, co-owner of the Conaway Ranch and son-in-law of B. F. Conaway, will together with Mr. Conaway remain more closely identified with the rapidly developing farming property near Woodland. Mr. Hopkins will maintain his personal interest in the development of the Conaway property. He is a son-in-law of Conaway and both are deeply concerned with the other's business success.

**On December 19, 1919** there was a transfer in title of **125 acres** from Thomas O'Connor to B. F. Conaway being located in Section 28, Township 10 North, Range 3 east M.D.B.&M.

**On February 24, 1920** it was noted in the Daily Democrat that deeds were recorded a week earlier in which the Asa W. Morris conveyed **800 acres**, which was the home of the Morris Holstein Herd, giving the Conaway interests a large sweep of grazing land north of the Sacramento Northern Railroad right of way. Recently the Morris interests purchased for more than \$ 204,000 the H. E. Coil Ranch north of Woodland and which is to be the future home of the Morris dairy stock.

**On March 23, 1920** the Conaway Ranch advertised the auction sale for Saturday, March 27, 1920 for all stock and equipment used for farming and not needed in developing. Located at the Conaway Ranch 7 miles SW of Woodland beginning at 10:00 AM. Included in the classified ad was the following statement: "In order to more rapidly develop our irrigation and drainage systems and to perfect a system for handling our leases, we have decided to concentrate our efforts on development work, and so will dispose without reserve our entire supply of farm machinery and work stock not required in development work. Implements enumerated are all practically new, many never having been used." The sale was conducted by Lawson and Hord, Auctioneers.

**April 20, 1920** headline report in the Daily Democrat detailed availability of water from the Sacramento River as received in a report to E. Armfield of Woodland. Of a total of 136,363 acres subject to irrigation, 78,297 acres was reasonably certain; 28,380 acres water supply probably sufficient; 28,677 water supply precarious. The Conaway Ranch had 3,126 acres of reasonably certain water only. Pumps will take care of additional acreage.

**May 17, 1920** on middle page of Daily Democrat "TOO MUCH WATER STARTS SUIT HERE FOR \$ 7,500 DAMAGES". Damages for \$ 7500 are asked in a complaint filed here Saturday by W. R. Strawbridge against B. F. Conaway and A. Otis Birch, who are reclaiming the Conaway tract east of Woodland. The plaintiff alleges that the defendants are pumping water from the Sacramento River and allowing it to flow in to Willow Slough in such a manner as to damage the Strawbridge property. Trees and crops on a portion of the plaintiff's lands have already been destroyed, according to the complaint.

Strawbridge asks for an injunction to prevent the Conaway-Birch interests from continuing their pumping operations. A. C. Huston, Neal Chalmers and Henry W. Longsdorf are named as attorneys for the plaintiff.

**July 29, 1920** a short news article in the Daily Democrat noted "CONAWAY HOUSE ID PARTIAL LOSS". Fire partially destroyed a fine two story house on the Conaway ranch and on the subdivision known as the Gallup ranch last night. The cause of the fire is unknown. Good ranch fire fighting facilities controlled the fire before it completed it's work of destruction. The place was insured with the R. G. Lawson Agency. It was valued at \$ 1,000.

**July 30, 1920** headline states "B. F. CONAWAY TRESPASSES; WARRANT OUT". In a complaint filed by David Pool who claimed to hold a year to year lease on 20 acres, considered more or less to be a part of the Conaway Ranch. Pool alleged that Conaway himself, now here from the southern part of the state, directing the development of his large holdings, tore down a portion of the fence on the east of the alleged Pool holdings. The action is more or less a civil controversy, and may be moved to the proper court to determine the rights of the parties. Conaway claims to be well within his rights, while Pool is just as certain that he is protected by the terms of his running lease.

**August 9, 1920** Daily Democrat LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT – "NOTICE TO THE LANDOWNERS OF RECLAMATION DISTRICT 2035 (Mostly Conaway).

Notice is hereby given to the landowners of Reclamation District 2035, and to any and all other interested persons, that there has been filed with the County Clerk of the County of Yolo, and with the Secretary of the Reclamation Board, original plans for the reclamation, drainage and irrigation of lands of said district; that the Reclamation Board will hold a meeting at it's office in the City of Sacramento, County of Sacramento, State of California, on the 34<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1920, at the hour of 10:00 o'clock a. m., at which time any interested party may appear and object to said plans.

THOS. MAYHEW,  
Secretary

*Note that in the same issue of 8/9/20 there was interesting information about plans to build a dam at Indian Valley and there was a bright financial report on the C.L. Best Tractor Company*

**August 14, 1920** headline is "Conaway Spends \$ 36,000 on 3 New Warehouses; Has 8,000 Acres in Best Rice." Each warehouse will measure 50 x 200 feet and cost \$ 12,000 each. Each will have a capacity of 70,000 sacks and 210,000 sacks for the three. The warehouses are located on the Gallup ranch of the Conaway holdings and alongside of the present warehouse of the company. The warehouses are accessible to the Sacramento Northern spur which was recently constructed at considerable expense, in keeping with the company's policy to assist in every way possible in the development of all worthy enterprises. Aside from the rice acreage, which is going ahead wonderfully in the hot weather of the past few days, the ranch has 100 acres of sugar beets for the Alameda Sugar Company. This is the first beets grown on the place and because of the progress made by them under intensive cultivation it is assured that that they will become one of the staple annual crops of the big and progressive holdings.

In the same dated newspaper there was also large article about the ducks doing considerable damage to the rice and the request to Fish and Game Commission for

permission to shoot the birds. The Commission refused the request and suggested smoke and noise bombs. The company stated that the bombs were almost as unsatisfactory as the airplane patrols of last year, which kept the ducks away when the planes were overhead, but seemed to have the happy facility of sending the tame ducks back to the rice field. Something must be done, is the word from the Conaway Ranch, but the fish and game commission seems quite independent in their stand to preserve the notable game birds for the hunters and their debtors this season.

**October 1, 1920** issue of Daily Democrat had front page article "**Rice Harvest at Conaway Begins**". Rice harvesting at Conaway began Wednesday (today is Friday) on the Conaway Ranch and will continue the next six weeks until 7,000 acres of the best rice in the valley is harvested and in the warehouse. Several hundred men are at work on the fine crop and will rush it through.

The Conaway rice plantation is held as one of the best in the valley, principally because of intensified cultivation and the ample supply of water available. The acreage of rice is compact and of easy access to the canals and spur of the Sacramento Northern Railroad recently run for 2 miles into the property to facilitate storage and distribution.

In talking to the "Democrat" this morning the ranch heads stated that the crop was "the best ever". The harvesting is let out to others and details of exact number of men employed in the work were not available.

The rice harvest is beginning in all parts of the county and within a few days the bumper crop will begin to pour in to the local warehouses. Although the Yolo County acreage was limited this year, due to lack of water, it is nearly as large as last year and there is every reason to predict that the season will be fairly profitable and satisfactory to all. The weather has been all that could be expected for the season. A little more warm weather would have hastened the harvest.

**October 19, 1920** notice in Daily Democrat classified section "ONE LEASE AT A TIME - Mr. B. F. Conaway, owner, Attention - Not having had my lease cancelled by mail, or otherwise, I hereby notify the Birch Gun Club, the Conaway Gun Club, to refrain from trespassing upon that part of the Conaway Ranch, known as the Poole Lease.  
(signed) Dave Poole

**March 10, 1921** headline in Daily Democrat "D. POOLE SUES CONAWAY FOR \$100,000 DAMAGES; ISAAC CLOVER FOR \$1100". David Poole, Lessee of 1,000 acres of the B. F. Conaway Ranch, Between Woodland and Elkhorn, Sued His Landlord in the Superior Court of This County Here Today for \$100,000 Damages and Constable Isaac Clover for \$1,100 Damages and the Value of Six Horses Belonging to the Plaintiff, Seized by the Constable Last week.

Poole began two separate suits through attorneys Grant and Bailey against B. F. Conaway, each for \$50,000 damages for the alleged loss of crops of barley and milo, due according to the allegations, to the negligence and carelessness of the defendant in flooding plaintiff's premises so that Poole could not plant crops in time for them to mature into profitable or any harvest at all.

The complaint alleges that on November 10, 1916, Poole leased from Conaway 1,000 acres of land. In February and March, the complaint states, that Conaway or his

representatives carelessly and negligently turned water in to the lands and premises of the plaintiff, so that it was April before he was able to plant his crop, it being too late for it to mature. Poole declares that the land was fertile and if he had planted early it was moist enough to insure him a crop. He sues on this count for \$ 50,000.

He alleges similar circumstances in 1919, wherein 700 acres on which he was to plant milo, were flooded making it impossible for him to plant, to his further loss in the amount of \$50,000.

#### POOLE VS. CLOVER

The third cause of action by Poole is against Constable Isaac Clover, who is charged with the unlawful seizure of six head of horses valued at \$600. He asks \$500 for their detention.

Poole states that the horses were permitted to leave his pasture because of the removal of certain fences against the will of the plaintiff.

Also in same Daily Democrat issue "COLUSA LANDOWNERS ASK DISSOLUTION OF DISTRICT". Steps to do away with the Sacramento San Joaquin Drainage District probably will be proposed at a meeting of all landowners of that district to be held in the Colusa city hall next Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

Arrangements were made for the meeting at a conference held in the offices of Seth Millington Jr. in Colusa.

All matters of legislation affecting landowners will come up at Saturday's meeting, but the most important matter of discussion will be the large Sacramento and San Joaquin Drainage District, which is declared to be a burden on the landowners.

The Colusa county unit of the Federation of American Farmers went on record last Saturday as apposed to the activities of the State Reclamation Board.

Also in same Democrat issue was headline "Grand Jury to Hear Garvey's Defense in Rice Deals Late Today". Members of the Yolo County Grand Jury This Afternoon Were to Hear the Story of T. J. Garvey of the California State Rice Milling Company. Replying to the Charges of the Pacific Rice Growers Association and Valley Growers That His Mill Had figured in a Swindle the Result of Which had Cost Neil Simonson, Yolo Rancher, Jensen and Tortson and J. Soo Lee, Up Country Farmers, Several Thousands of Dollars.

*(Note: There is a long article regarding testimony in this case regarding permission to sell at below a previously fixed price. Article is attached as Exhibit 002).*

March 11, 1921 Democrat headline "B. Lockhart Arrested by Dave Poole". Still another chapter was added to the controversy over a leasehold between David Poole and B. F. Conaway, owner of the 22,000 acre ranch between Woodland and Elkhorn, when Poole swore a complaint late yesterday afternoon before Justice of the Peace R. W. Harrison, charging Bob Lockhart, well known football star and member of the firm Lockhart and Slater of the Conaway Ranch, with plowing up a crop of barley belonging to the complainant.

In the same issue and page is headline "By Vote of 10 to 1 Yolo Jury Refuses to Indict in Rice Probe. *(Note: regarding sale of rice by California State Rice Milling Company).*

*(Note: Reference made to complaint of prior day against Conaway and arresting officer in this case Clover regarding six horses etc. plus the rice sales complaint noted above. See Exhibit 011).*

**March 12, 1921** headline in Daily Democrat "B. F. Conaway Would Eject Dave Poole". During the coming week, B. Conaway promoter of the Conaway Ranch near Woodland, will, according to his attorney, Elmer W. Armfield, institute proceedings in the superior court of this county to eject David Poole, who sued him during the current week for \$100,000 damages and caused the arrest of Conaway and Bob Lockhart.

In discussing the matter this morning attorney Armfield stated that the damage suits were without any merit and could be easily defeated. It was admitted that Poole had a lease on a certain 1,000 acres of land on the Conaway Ranch, but that one of the covenants of the lease was that the land should bear annual crops, which they have not, according to Armfield, with the result that ejection proceedings under the terms of the lease will lie.

Conaway and Lockhart have yet to answer in Justice of the Peace R. W. Harrison for alleged trespass on the premises of Poole.

**March 22, 1921** Democrat headline "CONAWAY CHARGES POOLE IS 'SQUATTER' ON PART OF 22,000 ACRE RANCH". Is Davis Poole a "squatter", or has he an oral lease on a tract of 20 years in addition to a written lease to 1000 acres of the B. F. Conaway tract, east of Woodland?

*(Note: Long article outlining testimony in court attached as Exhibit 003).*

**December 5, 1921** Daily Democrat reported the death of Gordon Hayward Sawyer, Jr., 25 years old of Berkeley who was accidentally shot and killed while hunting ducks on the Conaway Ranch. His close friend William L. Minikar of Vallejo was responsible but no charges were filed.

**April 4, 1922** Democrat headline "Huston, Armfield Wrangle as Rice Farmers Win First Round of B. F. Conaway Suit". Over the protests of E. W. Armfield, counsel for Conaway, Judge W. A. Anderson late yesterday said it would be impossible to hear before September 12 the Conaway injunction and damage suit to stop the Western Yolo irrigationists from dumping water down Willow Slough. As it will require close upon three weeks to try the case, the Western Yolo water users will have irrigated and harvested their 1922 crops before the merits of the Conaway complaint are decided.

*(Note: Long article the give and take of the attorneys attached as Exhibit 004).*

**September 9, 1922** headline in Daily Democrat "B. F. Conaway Trial Here Tuesday". Although the Yolo superior court session opened here this week, Judge Wm. A. Anderson has been substituting on the Appellate bench at Sacramento most of the time and real court business will be taken up here next Tuesday.

The trial of the case of B. F. Conaway vs. Yolo Water and Power Company and numerous other defendant rice growers will be started with an array of legal talent on both sides. Conaway seeks to recover damages and to enjoin the water company and rice growers from diverting water so as to cause injury to the Conaway tract.

Depositions have been taken in the case all summer, indicating that the trial will be of long duration and be bitterly fought.

Judge Anderson will hear the case.

**September 12, 1922** headline "Conaway Attack on 300 Yolo Rice Men Starts Here; Trial Last 4 Weeks". What promises to be one of the longest and most closely contested trials in the history of the county began this morning before Superior Judge W. A. Anderson, when the application of B. F. Conaway and A. Otis Birch, Louise and Ruth Hopkins for a preliminary injunction against the Yolo Water and Power Company and some 300 rice growers of Yolo county having acreages along Willow Slough, came up for a hearing.

*(Note: This long article shows "Theory of Defense, Claims of Plaintiff, Battery of Attorneys" and other subjects. Complete article attached as Exhibit 005).*

**September 14, 1922** headline in Democrat "Conaway Tract Farmers Testify Willow Slough Natural Water Outlet". . . . . FARMERS TESTIFY Sylvester Lawson, Mose Haines, and Harvey Hiddleson all of whom have had farming experiences on the property now owned by Conaway, were the witnesses who testified this morning. They told of crop and water conditions on the Conaway tract before the Southern California man came here to begin his reclamation project. Attorneys for the plaintiff were seeking to bring out evidence to the effect that they were not hindered in cropping the property in the early days as the present Conaway tenants are, according to the Conaway petition for the injunction.

Counsel for the defense claimed that they had scored by bringing out testimony to show that Willow Slough has always been the natural outlet of the water from Cache Creek and that farming on the Conaway area has always been treacherous and impracticable.

**October 4, 1922** in the Daily democrat headlined "CONAWAY DENIED INJUNCTION ORDER". - " Water Situation Held "Not Desperate" by Yolo Court".

*Although B. F. Conaway, wealthy owner of 22,000 acre area of reclaimed land east of Woodland, was today denied a restraining order to stop Yolo Water and Power Co. and some three hundred water users in the western part of the county from emptying water down Willow Slough, the plaintiff Conaway and his attorneys were claiming that they had scored a victory in the first skirmish of what promises to be one of the hardest fought court cases ever tried in this community.*

Judge Wm. A. Anderson set the date for trial of the case upon it's merits for December 26. The fixing of an early date is the point over which the Conaway interest are elated.

*(Note: There were over a half page of the newspaper devoted to this item including comments from the various attorneys - A. B. Eddy representing Conaway; Frank Freeman representing Conaway and A. C. Huston representing the water company and water users. Also there was a large section devoted to the court's reasoning for the decision. The full text of this matter is attached as Exhibit 001).*

**October 5, 1922** editorial in Democrat by Ed. Leake. "Conaway Water Fight Should Be Averted If Possible To Do So". Unnecessary time, care and expense to all parties litigant and to Yolo county was saved by Judge Wm. A. Anderson when he practically threw the B. F. Conaway petition for a temporary injunction order out of court, after the Conaway side failed to make good it's case. (Note: see *Exhibit 009*).

**December 5, 1922** Daily Democrat reported the death of Ed. S. Gallup at age 87, a prominent farmer in Yolo county.

Also in the same issue was the headline "Novel Procedure Marks the Trial of Strawbridge Damage Suit" Strawbridge was suing B. F. Conaway for \$10,000 damage to crops and property caused by the Conaway irrigation scheme. Half of the case would be tried by the court, sitting as a court in equity while the questions of fact would be tried by a jury later.

**March 1, 1923** Daily Democrat headline "ORAL ARGUMENTS CONCLUDED IN RICE SUIT". Oral arguments in the long pending litigation of B. F. Conaway against the Yolo Water and Power Company and 300 Yolo county rice farmers in the action begun by Conaway to enjoin growers from using Willow Slough as a drainage canal for rice water, came to a close yesterday afternoon. Briefs and points of authorities will now be filed and than Superior Court Judge W. A. Anderson will take the matter under advisement, preparatory to rendering an opinion on one of the most important cases of the year.

If Conaway's plea for an injunction should be sustained, rice growers furnished water by the water company will have to seek a new means of draining the land. If, on the other hand, the rice growers win, Conaway will have to seek other means of protecting his 22,000 acre tract from the annual overflow of Willow Slough.

**May 23, 1923** Democrat article "COMPLAINT MADE AGAINST CONAWAY LEVEES, CANALS". The State Reclamation Board yesterday ordered and investigation made by a group of landowners in the Yolo by-pass district that their lands have been damaged and crops flooded through the construction of an irrigation embankment near the by-pass by B. F. Conaway, owner of large interests in the district south of Woodland. The matter was put in the hands of Secretary Peter R. Gadd with instructions to have engineers of the board investigate and report at the next meeting of the board.

The landowners held that Conaway had built the levee above the maximum height two feet permitted by the board thereby causing the water to back up on their lands. One rancher said 250 acres of his land had been flooded and another declared a 500 acre crop of grain had been destroyed.

Conaway replied that he had made several breaks in the embankment to comply with the regulations of the board. He requested that a committee be sent to investigate.

Attorney Robert T. Devlin represented the complaintants. Among those who appeared to register complaints were Beter J. Braun, Peter Carli, Thomas O'Connor, G. Petri and G. Celli. Attorney Harry Huston represented District 1600.

**September 12, 1923** Daily Democrat headline "YOLO RICE GROWERS DEFEAT B. F. CONAWAY INJUNCTION". "ANDERSON TO HEAR MORE TESTIMONY; IN MEAN TIME PLANTERS TO USE SLOUGH". Three hundred rice growers in Western Yolo county using Willow Slough as a drainage canal for rice waters may continue in the use of the stream, according to an important opinion handed down this morning by Superior Judge W. A. Anderson, wherein he temporarily refused a permanent injunction to B. F. Conaway, owner of the 22,000 acre tract of land between Woodland and Elkhorn, who sued 300 rice growers and the Yolo Water and Power Company to enjoin them from emptying the season's rice water in to the slough.

*(Note; basically, the judge asked for additional evidence of permanent damage to the plaintiff's property and more specific numbers as to volume of water involved. See Exhibit 007).*

**September 25, 1923** Daily Democrat headline "Dave Poole's Large Damage Suit Against B. F. Conaway Is on Trial Here Before El Dorado Co. Judge". One of the old standing suits initiated by Davis Poole against B. F. Conaway, owner of a 22,000 ranch near Woodland and calling for damages running upwards of \$100,000 is being tried in the Superior Court here today with Superior Judge George H. Thompson of El Dorado county. A. G. Bailey of the firm of Grant & Bailey is representing Poole with Arthur B. Eddy of Armfield and Eddy is Conaway's legal representative in court.

*(Note: During the day in court one cause of action was abandoned, reducing the total claim to only \$50,000. See Exhibit 008).*

**November 1, 1923** Democrat article headlined "STATE PROMISES TO AID BUILDING CAUSEWAY FOR SHORT ROUTE TO CAPITAL". ... Through an arrangement with B. F. Conaway, a big land owner in the district, the county is using a drag line machine belonging to Conaway and is making good progress throwing up a new road. Conaway is donating the use of the machine. Supervisor Hutchings said that this road bed would be graveled this coming spring and then allowed to settle.

*(Note: Long article explains that state will build a causeway over the tule after the county paves the existing roads east and west of the by-pass. See Exhibit 006).*

**June 11, 1924** small article in Daily Democrat. Seventeen Sacks Per Acre, Average From Big Conaway Fields. Three harvesters are busy harvesting 12,000 acres of barley and 2,000 acres of wheat on the Conaway Ranch east of Woodland. The grain is averaging close to 17 sacks to the acre.

**August 16, 1924** Daily Democrat headline "COURT DENIES CONAWAY INJUNCTION". "200 Yolo County Rice Growers Win In Legal Battle For Use of Willow Slough". Over 200 Western Yolo county rice growers and other farmers who in ordinary years avail of the use of irrigation water brought down from Clear Lake, together with the Yolo Water and Power Company, were favored by an important Yolo Superior Court opinion rendered here this morning by Judge Wm. A. Anderson, when he denied the petition of B. F. Conaway, Mr. & Mrs. A. Otis Birch, Louise S. Hopkins, and Ruth S. Hopkins, for a writ of injunction restraining the defendants from draining the

irrigation water into Willow Slough and it's tributaries and on to the lands of the plaintiffs.

*(Note: The complete written opinion of the judge with comments is included on nearly a full second page of the newspaper and is worth reading. See Exhibit 009).*

**September 12, 1924** was a large ad in the Daily Democrat giving notice that Conaway Ranch had just bought it's second Holt 75 h.p. Tractor from Karl E. Giguere, 617 Main St. Woodland, representative for the Farm Machinery Company of Los Angeles.

**November 19, 1924** headline in Daily Democrat "YOLO COUNTY RICE BRINGS TOP PRICE". "RICE CROP BEST ON MARKET" *(Note: see Exhibit 010).*

**January 3, 1935** Legal Notice in Daily Democrat.

**CERTIFICATE OF BUSINESS**

Fictitious Firm Name

**THE UNDERSIGNED** do hereby certify that we are conducting a general ranching business at Woodland, California, under the fictitious firm name of Conaway Ranch and that said Conaway Ranch is composed of only the Birch Ranch and Oil Company, a Nevada Corporation whose address is Woodland, California and 728 Roosevelt Building, Los Angeles, California.

**WITNESS** our hands this 8<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1934.

**BIRCH RANCH & OIL COMPANY**

By A Otis Birch,

President

By M. Estelle C. Birch

Secretary

(NOTARY)

**July 31, 1935** contained in Daily Democrat is death notice of B. F. Conaway. "B. F. Conaway, Founder of District, Dies". Benjamin Franklin Conaway, 86, who reclaimed 22,000 tule acres into the Conaway ranch, died at his home in South Pasadena Tuesday night according to a telegram received here Wednesday. He had been in ill health for some time, and his advanced age prevented his recovery.

Mr. Conaway sold his interest in the ranch a number of years ago to his son-in-law, A. Otis Birch, who had been associated with him since Mr. Conaway first took over the property.

Coming here in 1914, Mr. Conaway, a Pasadena oil man, purchased the land from Haines, Chapman, Lawsen, Morris, Nelson, Paleson and Gallop, formed the \$3,000,000 Reclamation District No. 2035 and supervised the transformation of the waste acres in to one of the most productive sections of the state.

He remained here intermittently until 1927 when he deeded the ranch to Mr. Birch and returned to southern California.

Surviving him are his widow Mrs. Adea A. Conaway, and his daughter, Mrs. Estelle C. Birch, both of Pasadena.

The funeral services, in Pasadena Friday, will be attended by Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Connor, the former being superintendent of the ranch. (See *Exhibit 012*)