

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Highway 1, Bloomfield California

by Susan Teel - 2015

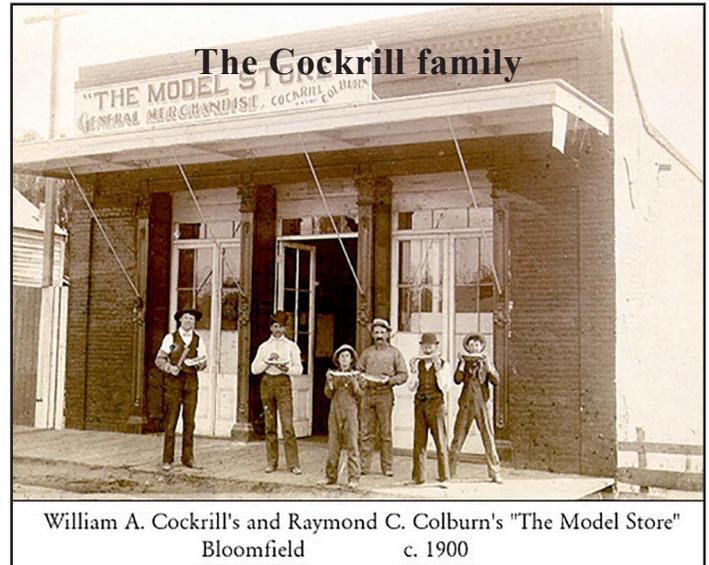
Bloomfield was the second largest town in Sonoma County in the late 1850's, with the city of Sonoma holding first place. The Cockrill family played a big role in the 19th century founding the town, and one of the original streets, Washington Street, was renamed Cockrill Street in the 20th century. However, how the town got its name remains something of a controversy.

From "Kentuckians Who Went That A Way", by Herbert J. Boothroyd, Kentucky Ancestors 1994, "Cockrills were organizers of the 30-wagon train, with 125 people...which arrived in Sonoma County, California on 15 October 1853. There Larkin (Cockrill) built the second house in the settlement he named Bloomfield (after an early home in Kentucky); he farmed and was elected associate judge. I'm puzzled by the statement

as Bloomfield KY is in Nelson County and I'm unaware of any Anderson Cockrill's family going there. Larkin is in Allen Co. 1830 census. If he ever went to Nelson Co., seems doubtful it would have been long enough to be attached to the name, There was a Bloomfield located in Missouri, but no Cockrills are listed living there."

It appears, however, that according to Cockrill Family tradition, Bloomfield was adamantly believed to have been named by Larkin Cockrill. An excerpt from the autobiography of William Aaron Cockrill supplied by Rebecca Aileen Cockrill states, "My father was Bruce Travis Cockrill, youngest son of Larkin Davenport Cockrill and Didamia Cockrill, his wife, maiden name of Stamps, born in Bloomfield, Nelson County, Kentucky. The family crossed the plains by ox team and covered wagon in 1853 and located in Bloomfield, Sonoma County, California. Bloomfield is located in Big Valley; the first home was built there by the Cockrill family. Another family by the name of Woodson, who also came from Bloomfield, Kentucky, was the first family to locate in Big Valley, but two miles from where the town was later surveyed and promoted. The Woodson family and the Cockrill family got together and named the town that was later built, Bloomfield, after their old native town, in spite of some stories.

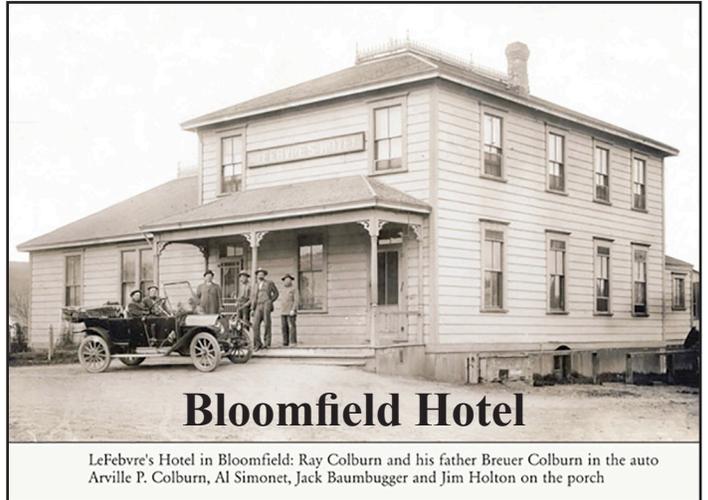
It has not been documented that Didamia Stamps was born in Bloomfield, Nelson Co., Kentucky. There is no mention in, "A Sketch of Life of Rebecca Hildreth Nutting Woodson", of her or her family ever living in Bloomfield, Kentucky. According to, "A Short History of Bloomfield", however, "it was her husband, George Woodson, who named the post office Bloomfield at a public meeting on July 12, 1856." Non-family accounts state that the town was named after F.G. Blume who owned a large portion of the Analy Township. This account states that the naming of Bloomfield was told by Russell Smith (Santa Rosa Press Democrat, 17 April 1949). Russell insisted that some very old deeds to his ranch showed that the portion of land extending into the present town site had the name, "Bloomingdale", written on it. The deed is said to predate 1856 and the founding town meeting. According to Smith, it was called this because of the many and



## BLOOMFIELD

varied wild flowers that rise up in the spring or Smith could have seen the words, “Blumedale Company” on his deed, the name of Dr. F.G. Blume sawmill.

In its prime, Bloomfield was known as the “potato capital” of California. It was said that “The Big Valley Spud” was even better than those from Idaho, as “the best spud in the U.S.A.” Gaye Lebaron states in, “Santa Rosa, a nineteenth century town”; that ” potatoes were the first cash crop in Sonoma County; thrust hastily into the scarcely plowed ground. Shipped downstream from Petaluma to the bay, they turned that rude hunting camp into a flourishing port and made it a big town, for a short time, of Bloomfield, the potato capital of early California.”



Bloomfield was also known as an inland trading point and a stopping point on the stage coach route between Petaluma and Gualala. It became a center for horse breeding and trading, even at one time having a racetrack. Although isolated from the roads and railways, Bloomfield had communication with the outside world by the North Pacific Coast Railroad telegraph, and by the U.S. and Wells Fargo & Co. mails. This community, as were many in that day, was virtually self-sufficient. Although business interests in Bloomfield provided for most of the residents needs, and a doctor was eventually obtained, it seems that even the early residents of Bloomfield had some inkling of the decline of their town. Bloomfield was not included on the rail line, and Governor Haight in 1872 vetoed extending the Northern Pacific Railroad to Bloomfield from Petaluma.



Left to right standing: George Pettit, W. A. Cockrill, Jim Dunbar, Belle Harnell, Chas Harnell,  
Ira Jervall Dellinan, Chas Dellinan, Beir Gregg, not named, Breuer Colburn  
Sitting down: John Blake, Obe Cockrill, Ray Colburn, James Cockrill, not named, Frank Howe, Hall