



“THE HARDEST WORK THAT EVER MORTAL MAN DONE”

John Kellogg Pattee was born September 26, in 1821 in Fort Covington, New York, the second of six children. He was one of thousands of young men who came west to seek their fortune in the gold rush. He traveled with a company from New York across the Panama Isthmus and on to Calaveras County. By great fortune *Las Calaveras* has been given a copy of his original letter that he sent home to his family detailing his travels when he first arrived in this county.

We are unable to discern the exact date on the letter, however biographical information claims that he arrived in 1849. Given the hints within, it's clear that he was a very early pioneer. He preceded state hood or at least the word of it (September 9, 1850), he was here when grizzleys were abundant, and cattle ran wild in the San Joaquin Valley. Regarding San Francisco, he observed that “The city is small”; at his diggings, there

are only 400 miners, which was an unusually small number for a gold camp, so he probably was a true forty-niner.

John Pattee was the son of a doctor. He was an educated man as is evidenced by his language and quality of script. He shows his homesickness when he begs for return mail, but bemoans his



Castle Rock, northeast of Valley Springs.

inability to write more often as he cannot obtain proper writing paper.

As he laments in his letter, he quickly found mining to be hard work and he gave up that occupation in search of another. Despite promises to return home to his family, Pattee never left California. He found mining to be difficult work, "the hardest work that ever mortal man done." He gave it up and ultimately settled in the Valley Springs area in 1852 and pursued ranching. He was a good family man and married an Irish wife in 1859 and together they had seven children on their ranch. Two of the sons established the Pattee Brothers General Merchandising store that sold the family's beef and was well known for many a year in the area. Pattee's own father came to Calaveras County to join his successful son at his Valley Springs ranch until his passing.

The land northeast of town, marked prominently with the rock formation fondly referred to as Castle Rock, was the land the Pattee family ranched. Descendants of the family still own this land today. On the north slope of this hill is a water tank which stores water from wells installed by the Pattee family. When the dry town of Spring Valley (as Valley Springs was first known) needed water, the Pattee family piped water from their reservoir system to town. This water system

became the Valley Springs Water Works, the impetus for the present day Valley Springs Public Utility District.

John K. Pattee contributed to the community on many fronts. In his early years he got up a posse to chase Joaquin Murieta when he stole Pattee's horses. Pattee later served as the Valley Springs Postmaster and Justice of the Peace, and was appointed by two governors to serve as a notary public. John Kellogg Pattee passed away at the age of 82 on January 19, 1904, regarded as a highly respected citizen, and a true pioneer of the gold rush.

The Castle Rock land has been leased over the years by the other prominent Valley Springs ranching family, the Snyders. It is through Betty Snyder that we came by this letter, and *Las Calaveras* is grateful for her sharing this connection to the past with us.

John Kellogg Pattee and the legacy he left are both detailed and intriguing. Perhaps in the future *Las Calaveras* can document more about this prolific family that contributed so much to the founding of Valley Springs and Calaveras County. Until then, readers are encouraged to see *Las Calaveras*, January 1996; and Sal Manna's column *Something From Nothing* in the *Valley Springs News*, March 7, 2007.



The only known photo of John K. Pattee. He is the gentleman on the far left with the white beard. Photo circa 1895 from the files of the Calaveras County Historical Society.

Dearest Parents,

According to promise and duty, after arriving at my destined port, I now address you. I am well, fleshy and rugged at present and fair prospects of remaining so. In my letter from Panama, I did not state that I was very sick, because I thought it might cause you some uneasiness of mind, but I lay sick on the Isthmus five weeks before I could procure a passage here. My whole stay there was of seven weeks. Then procured one on board the *Syph* [with] Capt Gardner and paid 150.00 dollars. I paid 100 and the northern company assisted me and paid the balance and after a voyage of 78 days from Panama encountering a storm that lasted two days and nights carrying away the foretops gallant giboon [jibboom] and sail, arrived at San Francisco. The city is small but flourishing—the adjacent country has not the flourishing appearance that was stated but looks more like a barren sea coast and I must say that I am much disappointed in that respect. After remaining there two days took passage with this company on board the *Emily Jane* to Stockton up the San Joaquin 150 miles from San Francisco. After staying at Stockton—a small village composed mostly of camp tents a few stores and taverns. For one week to rest and [proceeded] in land procured provisions and packed them on mules for the [colonists] diggings where I am at present. We [started for] Stockton on foot [by a] different route from the mules carrying only a change of clothes and three days provisions on our backs. A distance of 60 miles and arrived the third day after. Our provisions not coming as soon as expected we had to fast two days although they are plenty and cheap at Stockton and San Francisco. I have been digging ten days and a half and got 150 dollars and a chance of falling in a ton strike. Some days I take out but little and others doing well. One day I dug 47 dollars of gold out and did not work very hard either but in general it is the hardest work that ever mortal man done. After a little I shall get in some business. Clerks wages are from 150 to 200 dollars per month. Common work from 8 to 10 dollars per day. Carpenters and joiners get from 12 to 15 dollars per day. Shoeing a horse 25 dollars. Setting a tire on a double wagon 150 dollars, board can be procured at 2 dollars per day, flour 10 per cb, - Pork 20. But if a person set out to come to California he assuredly takes his life in his hands. If I knew all the trials and hardships I have encountered since leaving home beforehand all the old in California would not tempt me to start [as such]. I have slept in the open air and for days have climbed so steep that I could but draw myself up by the rugged rocks. At this moment I am sitting quite comfortable in my tent at the foot of a mountain five or six hundred feet high and the top not wider across than ten feet. I shall be in this comfortable for a short time. Gold sells here for 16 dollars per ounce, but in the states it is worth 20. There are four hundred people in the mines. Stealing is rarely known. A man may leave anything where he pleases and no one will disturb it and all is quietness and good order. After I arrived at Stockton I saw a young man about 20 years old hung by the neck till he was dead dead dead. His name was Jim [Lyman?] from state of N. Y. I do not think the company will keep together long and then I shall return to San Francisco or Stockton. I have not heard from Elisha Lind since I came. Tell Mr. Treadwell that I left the letter at the Post Office in San Francisco for Mr. Macon his nephew and after returning shall endeavor to find him out. Wages can not hold out very long at the present high rates on account of the immense emigration through the immense gold region will check their fall in some degree. Coming up from the mouth of the San Joaquin I could see droves of wild cattle with five and six hundred in one drove. Other game is plenty in the mountains with a plenty of Grizzly bear. The thermometer stands at present in the shade 102 degrees at five o'clock. The same in the morning 102 deg, no deer in the part of the country and water very good. I am not at San Francisco at present. I dated my letters so because when you write direct your letter to San Francisco. I wish you would immediately and write all the news and how everything is and looks at home and what all the people are about if they are cutting each others throats in a rebellion. Tell David Wilcox that if he starts for California not to start with less than three hundred dollars to come easy. My letter passes Calvin Pattee's hands so I make one letter do for more than one. I wish you would write to me. I am ready to receive letters from anyone but cannot write now till next month when I intend to write to many, but in my present situation am deprived of the privilege for the want of more paper which cannot be procured here. You can show this letter to all who wish to see it. I sent a pamphlet to Calvin which he will forward to you by mail containing a account of our voyage from Panama. I do not think I shall be able to return before three years at least because I don't wish to take another journey like this. Some of the party are out prospecting but as it is Sunday I lay still and rest myself from labors. Tell Melissa she must kiss Hanna for me and [Lucinda?] and in fact all the family. My heart yearns to see you all and all friends. Tell David Childs, John Josiah [M---] and everybody to write to me and write all the [stories] for I have not heard a [list] since I started. Tell Grandfather I have the watch yet and she keeps good time. I look at the name on the back every day and makes me think of home. Tell Joseph to take four or five of the biggest potatoes he can find and throw them towards California for me for I have not seen one since I left New York nor vegetables of any kind except onions and garlic.

Farewell for the Present

Your affectionate Son
John K. Pattee

WALLACE AND LAS CALAVERAS MAKE CALIFORNIA HISTORY

Articles related to Calaveras County in *California History*, the scholarly journal of the California Historical Society published quarterly since 1922 are rare. But last fall it featured the community of Wallace and *Las Calaveras*. Readers may remember the interesting story about the connection between Alfred Wallace, after whom the town of Wallace is named, and Charles Darwin, which appeared in *Las Calaveras* in 2006. The California Historical Society wanted an expanded version of the story by west county author Sal Manna. So Manna went to work again and further developed his story to a full 22-page essay that became the lead story for the fall issue of *California History*, Volume 85, No. 4, titled "A Brother's Reunion: Evolution's Champion Alfred Russel Wallace and Forty-Niner John Wallace." *Las Calaveras* is credited in the article.

The final story was subjected to significant historian peer review before acceptance for publication. Congratulations to author Sal Manna for taking Calaveras County history to the California spot light. Copies of the expanded *California History* article may be purchased and downloaded at Amazon.com. Copies of the entire issue are available through the California Historical Society.

"SOMETHING FROM NOTHING" MAGAZINE FEATURES WEST CALAVERAS HISTORY

Do you know that the first California native to become an admiral was born near Valley Springs? Or that Wallace was named after the older brother of one of the most famous naturalists of the modern era? Or that a poet-soldier of the Civil War was a Burson postmaster? All that and more, accompanied by dozens of photographs, comprise "Something From Nothing, The Early History of West Calaveras County, Vol. I," a collection of the first 20 installments of the popular monthly column penned by Sal Manna for the Valley Springs News and now entering its fourth year. The 48 page, full color magazine adds numerous photographs to the originally published columns.

Most of the subjects have never before written about before. "Something From Nothing, Vol. I" is the only color publication ever produced about the west county's history. The publication is only \$10, and all proceeds go to benefit The Society for the Preservation of West Calaveras History. To obtain your copy, you may find one at the office of the Valley Springs News, or call 772-0336.

ANOTHER CALAVERAS COUNTY RESIDENT'S LETTER...

In December 2008 *Las Calaveras* received the following letter from a resident and long time member of the Calaveras County Historical Society. *Las Calaveras* strives to keep the members informed, and appreciates the feedback.



Dear Las Calaveras,

12/12/08

I want to thank you for the many tales of Calaveras County history you have researched and written. Those of us who have moved here and even old timers would never have known about all the many places, people and "things" that you have written about.

Now we know more about the small towns that have disappeared, the mines, the people, bridges, barns, roads, events, etc.

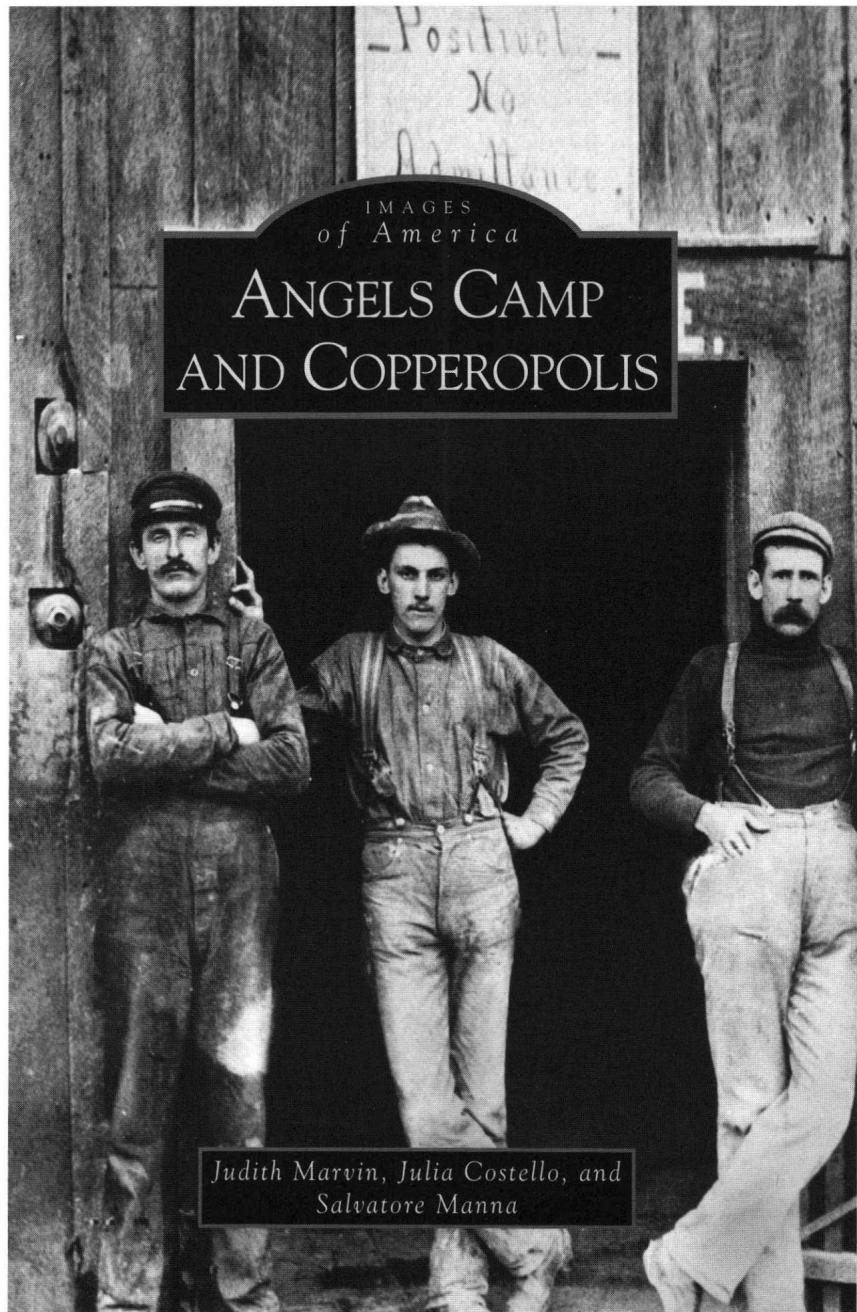
*Thank you,
Joan Donleavy*

NEW BOOK TO BENEFIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Local authors Judith Marvin, Julia Costello and Salvatore Manna have produced another stunning book, this time of the story of the west side of Calaveras County. This new book in the Images of America series produced by Arcadia Publishing is entitled *Angels Camp and Copperopolis*. All profits from this book are being donated by the authors to local historic endeavors including our own Historical Society, the Calaveras County Archives, the Angels Camp Museum and the Calaveras Heritage Council.

Highlights from the book include numerous photographs rarely seen before or never before published. The fine graphics work was produced or enhanced by the Historical Society's own Wally Motloch. The book also includes many stories from pioneer families, and the stories behind the almost forgotten settlements of Hodson, Milton, Felix, Carson Hill, Dogtown and Lost City, and the ferries and railways that served them. Also in this region is one of the nation's earliest Native American settlements. The western edge of Calaveras County had more to contribute than just a link to a railroad. It gained national prominence in both the Gold Rush and the Civil War. And what story would be complete without Black Bart or Mark Twain? You'll find both the authoritative text and the photographs to be fun and engaging. The book would make a fine gift.

Look for copies of the book at local bookstores or pick one up the next time you visit the County Museum next to the offices of the Calaveras County Historical Society. The Society is grateful for these authors and their fine preservation work and their generous gift.



Calaveras County Historical Society

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Las Calaveras is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. A subscription to *Las Calaveras* comes with membership in the Calaveras County Historical Society for \$22.00 per year. Non-members may obtain copies from the Historical Society office. The original historical material presented in *Las Calaveras* is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source would be appreciated. Contributions of articles about Calaveras County are appreciated and may be submitted to the Historical Society for consideration.

The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas; and the historic Red Barn Museum at 891 Mountain Ranch Road, also in San Andreas, which is open Thursday to Sunday, 10:00 to 4:00.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museums while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com; Red Barn Museum (209) 754-0800.

New Members

The Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

December, 2008

Ray Malerbi, Angels Camp
Paul Louis, Newberg, Oregon

January, 2009

Judy Ospital, Murphys
Marie Tagliabue, Manteca
Ruby Minard Hibbert, Angels Camp
Renee Minard Menzes, Angels Camp

February, 2009

Roberta L. Powell, San Andreas
Pleasant H. Hill III, Valley Springs
Ginger Rasmussen, Angels Camp
Susan Kravitz, San Andreas



Donations

December, 2008

White Cotton Bonnet—Joan Donleavy, San Andreas

February, 2009

Family Photos—Carmenne Poore, San Andreas
Family History Binder and Wedding Dress of Minverva Louise Houston Reed; Family Histories of the Houston Family, Reed Family, Wickham Family and Storing Family, including many photos—Sandra Wallace, Aptos