



CARSON HILL AND THE STEVENOT FAMILY

BY ARCHIE STEVENOT

Jean Gabriel K. Stevenot, a lawyer by profession, from Alsace-Lorraine, France, arrived at the Port of San Francisco, California, on August 9, 1849.

He first engaged in merchandising at San Francisco and soon thereafter went to Marysville, California with General Sutter. Together they built the town of Elizaville, named in honor of the daughter of General Sutter.

In 1850 he came to Calaveras County, located about one-half mile westerly of the town of Carson Hill, pitched a tent, established a home, engaged in a store business, purchasing gold from the miners and in general being helpful to others.

Shortly after arriving in Calaveras County he began to purchase and work mining property and eventually held title to property from Albany Flat to Robinson's Ferry. He was a pioneer quartz miner and operator in Calaveras County.

In the late 50's, Mr. Stevenot erected a one stamp quartz mill at a place called the "Waterfall" being one-half mile below the town of Carson Hill on Carson Creek. The ore crushed in this mill came from the "Reserve Mine" on Carson Hill. This enterprise proved profitable and in order to enlarge the plant he purchased a ditch bringing water from the foot of Vallecito Flat on Coyote Creek to Carson Hill. Thereafter he promoted the erection of a forty stamp mill near Carson Hill to work the ore taken from the "Reserve Mine." During the early copper excitement in Calaveras County in the 60's, Mr. Stevenot was interested in copper mining at Copperopolis.

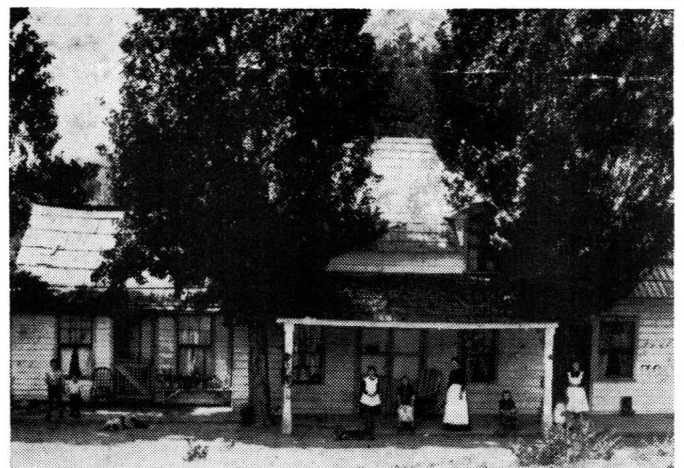
His mining interests were eventually acquired by the Melones Mining Company and extensively worked.

Mr. Gabriel K. Stevenot was born October 9, 1813, died in San Francisco October 23, 1885. He was married in

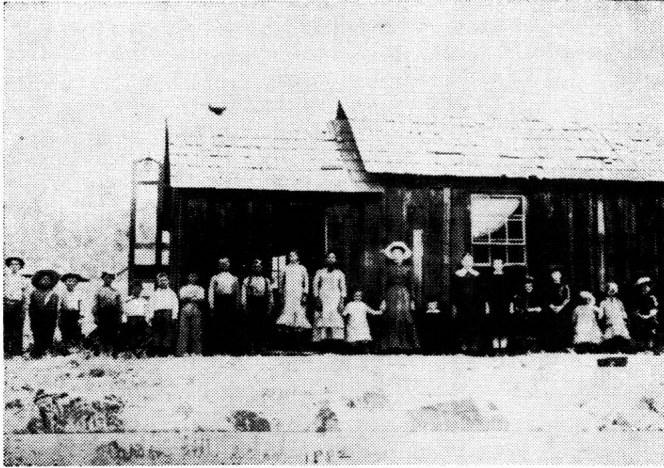
France in 1844 and had one son and one daughter. His wife and daughter never came to the United States.

Emile K. Stevenot, the son of Gabriel K. Stevenot was born at Alsace-Lorraine, France, on February 11, 1846. He graduated from the University of Straasburg as an engineer and joined his father in Calavers County in 1863. He became president of the Melones Mining Company and continued with the company until 1870. At that time he went to San Francisco and engaged in Borax Metalurgical Refining until 1879. He married Sarah Elizabeth Stephens of Cincinnati, Ohio, the daughter of Josephus Stephens, a United States Marshal. Mr. Emile K. Stevenot, with his family, returned to Calaveras County in 1879 and to his mining holdings.

There was no school nearer than Angels Camp for the



STEVENOT FAMILY, CARSON HILL, ABOUT 1888—
Left to right: Fred Stevenot, Archie Stevenot, Margret Stevenot, Nellie Stevenot, Mother Stevenot, Louis Stevenot, Allie Stevenot, Marie Stevenot. Father Stevenot took the picture.



CARSON HILL SCHOOL—Picture taken by Emile K. Stevenot 1882. Left to right: George Tarbat, Augustine Peirano, Fred Stevenot, Tom Tarbat, Ted Cordes, John Tarbat, Alex Tarbat, Herman Cordes, John Peirano, Rose Tarbt, Annie Peirano, Peirano girl, Florence Smith Cutler, Bobby Cordes, Ida Cordes, Mamie Stevenot, Nellie Stevenot, Maggie Stevenot, Mary Peirano, Nettie Peirano, Louie Stevenot.

Stevenot children to attend, so Mr. and Mrs. Stevenot engaged a private teacher for their children and later decided to provide an opportunity for all the children residing in the district to attend school. They purchased a cabin just below the town of Carson Hill on what is now known as the California-Ophir Mine and opened a school, and paid the salary of the teacher until the school was taken over as a public school.

The Stevenot home has always been on the westerly slope of Carson Hill. In the 80's, Mr. Emile K. Stevenot built an eight stamp quartz mill on Carson Hill just below where his father had first built the one stamp mill. This was later replaced with a forty stamp mill. In this mill the ore from the Santa Cruz and Whittle Mines was reduced. At this mill Mr. Stevenot did considerable experimenting in treating the ore and used cyanide at this early date in Calaveras County. The Santa Cruz Mine sold by Mr. Stevenot in 1888 to Lord Cameron and John Mackey of Comstock fame. The ditch from Coyote Creek was later extended around Carson Hill, water power was used and a mill was built near the old Morales Ranch.

The Carson Hill Mines acquired the properties from the Melones Mining Company. Through the efforts of Mr. D. C. Demarest and Lawrence Monte Verda of Altaville and Archie D. Stevenot (son of Emile K. Stevenot), Mr. Wm. J. Loring became interested in the Melones-Carson Hill group of mines and the Carson Hill Gold Mines, Inc., was organized to work the mines as a group from Robinson's Ferry to Carson Hill. The new company, in addition to acquiring the mining claims belonging to the Melones Mining Company, secured the Morgan Mine, the Iron Rock, the Finnegan, Woods properties and some smaller claims for about \$2,000,000. Wm. J. Loring was made president of the company and Archie D. Stevenot, general manager. They first started with a three stamp mill which was afterwards enlarged to a thirty stamp mill. During their operation a recovery of more than \$1,000,000 per year was made.

Fred G. Stevenot, another son of Emile K. Stevenot, spent many years operating mining property in Calaveras County in the neighborhood of Carson Hill. In connection with his cattle business, he operated the Meeker Mine on Chaparral Hill. Mr. Fred G. Stevenot represented the County of Calaveras in the State Legislature and is now a manager of one of the departments of Bank of America.

At the present writing, the Stevenot family has a record of having been residents and land owners in Calaveras County for 105 years.

By purchase recently the property of the Carson Hill Mining Company is again in the hands of the Stevenot family.

Mrs. Emile K. Stevenot was of the Hamilton family. She and Mr. Stevenot had the following named children: Mary Felice, Margaret, Ferdinand G. (Fred), Natalie (Nellie), Leonie, Archibald D., Alice (Allie), Joseph E., and Cassimir (Cass).

SAWMILLS ABOVE MURPHYS

John Manuel bought the lumber business from Kimball and Cutting in 1878 and for the next 20 years, until his death in 1899, was the lumberman of Calaveras. He was assisted by three sons, Matt, Jack, and Ray. Upon his death the business was incorporated as the Manuel Estate Company by his heirs with Matt H. Manuel as general manager. This concern continued in the lumbering business until recent years. Now the assets have been liquidated and the Estate dissolved.

Manuel had sawmills at several locations but the first was at what is now Hunter's Dam. It was moved to the Moran Creek below the Flanders place. Later it was moved to Cowell Creek, a branch of the San Antone, at a point a short distance southwest of the present town of Arnold. The mill was later located on the Moran Ranch, east of Arnold, at what is now Fly-In-Acres. There was another mill site just above Avery where the present highway cuts through some swampy ground.

Manuel had the first lumber yard at Murphys on the lot beside the Matt Manuel home on Main Street. Two long sheds run from Main Street to the back of the lot near the Masonic Temple. This housed not only the lumber but the rear sheds were stables for the lumbering teams.

By 1904 the demand for lumber was so great that the Manuel Estate had two mills and yards in operation. When the Sierra Railroad built a branch line from Jamestown to Angels Camp, the lumber yard was moved to the railroad and the yard in Murphys closed. The yard in Angels Camp was taken over by the Angels Box and Lumber Company, a corporation organized by John Manuel, Jr., and separated from the Manuel Estate.

For a period of ten years, because competition was injuring both businesses, the Manuels closed their mill in an agreement with the Raggio Brothers who were operating a sawmill on San Antone Creek. During this time, the Manuels continued to haul logs and poles to the mines in Angels Camp, but did not cut any lumber. After the Raggios had cut their lumber on San Antone Creek, the Manuels again began sawing.

The Manuels worked between 35 and 40 men on their lumbering crews and usually had three or four 14-horse or mule teams hauling the lumber to the yards and mines dur-

ing about six months of the year. There were also teams used in the woods to drag in the logs. There were three corals for feeding and resting the teams. One was in Murphys, another at the top of the grade on Hanford Hill at the Forrester Ranch, and one was on the Moran Ranch at the logging operations.

During the lumbering season the teamster would work seven days a week and from 12 to 14 hours a day for a top wage of from \$85 to \$90 a month and board, for the best drivers. The only holiday observed was July the 4th.

Hostlers who took care of the teams worked even longer hours for \$45 and \$50 a month and board. The hostlers duties were to feed and harness the teams at four o'clock in the morning and in the evening they would sometimes work until 10 or 11 p. m., feeding, watering, and caring for the stock. Sore shoulders had to be treated and collars rubbed down to prevent chafing. There was also the danger of being kicked by ill-tempered mules, aroused at being harnessed so early. The life of a hostler seemed arduous and hazardous for the lowly salary involved.

It will be impossible and unnecessary to name all the drivers of Manuel teams but here are a few.

One of the best drivers in handling 14 horses pulling two wagons of lumber was John Jones, but there were many others, such as Ernie Lombardi, Charles Williams, Eli Talbot, Gay Willett, Joe Bruner, Ted Martell, George and Jack Asbury, Ed Wright, George Williams, Andy Inks, George Terry, Joe Schachten, Raggio's driver, Gus Emerald, Ed True, who was also foreman of the logging crew, Austin Kaler, Bud Lewis, Jim Inks, J. Darby, Ben Jones, Emil Schwoerer. Frank and Jack Gillette were good drivers of logging teams. These teams were different in that oxen were many times used as wheelers with 6 horses hitched on in front of them.

When the lumbering season was ended with the fall rains, the Manuels took most of their teams to the valley and used them for winter plowing and cultivating on Roberts Island near Stockton, where hay and grain was raised for feed.

The Manuels were first to replace the 24 mule teams with a big steam traction engine, which pulled five wagons of lumber amounting to about 40,000 feet each trip. Frank Adams was one of the best drivers of this engine and he was assisted by a brake tender who would walk beside the wagons and set the brakes by hand when signaled by a blast on the whistles. Many of the old-timers tell of their first experience with this roaring and snorting iron monster who terrified both man and beast on the first trips up and down the grades. Large wheels and tremendous weight also had disastrous effect on the roads.

The Manuels also replaced the oxen and horse teams used in logging with a donkey engine. It was a spark from this engine that set the fire that burned through the Big Trees Grove in 1910.

The Raggio Brothers, Richard, Ernest, and Joe, operated a sawmill for many years on the San Domingo below Manuels' mill and about opposite Avery and a second one at Cowell Creek in the early 1900's. The lumber was sawed at the mill on the creek and then hauled by a donkey engine to the top of the ridge where there was a drying yard near the Murphys Big Trees Road. A planing mill was also a part of this operation. At later periods, the Raggios cut lumber

at the head of O'Neil Creek. Their main lumber yard was in Angels Camp. Besides these operations, a great deal of wood was transported to Sheep Ranch for fuel to run the steam engines which furnished the power for the hoists.

The Raggios also had a traction engine used in hauling lumber. A man named Moreno was the driver of this engine. Later he was killed in an accident while serving as brakeman on the Sierra Railway.

John and Nathan McKay operated a sawmill about 12 miles from Murphys near the Big Trees at the headwaters of Lone Creek for many years. They had a lumber yard at Altaville.

A visitor to Murphys in 1892 stated that there were two mills in the vicinity of Murphys. One was owned by John Manuel, and the other by the McKay Brothers. The two mills had a cutting capacity of 3,000,000 feet in a season.(1)

McKay had a traction or donkey engine which ran on a track and brought logs into the mill. This is now on display in front of the museum in Angels Camp.

The early logging operations were carried on by the use of oxen pulling solid wood iron-bound wheels about seven feet in diameter on which the logs were piled. One of the famous bull drivers was Andrew Daggett. He had a tremendous voice and could be heard yelling at the 10-oxen team for a mile. He used no lines but guided them with a good stick and by calling out the directions to them. He would work in the woods all summer and not come out until the season was over in the fall when he would bring his bulls and steers out of the woods hauling a large load of lumber.

Bill Wright was another driver for McKays.

McKays operated the mill until recent years.

(1) History of Central California, page 231.

DEED

May 16, 1863

M. W. HALL and J. H. STRATTON to GABRIEL K. STEVENOT:

Consideration \$6,000.00 in Gold Coin Conveys

That certain water ditch known as Carpenters & Stratton Ditch running water from Coyote Creek at the foot of Vallecito Flat. Together with all branch ditches and reservoirs connected with or used or in anywise appertaining.

Recorded in Book I of Deeds, page 325. Calaveras County Records.

CARSON HILL

CALAVERAS COUNTY, Elliot, W. W. Oakland 1885—Carson Hill produces ponderous masses of gold in a short time—\$2,800,000 worth of gold was extracted in seven months, and from contiguous pits not 100 feet deep; \$14,000 worth was taken out of a shaft in a day; and \$20,000 worth out of another only 60 feet deep. The weight of the masses of gold was expressed in pounds not in ounces; one mass of gold weighed 6½ pounds and another 7½ pounds. But the most marvelous account of all is that of the blast in the Pachecho Shaft, which threw down a mass of rock so filled with gold that the masses held together when cracked by sledge hammers—one mass so broken out weighed 108 pounds and contained 104 pounds of gold. This is the largest mass of vein gold which has been found in the world, at least of which there is any record.

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The Calaveras County Historical Society meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Courthouse in San Andreas. Dinner meetings are held each quarter at different places in the county.

THE STEVENOT FAMILY OF CARSON HILL

By ARCHIE STEVENOT

Gabriel Stevenot, a lawyer from Alsace Lorraine, France, arrived in San Francisco on August 9, 1849. He engaged in merchandising at first and later went to Marysville with Captain Sutter. About ten miles from Marysville they built the town of Elizaville. It was named for Sutter's daughter. He left that region and came to Calaveras County in 1850 and pitched his tent one-fourth mile below Carson Hill. Later he built a house and engaged in merchandising, weighing gold and giving advice to anyone seeking it. He was known as Angel Gabriel.

Stevenot started buying mining claims and soon owned property from Albany Flat to Robinson Ferry or Melones. In the late 50's he built a one stamp mill at what is known as the Water Fall, one-fourth mile below Carson Hill on Carson Creek, where the water ditch takes off to the old Stevenot homestead. The ore that was crushed in this one stamp mill came from the Reserve Mine on Carson Hill. This proved very profitable on a small scale and Stevenot planned a larger mill. Water was the main drawback, so Gabriel Stevenot interested a number of people in building a ditch from Coyote Creek at Vallecito to Carson Hill and on below to the Stevenot homestead. This ditch was extended finally to the Jones Mine further down Carson Creek. The water was used to operate water wheels to furnish power for the stamp mills. Stevenot bought the ditch in 1863 for \$6,000.

When the water was brought to Carson Hill, the Stevenot mill was increased to forty stamps. This was locat-

ed at the foot of Carson Hill near the town of Carson and worked the ore from the Reserve Mine. Later Archibald Gryson, who was William Ralston's father-in-law, bought the Reserve Mine from Emile K. Stevenot, son of Gabriel, for \$80,000. Gryson had organized the Melones Mining Company with extensive holdings and had built a forty stamp mill. With the addition of the Reserve property and other claims the company found it necessary to enlarge the mill to one hundred stamps.

Emile K. Stevenot graduated from the University of Strasburg where he had studied mining, chemistry, and languages. He joined his father at Carson Hill in 1863 and after investing in the Melones Mining Company was elected president. He left Carson Hill in 1870 and started a borax metallurgical refinery in San Francisco. This was the largest and most complete works of its kind in the United States. Stevenot was known for a time as the Borax King and was associated with Borax Smith. Smith interested some Eastern capital in borax and in 1879 bought out Stevenot.

Emile Stevenot had married Miss Sarah Elizabeth Stephens in San Francisco in 1872 and from this union came nine children. After selling the borax plant in 1879, the Stevenots returned to Carson Hill and their large holdings in mining property.

(Continued in the next issue of Las Calaveras.)

LUMP OF GOLD AT CARSON CREEK

STOCKTON TIMES, March 23, 1850 — Stockton is excited by the news of a 93 pound lump of gold which has been dug up at Carson Creek. Yesterday a man presented us with a piece of gold which had been broken from the mass as a specimen. It weighed only a twelfth part of the whole lump which had been disseminated through quartz.

In November, 1854, the largest gold nugget ever found in California was taken from the Morgan Mine, Carson Hill, Calaveras County, California. It was a lump fifteen inches long, six inches wide and four inches thick, weighing about 195 pounds troy and worth in excess of \$43,000.—Hittell's History of California.

In 1851, says the Angels Camp Record, a pocket of gold was discovered in what is now known as the Morgan Mine. It is said that nearly \$3,000,000 was taken out from an excavation that was only 20 feet square and not over 30 feet deep.

The gold was found accumulated in bars and shreds around a large center mass like a huge golden octopus.

The miners worked under armed guards. When blasting, the powder was charged into the drill holes and then the rock covered with raw hide and timbers to prevent the rock and gold from flying.

When the blast had gone off, the men went into the hole and picked loose such of the metal as they could get. The long stringers were twisted and pried with bars and beaten with hammers to loosen them. Often it was necessary to cut the gold with chisels, according to the statement of the men who worked there. The Carson Hill pocket was undoubtedly the largest ever found in the world.—Calaveras Chronicle, November 9, 1907.