



STORIES IN STONE PART II

by Charity Maness

Stories in Stone Part II continues the journey through the beautiful highways and backroads of Calaveras County, visiting historical markers along the way. Each marker offers a tasty tidbit of historical information; just enough to whet the appetite.

It is important to note that not every historical landmark has a marker and not every historic site is recognized at the state level. There are over nine hundred registered historical landmarks in California and Calaveras County is home to forty-two of them.

Glencoe (Mosquito Gulch) ***California Historical Landmark*** ***No. 280:***

Citation by the California Office of Historic Preservation: *Glencoe was formerly called Mosquito Gulch. The business portion of the town was on the north side of Mosquito Gulch, but not one of the old buildings remains. The mines were first worked by the Mexicans in the early 1850s—quartz mining predominated but there was some placer mining.*

Glencoe was founded in 1849. It was originally called Mosquito Gulch—named so by a prospector by the name of Fosterling. The area at the time was

said to have been filled with swamps and water holes left behind from prospectors in search of gold, making it a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes, and breed they did.

A story about the discovery of Mosquito Gulch comes from an article dated May 29, 1875 and reprinted in the *Calaveras Enterprise* in 1976:

“...it was discovered in the early rush by a young Irishman. As was often the case, the discovery was far more the result of an accident than it was serious prospecting.

This young son of the Emerald Isle had a lucky day and proceeded to seek a drinking booth with the full intent to reduce his purse to its original state. He was completely successful and by midnight he was most delightfully off his legs. He retained enough consciousness to know that he was not at his own home, and that it might be time to now return. As is understandable, he was not too sure of his direction and soon turned off into the woods. Now we know that he went up to Steep Gulch and as could be expected lost his footing and tumbled down into the ravine. As is often the case with those who do overuse the whiskey toddies, he was safe from harm and fell asleep even as he tumbled to the bottom. Young Paddy slept soundly in his rocky bed and did

not awake until the sun hit the bottom of the gulch, which happened about ten o'clock.

The sun woke him and he felt as if his bones were broken. His head was more muddled than usual and he just layed in the same spot for some time. As he sprawled there the only real concern was his location; he was worried how far he might be from a drinking booth.

He started stretching himself and lolling about and began to pass his time scraping and digging with his knife. Soon he felt he could find the strength to go in search of some relief for his parched throat. As he scratched around with the pocket knife, he reached a depth of about five inches when he spotted something shining at him from the hole."

This young hapless prospector soon had multiple nuggets in hand. Not one to waste a good opportunity, he told no one of the rich location, pocketed his wealth and headed to San Francisco in hopes of seeing his good fortune increase at the gambling tables. His good fortune was short lived as he returned to his secret location with empty pockets and found, much to his dismay, that it was being worked by other prospectors.

How Glencoe finally got its name is a story in itself, as there are at least two different claims. One claim is that an employee of the Mokelumne Ditch Company, by the name of Mr. L. P. Terwilliger, named the town in the late 1850s after a town he'd read of in a novel; Glencoe in

Argylshire, Scotland. Another claim is that Mr. G. W. Berry, the first post office operator, changed the name to Glencoe around 1879. The post office had operated under the town name of Mosquito Gulch from 1873 to 1878.

In 1879 the town was bustling with multiple stores, boarding houses, a butcher shop, a livery stable and a hotel. Jerome Burt owned a two-story building that served as a general store and post office on the ground floor and a dance hall upstairs. Glencoe was also utilized as a stopover for freight and logging wagons en route to West Point and Railroad Flat.

The school district in Glencoe encompassed Railroad Flat and Independence until it was divided in 1866. In 1881 the original school house burned to the ground. The following excerpt from the *Calaveras Citizen* dated July 15, 1881 tells the tale:

"The school house at Glencoe in the Mosquito Gulch School District was destroyed by fire last Sunday. The building, which is a comparatively new one, stands quite a distance from any other building and no fire had been built in it for months. These facts with several suspicious circumstances indicate that the burning was the work of an incendiary."

The town supported the employees of local mines, their families, and many prospectors as well. Most of the area's mines were active in the late 1800s but some were active into the early

1900s. The Good Hope Group, which included the Good Hope, Monte Cristo, Oriental and San Bruno claims, produced up to \$10,000 per month in the 1860s and 1870s. The Glencoe Mine, by the south fork of the Mokelumne River, was a consolidation of the Valentine, Mexican, Sierra King, Sierra Queen, Ridge View and Stoetzer claims. It was worked in the 1870s and 1880s. One of the first quartz mills in the area was built by Fred Greve, at what was then known as the Vance Mine. The mill became known as the Garland Mill



Glencoe store, post office and dance hall c. 1926. Calaveras Historical Society.

after it was purchased by C. J. Garland, who had the eight-stamp mill customized to run on steam. Other mines in the area included the Fidelity, Aetna, Blue Bell, Banner (Grasshopper), Poor Man and Stonewall Jackson.

Another mineral found to be plentiful in the area was soapstone. At one time, southeast of Glencoe, there was a mountain that contained a large soapstone deposit. The soapstone was sawed into blocks and used by local sawmills to encase the boilers. Often ranchers would use soapstone to make fireplaces in their homes. Local resident Ruby Taylor wrote that coal pits were also plentiful in the area in the late 1800s. One coal pit was located about two miles out of town on Three-Cent Flat. Coal was made by burning oak wood under the ground for several weeks.

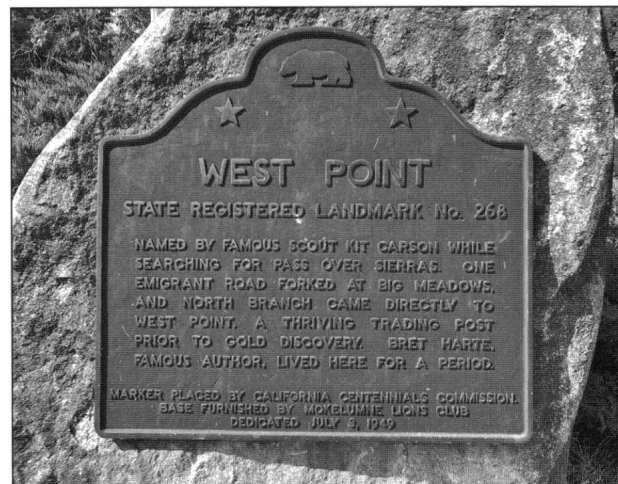
West Point (Sandy Gulch)
California Historical Landmark
No. 268:

The West Point marker dedicated on July 3, 1949, placed by the California Centennials Commission, is inscribed: *Named by famous scout Kit Carson while searching for a pass over Sierras. One emigrant road forked at Big Meadows and north branch came directly to West Point. A thriving trading post prior to gold discovery. Bret Harte, famous author lived here for a period.*

Though gold was discovered in late 1848 or early 1849 in what is now known as West Point, California historian Erwin G. Gudde claims the town was originally named Indian Gulch and was discovered in 1852. (Indian Gulch was a gulch about a half mile from town with a branch draining the area where the town of West Point is located.)

Legend has it that in 1844 Kit Carson was tasked with guiding John C. Fremont's second expedition down the Sierra mountains from what is now known as Carson Pass. Judge J. A. Smith, former President of the Calaveras County Historical Society, wrote, "In 1844, Kit Carson, seeking a pass over the Sierra, came down the south side of the Mokelumne River canyon and finding the main Mokelumne River at flood stage, named the point where he had come farthest west, West Point."

However, according to Gudde, Lieutenant Fremont's journals of his 1843-44 expedition to



West Point historical marker dedicated July 3, 1949.
Photo by Charity Maness.

California and the maps and field notes of his cartographer, Charles Preuss, make no reference to the West Point area or any crossing of the Mokelumne River. Those records indicate that the route taken by the expedition followed the north side of the American River, following the general direction of the south fork until they arrived at Sutter's Fort in March of 1844.

Regardless of how it received its name, West Point became a prosperous mining town with a surge in its growth in the late 1850s, due to a branch of the emigrant road from Carson Valley being routed through town. The West Point Mining District was formed in November 1857, with rules handed down quickly. The first rule limited quartz claims to 200 feet of vein, including its dips and angles. West Point's mines became profitable enough to warrant a Wells Fargo office, which operated from 1888 to 1894.

The first post office was established July 31, 1856. The West Point School District—School District Number 2, Township 7—formed the same year with fifty-six pupils. The first Odd Fellows Hall was completed November 3, 1882 and destroyed by fire eleven years later. A new hall was completed October 27, 1893.

In 1858 the area in West Point known as Chinatown was almost completely destroyed by fire and subsequently rebuilt. Again, in the 1860s most of the buildings along Main Street were destroyed by fire, with only the adobe buildings left intact.

In the fall of 1940 West Point had enough 'potential' customers for Pacific Gas and Electric to begin construction of a new power line. By the



Main Street West Point c. 1892. *Calaveras Historical Society Photo.*

spring of 1941 the line was complete and supplied fifty homes and businesses with electricity. A celebration was in order and was quickly sponsored by the West Point Progressive Club. They held a dance program and midnight supper at the Odd Fellows Hall.

The small mining camp of Bummerville (Bumtown) was just on the outskirts of West Point. When the area was first scouted for potential as a mining area in 1847 it was primarily a Mexican and Indian settlement. While the origination of the name Bummerville is not known, J. A. Smith had wondered publicly if it was due to the type of people the area attracted. As with many towns that have disappeared from the landscape, stories of their inhabitants and mysteries are still passed down through generations.

One such story from Smith was about a one-armed man named August Marion. According to Smith, Marion was working alone at the Water Lily gold mine as a hoist engineer when his arm became entangled in machinery. To free himself he took a jackknife from his pocket and cut off his arm.

Then there is the mystery of McCleese's hidden gold. Mrs. Golta, a onetime resident, remembers her grandfather, Bill Davis, was gold mining partners

with a man named McCleese. After accumulating approximately \$60,000 in gold nuggets the men dissolved the partnership and went their own ways. Davis turned in his gold for cash, yet local legend has it that McCleese buried his share of the gold. Over the years, many people have searched for McCleese's gold to no avail.

During its heyday Bummerville boasted several boarding houses, many homes, a general store and a small schoolhouse just outside of town. The area's profitable gold mines were the Blazing Star, Water Lily, Wide West and Matrimony.

Camp Tamarack (Onion Valley)
E Clampus Vitus,
Matuca Chapter Historical Marker:

The inscription reads: *For more than 80 years, the area was known as Onion Valley due to the profusion of wild onions growing here. It was mainly used as a summer stock range. In the late 1860–70s a sawmill was operated by C. Brown. Later a man called "Turkey" Johnson came every summer with sheep, pigs, chickens and turkeys. Once, during an early snowstorm, the turkeys took to the pines and Johnson could not get them down. Dave Filipini*

received the first land patent. Later he sold to Will & Chas. Gann who used it as summer pasturage. W.H. Hutchins built the first store in early 20s and changed the name to Camp Tamarack. His large building also housed a dance hall and saloon. After several owners and various locations, the lodge was moved to its current location by the State to make room for the present Hwy 4.

The Camp Tamarack historical marker, located on CA-4 just west of the Alpine county line in Calaveras County, was dedicated by the Clampers on August 22, 1987.

Dave Filippini held the first land patent for Onion Valley, where he ranged his beef cattle like his father Carlos Filippini had for many years before him. During the time that Carlos ran his cattle in the area the land had been federal forest reserve land, so Carlos had made no effort to acquire the land. Later Will and Charlie Gann purchased the property to use as their summer range.

The man known as "Turkey" Johnson was among the first sheep herders in the area in the 1860s. From his Onion Valley base camp, he grazed sheep over a wide area. Johnson came by his nickname honestly, as he also raised a large flock of turkeys each summer at his Onion Valley camp; the operation being overseen by his children. Local lore has it that inclement weather came early one year, prior to Turkey Johnson being able to herd his turkeys to the valley for sale or slaughter.

Apparently the turkeys took to the trees and would not set foot in the snow under any circumstances. At which point Johnson gave up turkey ranching but the moniker stuck.

W. H. Hutchins' store was originally located at Big Meadows and consisted of a canvas tent pitched on a wooden platform. Fire consumed this structure and Hutchins rebuilt in the 1920s, this time relocating his store to Onion Valley, which he renamed 'Camp Tamarack'. The new store at Camp Tamarack also housed a large dance hall with dances held every Saturday night. Unfortunately, in 1934 this store was also consumed by fire. After the fire, the Ganns sold the property to William and Ruby Bracey. In 1934 the Braceys built a store and two rental cabins. This store burnt down not long after it was built. The land and buildings then passed through a myriad of owners.

Snowfall in record amounts was recorded in Tamarack during the 1906–1907 winter. In a letter dated June 28, 1967, Grant Merrill wrote, "*Between the years of 1899 and 1911 the P. G. & E. maintained a weather station called Tamarack Station at the foot of Lower Blue Lake in Alpine County. It was at this station that the record seasonal snowfall of 73 2/3 feet was measured for the winter of 1906–1907.*"

Note: In the Tamarack–Onion Valley section the name Filippini had three different spellings throughout the many research documents utilized; Filippini, Fillippini and Filipini. Filippini is the correct spelling.

All information gleaned for this bulletin was found within the many files at the Calaveras Historical Society, and resources such as Calaveras History.org, Calaveras Enterprise and the California Digital Newspaper Collection.

Additional copies of the Las Calaveras, as well as back copies, are available for purchase at the Calaveras County Historical Society.



Camp Tamarack c. 1934, showing the Bracey's first store and rental cabins.
Calaveras Historical Society Photo.

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 \$25.00 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.

July–September 2018

New Members:

Warren & Susan Hibbs—Mountain Ranch

Roberta Bean—San Andreas
(converted to Lifetime Member)

Erle & Raelyn Winkler—San Andreas
(converted to Lifetime Member)

Burch & Chloe Schufeldt—Murphys
(converted to Lifetime Member)

Crane Souder—Wilseyville

Richard Baker—Mountain Ranch

Donations:

Robert Pentz—Cash donation

Betty Raggio—Cash donation

Ted & Peggy Dodge—Cash donation

Lee Rude—Copies of the book "Sheep Ranch of the Eighteen-Nineties"

Mary Matzek—Stephens Store Purchases
Register—1895

Crane Souder—Custom framing for archived photo