

THE MOKELUMNE HILL DITCH

By JUDGE J. A. SMITH

In order to successfully work the immense gravel deposits in the vicinity of Mokelumne Hill and Chili Gulch in Calaveras County, water for hydraulicking was necessary. A company or association of men was formed on the 16th day of November, 1852, in conformity with an act of the legislature passed April 22, 1850, under the name of Mokelumne Hill Canal and Mining Company. Its purpose was to construct a canal to convey the waters of the South Fork of the Mokelumne River to the mining and agricultural districts south and west of the said stream, to be used for mining, mechanical, agricultural, manufacturing and other purposes. The capital stock was \$150,000.00, divided into one thousand five hundred shares of one hundred dollars each.

In the first instance, the following named persons formed the association: George Spencer, Pinkaton Wade, Henry Eno, Edwin Gates, Bert Kincade, J. B. Hall, Joseph Saunders, Edwin Fletcher, James Torrens, H. Q. Clark, Thomas H. Wade, Mathew Aiken, John G. Mackey, Joseph Torrens, Hugh Murphy, A. W. Mitchell, Charles A. Clark and others.

This company constructed a ditch or canal from the stream referred to above to the vicinity of Mokelumne Hill, a distance of sixteen miles. Much of the work was done by Chinese laborers, who comprised a large part of the population of Mokelumne Hill.

In order to get lumber for the flumes on the canal, the company built its own sawmill at Glencoe upon property afterwards known as the Woodcock Ranch, which was near the present Three-Way Station.

After bringing water to Mokelumne Hill and vicinity, it was decided by the company to extend the canal to Campo Seco, a distance of approximately sixteen miles. At that

time, Campo Seco was a flourishing placer mining camp.

On January 23, 1854, the company entered into an agreement with John Andrews and Allen Cadwaller, partners, by which Andrews and Company contracted to grade a canal from near Mokelumne Hill to Campo Seco. They were to flume the canal where it was necessary for the sum of \$95,000. This extension was to be paid for within four months after completion of the canal.

In 1853, the State Legislature provided for the formation of corporations, after the date of the agreement for the Campo Seco extension, and in 1854 the Canal Company decided to incorporate.

It was incorporated under the name of the Mokelumne Hill Canal and Mining Company with the following officers: Henry Eno, president; Charles S. Potter, secretary; Robert Rogers, Wm. Innis, A. G. Lawrence, J. Shindler, and Charles K. Smith, directors.

In September, 1854, the Company entered into another agreement with Andrews and Cadwaller to construct a reservoir about one mile east of the town of Campo Seco. The reservoir was completed in October of the same year.

The expense to the company in constructing the original canal with improvements, laterals, and extensions was enormous and the company became burdened with a large debt. It tried several expedients in an effort to liquidate the indebtedness. On one occasion revenue bonds were issued for a short period. A mortgage was placed on the property, and at one time the property was leased, including the revenue therefrom.

The mortgage was given in the latter part of the year 1854 to Wade Hanson & Company, a Mokelumne Hill business firm, for a term of two years. This company became insolvent and was unable to carry out the provisions of the lease. One of its provisions being that it pay to the company the sum of \$10,000 per month.

The company was unable to meet the payments for the

Campo Seco extension and reservoir, and Andrews and Company began an action to foreclose a lien it had filed on the property.

The lien action was tried by a jury in the District Court for the Fifth Judicial District and a judgment of \$26,000 was secured by the contractors. An appeal was taken to the Supreme Court of the State and the judgment was affirmed.

The property was then ordered sold and one, J. B. Bayerque purchased the property as Trustee for Charles B. Bowman, John Bensley, H. Von Valkenberg, J. M. Easley, J. A. Peck, Nathaniel Gray, E. W. Leonard, S. Heydenfeldt, Charles Lumbard, S. Foorman, Wm. L. Dudley and John Andrews. These men had provided the money for the purchase of the property. At the time of the sale, Bayerque was the holder of the mortgage given on the property for \$50,000.

Thereafter a new company was formed called Mokelumne and Campo Seco Canal and Mining Company and the title went to the new corporation in 1859.

The new company became very active. The sawmill, that had been moved to a location one and a half miles northeast of Glencoe, was sold to David McCarty in 1862. That same year S. L. Prindle became the secretary and general manager of the company and continued in that capacity until his death in 1889. Under Prindle many improvements were made and the extensions were completed. Water was taken as far west as Chili Camp. When the railroad came to Valley Springs, water was furnished to Valley Springs and Burson. Much hydraulicking was done in and about Chili Gulch. The Gwin Mine for many years was the largest customer the company had. Power to operate the mine was from water from the ditch. A lateral was built to Central Hill and a reservoir built on the Gourley place. Water was introduced into the system from the so-called Bingham Reservoir near Railroad Flat Purchased from David McCarty in 1879. The water from this reservoir ran down the Calaveras River and was then taken into the main canal near Rich Gulch.

In 1877, in order to meet the growing demand for water, the company purchased from A. W. Harris of Sandy Gulch the old Sandy Gulch Ditch system, which was conveying water from the Middle Fork of the Mokelumne River. The water from this ditch was turned into the South Fork of the Mokelumne River above the point of diversion on the South Fork of the Mokelumne River.

Isaac Foorman secured most of the interests in the system and, after the death of Samuel Prindle, Chas. Prindle was the superintendent.

In 1907 a new corporation was formed called the Mokelumne River Power and Water Company.

The ditch flourished until Congress enacted the law which curtailed hydraulicking. This caused many of the mines to cease operation and the demand for water fell off, as did the revenue. The income was not sufficient to pay operating expenses and the ditch system became limited and in need of repair.

The company eventually was forced to make application to the Railroad Commission to discontinue service as a public utility.

While the proceedings before the Railroad Commission were pending, the towns of Mokelumne Hill, San Andreas, and vicinities, realizing that if they wished to grow they had to have an adequate supply of water, formed a district under the name of Calaveras Public Utility District. Bonds were voted and with government assistance the property was purchased. A dam was built on the Middle Fork of the Mokelumne River for storage purpose. The ditch was cleaned, new flumes installed, and water is now being furnished to the inhabitants of the District. Water is also supplied through the old Sandy Gulch Ditch to the Town of Wilseyville.

THE UNION WATER COMPANY IN 1884

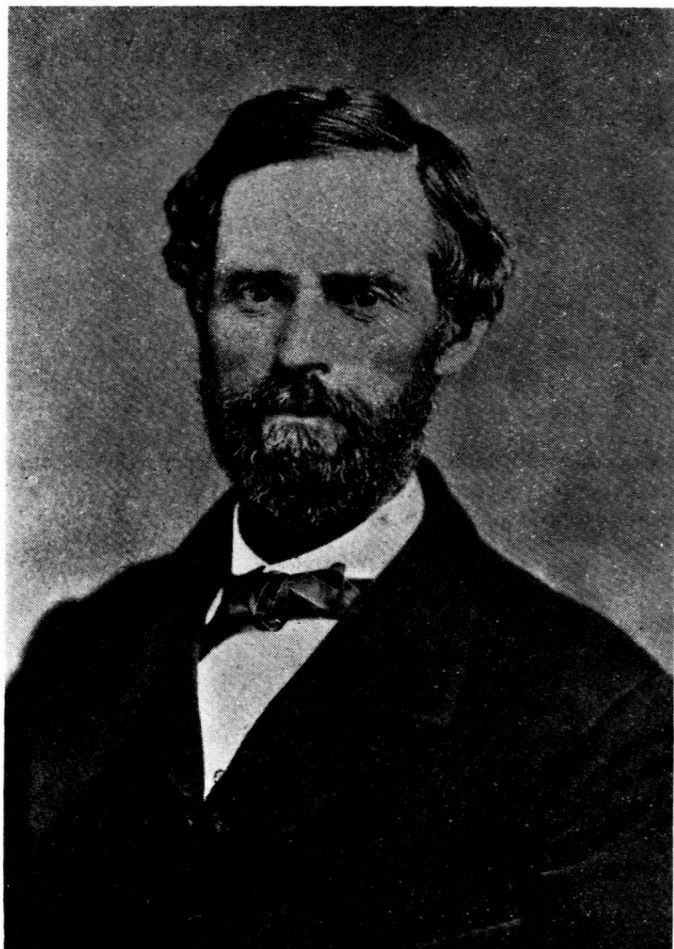
Originally Written by EPHRAIM CUTTING
as a Prospectus for the Sale of the Property

The Union Water Company of Calaveras County was incorporated May 3, 1854, under an act approved April 4, 1853, for the purpose of conveying water by a ditch and flume from the Stanislaus River and its northern tributaries above the head of the Murphys and Angels Creek. The creek bed was to be used as a channel for the conveyance. The object of the company was to use the water so conveyed for mining, mechanical, agriculture and other purposes on the ravines, rivers, gulches, flats, and hills at and adjacent to Murphys, Douglas Flat, Vallecito, Carsons, Albany Flat, Angels Camp, Cherokee Flat, Hawkeye Ranch, Foreman's Ranch, and intermediate points in Calaveras County. The capital stock of the company was to be two hundred thousand dollars and the number of shares were to be four hundred. They were to be in existence for fifty years and the principal place of business was at Murphys. The Articles of Incorporation were filed before a Notary Public on May 4, 1854.

The capital stock was subsequently increased from two hundred thousand to two hundred and sixty thousand dollars, but there was no increase made in the number of shares.

In 1884 the four hundred shares of stock were owned by the following: Ephraim Cutting, Jo Prieg, W. Thomas, W. A. Kiefer. Under this incorporation a reservoir was built near the head of the North Fork of the Stanislaus River, in what is now Alpine County, and a system of ditches constructed to carry water to the several localities named. This system was used up to 1875. On May 5, 1868, the Union Water Company bought from Morris Cohen and Isaac Levi the property known as the Calaveras County Water Company. Cohen and Levi had taken title to the property by sheriff's deed, dated March 8, 1866.

The Calaveras County Water Company was incorporated on November 1, 1856, under the act of April 14, 1853, for the purpose of conveying the waters of Griswold Creek, Beaver Creek, North Fork of the Stanislaus River, and Mill Creek by flume or ditch through the divide at the head of Coyote Creek and the Stanislaus River to such extensions, branches and reservoirs as "the company shall see fit to construct." The amount of capital stock was to be one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, divided into seventeen hundred and fifty shares with a duration of fifty



RILEY SENTER (above) was an investor in the Union Water Company ditch as well as company secretary at \$180 a month salary. He also ran a general store in Murphys for fifty years, and died there in 1902 at the age of 83.

years. The principal place of business was Vallecito.

This company constructed a system of ditches upon a lower level than that of the Union Water Company. After the purchase of the Calaveras Ditch by the Union Water Company, it was enlarged as a part of the Union Water Company system. The property as now used consists of a large reservoir at the head of the North Fork of the Stanislaus River with a capacity of 1000 inches for ninety days, thirty miles of main ditch and flume, and fifty miles of supply ditches and flumes.

The reservoir has been recently re-built. It has a fine location and takes the water from a large watershed. The dam is built of granite and lined with cement masonry to a depth of one to two feet at the point of greatest strain. The base is thirty feet and the top ten feet wide and the height is twenty-five feet. The iron trunk for the delivering of water is three by two and a half feet in size. The capacity of the reservoir could be greatly increased by raising the walls six feet. This construction could be done at compara-

tively small expense as the rock escarpments at the sides allow such increase of elevation. The length of the wall as now constructed is a thousand and forty feet, and its cost is given at \$13,927.

From the reservoir the water is conveyed down the Stanislaus River thirty miles to the main flume at Modoc Mill to which point also, the waters of Beaver Creek are brought. The water of Beaver Creek is taken out at a point below the Big Trees Creek and conveyed by flume and ditch to a point about a mile below where it is conveyed through a tunnel for two hundred feet to the Stanislaus side. The water is then conveyed through ravines and by the natural course of the river. The altitude of the tunnel above the river at the mill is eight hundred and sixty feet.

There is a good head of water for water power. The Beaver Ditch is two and a half feet deep and two feet wide with a grade of fifteen feet to the mile. The main flume begins at a point near the Modoc Mill and, for a distance of five miles, follows closely the mountain side along granite and basaltic rocks to its junction with the main ditch. The ditch then continues three miles further to the Kimball and Cutting Reservoir which also receives the water of Mill and Love creeks. The flume is two and a half by four feet in size and is made of one and a half inch lumber with underpinning of four by fours. The grade is twenty-five feet to the mile. The flume was built in 1875.

The supporting timbers in places are from twenty to twenty-five feet high for distances of fifty to a hundred feet, but generally the height is under ten feet. The ditch is in good condition and can carry two thousand inches of water safely. From the Kimball and Cutting Reservoir to the head of Coyote Creek, a distance of fourteen miles, there is about two miles of flume, generally in short pieces, but one stretch is nearly three-fourths of a mile in length. The current runs generally against the pitch of the rock which is soft lava and slate and this makes the danger from caves and washing out limited. The general grade is between fifteen and twenty-five feet to the mile and a greater fall might be obtained if needed. Three-fourths of the flume on this division could be dispensed with and a ditch substituted. At the head of Coyote Creek the water is taken in three directions to the lower county by ditch and creek, to supply Murphys, Angels Camp, Smith's Flat, Dog Town, Hawkeye Ranch, and intermediate points. Douglas Flat, Vallecito, and Carson Mill are also supplied by an extension of the ditch. The ditches are from four to five feet wide and two and a half feet deep. They are well constructed and are in good condition. The prices for irrigating water bring in ten to fifteen cents per inch as against five to ten inches per inch sold to miners. According to whether the water can be taken up again or not, there is a large area of the county that is finely adapted for fruits, especially grapes, under adequate inducements as to price and with the assurance of continued supply of water, this land could be brought under cultivation. The present sales of water (April, 1884) are fifty dollars per day. The receipts from the sale of water during the past three years have been from ten to twelve thousand dollars per year. From the present indications the receipts will be fifteen thousand dollars this year (1884).

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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.

EDITORIAL

Although the annual election of officers for the Society was held at the July dinner meeting in the Grange Hall at San Andreas, there were no changes in personnel. Louis Dominghini, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented a motion that all of the present officers of the Society be re-elected. The motion was seconded by Archie Stevenot and adopted unanimously by the members present. Therefore, our beloved President, Judge Smith, begins his eighth year as head of the Society.

The officers met at the Hunt Ranch in August to celebrate Sadie Hunt's birthday and assemble the mimeographed winning essays from the third essay contest on Calaveras History. These essays are now available for seventy-five cents a copy.

We are happy to announce that the pictorial history, STOCKTON ALBUM THROUGH THE YEARS, by our loyal Stockton member, Covert Martin, has been sent to the publishers. The publication date of December 15 has been promised by the publishers. Anyone wanting a copy of this ALBUM on Stockton which carries 250 historical pictures and over 200 pages of history, should contact Mr. Martin. This is a limited edition of one thousand copies.

(Continued from page 3)

The working force of the company consists of a secretary, superintendent, two collectors and two ditch tenders. The total payroll amounts to four hundred and twenty-five dollars per month. The estimated costs of general repairs are fifty dollars per month.

There is no question of the feasibility of a "V" flume because the nature of the country to be built through, exclusive of that now flumed, offers no difficulties in obtain-

ing any grade desired. Beaver Ridge is an open hillside and is the only portion where a grade is not already established. The necessary grade can be obtained either by an extension of the ditch beyond the present tunnel or by enlarging it and continuing the ditch on the Stanislaus side. There is plenty of water for the purpose even at the driest season of the year.

To determine the cost of such flumes, special surveys, measures, and estimates would be necessary. It is probable that for a portion of the way the flume could be made of a size to carry all the water needed by the company and then by enlarging the present ditch make it serve to carry the surplus water above that needed to transport the lumber. From such estimates as can be obtained for similar works, a flume of the necessary size can be made for not to exceed two thousand dollars per mile from the Beaver Divide to the Kimball and Cutting Reservoir and twelve to fifteen hundred dollars per mile for the remaining distance. No consideration was given to the construction of a "V" flume below Murphys and Altaville.

There is a fine growth of sugar, yellow pine and fir timber (not less than 500 million feet) easily accessible from any selected point on Beaver Creek or Big Trees Creek. East and South of this section the area of timber is large and unbroken. From the Beaver Divide the area of timber shows to fine advantage with a large amount of superior timber which is accessible from the line of Beaver Creek to a point some three or four miles above the South Grove trail. The open character of the country generally, exclusive of the precipitous sides of the Stanislaus River, which is comparatively barren of timber, makes logging so easy that even the scattering timber can be hauled profitably, and there will be no necessity for the construction of special roads.

RESOLUTIONS ON THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH KALER

WHEREAS: Death has entered our midst and removed from her earthly home our beloved member, Elizabeth Kaler of Murphys, Calaveras County, California; and

WHEREAS: We, the members of the Calaveras County Historical Society, extend to the bereaved family and friends our heartfelt and sincere sympathy; and

WHEREAS: We bow our heads in sorrow at the parting, and deplore her passing, yet we cherish her memory, treasure and appreciate her many contributions of unusual interest which delighted members and guests;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That in the passing of this lovely lady, the Society has lost one of its most outstanding members;

That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the family;

That a copy be spread upon the pages of the Society's Minute Book;

That a copy be sent to our local paper, "The Calaveras Prospect," for publication.

Signed:

R. COKE WOOD

RHODA E. DUNLAP

HATTIE E. HERTZIG

Committee