



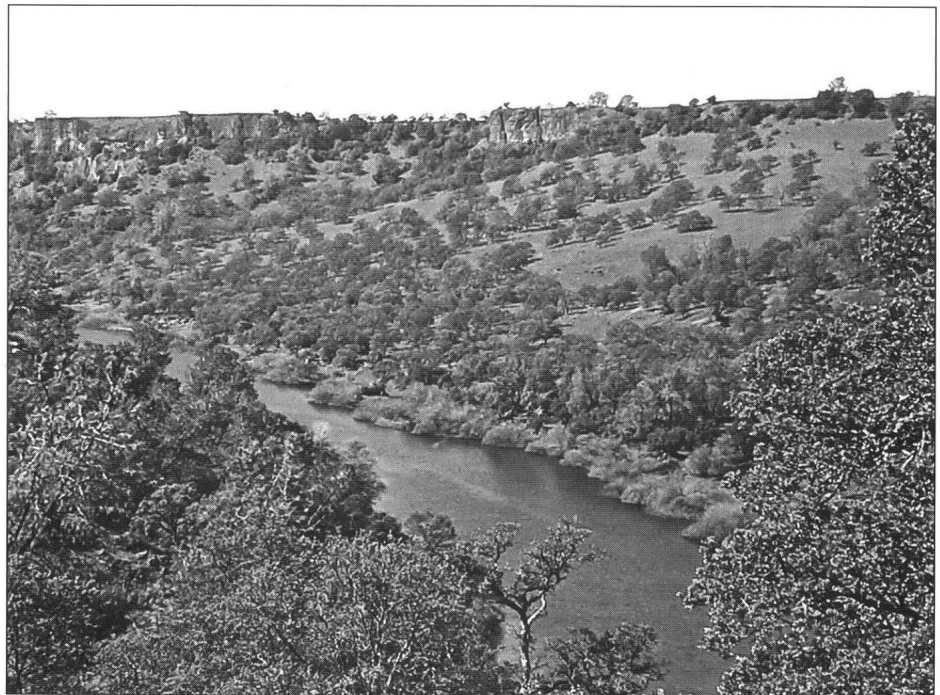
THE BOOM AND BUST AND LEGACY OF SIX MILE BAR

by Bonnie Miller

Along the southern boundary of Calaveras County, on the northern banks of the Stanislaus River, lays a remote stretch of land known as Six Mile Bar. This river-bank supported a community of a few dozen gold miners, merchants and ranchers for just a few years, yet left a legacy lasting well into this century. Today Six Mile Bar lies between the shadows of the Tulloch and Goodwin Dams, narrowly having escaped inundation. The now abandoned community has a unique place in history in Calaveras County, is adjacent to the famous Spanish Land Grant, and maintains an integral relationship with modern Stanislaus County.

The easy placer mining and the rich gravel bars drew the earliest gold seekers. Some

of the first settlements in the Gold Rush were located along this stretch of the river. The gold-bearing gravels ultimately proved to run as deep as twenty feet.



Six Mile Bar once resided on the north bank (right) of the Stanislaus River, under the dramatic shelf of Table Mountain. Viewing west from the Tulloch Dam. Photo by Bonnie Miller, April 2015.

Two miles upstream of Knight's Ferry in Stanislaus County was a gravel bar called Two Mile Bar. Six Mile Bar was located six miles upstream of Knights Ferry, hence its name. Next upstream was a small bar called Spanish Bar as it was first mined by the Chilean miners. Further up was the settlement of Scorpion Gulch. Although referenced from Knight's Ferry, these bars and gulches were past the county line and lay within the boundaries of Calaveras County.

The communities were fed by the bountiful waters from the confluence of Black Creek and the Stanislaus River. To the north runs Littlejohn's Creek almost parallel to the river. North and west of the river runs the prominent Gopher Ridge. Further to the east was the important river crossing of O'Byrne's Ferry, located under the dramatic wall of Table Mountain.

When Calaveras County was established this general area was designated at Township 8. It encompassed the other nearby gold camps such as Angels, Robinson's Ferry, Albany Flat, Copperopolis, Reynold's Ferry, Telegraph City, O'Byrne's Ferry, Scorpion Gulch, Six Mile Bar, and Carson as well.

Six Mile Bar was strategically located within the commerce of the area. The community was easily accessible in those days as it lay near several cross-roads. The O'Byrne's Ferry Road, the Copperopolis and Knights Ferry Road, and the Copperopolis and Sonora Roads all crossed the Stanislaus River at O'Byrne's Ferry and were within easy reach of

Six Mile Bar. The road and later stage connecting Knight's Ferry to Sonora ran through Six Mile Bar.

The community of Six Mile Bar constructed a small bridge over the river yet it was unable to support the demands of mining traffic inundating the foothills. Significant loads required the services of Knight's Ferry downstream, or the O'Byrne's Ferry which was established in 1852 by Patrick O. Byrnes further upstream.

The O'Byrne's Ferry proved to be an essential link in all aspects of commerce and transportation for Calaveras County and the southern mines. The ferry provided an integral link connecting eastbound traffic from the valley, or southbound traffic from Calaveras County with Tuolumne County, Sonora, Yosemite and others.

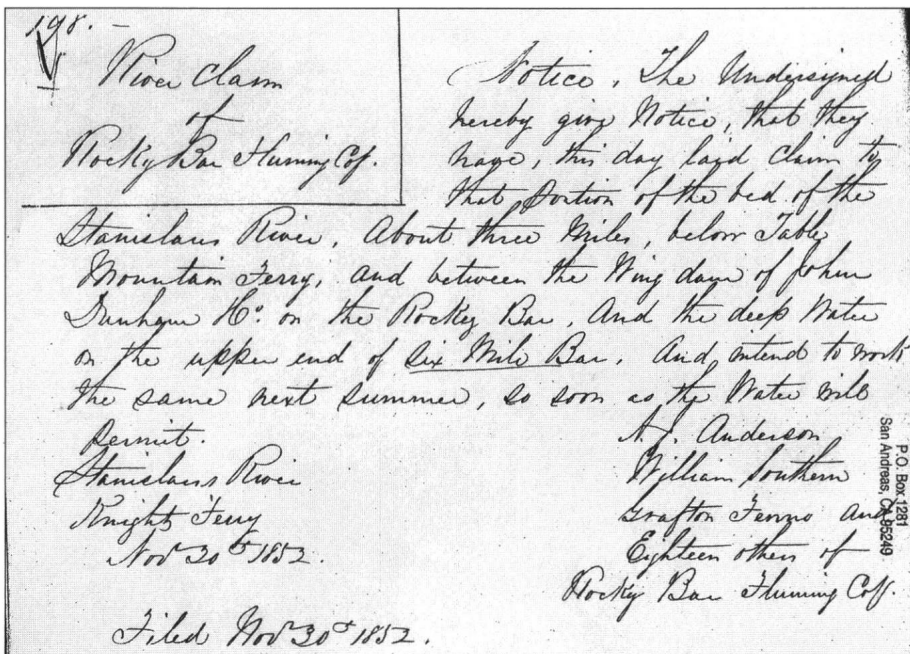
Because of its location along the important routes in the area, the residents wished to see that the roads serving Six Mile Bar were passable and desirable for transport. The community of Six Mile Bar petitioned the county to improve the road linking them to O'Byrne's Ferry and Copperopolis, and in February of 1858 the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors appointed William Daily of Six Mile Bar as the Road Overseer or commissioner for Township 8.

The county boundary lines had little influence on the miners or early residents of the gravel bars as evidenced by the fact that Six Mile Bar was named for its distance from a community in another county. The closest store to Six Mile Bar was in

Knights Ferry, and the Knights Ferry Post Office served Six Mile Bar and Scorpion Gulch, yet the residents of the smaller communities voted in Calaveras County.

The Residents of Six Mile Bar

Native Californians lived along the banks of the Stanislaus River for centuries before the arrival of the Europeans. The first Europeans were likely the Spanish explorers who eventually yielded to the Mexican rule. It was not until gold was discovered in California's streams did the area experience the boom in population.



Possibly the first claim filed on the Stanislaus River, claiming the riverbed and deep water in front of Six Mile Bar, filed by the Rocky Bar Fluming Company, 11/30/1852. Calaveras County Archives.

First the native Californians and then the miners and settlers drew their sustenance from the moody river and its shores. Every winter the river threatened to flood its banks, endangering the communities. When tame, the river provided water, abundant fishing, and the power to wash their gold. Quail were plentiful and easy to hunt. Good deer hunting could be had in the saddle to the north of Six Mile Bar, or herds could be found tucked under the rim rocks that lined the bank between Six Mile Bar and Scorpion Gulch. Wild ducks frequented the numerous natural springs.

The years 1858 to 1860 appear to have been the height of placer mining activity for Six Mile Bar. One visitor described the area as a “*succession of claims worked with ‘wheels’, elevators of water, ditches, conductors and such which so characterize the scenery of the Stanislaus River.*” He noted that the area had the sound “*...of the gratings of shovels and the sharp ringing of picks, incident to mining live.*” The 1858 census indicated about a dozen miners were living in Six Mile Bar. Within two years another half dozen Chinese miners called Six Mile Bar home. Further upstream several Chinese miners worked the tailings of Spanish Bar, yet lived on the opposite side of the river. There, every morning the Chinese crossed the river to work the north side, while the white miners crossed the river to work the south side. Each evening the miners passed each other again as they returned to their camps.

A few children were born in Six Mile Bar. We know of William John Peterson, born 18 May 1858. He was the son of German immigrants Charles and Dora Peterson. Thomas and Bertha Gatzman, also German immigrants, owned a house and lot in the community according to tax records. They had a son, Edward Gatzman, born 13 February 1860. Edward later played a prominent role in Stanislaus County Schools, serving as a member of their Board of Trustees.

Assessment records tell us that in 1858 Henry Van Horn owned a house and lot and had a successful slaughterhouse at O’Byrne’s Ferry. While at the same time, the *San Andreas Independent* reported on 15 November 1858 that residents G. L. Fisher and Thomas Gatesman (Gatzman) were both delinquent on their taxes, each of whom owned a house and lot at the time. Yet they remained in the area. Gatzman must have paid his taxes, as he expanded his holdings to include an 80 acre cattle ranch in Scorpion Gulch.

Six Mile Bar was a significant enough community within Township 8 to warrant its own election

As a mining district, Knight’s has but few superiors; her river banks and deep bars are being worked, and by the aid of the late great improvements in mining, are paying most excellent wages. The hills and gulches, for several miles around, have recently been prospected and found to contain rich deposits. The great and astonishing Table Mountain terminates here, dips into the planes, and is lost. A company of enterprising miner’s have just completed a Ditch that conveys a large stream from 6 mile Bar, to the high lands and flats in this vicinity, as well as supplying a number of localities on its line above and below the Ferry.

Description of the mining district and its potential for water from the *1856 Miners and Business Men’s Directory*.

precinct. The 1859 election records indicated that three men served as elections officials for the precinct. The *San Andreas Independent* reported on 3 September 1859 that J. Mason and W. E. Peck served as the judges for the precinct and John Buling as the inspector. The *Independent* reported on 9 August 1860 that McEnzey served as inspector, while John Tayson and W. G. Taylor served as judges. The election results posted on 20 September 1862 noted that 25 ballots were cast in the precinct. Two years later only 22 ballots were cast, apparently being the last year that Six Mile had a precinct. The following year a new precinct was opened at O’Byrne’s Ferry.

Calaveras County operated a school located between Copperopolis and O’Byrnes Ferry on the Mark McCormick Ranch. This school served the children of the surrounding ranching families and settlements along the river. This was the closest school available to the children of Six Mile Bar. (The school operated for 46 years until closing in 1921). Given the distance, it is likely that any children of Six Mile Bar were schooled at home if at all.

The Driving Commerce

Knight’s Ferry was an important community in early Stanislaus County history which in turn influenced the other gold camps up stream. Indeed, the community was so important that it served as that county’s seat for ten years. A few thousand people lived there in the earliest days of the Gold Rush, so the miners of Scorpion Gulch and Six Mile Bar traveled downstream to secure their supplies there or to read their newspaper called the *Ferry Bee*. In 1850 a

scythe purchased in Knight's Ferry cost \$85 in gold dust. Six ounces of gold dust could buy a beef cow. A laborer earned \$5 a day, while a skilled carpenter earned \$12 a day. If there was housing to be found in Knight's Ferry, a twenty-foot square building with dirt floors rented for \$500 a month.

Much of the commerce and success of Knight's Ferry was inspired by Abraham Schell. His expertise included being a Wells Fargo agent, gold assayer, lawyer, banker, builder and general benefactor of the community. Additionally he made wine and maintained a 75 acre of vineyard. His Red Mountain Winery and vineyard was likely one of the earliest established large scale agricultural enterprises in the area. His investment in the community provided much of the infrastructure that maintained its viability.

Everett's Express brought goods from Knight's Ferry, serving the communities of the north Stanislaus River: Two Mile Bar, Six Mile Bar, Scorpion Gulch, O'Byrne's Ferry, Central Ferry and Ramsey's Flat, to name a few. The express left Knight's Ferry every Wednesday and Saturday, and provided return service each Tuesday and Friday.

Within a few short years enough people were living in Six Mile Bar to justify a store of their own. Charles Peterson of New York formed a partnership with John Hubbard and John Tyson as merchants in Six Mile Bar on the first of January, 1855. Operating under the name Hubbard & Co, they conducted business in merchandising, teaming and ranching. Peterson must have been immediately successful as his name appeared in the *1856 Miner's and Business Men's Directory*. However just a year later the partnership chose to move on. In November 1857 the partnership was dissolved by mutual consent and Tyson and Peterson continued cattle ranching further east.

In April of 1859 Henry Dufrain applied to the United States Postal Service to provide postal service from Knight's Ferry to Six Mile Bar. Later that same year, on 31 October Hiram Bartels deeded to James Anderson a lot and saloon in the community. The 1860 tax records indicate a thriving commerce throughout Township 8 and a strong community for the residents of Six Mile Bar. Several homes and lots were taxed, and there were at least two saloons, two merchants and one ranch. Additionally there was a six-stamp mill processing ore. And several individuals or companies were assessed for water improvements, specifically ditches, dams and

flumes. The remnants and products of this industrious period are still evident today.

The Spanish Land Grant

Vestiges of the river's history continued to play a role in the social structure of these early settlements. Despite the Spanish influence and the gold rush, the native Californians continued to live in the area. Above Two Mile Bar was an Indian burial ground.

Two Indians got into trouble in Six Mile Bar in 1859. The *San Andreas Independent* reported a gruesome lynching on 3 September 1859. Two Indian boys were accused of having shot a peddler who subsequently died of his wounds. A vigilante group seized the boys and hung them from a tree. The corpses were further mutilated by the angry crowd.

Despite such misgivings the Indians continued to live in the area. Records indicate a "reservation" east of Gopher Ridge, and an Indian settlement near Ramsey Flat as late as 1890. (These may have been the same location with two different reference points).

It is the aura of the Spanish Land Grant that interests people still today. El Rancharia del Rio Estanislau dates back to 1843 and was named for an Indian that came from this river area. The original grant exceeded 48,000 acres running along the north side of the river. It encompassed most of the land between Knight's Ferry and Black Creek and Scorpion Gulch, which would include Two Mile and Six Mile Bars. Much of the history of this area has been memorialized in the book *El Rancharia del Rio Estanislau* by Margaret Gaylord Ruppel. Ruppel's family acquired much of the land from the grant in 1940. Approximately 11,000 acres of the original grant remains intact.

The River Sustained Them

The river sustained the communities along its banks in several ways. As late as the 1940s residents claimed that wild salmon choked the water, sometimes as many as two or three deep and weighing as much as 35 pounds. But most importantly, the river provided the water that drove the mining operations. Numerous small dams and extensive ditches and flumes redirected the river's water to more profitable enterprises.

Possibly the first "river claim" in the area was filed on 30 November 1852. The Rocky Bar Fluming Company pompously claimed for itself three miles of the river beds below Table Mountain and all of the deep water fronting Six Mile Bar.

The year 1855 proved to be a difficult one as the communities struggled against the whims of the river. Spring runoffs caused damage to several of the water ditches. Abraham Schell provided the necessary financial assistance to conduct repairs. Later that year, the *Sacramento Daily Union* reported on 1 August 1855 that a fire occurred at Six Mile Bar on July 28th. The fire destroyed all of the lumber and tools of the Jenny Lind Fluming Company for a loss of \$2500.

Historian Roger Werner has noted several accounts of extensive tunnels in the Table Mountain area, notably one called the Calaveras Tunnel. He believes the first use of hydraulic mining on the Stanislaus River occurred here as described by the *San Joaquin Republican* on 24 April 1856. The *Republican* again reported promising quartz leads at Six Mile Bar on 19 March 1857.

Tax Assessment records for the year 1858 tell us that the San Joaquin County Water Company operated a ditch taking water from the Stanislaus River. The ditch commenced at Spanish Bar two miles above Six Mile Bar and ran to the county line on Yours Hill near Knights Ferry. It was valued at \$6000. Another ditch and flume in Township 8, was known as the Stanislaus Water Ditch, valued at \$10,000. Much of this waterway included what was referred to as the "hanging flume", the wooden flume that was suspended above the river, taking a circuitous route toward the northwest. Many decades later the routes of those wooden flumes can still be traced by the trail of nails littering the hillside.

Two years later Henry Truett was assessed for a twelve mile ditch he was credited with building. This ditch conveyed water from Littlejohn's Creek. Yet another miner, known as Lane, damned a portion of Littlejohn's Creek and created a reservoir. He charged miners so much gold dust for a "miner's inch" of water (a flow of about 8.5 gallons per minute).

In 1861 the Stanislaus Water Company ditch from Six Mile Bar to the county line was valued at \$2500. That same year the San Joaquin Water Company was also assessed for a mining ditch at Six Mile Bar, valued \$5000. Yet another report indicates that the company's improvements could have valued \$8000. The ditch provided water to the Stanislaus

*Six Mile Bar Calaveras County
State of California*

We the undersigned do hereby certify that we have associated ourselves together as a Corporation for the building of a Flume and other Mining purposes, to flume a portion of the River Stanislaus, said Flume commencing at the Dam made by, and belonging to, the San Joaquin Ditch Co. said Dam being situate at or near Six Mile Bar on the river Stanislaus, and running thence along said river to the Dam known as Casperman's Dam - being its point of termination - that the name or designation of said Corporation is: the Stanislaus River Fluming and Mining Co. - and that the Capital stock of said Co. is the sum of Thirty Thousand Dollars - - and is divided into Sixty Shares -

The period of time for which said Corporation is formed is Twenty-five Years - The number of Trustees of said Co. is Three and the following are the names of the Trustees who will manage its affairs for the first Three Months: to Wit: W. C. Jones S

Articles of Incorporation of the Stanislaus River Fluming and Mining Company, filed for Six Mile Bar on 2/10/1859. Calaveras County Archives, Box 115.

County line. Up at Tyson's Flat the cliffs of Table Mountain rise above the river. Iron rods hold 1200 feet of a wooden flume suspended from the cliffs.

The 1861 assessment for F. McKenzie indicates extensive agricultural improvements at Six Mile Bar. He maintained a house and lot, a fenced five acre orchard, a butcher shop and slaughterhouse. That year he noted his holdings to include 25 hogs, three horses and a mule. Interest in the river was changing from mining operations to developing agricultural concerns and exploiting a water resource. Then the following year the river experienced one of its greatest floods.

The flood of 1862 caused significant damage to the riverbanks and the miners' improvements. Few people recovered from the devastation. After the flood David Tulloch of Knight's Ferry purchased the devastated flour mill and rebuilt it. His son Charles subsequently inherited the mill and operated it with water from the Knight's Ferry Ditch.

This was the ditch originally built by miners to divert water from the Stanislaus River near Six Mile Bar. Later young Tulloch constructed a hydro-electric power plant adjacent the old flour mill. This was the first power plant on the Stanislaus River. Initially it provided power to the community of Knight's Ferry, then extended on to Oakdale and eastern Modesto. Eventually this plant provided power upstream as well back to the Alta Mine and the asbestos mine and on into Copperopolis and beyond.

Although mining at Six Mile never thrived again, the *Copperopolis Courier* reported on 7 October 1865 that investors were still regarding Six Mile Bar as viable for mining. As stamp mills were being constructed around the Copperopolis area, samples from Six Mile continued to be assayed for their potential, showing positive results. Yet earlier that year nearby, tax liens had been placed on the Scorpion Gulch Mining Company. Still enough residents clung to the banks of the river to justify continuing traffic and the road remained an important thoroughfare. Indeed, a young Chinese man born that year in Knight's Ferry drayed merchandise from Knight's Ferry, through Six Mile and on to Scorpion Gulch and the Alta Mine until 1914.

The Altered Landscape

The Stanislaus River spawned numerous enterprises such as the Stanislaus River and Tunnel Manufacturing Company, Stanislaus River Fluming and Mining Company, the San Joaquin Water Company, the Central Water

From the Stockton Independent of Tuesday, we learn the following sad facts:

The flood of Friday, Saturday and Sunday were terribly disastrous to life and property all along the Mokelumne, Calaveras, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced and San Joaquin rivers.

The Stanislaus was fifteen higher at Knight's Ferry on Saturday than in the flood of 1852.

The towns of Don Pedro's Bar and Jacksonville, on the Tuolumne, have been completely washed away; and when we hear from the lower valleys of the Tuolumne and Merced, the fear is that the word will be, "All is gone!"

The entire plains between Stockton and the San Joaquin was one vast lake. The flouring mill and bridge at Knight's Ferry have been carried away; and fully one half the town with everything the houses contained, went down the current. The waters rose so fast that the people had only time to run to the hill in the rear to save their lives. Tom, a restaurant keeper, was drowned.

At Two-Mile Bar, a man by the name of Proctor, while busily engaged in removing the goods from Mr. Flowers' store, floated down stream with the building, the latter having left its foundation without giving him any opportunity to save himself. He climbed on the roof of the house, and was seen from the bank in a praying attitude, and as the house was about going down the canon, he waved a farewell with his hat. There was no possible hope for his life, as he must have been dashed to pieces with the building. Another man was missing, supposed to have been drowned.

Byrne's ferry-boat was fastened in the stream, the water extending a half a mile on each side, and the boat was occupied by three families who were driven out of their houses by the flood, and had been on board twenty-four hours, unprovided with anything to eat.

The Calaveras Chronicle described the 1862 floods that ravaged the banks of the Stanislaus River. Calaveras Chronicle, 2/1/1862.

Ditch, the Stanislaus Water Company, the San Joaquin Land and Water Company, and the Stockton Table Mountain Tunnel and Mining Company. As late as 1890 ditches from Littlejohn's Creek were still being expanded.

Water ultimately proved to be the most precious commodity for the gravel bars of the Stanislaus River. Water was so important to the community of Knight's Ferry that descendants of their pioneers insisted in 1929 that each grave in their cemetery be supplied with a source of water.

The flumes and ditches that drew water from the river for mining also turned that water into electricity, as well as providing agricultural/irrigation water. The first ditches from Six Mile Bar were the impetus for the subsequent Oakdale Irrigation District. The water systems built from mining were the basis of Stanislaus County's modern irrigation and water supply systems. In 1897 the old (first) Tulloch dam was built.

The year of 1862 was momentous for the miners of the foothills and residents of all of California. Record rainfalls caused damaging floods across the gold country. In January of 1862 more than 30 inches of rainfall was recorded. The subsequent floods on the Stanislaus River swept away the mill and

bridge at Six Mile Bar. Downstream, the store at Two Mile Bar was completely destroyed and carried away by the raging waters. The store was reputed to have been swept away with a safe full of gold dust that has never been recovered.

The communities of the mining bars along the Stanislaus River were inundated and destroyed

by the raging waters. Where Six Mile Bar once housed miners, one can still see where the road once meandered, where the stage faithfully passed by. Today the only other evidence of that former community are the chimneys and rock foundations, and miles of rock walls that still cling to the riverbank. The land is no longer divided into communities and taxed as individual lots, but all lies together under one ownership in one parcel contiguous with the old Spanish Land Grant.

Most of the town of Knight's Ferry, including all of its Chinatown, were destroyed in the flood. Knight's Ferry had boasted of a sturdy bridge that had supplanted the need for a ferry crossing. That bridge held tight to the riverbanks during the flood until it was knocked from its foundation by another bridge from upstream that rammed against it. That floating bridge was likely the less significant Two Mile Bar bridge.

Knight's Ferry rebuilt their bridge in a higher location the following year, and it still stands. Today it is distinguished as being the longest covered bridge west of the Mississippi. The Army Corps of Engineers operates the bridge as a National Recreation Area, while the community itself is designated a California Historical Landmark.

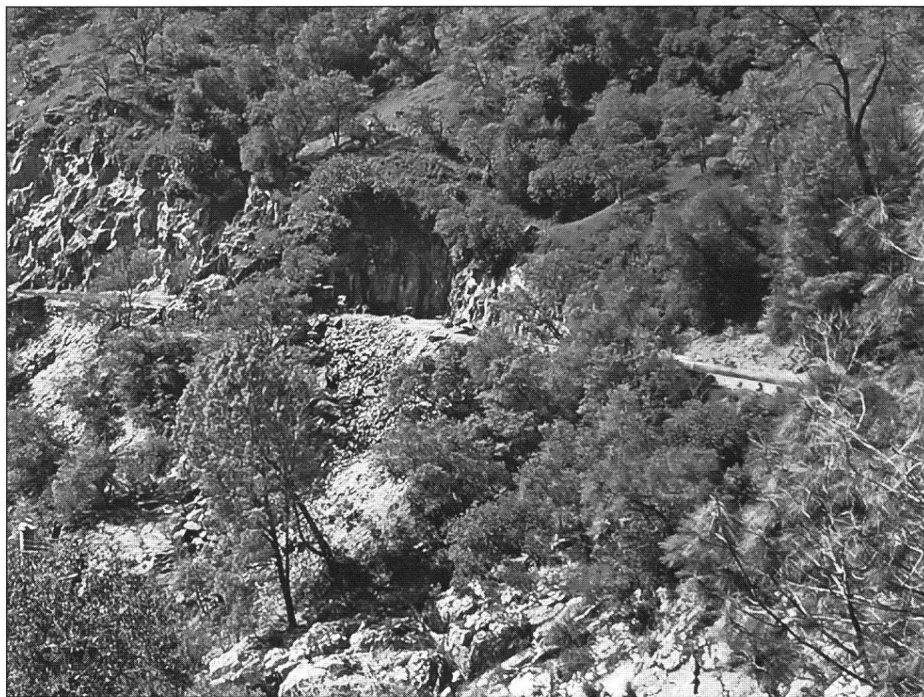
At one time Scorpion Gulch was rumored to yield one ounce of gold per panful, which would have been extraordinary. The drainage continued to produce gold and was the site where the profitable Alta Mine was later established. Yet most other south western Calaveras communities along the Stanislaus River slowly converted to cattle ranching or other agricultural purposes. Six Mile Bar never held more than a few dozen miners at its peak. It didn't see the huge influx of thousands of Argonauts like some camps did. Rather the inhabitants of the bars chose to mine California's other golden product: water.

In 1862 the river had fought back. The record floods across California

wiped out many bridges and riverside settlements that never fully recovered, and Six Mile Bar was one of them.

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Evidence of tunnels (center), ditches and flumes (left and right) can still be seen alongside the river today. Many of the ditches and flumes are still in use, carrying water toward other purposes. Photo by Bonnie Miller, April 2015.

Calaveras County Historical Society

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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.

April–June, 2015

New Members:

Kathey Dietrich—Mokelumne Hill
Pat Morales—Mountain Ranch
Ron & Linda Eberhardt—Angels Camp
Lorraine Schultz—Tuolumne
Linda Owens—Valley Springs
Victor & Elaine Lara—Valley Springs
Patricia James—Angels Camp
Steven Cilenti—San Andreas
Lisa (Hatler) Curtoni—Farmington
Nancy Hiteshew—Valley Springs

Donations:

Anne Bell—Photos of her father, Bud Bowman and a cash donation
Patricia Putnam Morrow—Original art work "Mountain Ranch Post Office" watercolor #34/100 from the estate of Rear Admiral Ira D. Putnam & Rosemary Putnam
Keith Tallia—Replica of mining headframe
John Gibson—Frogskins from 1948 and 1963, Calaveras County Fair letterhead from 1952
Mrs. B. A. Raggio—Cash donation
John & Michele Rugo—Cash donation
Erich & Paulie Sender—Cash donation in honor of Rosemary Faulkner's birthday
Ted & Rosalie Shannon—Cash donation
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