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## CALAVERITAS, A LIVING LINK WITH THE PAST

While pausing to rest his team of oxen, William Workman of Angels Camp, in the fall of 1850, discovered gold in a tributary of O'Neil Creek and almost overnight the mining camp of Upper Calaveritas was born.

Workman's strike was not the first gold discovery in central Calaveras County, or for that matter, on O'Neil Creek.

When American gold seekers arrived in the spring of 1848 in what was to become Calaveras County, they found Mexican miners already panning gold on San Andreas Creek.

By early 1850 miners were sluicing rich pay dirt around a wild, rip-roaring tent settlement which became known as Lower Calaveritas, that had sprung

Please see **CALAVERITAS**, pg. 32

## RICH IN HISTORY, FRICOT CITY FACES UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The discovery of gold in California with its promise of quick riches triggered an instant migration of eager Europeans.

And nowhere was the news more alluring than to the citizens of France, whose country, following the Revolution of 1848, had sunk into deep economic depression.

In September, 1850, at the height of the gold excitement, Jules Fricot with his friends Andre Chavanne and Chavanne's brother, Louis, embarked from France on the sailing ship *Les Medicis*, bound for the California gold fields.

Six months later, in March 1851, Fricot and the Chavanne brothers landed at the foot of San Francisco's Montgomery Street and within days were headed for the rich placer diggings along the Yuba River.

Their first mining was at Rich Bar, on the South Fork of the Yuba, but later, upon hearing of the discovery of gold bearing quartz veins at Grass Valley, they moved to that area.

Well educated and industrious, with an eye for business opportunities, Fricot and the Chavannes set up a custom stamp mill in Boston Ravine. They crushed ore for prospectors and owners of small mines in what soon became known as the "French Mill."

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Today, Fricot City complex might easily be mistaken for some small, exclusive college campus.

**FRICOT**, cont. from pg. 29

It was during that period, as he became a leader in the mining business and affairs of the area, that Jules Fricot acquired the nickname of the "Emperor."

The Chavanne brothers, involved in other enterprises, soon left the mill partnership, but Fricot continued to operate the mill until 1864 or 1865 when he bought from a Frenchman named Lemarque, the Eureka Mine which proved to be the beginning of the famed Idaho-Maryland ledge.

On December 11, 1865, at age 48, Jules Fricot married Elizabeth Jane Jenkins, of Grass Valley. From that marriage two children, one of them Desire' Fricot, the builder of Calaveras County's famed Fricot City complex, would be born.

Desire' Fricot was born in Paris on April 4, 1868, while his parents were visiting France. And, since both parents were American citizens, the infant's birth was immediately recorded at the U.S. Consulate in Paris.



**Desire' Fricot**

Desire's sister, Marie, was born some two years later. Both children received the majority of their educations in France. Desire's schooling was at the Lycee Louis LeGrand, in France, and later he studied mining engineering at the Sorbonne.

During that period his father's old friend and former mining partner, Andre Chavanne, who had become successful in quartz mining operations around Grass Valley, became involved in the late 1870's in a mine at Sheep Ranch, in Calaveras County.

The mine, which he called the Chavanne, was an extension of the famous Sheep Ranch Mine, and with him to Calaveras County came Jules Fricot and his family.

When not attending school in France, young Fricot lived with his parents in Sheep Ranch and prowled the hills of Calaveras County.

In the early eighties Chavanne sold his mining interest in Sheep Ranch to Haggin, Tevis and Hearst, owners of the Sheep Ranch Mine, and he and Jules Fricot returned to the Grass Valley area.

Jules Fricot died in Paris, France, at age 72, on August 27, 1889.

His son, upon completing his education in France, returned to the U.S., and in 1893, at age 24, entered into a partnership in the Independence Mine, in Grass Valley, with Andre Chavanne. This relationship continued until Chavanne's death in 1897.

But despite his financial and other interests, both domestic and abroad, (he spoke five languages; English, French, German, Spanish and Italian) Desire' Fricot never lost his fascination with Calaveras County which he had acquired as a youth at Sheep Ranch.

As a result of his attachment to the Calaveras area, Fricot took title during the 1890's to eight patented mining claims comprising several hundred acres along the crest of towering, San Antone Ridge.

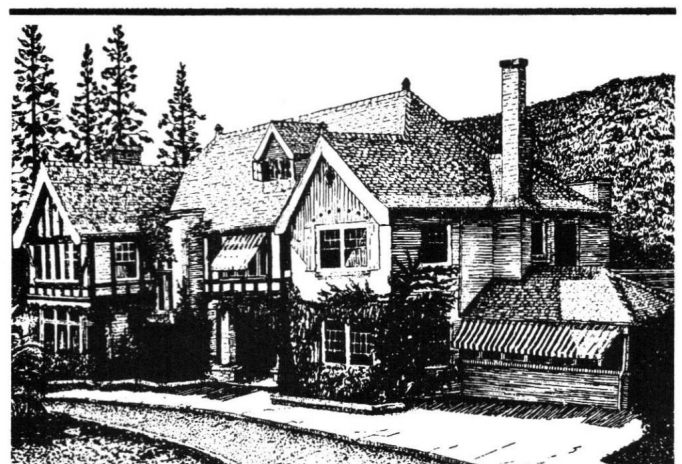
These claims, the Philadelphia, New Orleans, Oswego, Albany, Rochester, Governor Davis, Columbus and XXth Century, along with the Idaho, Mountain Girl and Grace Darling, to which he later was to acquire patent, made up the bulk of the 1,090 acres that was to become Fricot City.

On Nov. 10, 1898, Desire' Fricot married Lillian Eichelroth, daughter of pioneer Doctor William Eichelroth, of Sonora. Judge Gottschalk, in whose San Andreas home the young couple originally had met, united them in marriage.

Dawn of the new century found Fricot and his bride living in the palatial home he had built in 1897 on his land on San Antone Ridge.

Fricot's sister, Marie, now Mrs. George A. Berton, was enjoying the metropolitan life of San Francisco, but Desire' seemed always happiest in his rural

Please see **FRICOT**, pg. 37



**THE FRICOT MANSION** — Desire' Fricot selected this pen and ink drawing for his personal note paper.

## A SOUTHERN LADY RETURNS TO THE MOTHER LODGE

By Marie Kettler Conway

AT GRAVESIDE — The epitaph should have read: "MARIE AGOSTINI KETTLER: NATIVE DAUGHTER OF THE GOLDEN WEST — She loved California and cheated at cards."

I had to smile to myself because memories of a grandmother I had never met, surfaced with warm and humorous anecdotes.

Grandmother became a reality to me about seven years ago when a gentle prodding inside sent me in the direction of Northern California to study acting and dig at some family roots.

She was born in 1876 in Old Gulch outside of San Andreas, a rustic mining town in California's Mother Lode.

The Old Gulch settlement is no longer there except for a remnant, a fireplace, or an artifact that remains of the French-Corsican immigrants who set up house-keeping and where their first generation of Californians was born.

Marie, a raven haired beauty, was one of four sisters and a brother whom I speculate moved from Old Gulch to San Andreas. Grandmother always claimed San Andreas as her home and it was possibly there that she met and married Judge Charles Kettler from Alabama who was living in Angels Camp and practicing law with another attorney named Hawley.

Evidently Grandfather had followed the call of the West and the romance it promised. For him it was Marie, and it was perhaps his ability to play the piano coupled with his Southern gentleman's charm that wooed her away from the place she loved so well.

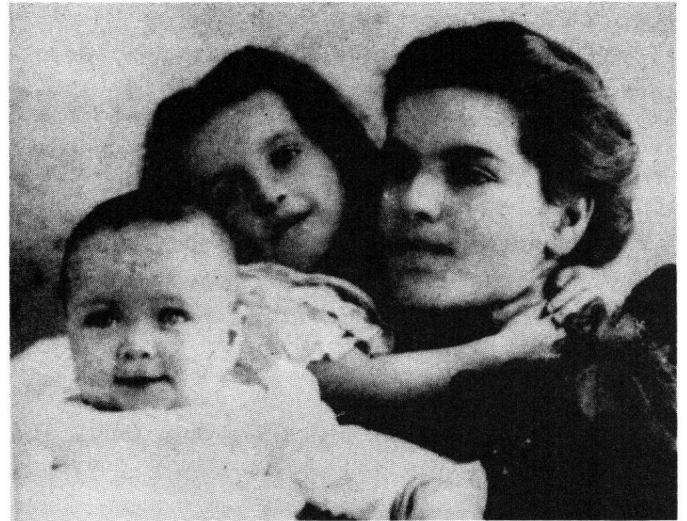
They left California and moved south, to his Alabama and another small town, Luverne, where six children eventually were born to them; the youngest was my father.

Dad adored his mother, even when she reprimanded him for raising his voice to his young wife, my mother. Because of her siding, an unspoken bond grew between the two women as did Mother's affection for her.

The lady had so many endearing qualities that even her one flaw, her one diabolical San Andreas fault worked in her favor. She cheated at cards.

Teamed against my parents, Grandmother and Mother's brother Sam cheated like Mississippi gamblers. There were cards under the table and up their sleeves. They always came up with the aces and Dad never suspected foul play.

True to the Wild West in her blood, Marie Agostini



**Marie Agostini Kettler at age 26 with daughter Mildred and son, John Frank.**

never gave it away. Neither did my mother.

Grandmother loved music and on one occasion, wearing one of her expensive hats, went to hear Paderevski. Hats and music were her weaknesses and had she not been a small town lady, one might have found her basking in San Francisco society, its operas, symphonies and theater.

When Grandfather died, Grandmother was left with debts which had resulted from his speculation in Florida land grants, a venture in which he lost most of his fortune.

Grandmother spent many years as a school teacher repaying the debts and probably teaching Alabama school children the correct Western pronunciation of such words as Colorado or Nevada.

Dad remembers that one of her favorite expressions was that she wouldn't give a "copper" when two cents of his unsolicited opinion was interjected. And those precious coppers were what she was saving to return to her beloved Northern California.

"And how she wanted to go back," Mother recalls; but while visiting my parents in Tennessee, unexpectedly, she died in my Dad's arms. Dad still gets misty when he retells the story, the long train ride back to Alabama on Thanksgiving Day. The lady from San Andreas didn't make it home to California.

Yet, I suspect the Hand of Destiny corrects the oversights... in a way, Marie Agostini did return.

It was the autumn of 1985 that the author of this story, her namesake and a would-be third generation Californian, took her memory and portion of her dream back to San Andreas.

Please see **SOUTHERN LADY**, pg. 32

**CALAVERITAS**, cont. from pg. 29

up on O'Neil Creek about a mile downstream from where Upper Calaveritas later would be located. Further west, near the confluence of O'Neil and Willow Creeks, where Highway 49 now crosses O'Neil, was Yaqui Camp, reputedly even tougher than Lower Calaveritas: "the hangout of cut-throats and thieves."

But the heyday of these camps was brief, and while Upper Calaveritas prospered, Lower Calaveritas and Yaqui Camp joined the ranks of the Mother Lode's ghost camps. Today, hardly a trace of them remains.

By 1853 Calaveritas was a well established community with a business area along its main street that included at least one livery stable, several stores, two butcher shops, town hall, restaurants, saloons and fandango houses.

Like Lower Calaveritas, Upper Calaveritas during its early years had a heavy Mexican population, and a considerable number of Chinese lived along the creek at the west end of town.

The first permanent structure in Upper Calaveritas

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**SOUTHERN LADY**, cont. from pg. 31

I saw the same hills she had seen, and stood on the same ground where she and others of my lineage had lived and worked. Somehow I found myself led to those places as if a guiding hand were ordering my steps. I found lovely people who had known of my family in a personal way, and others I would come to regard as friends. Accident, this is? No, indeed.

(FOOTNOTE...)

After flying 2,000 miles across country and driving another 150, I checked into a San Andreas motel with the intention of finding the Agostini Block, located somewhere in the central area of town.

Having little success, frustration mounting, I drove to Angels Camp hoping to find a lead, and there I struck gold.

The Agostini Block, I was told, was located in the area of the Black Bart Inn, in San Andreas.

Arriving back in San Andreas like a bloodhound hot on a scent, I tracked down Mr. Don Cuneo, owner of the Black Bart Inn.

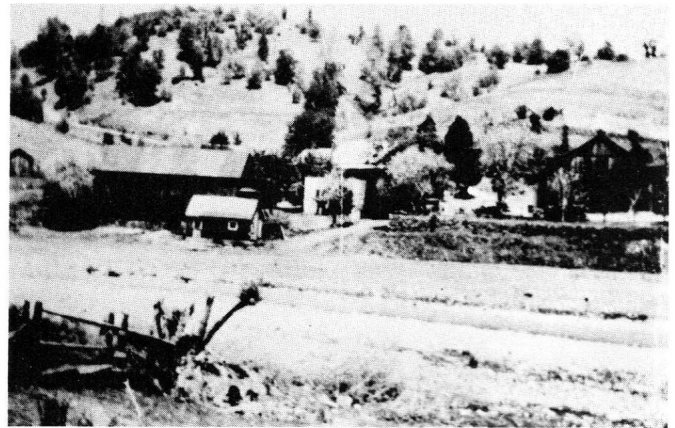
It seemed, he informed me, with a curious expression on his face, that I was standing on the Agostini Block. Without any previous knowledge of its location, I had slept on the very property which had formerly belonged to my family, and adjacent to the site where Aunt Rosa's store had once been located...

Marie Conway

was said to be an adobe building built by Mexicans, which served as a trading post. Many years later it was owned by John Bacigalupi and it still was standing in 1937.

Another early merchant was John Sharp who constructed a store building and operated it until after most of the town was destroyed by fire. Sharp then sold the business to Luigi Costa. Costa earlier had operated a store on the south side of O'Neil Creek where the John Bacigalupi home later was built.

Although by 1858 most of the area along O'Neil Creek had been worked out, new discoveries had been



**Looking north, across O'Neil Creek in Calaveritas about 1920. Large building on left is Costa dance hall. In center is Costa store and home with Charley Dietz blacksmith shop in foreground. Large building on right is barn for 20 horses.**

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made on higher ground. Miners were engaged in working these high channels and Calaveritas still was a booming settlement and trade center.

Saloons, fandango halls and gambling joints operated round-the-clock and the infamous bandit, Joaquin Murietta before his death at the hands of California Rangers, was said to have often frequented the Upper Calaveritas pleasure palaces.

And, it was allegedly a gambling dispute that on Aug. 3, 1858, triggered the disaster from which Upper Calaveritas never fully recovered. At 2 a.m. that morning a gambler named Shelton who had become angered during a card game, reportedly torched a vacant building beside the gambling establishment where he had lost his dust.

A total of 51 buildings — virtually everything on the north side of O'Neil Creek, was leveled by the flames, at a loss in excess of \$35,000, said the Calaveritas Independent of Aug. 8, 1858.

A list of the owners of the destroyed buildings and

the amount of their losses included: Sharp & Co., \$4,300; George Schultz & Co., \$3,500; Morris Murphy, \$4,500; L. Hornstein, \$2,500; Don Miguel Arseva & Co., \$3,000; Giobatto-Julio, \$2,500; Giobatto-Rombada, \$2,500; Orrego & Co., \$1,100; F.M. Shirley, \$1,000; J.B. Bartlett, \$1,000; A. Hopper, \$500; N.T. Norcross, \$600; Ramon, \$200; Zuniga, \$800; J.E. Friese, \$150.

Other losses included Paris & Co., \$600; A. Freidberger, \$150; G.W. Davis, \$320; James Bennett, \$800; Romeres, \$200; Comeres & Co., \$600; Phil Hudgkins, \$100; Welson, \$500; Bordelli, \$250; Jos. Lopez, \$350; A. Hinery & Co., \$300; Donna Manuela, \$350; Sam'l Dawden, \$500 and S.C. Bacon, \$350.

The only buildings on the north side which were not reduced to ashes, said the Independent, was the fire-proof building of Mons. Comeres and the John Sharp Store he later sold to Luigi Costa.

Although the gambler named Shelton was blamed for setting the fire, there was no information as to whether he was ever formally charged with arson or brought to trial for the alleged crime.

Mining continued in the area, but the burned out section of the settlement was never rebuilt, and from that day, Calaveritas ceased to be a major trade center.

Luigi Costa purchased Sharp's store about 1860 and operated it until 1905.

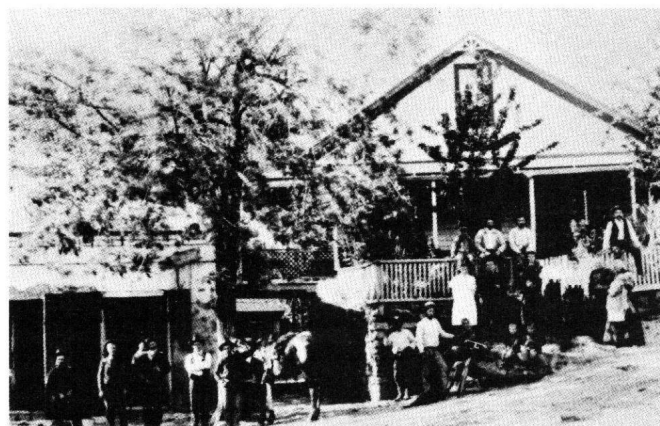
The Old Costa store and the Costa home, now the property of his granddaughter, Louise Greenlaw, stand almost in the shadow of the 80-foot-high wooden trestle that until not too many years ago, carried huge, rumbling trucks that hauled limestone from Calaveras Cement Company's Quarry Four to its cement plant, south of San Andreas.

The gracious old home in which Mrs. Greenlaw now lives, originally was built on San Antone Ridge, east of Fricot City.

Luigi Costa, around 1890, tore the house down, numbering each board, and rebuilt it on the foundations of the Costa home which had earlier been destroyed by fire.

During the 1880's and into the 1890's, miners still were sluicing and hydraulicing on the hillsides around Calaveritas with water supplied through the Ide-Terwilliger Ditch. These miners included Henry P. Angel, founder of Angels Camp, and his partner, Henry O'Dell, who were working a piece of old gravel channel near Burnham's on the South side of San Antone Ridge. The pit in which they mined can still be seen on the hillside below the present Buck Garrett home.

The Calaveritas Hill Hydraulic Mine, located on the north side of San Antone Ridge, overlooking Calaver-



**Costa family and friends. On far right is Nick Costa, son of Luigi and Carlotta Costa. Second from left is Dave Catamartori; and third on left is believed to be Frank Cuneo, owner of store at San Antone Camp. Girl in white pinafore is Rose Costa Cuneo beside her mother, Carlotta Costa and sisters, Columbia Costa O'Connel, Amelia Costa Bacagalupi and Mary Costa Queirolo.**

itas, also was operating. This diggings, originally called the Baldwin Mine, operated until 1914 when the California Debris Commission ordered it closed because its operators would not repair its broken tailing dam. The mine, which is on the old Fort Mountain Channel, reopened in 1936, but shut down again prior to the start of World War II.

The families which in 1900 were living in Calaveritas included the Bacigalupis whose home was on the south side of O'Neil Creek and the Costas, Cademartoris, Trenques and Luigi DeMartinis who lived on the North side.

A half mile upstream, on the north side of the creek was the Drury Ranch with its orchard and alfalfa field. The site of the ranch now is covered by waste from the cement company's Quarry Four.

The old adobe fandango hall where Joaquin Murietta and his gang once reveled — which still was standing at mid-century — now is gone, victim of the elements and of time.

Across the creek in a cemetery identified only by scattered rose bushes long ago gone wild, forgotten gold seekers lie in unmarked graves. On a hill on the north side of the creek is another forgotten graveyard where Mexican miners are buried.

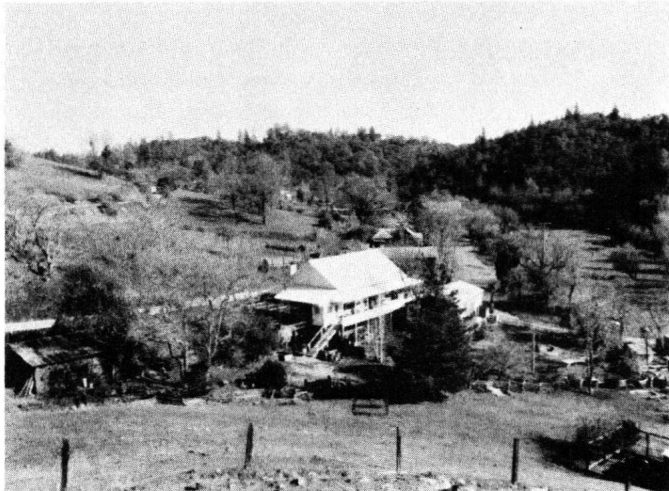
But over the years Calaveritas has changed little. It remains one of the Mother Lode communities that time seems to have passed by — that still has about it

Please see **CALAVERITAS**, pg. 34

**CALAVERITAS**, cont. from pg. 33  
the feel of California's gold country.

Presently, eight families including Louise Greenlaw and her brother Fred Cuneo, grandchildren of Luigi Costa, live in their old Calaveritas townsite.

They expect that change will continue to come slowly to Calaveritas, and that is the way they like it.



**Old town of Calaveritas as it appears today.**

### **JAMES VALENTE 1905-1987**

Former Angels Camp mayor, city councilman and longtime historical society member James Valente passed away Jan. 19, at age 82, in his home in that city.

He had served as an elected member of the Angels Camp City Council for 40 years prior to his retirement in 1972, and tragically, his death came just one week before he would have seen his city celebrate the 75th anniversary of its incorporation. He served as mayor from 1968 to 1972.

A native of Murphys, "Jimmy" as he was known to his myriad friends, spent 37 years in the banking business in Angels Camp and his interest in the history and well-being of that city and of Calaveras County was unflinching.

Valente was among the Angels Camp city councilmen who helped initiate and promote the campaign to establish the Angels Camp Museum and preserve its



fine collection of wagons, carriages and other horse-drawn rolling stock.

Until recent years when failing health curtailed his activities, he was an active member of the Angels Gun Club, Angels Boosters Club and a director of the Calaveras County Fair and other organizations.

### **DESIRÉ FRICOT WANTED THEM TO TELL IT STRAIGHT**

Desire' Fricot loved Calaveras County and its people and treasured it as a place to live, but he was quick to quash any belief that the county had played a role in the amassing of the Fricot fortune.

Fricot believed in telling it like it was.

His predilection for truth and accuracy was demonstrated in his response to a February, 1917, story in the Calaveras Prospect which erroneously attributed Jules Fricot's wealth to mining operations at Sheep Ranch during the 1870's.

The article went on to state that Jules Fricot while in Calaveras County, had lived on San Antone Ridge.

In a correction published the following week on demand of Desire' Fricot, the Prospect quoted Fricot as stating: "My father never came to Calaveras until 1879. He never resided on San Antone Ridge but at Sheep Ranch; and above all things he never made a nickél in Calaveras.

This county has cost my father and myself considerable money without ever bringing anything in return. This fact I would like you to publish in your next issue."



**Chavanne Mine, on south end of Sheep Ranch Ledge. It became part of the Sheep Ranch Mine.**

## THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE WERE KEPT WELL OILED IN 1854 MURPHYS COUTROOM

*(From the unpublished manuscript of Frances Bishop)  
(History of the Murphys and Angels Union Water Co.)  
(All Rights Reserved)*

The Union Water Company, forerunner of today's Union Public Utility District, was established in 1851 and by 1853 was delivering water to Murphys and extending service toward Vallecito and Angels Camp.

Water was carried to the Angels area by the company's North Ditch which followed approximately the same route as today's Utica Ditch. However, in late 1853 or early 1854 Mark Torrey & Co., a mining enterprise, constructed a dam across Angels Creek to divert water into a ditch of its own, upstream from the Union Ditch Company's North Ditch diversion.

As a result, the dispute went to court in 1854 to establish who held prior claim to the water rights and to determine if the Union Water Company had broken the Torrey & Co. dam.

The subsequent court proceedings herein vividly described, are taken verbatim from the diary of Capt. Leonard Withington Noyes, a member of the jury.

(Diary made available, courtesy of Duncan Phillips Museum, Salem, Mass. Spelling and wordage is exactly as contained in diary.)

"The suit commenced before Judge Alexander Putney, Justice of the Peace at Murphys Camp. The court

was held in a big tent, say 70 by 160 feet, kept by Bob Patterson, in which he had a Bar of Choice Liquors, a billiard Table — two Monte Tables and a Rolet Table — all of them in full blast.

The Union Water Company had 3 lawyers as had the Torrey Company. The U.W. Water Co. had A.P. Dudley, Coruthers and..... and the Torrey Co. had William Olliver, Walter Abels and.....

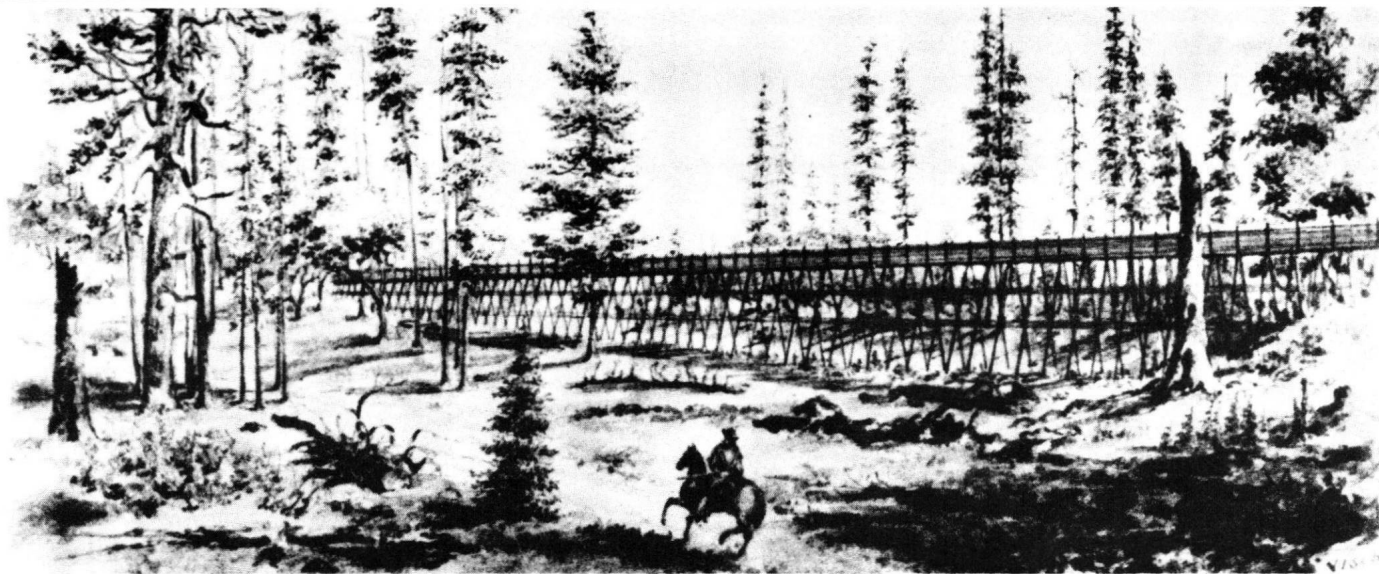
The court was held in the south end of the tent, right in front of the Bar where sat Judge Putney, who reportedly weighed at least 350 pounds, his left hand to the Bar.

Along the south end and against the side of the tent was a bench for the 12 jurors in front of the Judge's left hand. At his back and close to him was the Billiard Table, extending to the end of the Bar, at the north end of the tent were two Monte Tables, and between the Billiard Table and the front of the Tent was the Rolet Table.

The lawyers occupied the side of the Table on which the Judge sat, and at the highest to the door, leaving the end of the Table next to the Bar empty, so that customers could get up to the Bar to drink.

The first thing in order was the selection of a Jury of 12 honest miners no others would do who the Law allowed \$5.00 per day for their service, and they had to pay a man \$8.00 to work in their place in the claim, making \$3.00 per day out of pocket.

Of course the Jury must be kept good natured — so  
Please see **JUSTICE**, pg. 36



**Union Water Company flume at what is now Red Apple, on Highway 4, as it appeared in 1862 when this drawing was made by artist-historian Edward A. Vischer. The flume and ditch, started in 1851, was delivering water to Murphys area by 1853.**

**JUSTICE**, cont. from pg. 35

one party to the suit suggested that it not be right that the Miners should serve at \$5.00 and pay \$8.00 per day — and proposed that they be allowed \$8.00 each. The other party not wishing to have a March stolen on them in that way, raised them to \$12.00 they saw him and went \$3.00 better, finerly they settled on \$16.00 Per Day for each Juror, and they selected 12 to try the case. I was one of the number. 2--Chs. DeWolfe 3--Frank Knapp 4--Capt. Steward 5--J F McLellan 6--W H Barnes 7--Dan Bell 8-- Frank Anderson 9--F McDonald 10..... 11..... 12.....

The jury selected an adjournment was had for the purpose allowing the Court to get his wind and a drink. As soon as the adjournment was had the plaintiffs invited all the Jurors up to drink — then to take cigars, as soon as the Plaintiff had got them all right, Defendent not wishing to be beat in jenerosity also asked all the Jurors up to Drink and take cigars — the Judge and Lawyers likewise. Finerly the examination of witnesses began for the first day every one was attentive. The next day it began to be tegeious. Jim Pearson was Constable, would loose his dinner any time, to play Billiards... he kept up one continuol game all the time the Case was going on. Every fiew moments Judge Putneys Head would be in the way of Jims Queu, when he would call out, Move your head Judge so I can make this lick. Shortly a witness was wanted, Judge Putney would say Mr. Pearson call Mr. So and So. Jim would say hold on a minute Judge until I play this string out. The court would wait to accomodate him.

Shortly, an objection to something would be raised and some Law Point discussed, when by way of convincing the Judge Al Dudley would take out his purse, slap it down on the Table and say by God ill bet you \$50.00 so and so is law. Bill Olliver wold cover the amount, the Judge would slowly open his big eyes, half laughing and look at the 12 Jurors, would say Gentlemen the Jury look dry — suppose we adjourn for a few moments — as soon as said, one of the Lawyers would snatch Judge Putney by the arm Walk him up and down the street and a fiew Moments, then take the Judge up to the bar and Treat him.

The Judge imediatly shaking him, allows himself to be buzzed by another Lawyer, untill the whole six had Buzzed and Treated Judge Putney. Mean time the Jury are not neglected for the same old game of Treating them first by Plaintiff then Defendent was always attended to by the proper persons both to drinks & cigars as soon as the Court was called to order a box of

Cigars would be passed arround among the Jury and they would all be smoking, filling the place so one could hardly see for smoke, useualy each Lawyer had a Glass of Liquor sitting on the table by him all the time, add this to a hundred Miners and Gamblers arround the Gambling tables cursing their luck and a maney more passing in and out the door, dragging big spurrs after them like stearn wheel steamboats all having on old ragged cloaths, Broad rimed hats & knives slung to them cursing and talking loud — as many as can stand in front of the bar two deep, 5 or 6 Barkeepers waiting upon them and you have some idea of what kind of place this was to hold a Court.

Then the Jury some of them half tight were getting tired, and leaning forward their elbows on their knees with their Sit downs projecting past thier bench shoving the cloath pertition back, and temppting the Boys outside to stick pins through the tent into their unmentionable causing old Cap Stewart to land head foremost on the Table right opposit the Judge with a yell of distress Jesus Christ, scratching his behind and uttering cuss words in open Court without getting one word of sensure from the Judge who joined in laugh with the rest. Stewart managed to keep his keg pretty full all the time he got tired and sleepy and every time he leaned forward so as to round the cloth of the tent out, the Boys on the out side would raise him with a pin.

Charley DeWolfe would mew like a cat keeping Stewart hunting that kitten when not too loggy. All went well to make this a very interesting case, especially to us who were getting \$16.00 Per day — and all the luxuries thrown in — the Case lasted about a week costing them an enormous Sum, finerly the Case went to the Jury who were taken to Sperry's first hotel (then unfinished) to deliberate. After being left to ourselves, some one proposed that each put a P or a D on a piece of paper and drop them in a hat to see how we stood, those putting in a P gave Verdict for the Plaintiff, those D, for Defendent. It fell my lot to take those papers from the Hat and open them. Allmost the first paper I got had a X on it. I held it up and asked here is a cross what does that mean? Dan Bell spoke up — saying that is Myne, I go with the rest. It so hapened all the others were one way, so there was no dispute about Dans X, the fact was Dan Bell was from Pike, he could set and Play the Arkansor Traveler on a fiddle when he was asleep, but he did not know a letter in the Alphabet, neither did he know the meaning of Plaintiff or defendent, some how he was a standing Juror on every Case.

After Rendering our decision all hands went on a



spree — Judge — Lawyers — Constable — Plaintiff & Defendants all but a few were on their High Horses that night.”

Despite his vivid description of the trial, Leonard W. Noyes, however, neglected to mention the actual outcome of the trial.

The case apparently was won by Mark Torrey & Co., as the records show that not long after, the Union Ditch Company acquired the Montezuma or Torrey Ditch which had been the cause of the litigation.

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**FRICOT**, cont. from pg. 30

Calaveras surroundings. And, although he and his wife traveled widely throughout their lives, they always returned to San Antone Ridge.

With his financial interests ranging from his Calaveras County holdings to mining operations on the Consumnes River and management of his San Francisco business properties, Desire' led a busy life.

Philanthropist, humanitarian, conservationist, friend of youth, and above all, a believer in the future of the Mother Lode, Fricot also never forgot France, where he had been educated and his father had been born.

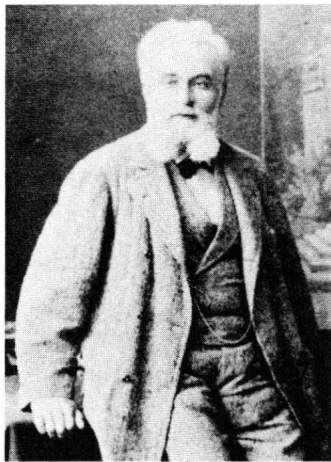
He was grief stricken when in 1914, war swept across Europe, engulfing France in bloody strife.

As a patriot and personal friend of French statesman and war minister Georges Clemenceau, Fricot went to France during the war and ultimately contributed an estimated one-fourth of his income to help victims of the conflict.

During 1916 he toured France, visiting hospitals and serving as interpreter for Dr. W.C. Chidester, noted Army surgeon. He also spent a vast amount of money and months of long, hard work promoting sales of Liberty Bonds to help finance the war.

It was in 1916 while meeting in San Francisco with French military representatives, that Fricot learned his Calaveras County home had caught fire from a defective flue and burned to the ground.

One result of the fire was that on May 31, of that year Fricot purchased the 16-mile long Ide-Terwilliger Ditch to bring water from San Antone Creek and ensure his property an adequate future water supply.



**Jules Fricot**

The war ended and Desire' and Lillian Fricot built an even larger and more imposing mansion on San Antone Ridge to replace their burned dwelling.

Also, as an aftermath of his efforts on behalf of the Allies during World War I, France bestowed upon Desire' Fricot in 1935, its highest award — Knight of the French Legion of Honor. He also had been earlier decorated by the Serbian Government with its coveted Cross of St. Sava.

Meanwhile, the new Fricot mansion and its surrounding complex which was fast acquiring the title “Fricot City,” had become a center of social and cultural activities for Calaveras County.

Throughout his life Desire' Fricot was noted for his help to others and one of his major interests was promotion of the Boy Scouts of America.

Sprawling Fricot City soon was to become the Mecca for Scout groups from throughout Central California.

For the visiting scout troops Fricot built a swimming pool, a large scout hut and other buildings in which they could conduct their activities. He became known as one of the “Fathers of Scouting” in the Calaveras-San Joaquin area and at the time of his death was President Emeritus of the San Joaquin-Calaveras Council and Chairman of the Calaveras District.

Involved as he was in the scouting movement, Fricot was equally interested in conservation.

His leadership in the 1920's and 30's helped save the Calaveras Big Trees North Grove and place it in the California State Park System.

Fricot traveled and worked tirelessly to influence state legislators and park officials to protect the Big Trees. His efforts were finally rewarded when on July 4, 1931 during a special ceremony there, the North Grove of the Calaveras Big Trees was declared a state park.

On Oct. 27, 1935, Fricot and his associates were honored when a bronze plaque recognizing their effort in saving the Big Trees was placed on a granite boulder there. And, in 1940, shortly before his death, a new recreation hall in the North Grove was dedicated in the name of Desire' Fricot.

Among Fricot's outstanding contributions to Calaveras County was his gift in 1937 of the historic stone building on North Main Street, in San Andreas, which has served as a County Library for more than 40 years.

Fricot purchased the American Hotel building which had been constructed in 1852, remodeled it and gave it to the county to serve as a combination library and

Please see **FRICOT**, pg. 38

**FRICOT**, cont. from pg. 37

museum. The museum has since been moved up the street to the old Calaveras County Courthouse, but the beautiful old stone structure still is the main county library. For a time after he made the presentation during those financially hard pressed depression years, Fricot provided both the librarian's and the library janitor's salaries.

A man of foresight, Desire' Fricot was among the first to recognize the need for the "counties of origin" to preserve their water rights.

He also was a member of the Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce, Angels Boosters and the San Andreas Progressive Club. He was president of the Chamber of Commerce at the time of his death and also was a patron member of the California Historical Society.

Desire' Fricot died at age 72 on Dec. 6, 1940, in his beloved home on San Antone Ridge.

His funeral in San Andreas, one of the largest in Calaveras County history, brought out honor guards of Boy Scouts.

Lillian Eichelroth Fricot passed away at Fricot City in August, 1942.

The total value of the Fricot estate is unknown, but in March, 1942, the Fricot department store building at Fifth and Market Street — standing on the land for which Jules Fricot had paid \$30,000 in 1870, sold for \$1,875,000.

Desire' and Lillian Fricot were childless, but Raymonde Rooney, one of Mrs. Fricot's three nieces, had lived with them at Fricot City for many years. Fricot and his wife, in their wills, divided their wealth between Miss Rooney, who received three-fourths of the estate and Fricot's sister, Mrs. George Berton, who received the remaining one-fourth.

Fricot had always wanted his property on San Antone Ridge in one way or another to benefit youth, and Miss Rooney, who after the death of the Fricots moved to San Francisco, carried out her uncle's wishes.

In February, 1944, Miss Rooney leased the 1,090 acres on San Antone Ridge to the California Youth Authority for use as a home for youngsters 14 years and younger who had become wards of the court. Fricot Ranch School For Boys opened on July 7, 1944, when a group of 20 boys arrived from Los Angeles County.

The State purchased the property in January, 1946, for \$65,000.

In addition to the leasing of Fricot City to the state, Miss Rooney also in 1944 donated 550 volumes of

French literature and history from Desire' Fricot's personal library to Mills College. The books, all printed in French, were considered a major windfall by college officials.

And, although she had not attended Mills College, Miss Rooney who died in 1969, willed her entire estate, estimated at \$2 million, to the college.

For 28 years Fricot Ranch served as a youth author-



**Elizabeth Jenkins Fricot and children Desire' and Marie.**

ity installation, providing schooling and guidance for a population of up to 200 youths whose age limits eventually were increased to 18 years.

Over the years millions were expended to build Fricot into one of the state's best youth operations.

However, county and state policy changes in the handling of juveniles during the 1960's and early 1970's resulted in population declines in state youth authority institutions.

Because of its remote location and relatively small

population — something less than 200 youngsters — per capita cost of operating the Fricot School, said cost conscious youth authority officials, was the highest of their ten installations.

As a result, when budget cutbacks were ordered, Fricot Ranch School For Boys was closed on June 30, 1972.

Two years later the State sold Fricot Ranch to private investors for \$1,200,000.

Since then the history of Fricot City has been one of financial instability and only transient occupancy.

Efforts to utilize it as a convalescent home, church school and retreat and an off-campus classroom facility for the Oakland school system, all have failed.

Its most successful operation in recent years was as a training academy for the California Conservation Corps, but that organization too, chose to leave Fricot before the close of 1986.

Today, owned by Amos and Royce Starr, of Sacramento, the sprawling complex atop San Antone Ridge might at first glance be mistaken for some small, select college campus.

But now, empty and unused except for a few dwellings rented to individuals, this once vibrant empire created by Desire' Fricot appears at best to be facing an uncertain future.

### NEW MEMBERS

We welcome these new members to the society:

Mariana Bacoccini, Altaville, Ca.  
Jess & Gladys Lee, San Andreas  
Thomas F. Osborne, Murphys  
Fred Stanley, Copperopolis  
George Stanley, Copperopolis  
Koenigsberg/Eckman, West Point  
Arlene Westenrider, Angels Camp  
Dale & Cheryl Briski, San Andreas  
Zora Foster, Murphys  
Mr. & Mrs. H.H. Hewlett, Altaville  
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel D. Miller, Altaville  
Carroll & Dorothy Ogren, Stockton, Ca.  
Robert E. Schmauder, Altaville  
Walt & Dorise Harper, Deer Park, Wa.  
Mr. & Mrs. Stan E. Grunder, San Andreas  
Mr. & Mrs. Paul P. Matson, Jackson, Ca.  
Willa M. Holter, Linden  
Ed Stritzel, Lodi, Ca.  
R. Wm. Moran, Jamestown, Ca.  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg Amaral, Willowbrook, Ill.  
Col. (Ret.) & Mrs. R.E. Van Ness, Valley Springs

## DESIRE' FRICOT WAS KIND TO SHEEP RANCH INDIANS

Desire' Fricot had a soft spot in his heart for Calaveras County's Native Americans, particularly those living in the Sheep Ranch area.

He first met the Mi-Wuk Indian people when as a boy, he came to Sheep Ranch with his parents.

Later, when he returned and built the Fricot mansion on San Antone Ridge, he continued to befriend the Sheep Ranch Indians. He made no attempt to interfere with or change their life style, but he often helped them and made a practice of paying for their funerals.

Limpy, "Rose Davis," reportedly the oldest Indian woman in Calaveras County when she died in 1930, was a special friend of Desire' Fricot, whom she called "Pico."

Limpy was old enough to remember the Gold Rush and the arrival of the first miners in Calaveras County. Often, she walked all the way from Sheep Ranch to Fricot City to sit on a small rug in the shade near the mansion and tell Desire' Fricot about the old days.

One day she decided she wanted the rug at home. She simply rolled it up and walked away with it, stating, "Pico will buy me another one," and, sure enough he did.

When Limpy died, Fricot paid for her funeral.

Her son, 80-year-old Jeff Davis, died on Dec. 6, 1940 — the same day that Desire' Fricot died.

The Fricot family paid for a full chief's funeral for Jeff Davis.

## MOKE HILL HISTORY GROUP SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

The Mokelumne Hill History Society is welcoming new members.

Dues are \$5.00 per year and the Society meets at 2 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at Main and Center Streets in Mokelumne Hill.

The Society's Cook Book and Poetry Book now are on sale, as are other items of historical interest.

### IN MEMORIAM

Howard L. Joses, Mountain Ranch, Feb. 10, 1987

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## Calaveras County Historical Society

30 Main Street • P.O. Box 721  
San Andreas, California 95249

### Officers and Directors:

President ..... Lorraine Kennedy, San Andreas  
Vice president ..... Don Cuneo, San Andreas  
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Membership-Financial Sec'y ..... Lillian Filippini,  
San Andreas  
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Fred Cuneo, Calaveritas  
Rosemary Faulker, Rail Road Flat  
George Beaman, San Andreas

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The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Grange Hall in San Andreas — except for dinner meetings which are held each quarter at different places in the county.

The Society's office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 to 5:00. The telephone number is (209) 754-1058. Visitors are welcome.

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## SPRING DINNER MEETING SET FOR APRIL 23 AT ROSSETTI'S

Historical Society President Lorraine Kennedy has announced that our annual spring dinner meeting will be in Rossetti's, in Wallace, on the evening of April 23.

Mrs. Kennedy said that in response to numerous requests, a complete sit-down dinner (no standing in lines) will be served.

Cost of the dinner is \$12 per person. Reservations should be made no later than April 20 by phoning Eva Soracco, 754-4105; Bessie McGinnis, 736-2189; Madeline Cavagnaro, 754-3306 or Jack Kennedy, 754-1259.

And, as a reminder, Membership Secretary Lillian Filippini warns that those who have not paid their 1987 dues must be dropped from membership as of April 30.

## FRICOT NUGGET PRESERVED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Jules Fricot was a mining man and an admirer of fine specimens of gold.

Today, because of his awareness of its unique beauty and through the generosity of the Fricot family, one of the most beautiful specimens of arborescent (sponge) gold ever mined in California has been preserved and is on public display.

The 12-pound piece, known as the "Fricot Nugget," was found during the 1880's — the exact year is not known — at the Grit Mine near the Spanish Dry Diggings, in El Dorado County.

Jules Fricot is not believed to have had a part in the actual mining of the nugget but instead is thought to have purchased it while he and his family were residing at Sheep Ranch where he was involved in mining with Andre Chavanne.

The nugget remained in possession of Jules Fricot and his heirs until after the death of his son, Desire' Fricot, in 1940.

The Sacramento Bee, in an article concerning the Fricot Nugget following Desire' Fricot's death, stated that twice, prior to 1917, the Fricot family refused offers in excess of \$10,000 from the Russian government for purchase of the unique gold specimen.

On Aug. 18, 1943, Marie E. E. Berton, daughter of Jules Fricot, in memory of her father donated the famed nugget to the California Academy of Science, in San Francisco, where it presently is on public display.

Over the years during handling, however, small pieces have broken from the fragile nugget, and today it weighs exactly six grams more than 12 pounds.

Three pieces which broke from the nugget weigh 325, 203 and 4.50 grams each. They too are on display with the main specimen.

And, in order to preserve it, the nugget has been reinforced with a gold band and several unobtrusive wires.

## SCHOOL ALBUMS AVAILABLE

For those who have not yet obtained them, a few copies of the Historical Society's limited edition Album of the Pioneer Schools of Calaveras County still are available.

The 160-page albums may be obtained at the Historical Society Office, 30 N. Main St., San Andreas, or by writing to the Calaveras County Historical Society, P.O. Box 721, San Andreas, Ca. 95249.

Cost is \$19.00 plus six percent sales tax and \$1.00 handling charge.