



THE EVER CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CALAVERAS COUNTY

By Charity Maness

Often times the history of Calaveras County is confined to what we know of its current borders. However, I would be remiss in my duties if I were not to research for you the full extent of our land mass in the early days of our existence.

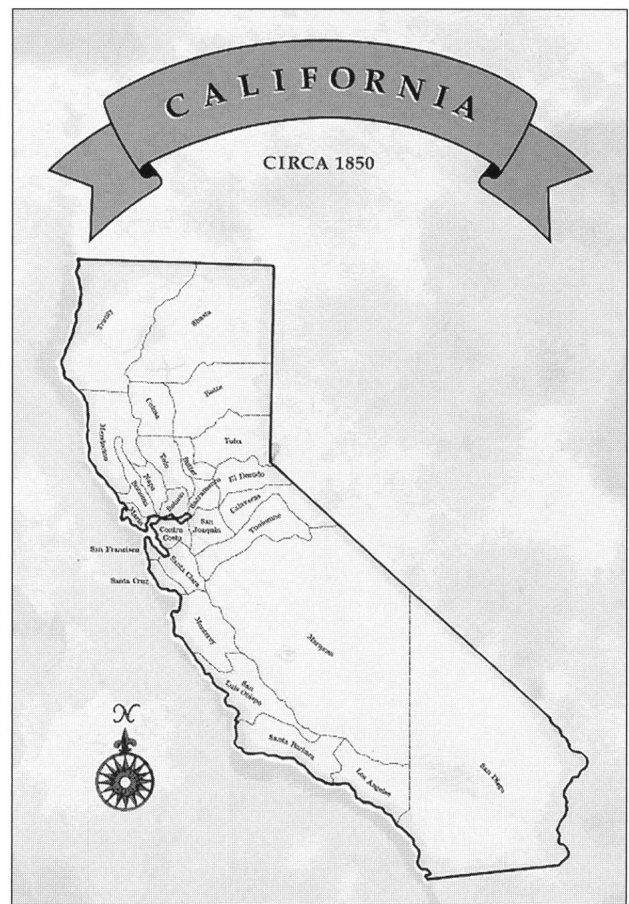
The idea to research our historical boundaries came to me after researching and penning the last Las Calaveras. Some members/research enthusiasts questioned the inclusion of locations which currently were not located within the boundaries of Calaveras County. This, of course, piqued my interest and caused me to do a bit more digging of my own.

This is where the history of our county can become a bit confusing.

While many of us are quite accustomed to the current map of Calaveras, this map was not the original, nor was it the second or the third for that matter.

Calaveras County, formed February 18, 1850, was one of the first of 27 counties signed into law by California's first governor, Peter Burnett, when California became a state in 1850.

It only took six weeks for California's first constitutional convention to create the boundaries of the first 27 counties of California.



According to the California Association of Counties:

“On January 4, 1850, a committee of California’s first constitutional convention, chaired by General Mariano Vallejo, recommended the creation of eighteen counties. They were Benicia, Butte, Fremont, Los Angeles, Mariposa, Monterey, Mt. Diablo, Oro, Redding, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Sonoma, and Sutter.”

Between January 4 and February 18, 1850, the California legislature added nine counties to the list recommended by General Vallejo’s committee, some of the changes based on additional recommendations by the committee. The nine added counties were Branciforte, Calaveras, Coloma, Colusi, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Trinity, and Yuba.”

Finally the 27 counties were set and named—with final current names in parenthesis: Butte, Calaveras, Colusi (Colusa), Mount Diablo (Contra Costa), Benicia (El Dorado), Los Angeles, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Jose (Santa Clara), Branciforte (Santa Cruz), Redding (Shasta), Solano, Oro (Tuolumne), Fremont (Yola then Yolo) and Yuba.

In 1850 Calaveras County’s land mass stretched far and wide.

The state Legislature described the original boundaries of Calaveras County as:

“Beginning at the corner of Sacramento and San Joaquin Counties, thence up the middle of Dry Creek to its source; thence following the summit of the dividing ridge between Mokelumne and Consumnes Rivers; thence due east to the State boundary line; thence in a south-easterly direction along the boundary line of the State to the parallel of 38 degrees latitude; thence due west to the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains; thence in a westerly direction along the summit to the North Fork of the Stanislaus River; thence down the center of the North Fork of the Stanislaus river to a point one mile north of Knights Ferry; thence down the eastern boundary of San Joaquin County to the place of beginning. The County Seat shall be the town of Double Springs.”

To summarize, the county extended from Yolo and San Joaquin’s borders to the west, to El Dorado border on the north, Tuolumne and Mariposa’s borders on the south and reaching to the Utah Territory border (Nevada) at its farthest eastern border.

But this land mass was to be short lived.

By 1854 the county of Amador was formed by carving a large northern swath of Calaveras County from its origins as well as some land from El Dorado County.

The whittling away at the borders of Calaveras did not stop with the formation of Amador County.

Again in 1861 and 1864 large sections of the territory were reassigned to create part of Mono and Alpine Counties.

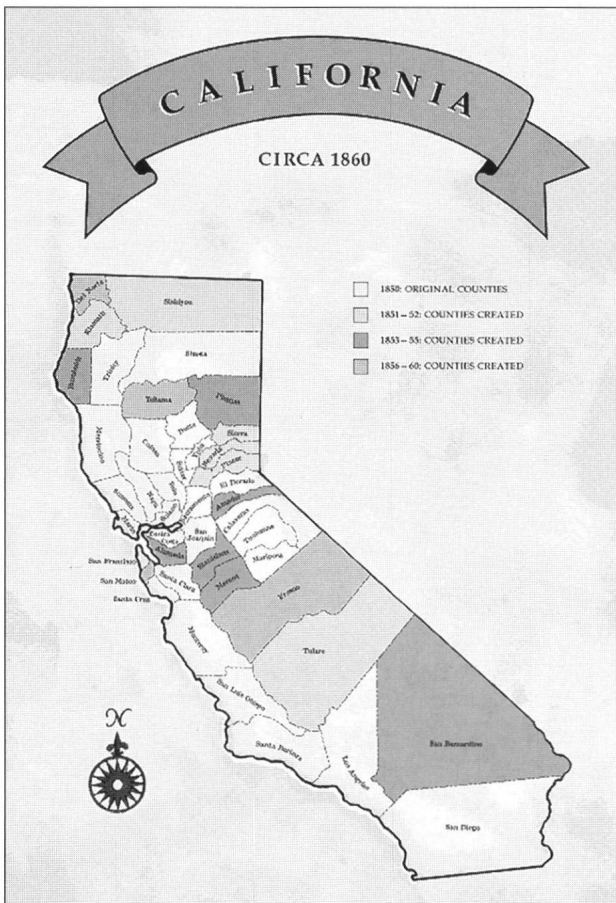
Calaveras County gained territory from no other county since its inception.

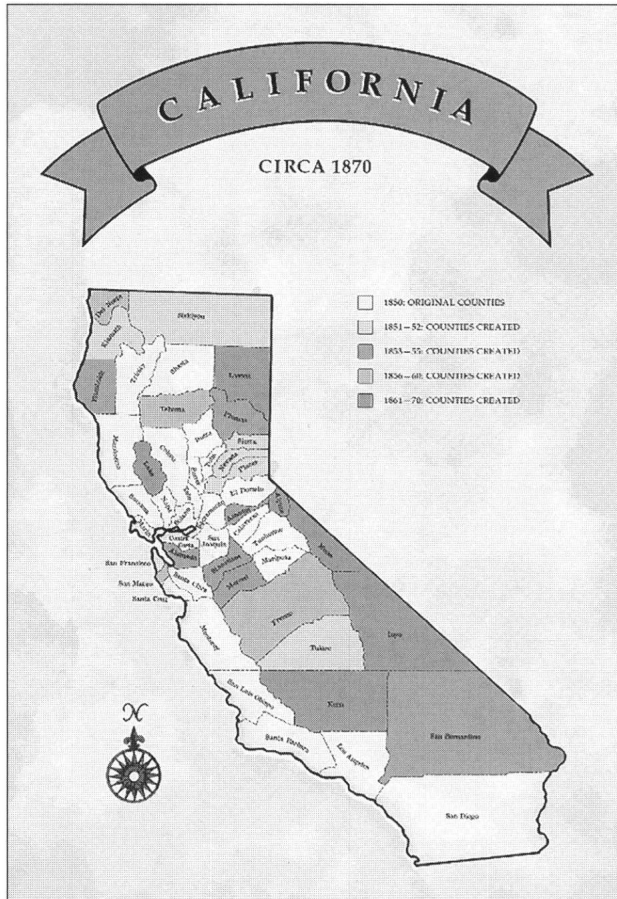
The Calaveras County Seat— Hotly Debated History Rife with Alleged Voter Fraud, Theft and Corruption.

Of the 27 original counties, Calaveras, Alameda, Butte, and Yolo, each boasted a total of four different county seats.

However, among some history records, even that history is contested.

Calaveras County’s original county seat was designated by the state legislature as located in Pleasant Valley. Records show that elections were to take place April 1, 1850 for county officers. One week after the elections were held Assemblyman Drury Baldwin introduced bill





AB-130 changing the name of Pleasant Valley to Double Springs, (“Dos Aqua”). The bill was passed and signed by the Governor on April 18, 1850 and the county seat of Calaveras became Double Springs. Whether this is to be considered a change of county seat or merely a change of town names is left to interpretation.

The county seat changed locations again in 1851 by moving to Jackson.

By 1852 the county seat was located in Mokelumne Hill and moved to its permanent location of San Andreas in 1866.

While moving a county seat may seem a reasonable thing to do depending on population, access, etc. the stories behind the moves are often times the things made of legend.

Jackson as the Calaveras County seat is a prime example of the many versions of history.

Election for County Seat (Alleged Voter Fraud)

In late 1850 citizens of Mokelumne Hill petitioned then Judge Smith, to hold an election to locate (or relocate) the county seat, currently located at Double Springs. An election was held February 22, 1851. After votes were

cast for county seat and ballots were counted and over 600 were thrown out for various violations, it was determined that Double Springs would remain county seat.

Another request was made and another election was held on May 26, 1851. After the ballots were counted Mokelumne Hill received more votes than Jackson, yet county clerk Collier threw out 308 ballots thereby declaring Jackson the new county seat, to take effect July 1, 1851.

A plaque resides on Main Street in the historic area of Jackson summarizing the tale of the town’s history:

“Judge Smith proclaimed Jackson the seat of Justice after Clerk Collier canvassed the votes of the May 1851 election in which 1,224 votes were cast for Mokelumne Hill and 1,014 for Jackson. An armed party from Mokelumne Hill pursued Judge Smith to lynch him. Another party stole the records from the Clerk’s office. Later Judge Smith shot and killed Collier on Main Street over another disputed election count. A perfect example of Mother Lode politics”

How Does One Steal the County Seat? (Theft)

In the following version of history apparently one steals a county seat with “fine alcohol”.

When Double Springs was designated as the Calaveras County seat, the one tent building in town held the court, saloon, store and hotel. With growth of the town not as expected for a county seat, some folks in Jackson (a town which possessed a few huts near the local spring) felt the county seat should be brought to Jackson.

Jackson Justice of the Peace Charles Boynton and Jackson resident Theo Mudge were rumored to have concocted a plan to do just that.

Deeming the proper channels of elections and acts of legislature to be too slow, the duo took it upon themselves to remedy the perceived issue of the correct location of the county seat.

“One morning while Double Springs was resting quietly on its dignity as a shire town, the enemy appeared, smiling as usual. They walked up to the county seat’s bar, and throwing down a coin, according to the custom of the country, invited all hands to imbibe...”

This offer was not missed by Colonel Collier, county clerk, who was well known for his love of fine alcohol.

“While one detachment of the enemy artfully engaged the attention of Colonel Collyer, who was county clerk and in that capacity custodian of the archives, another detachment at the other end of the room gathered the archives under his arm, tumbled them into a buggy, and

ran away with them to Jackson... a shake shanty, at the foot of Court Street, had been prepared for the bantling, and on the arrival of Boynton and Mudge at Jackson, the archives were deposited with the proper ceremonies... and Jackson became the center of Government for the great territory of Calaveras..."

The True Power Lay in Manipulating the Numbers (Deceit)

However, Larry Cenotto in his historic book Logan's Alley, questions the thievery under the nose of an inebriated, posing the question, "*Why steal records, when you can control who voted, change, deface or lose ballots, and, if the last resort were necessary, corrupt the canvassing or count of the votes itself?*"

Whichever story or tale holds the truth is hard to determine, however, Jackson did become the county seat and remained so until 1852.

Calaveras Towns of Note During the Early 1850s.

While Amador County was still just a twinkle in the legislature's eyes, there existed a few towns of interest that lay within the area that was to be cut from Calaveras.

Fiddletown:

At one time Fiddletown, named for the many fiddlers in the mining camp, lay between El Dorado County and Calaveras on a thin strip of territory known as Oleta. While votes from Fiddletown counted in El Dorado, Fiddletown declared itself neutral territory when taxes were in question.

Being a neutral territory they created their own legal system.

Crime and punishment in no-man's land—"home rule" courts and lynch mobs

In 1851 the residents of Fiddletown formed their first court under 'home rule' in 1851. The first case heard before the home rule court was for a horse thief by the name of West. West was arrested and tried by appointed judge Major Shipman. Witnesses were sworn "and the whole proceedings conducted with the form and spirit of the law, without its technicalities." The jury found West guilty and handed down a sentence of 100 stripes. "His fortitude gave way at this severe sentence, and he agreed if they would mitigate the punishment to thirty stripes he would make such a statement as would expose the whole gang, enabling them to convict them all." His request was approved.

Jackson:

Jackson was originally discovered by Mexican and Chileans miners who named the town "Bottleas" due to the high number of bottles found at the local spring which supplied water for many traveling miners and locals.

While the naming of Jackson is hotly debated, research shows three possibilities. The town was named after local prominent miner Colonel Jackson, or New York native Alden Appola Moore Jackson, or possibly Andrew Jackson. However, the name was garnered; it stuck and replaced Bottleas forever, and renamed the water which ran from the spring as Jackson's Creek.

The Oneida Mine, two miles from Jackson, was highly productive quickly making Jackson the hub for miners in search of supplies, booze and women.

Soon after becoming the county seat in 1851 Jackson's first post office was open for business; a sign of a prosperous and thriving community.

Jackson, which was said to have held the county seat by "shotgun force" and an ever watchful eye, was to hold its designation when Amador County was formed by vote on June 17, 1854.

Punishment for those not abiding by the law was not limited to "stripes" during the early mining years.

In June of 1850 blacksmith Allen Thompson was found dead in his camp in Jackson.

Two Indians, Coyote Joe and Coyote Jim were accused and put on trial. While awaiting trial and with the town lacking a jail, the two were escorted to a ship anchored in Stockton harbor and housed in the ship's brig. After being released the pair steered clear of the area until the following spring, when Coyote Joe was said to have wandered back into the area and was arrested by Justice of the Peace Charles Boynton. A lynch mob "liberated" Coyote Joe from the constable and held its own trial. The next day he was hung from what was to become the most famous hanging tree in the mines.

The hanging tree of Jackson reported by the Stockton Independent as "*the most remarkable tree in the State and merited preservation*" had the notoriety of not hanging three men at a time like that of the tree in Dry Diggin's, aka, Hangtown in El Dorado County, but of taking ten souls between March 1851 and August 1855; the first Coyote (Injun) Joe.

The final lines in a poem authored by William Logan II summarize Coyote Joe's death and of those to follow:

"Besides, no sense to waste more words 'cuz Injun's soul was loosed;

By Jackson's famed tree, ultimately, nine heads more were noosed."

The infamous hanging tree of Jackson was cut down in August of 1862.

Volcano:

Volcano was discovered in 1848 with stories pouring out from the area of picking large nuggets of gold from the surface gravels "*with only fingers as tools*".

The population of Volcano was such that the Post Master General established the Volcano post office the week of October 11, 1851 with the first Postmaster being E.W. Gemmel.

In 1852 the town boomed when the Volcano cutoff off the Carson Route was completed.

"The Emigration is coming in rapidly at the rates of 10 to 20 wagons a day and every two or 3 wagons a family sometimes two or three... Many of them are stopping here and going to mining so our town is quite lively," wrote John Doble in his diary. By 1853 his diary read, "... There is now in this Town Eleven stores, 1 Restaurant 3 Bakeries 6 Hotels 3 private Boarding Houses & 3 Bars & Gambling Houses one of the bars is in the Apothecary shop which only leaves two Gambling Houses."

Volcano was such a thriving town that they also had sought to unseat Jackson as the county seat when Amador became a county; yet failed by a small margin. Again voter fraud was suspected and use of alcohol to manipulate possible dissenters was prevalent, yet Jackson was named victor with 1002 votes to Volcano's 937 votes.

Much like Jackson, and other mining towns, Volcano was not immune to crime and murder; news from the mining town made headlines across the country.

According to the August 26, 1853 Daily Union in Washington D.C.

"A most foul murder was committed at Volcano on Sunday night. Mr. Charles Beekman, a merchant of Volcano Calaveras County was murdered in his bed. The deed was done with an axe; several blows were struck, mutilating his head and face horribly. He was discovered about nine o'clock the next morning. It is supposed his murderer was a German who entered the store to rob the premises. The fellow had not been apprehended."

Amador County's Independence Came at a Price.

When Amador County (originally to be named Washington County) was formed from Calaveras County a provision was made that the new county

should assume a just portion of the common debt. This matter was not addressed until Calaveras brought suit on January 27, 1857 against the Amador County Auditor. After a commission was formed to determine the county's indebtedness, the amount of \$26,517.32 was agreed upon and warrant No. 103 was issued for this amount.

At a December 26, 1861 Amador County Board of Supervisor's meeting, it was noted that there was a sum of \$6,155.04 in the Calaveras County Fund, it was the "opinion of the Board that the object for which said fund no longer exists" and that the remaining funds be transferred to the general fund.

However, in 1864 the District Court required the Supervisors of Amador County to levy a special tax for the payment of the balance of indebtedness, amounting to \$7,556.16. The matter was appealed yet the initial decision was upheld.

By the time the debt was satisfied over \$50,000.00 had been paid toward the warrant and attorney fees.

The Last Bits of Land Taken from Calaveras County

Following on the heels of the formation of Amador County from Calaveras County lands, both Alpine and Mono Counties cut large land masses from Calaveras.

Mono County was formed from sections of Calaveras, Fresno and Mariposa Counties. Mono County's first county seat was Aurora from 1861 to 1864, and Bridgeport from 1864 to present.

Alpine County was formed from sections of Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Mono and Tuolumne Counties. Her first county seat was Silver Mountain City from 1864 to 1875. Silver Mountain was founded by Norwegian Miners who originally named the location Konigsberg. The town was renamed Silver Mountain in 1865, yet ceased to exist by 1886. Markleeville (first settled in 1861) became the county seat in 1875 and remains so.

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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.

January–March 2016

New Members:

Mike & Lynne Fritz—Converted to Lifetime membership
Mark Oswald—Hathaway Pines
Tulie & Francine Barnum—Murphys
Charity Maness—Soulsbyville
Jacilyn Wells—Wilseyville
Ken & Nina Nakamura—Mountain Ranch
Pete White—Fair Oaks (gift membership)
Jim & Esther Jordan—Angels Camp
Mary Sacks—Mountain Ranch (gift membership)

Donations:

Phil Alberts—Camera bag, Rolleicord camera and accessories
Betty Raggio—Cash donation in memory of Alan H. Corell
Skip Skyrud—Calaveras Water Mining Company certificate of 100 shares of stock 1880s
Louis Krupp—Moaning Cave brochure found in Boulder, Colorado bookstore
Robert Lauridsen—Copperopolis Centennial Pictorial Souvenir from 1960 found in Eureka bookstore
Steve Cilenti—Copy of 1944 edition of "The Leatherneck"—Marine Corps. Magazine
Peter White—Cash donation
George Roessler—Antique wicker rocker
Lynette Norfolk—Records and items from Calaveras Grange #715