

MIDDLE BAR FERRY AND BRIDGES

By J. A. SMITH

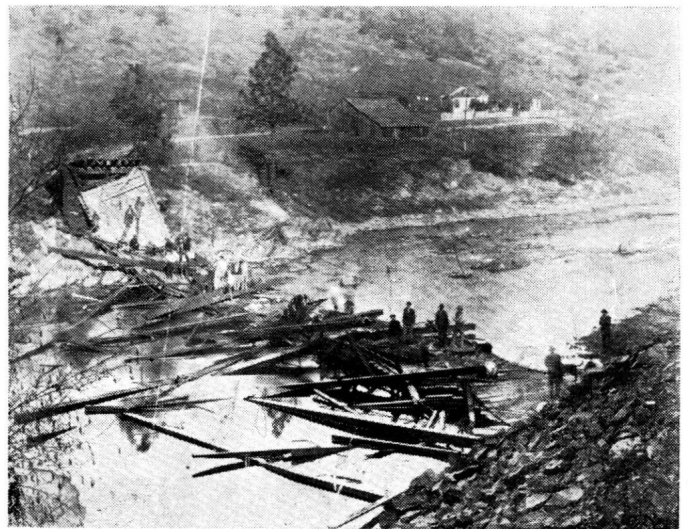
One of the early matters to come before the Court of Sessions after Calaveras County had been organized was the petition of William L. Martin and Aristide L. Pench for a license to operate a public ferry across the Mokelumne River at a point on said stream known as "Middle Bar." The petition was acted upon at a session of the Court held at Double Springs on June 10th, 1850. They were granted the right to maintain a ferry at Middle Bar and the Court of Sessions fixed the fees which they could charge as follows:

For each passenger, 50 cents; for each mule, horse, jack or jenny, or other animal, 50 cents; for each empty wagon, \$6.00; for each loaded wagon, \$6.50 for each hundredweight of freight; for each mule, horse, jack or jenny and cargo, \$1.00.

These early ferrymen had some difficulty in operating their ferry without interference, and they were forced to return to the Court of Sessions and have Furnell and Haney enjoined from trespassing upon their property.

Apparently William L. Martin disposed of his interest in the ferry within a year after securing the license from the Court of Sessions and there seems to have been an early desire to bridge the Mokelumne River at Middle Bar, for on September 9th, 1851, A. L. Pench and one P. P. del Rochelblare gave notice through the Court of Sessions that they intended to make application to the Court for a license to erect a toll bridge across the River at Middle Bar. Four days before John W. McKinney and Abraham J. Houghtelling had given a similar notice. The Court granted the right to erect a toll bridge to McKinney and Houghtelling and set rates of toll which they could charge as follows:

For foot passengers, 12½ cents; for man and horse, 37½ cents; for two horses without load, 75 cents; for two horses with load, \$1.25; for four horse wagon, unloaded, \$1.00; for four horse wagon loaded, \$1.50; for horse, mule or other animal, 12½ cents; for horse, mule or other animal, freighted, 25 cents.



The Middle Bar Bridge on the Mokelumne River after it had collapsed with a herd of cattle owned by the Garavantis. — Loaned by Mrs. Howard Blagen (Florence Garavanti).

This right was granted October 6, 1851.

The road from Middle Bar to Double Springs (County Seat) was the first public highway established in Calaveras County.

McKinney and Houghtelling did not own all the interests in the bridge and the other interests were conveyed to Levi P. Goodwin. In order to make Goodwin an owner of a half interest in the bridge, McKinney and Houghtelling conveyed him a small interest. In 1853 the road was the main stage road from Mokelumne Hill to Jackson and Sacramento, and that year McKinney and Houghtelling sold their one-half interest to Wm. B. Wade for \$14,000. Five years later their half interest was sold out under a Writ of Execution and became the property of John Sinclair. Sinclair sold to Miller,

and Lawrence Miller sold to Augustus Gebhardt. The Levi Goodwin interest was conveyed to Adam Denzler in April, 1859.

When the bridge was built at Big Bar, it was a more direct route to Jackson from Mokelumne Hill and it became the stage road between the two places. This took a great deal of the business away from Middle Bar. However, it continued to be operated as a toll bridge until it was swept away by flood water in January, 1862.

After the destruction of the bridge, Adam Denzler and his associates made application to the State Legislature of the State of California for a franchise to erect a toll bridge across the Mokelumne River at Middle Bar. By an Act of the Legislature dated February 20th, 1862, the right was granted for a term of 20 years, provided the construction should begin within six months and completed within one year after the passage of the Act. As far as I have been able to learn, this proposed bridge was never built, and Middle Bar was without a bridge until the year 1895. At that time the Gwin Mine was in operation and there was great demand for a bridge. The residents and citizens subscribed a fund of \$2600, secured necessary rights of way and petitioned for a bridge and road to connect with the Gwin Mine Road. Bids were called for by the Board of Supervisors of Calaveras County, and Cotton Bros. secured the contract to build the bridge for the sum of \$5350. The new bridge was 240 feet in length with a 16 foot roadway and opened to the public on the 12th day of June, 1895.

During the period from 1862 to 1895 Mr. McKinney, who operated a famous inn at Middle Bar, had a small ferry immediately in front of his inn, and he conveyed persons across the river at the rate of 50 cents each. George Sharon, a half-brother of Senator Sharon of Nevada, also had a small ferry a mile farther down the stream and he ran a similar service. However, during a large part of the year the stream could be forded, and fords were opened.

Early in the year 1911 the bridge built by Cotton Bros. went down when cattle owned by the Garavantis were crossing and a number of them were killed.

A joint county school district, called Middle Bar School, was established with the school house in Amador County, and, after the 1895 bridge was built, children from Calaveras County attended the Middle Bar School. After the bridge went down, the trustees of the school district erected a cable or trolley across the river on which the children were transported by the teacher across the river.

The Supervisors of Amador and Calaveras Counties decided in 1911 to erect a new bridge at Middle Bar, and the contract was awarded to Clinton Bridge Company for the sum of \$10,530. Construction work was delayed as the Company's iron works were destroyed by fire and the bridge was not completed until the fall of 1912.

(Note by J. A. Smith—Acknowledgement is hereby made to Mrs. J. L. Sargent of Jackson, a resident of Middle Bar, Amador side, in 1887, for many of the facts contained in this article.)

BIG BAR FERRY BOAT

On Saturday last, the ferry boat was finished and launched at Big Bar, opening a direct communication with Sacramento for stages and heavy teams. A wire cable has been stretched across the river sufficiently strong to with-

stand the force of the rapid current at the Bar.

The new ferry boat is one of the largest and most substantial ones in the country. Dr. Soher has spared no expense to make it perfectly secure against the action of the water, which runs with extraordinary force in the vicinity of the ferry.

The completion of the boat insures us constant communication for all kinds of teams, with our neighboring county of Amador.

The rate of toll will be the same as charged over the bridge previous to its being carried off by the recent floods. Calaveras Chronicle, March 15, 1862.

THE SOUTH FORK BRIDGES BETWEEN GLENCOE AND SANDY GULCH

By J. A. SMITH

Bridges were constructed across the South Fork of the Mokelumne River at an early date. The Board of Supervisors of Calaveras County, California, acting upon a petition of A. B. Pickering and D. L. Morrill, on Sept. 18th, 1855, granted Pickering and Morrill a license to construct and keep a toll bridge across the South Fork of the Mokelumne River at the crossing of the trail leading from Mosquito Gulch to Sandy Gulch and West Point. They fixed the amount payable for the license, and also set the rate of toll that should be charged.

Pickering and Morrill entered into a contract for the construction of the bridge with George A. Conrad and Daniel Wright. The following year Conrad became the owner of the bridge and the bridge is often referred to as Conrad's Bridge. After Conrad secured the bridge he reconstructed or built the road, leading on the south side from Annah Ranch and on the north side from Sandy Gulch to the bridge. Conrad sold the bridge and road to a man named John Funston for \$5700 and Funston sold it to George Whipple and M. G. Sawyer and in the early part of 1859 Whipple became the owner of the entire road and bridge property. Later, Mr. Sawyer took over the road and bridge and either he or his brother, D. W. Sawyer, operated the bridge as long as it remained a toll bridge.

In the high water of December, 1861, the bridge was washed away, and immediately rebuilt. This latter bridge was a wire suspension bridge. It was very high above the water and remained until the bridge was taken over by the county, the franchise having expired. The old wire suspension bridge being considered unsafe, the Board of Supervisors in 1896 awarded a contract to Cotton Bros. to wreck the old suspension bridge and construct a steel bridge of 140 foot span across the stream at the same point. The contract price was \$4540. This bridge remained until after the new concrete bridge was constructed a short distance further up the stream in the year 1936.

After the concrete bridge was built, the Board of Supervisors in 1938 sold the old steel bridge to a man named James E. Fitzimmons, who removed it.

NOTE BY J. A. SMITH—I have been told that a bridge on this site went down many years ago when a herd of cattle was driven on the bridge. I have not been able to confirm this statement, but it is probably true, as I have heard my folks speak of it.

MARY ANN DRURY BARTOLDUS RATHGEB PASSES ON

By EFFIE ENFIELD JOHNSTON

Mary Ann Drury, who was born on San Antone Creek, Calaveras County, California, September 30th, 1862, was the oldest of eight children born to Eugene J. Drury and wife, Rosanna Gillen. Mary's parents were from Ireland. They came to California during the Gold Rush. They were married in San Andreas. One child died.

Mary was small when her parents moved to the Tim Baity ranch on Calaveritas Creek, where, I believe, the rest of the children were born. Mary and her sister Rosanna (Mrs. Murphy), and brothers, Eugene, Thomas, George, Dave and Joseph, attended Calaveritas School. Mary's parents lived at the old home until they passed away.

In the early 1880's, Mary married Jo Bartoldus, who, with his brother, operated a brewery in San Andreas. Mary and Jo were parents of two children: Frank and Rose (Rose Joseph). Jo Bartoldus died when these children were small. In the late 1880's Mary married Ruda Rathgeb, by whom she had Ruda, Theresa (Mrs. Evans); Evalyn (Mrs. Trent); Henry, Robert and Albert. All of these children were born in or near San Andreas, where they grew up and attended San Andreas School. The younger ones attended Willow Creek School, since Mary and Ruda had moved to a ranch about a mile and a half east of San Andreas, on the Calaveritas Road. Here Rudy Rathgeb Sr. died some years ago. Mary spent her last days there with the exception of the last three years of her life, when she lived with her daughter, Mrs. Theresa Evans of Berkeley.

Mary Ann Drury Bartoldus Rathgeb passed away August 31, 1954, in a Berkeley hospital at the age of 91 years and 11 months. She is survived by seven children, four grandchildren and six great grandchildren. One brother, Thomas Drury, survives. Mary had the sorrow of losing her eldest son, Frank Bartoldus, when he was about 21.

I knew Mary as a devoted schoolmate, a devoted wife and mother, a congenial neighbor and a loyal friend.

NEW FERRY BOAT AT BIG BAR

On Saturday last, the ferry boat was finished and launched at Big Bar, opening a direct communication with Sacramento, for stages and heavy teams.

A wire cable has been stretched across the river, sufficiently strong to withstand the force of the rapid current at the Bar. The new ferry boat is one of the largest and most substantial ones in the country.

Dr. Soher has spared no expense in order to make it perfectly secure against the action of the water, which runs with extraordinary force in the vicinity of the ferry.

The rates of toll will be the same charged over the bridge previous to its being carried off by the late flood.—Calaveras Chronicle, Mar. 15, 1862.

THE MORELAND BRIDGE

In 1871, West Moreland, an Englishman, settled in the Mother Lode country, and decided to build a toll bridge across the Mokelumne River a few miles north and west of Campo Seco. He went back to England to obtain his timbers and cables, which were shipped around Cape Horn to California.

Just as Moreland was finishing the bridge two Mexican

desperadoes attempted to drive a band of stolen horses over the bridge. The bridge collapsed and the horses and planks went into the water below. The Mexicans were captured and hanged from the remains of the bridge. Moreland had to start over with his bridge, but it was completed and a toll rate of 2½ cents per head for sheep and cattle, and 25 cents per man was charged.

Children from the Cook ranch, located near the bridge, went across it in the late 1800's to school at Lancha Plana. The walk was shorter for the six and seven year olds than the daily trek to the Campo Seco school, which was attended by the older children. The bridge was a popular subject for photographers and used until 1920 when the copper smelter went out.

SOUTH FORK BRIDGE PARTIALLY BURNED

(Calaveras Chronicle, Aug. 9, 1873)

The suspension bridge across the South Fork of the Mokelumne on the Glencoe-West Point Stage Road, generally called "Sawyer's Bridge," was destroyed by fire on Aug. 6th, 1873.

Mr. Sawyer was burning some stumps and the fire was communicated to the toll house. It was not discovered the building was on fire until the flames had gained considerable headway. The house and the contents were entirely destroyed and the bridge was set on fire. The tower next to the toll bridge was burned, causing the bridge to hang edgewise by one cable. The railing was also burned off the bridge. It was repaired by Mr. Sawyer and put back into service in October, 1873.

WOMEN CONDUCTING BUSINESS IN CALAVERAS COUNTY IN THE FIFTIES

Mary Fitzsimmons had a store at Chili Camp in 1856. Susan B. Sharp, wife of John W. Sharp, conducted a hotel at Upper Calaveritas in 1856.

Elsie Golinelli had a store at Happy Valley in 1857.

Marie Becker conducted a store and bakery business at Robinson's Ferry in 1857.

Maria Musto ran a store at Mosquito Gulch (Glencoe) in 1858.

Francini Ponzadoux had a provision and liquor store at West Point in 1858.

Catherine Fischer conducted a butcher shop at Jesus Maria in 1858.

Fredericke Barkhorn conducted a saloon at Angels Camp in 1859.

Mary Lindsay had a hotel at Angels in 1859.

Margaret O'Neill conducted a ferry at O'Byrnes Ferry on the Stanislaus River in the latter part of 1859.

BRIDGE AT POVERTY BAR

A new wire suspension bridge has been erected at Poverty Bar on Mokelumne River by Messrs. Cooper & Thompson, in place of the old ferry boat which has been dismissed from service. A mile above is the splendid wire suspension bridge of Mr. Westmoreland.

The bridge at Poverty Bar is 180 feet span, 11 feet wide, double floor and 2 inch cables. The anchors are sunk 25 feet into the ground.—Calaveras Chronicle, January, 1860.

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LAS CALAVERAS

(Since we have adopted this name for our bulletin, it is important that all our members understand the source of the name for our county. The following article was taken from the California Blue Book and is the report of Mariano G. Vallejo, chairman of the Senate Committee on Counties, in regard to names given the first 27 counties and approved on February 18, 1852.)

Calaveras. "This word signifies skulls, and the so-called creek, which gives name to the county, derives its own name from the fact of an immense number of skulls having been found lying in its vicinity from time immemorial. According to the diary of Captain Moraga, who headed the first incursions made on the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, and the Sierra Nevada, the chiefs of the tribes encamped on these rivers made war against the tribes of the Sierra, who came down to fish for salmon, with which those rivers abounded. This was considered trespass on rights acquired by occupation, and war was in consequence declared between the tribes of the valley and those of the Sierra, during which a sanguinary battle was fought near the creek Calaveras. The tribes of the valley were victorious and more than 3000 killed on both sides remained on the field. Hence the name of the creek as given by Captain Moraga."

This story of the naming of the river is given differently by Harry Hubbard in his book "Building the Heart of an Empire." He states that the name El Rio de la Pasion had been given to the river when it was discovered by Jose Moraga in an expedition in 1776. The name Calaveras was given to the river by Dr. John Marsh in the summer of 1840. He was returning from the upper reaches of the river which the Indians had called Hachekumma, when night overtook them. (The Hudson Bay Company listed the river on their maps as the Wine Creek because of the large quantities of grapes which grew on its banks, according to Thompson and West, "History of San Joaquin County," 1879). The party made camp in the dark in a clump of trees on the south bank of the river. When the cook arose early the next morning and started looking for wood to build the fire, he discovered on the bank of the river a great pile of human skulls and bones. He rushed back to camp and summoned Marsh to come and see the discovery. When Marsh saw the great pile of white skulls, he was struck with awe and exclaimed, "Las Calaveras!" (the skulls).

It was from this incident that the river lost the name of El Rio de la Pasion (the River of Passion) and became Calaveras.

Marsh later learned that some time during the 1830's there had been a bitter battle between the Yachekos Indians, who claimed the territory to the south of the river, and the Siyakumma Indians, who claimed the territory to the north of the Calaveras, on the south bank of the river at a point near its confluence with the San Joaquin River. The few survivors on each side were so exhausted that they retired to their respective rancherias without burying the dead.

NEW SUSPENSION BRIDGE

Mr. M. G. Sawyer has completed his suspension bridge across the South Fork of the Mokelumne River. The bridge is 150 ft. span and 53 feet above the stream, the anchors have been firmly fixed and everything connected with the work put up in a substantial manner. The old bridge was carried off during the flood of last December.—Calaveras Chronicle, July 21, 1862.

Another story about the naming of the mining town of Jenny Lind comes from Mrs. Frank Meyer, whose father was an early settler in the region. Her story is that one of the first miners to locate at the diggings was John Lind and when the miners began searching for a name for the camp, they proposed to make it Lind, after the first settler. John Lind good naturedly agreed but suggested that they add the Jenny, after the famous "Swedish Nightingale," to his name and call it Jenny Lind. They agreed to this and adopted the name.

The Conference of California Historical Societies was launched at Columbia on July 24-25. A set of by-laws was adopted and a staff of officers were elected by the 106 delegates from 31 organizations. Two members from the Calaveras Society were elected to positions on the Board of Directors, Dr. Hunt and your editor. Dr. Hunt was chosen president; Harold Schutt of Tulare County, vice-president; Coke Wood, executive secretary, and Mrs. Doris Foley of Nevada County, treasurer.

The state was divided into seven regions and a regional vice-president chosen to represent each on the Board of Directors. The next annual meeting of the Conference will be held at Monterey on June 24-25, 1955. Active membership dues were set at \$5.00 annually. The Calaveras Society was the second charter member in the Conference.

The Executive Committee held a profitable meeting at the home of Florence and Walter Martell in Murphys on the fourth Thursday in August in place of our regular monthly meeting. Several business matters which required a great deal of time to discuss, such as the Matteson diary and the program for the coming year, were thoroughly considered. We made plans for an even better year than we have had.

We certainly missed our President, Judge Smith, at the September meeting, and we hope the Judicial Council doesn't get the habit again of sending him to Los Angeles County every other month to serve on the bench in that overcrowded metropolis. We need him in Calaveras County.