

# THE GIANNINI RANCH STILL RAISING CATTLE

By  
George Hoeper

Not gold, but agriculture and the opportunity to own land was the magnet that drew Augustus Giannini from his native Switzerland to America, and eventually to Calaveras County. However, he was not among the earlier arrivals to the golden state. Giannini was 30 years old in 1893 when he first set foot on American soil and journeyed across the continent to its Pacific Coast.

Long before he embarked for the United States, California had been his goal. Many Swiss-Italian families had preceded him to California's foothills and stories of their success in that new country had drifted back to his village of Piota, in Switzerland's southern Alps. However there was a considerable time lapse between his arrival in the San Francisco bay area and the day he first saw the Sierra foothills where he would spend the remainder of his life.

Using his knowledge of livestock and skills in the processing of milk products, August Giannini (he had quickly dropped the longer spelling of his first name for the more Americanized version) found employment at a Vallejo dairy where he worked for two years. But bay area weather, particularly the fog, was not to his liking and he yearned for the mountains and their golden sunshine. In early 1895 he gathered together his meager belongings and headed inland.



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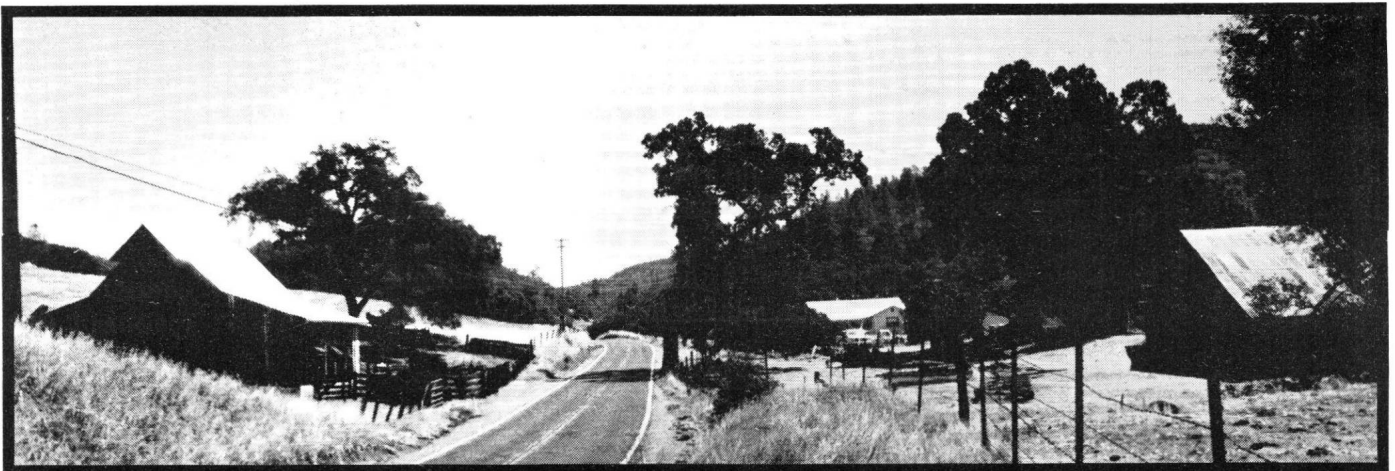
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He found work with a crew which was building the McCarty Reservoir near Rail Road Flat, then worked for a time on the McCarty Ranch. But, it was in Amador County rather than in Calaveras County that he stopped to put down at least temporary roots. A frugal and prudent man, he had saved his earnings while working at the Vallejo dairy and on the Calaveras County jobs. Using those funds coupled with the money he had brought to America with him, Giannini purchased ranch land near Clinton, southeast of Jackson, part of which extended into the Mokelumne River Canyon.

In addition to working his ranch land, August Giannini earned money cutting cordwood to power the steam boilers at the Zeila Gold Mine at the south edge of Jackson. He also was building up a small herd of dairy and beef cattle and clearing his land when he found time.

In 1898 he sold 10 acres of his land to the Standard Electric Company, forerunner of present-day Pacific  
Please see **RANCH**, pg. 2



Giannini Ranch on Mountain Ranch Road

**RANCH**, cont. from pg. 1

Gas & Electric, which needed the land for its Electra Powerhouse, which it was constructing on the North Fork of the Mokelumne River. Company officials objected loudly to the \$75 per-acre price Giannini asked, stating: "we can buy the finest peach orchard land in the San Joaquin Valley for that price." Nevertheless, the company purchased the property and completed the project while Giannini pocketed the money and looked forward to the day it would purchase more and better ranch land.

Giannini continued to operate the Amador County ranch but it was not the kind of property that really suited him, and around the turn of the century he sold it to Albert Cuneo, father of the present Verne Cuneo, of Jackson.

It was during that period August Giannini also, through an arrangement with Cuneo, began milking a dairy herd each summer on the meadow along the upper Blue Creek, in Calaveras County at what today is known as Cuneo Camp. There he made butter and cheese which was hauled by wagon to markets in Calaveras and Amador County towns. They took the cattle to the mountains as soon as the grass had taken on enough growth to support them and stayed there until shortly before the fall storms came. Milking a dairy herd and turning out butter and cheese meant long hours and hard work. It meant rising at dawn and the work seldom was finished before dark. But, to August Giannini, the fact that he was back in the mountains made all of his effort worthwhile. Nevertheless, he continued searching for another suitable ranch and in 1903 found what he was looking for in Calaveras County on Mountain Ranch Road, two miles east of San Andreas.

The ranch, owned in partnership by Albert Pini and Dave Beffa flanked both sides of the San Andreas - Mountain Ranch Road (Mountain Ranch in those days was known as El Dorado). It provided good grazing land and contained flat or rolling areas that lent themselves to the growing of grain and an annual harvest of grass hay. More importantly, Pini and Beffa were willing to sell the more than 500 acres at a reasonable price.

Giannini moved onto his new ranch and immediately began improving it. Yet, busy as he was with his new property, in 1904 he still found time



**Albina and August Giannini**

to pay court and win the hand of Albina Guliani, daughter of Swiss-Italian parents who operated a ranch on Sutter Creek, near the Amador County mining town of Volcano. The newly married couple lived in a small house that was on the ranch when August Giannini bought it. With hand-hewn timbers he began building a new barn which still stands and is in use today. Their first child, Charles Giannini, was born in 1905.

Gradually, August and Albina built up their cattle herd of Hereford and Durham cross breeds that they wintered on the ranch and drove to the mountains each summer. The Giannini family also was increasing. A daughter, Louise, was born in 1908 and a second son, Nat Giannini, was born on Christmas day 1909.

The Gianninis were a self-sufficient family. In addition to their cattle they raised their own pigs for ham and bacon. A flock of chickens provided eggs and an occasional fryer or roasting hen and each summer they cultivated a large vegetable garden.

On a portion of his acreage August Giannini each year planted a crop of oat hay for horse feed. On the flat land along the creek and on the better hillside ground he cut and harvested a large tonnage of grass hay to feed the cattle in winter. The hay was hauled to the barn by wagon and as their father pitchforked it into the storage area his children tramped it down so as much as possible could be stored.

They also raised wheat for chicken feed and after it was mowed it was hauled and spread on an open area of hard flat ground. Then, when it was

thoroughly dry, Giannini with his horses hitched four-abreast led them round and round on it to trample the heads of grain from the straw. Finally, the residue was run through a hand operated mill to separate the grains wheat from the chaff.

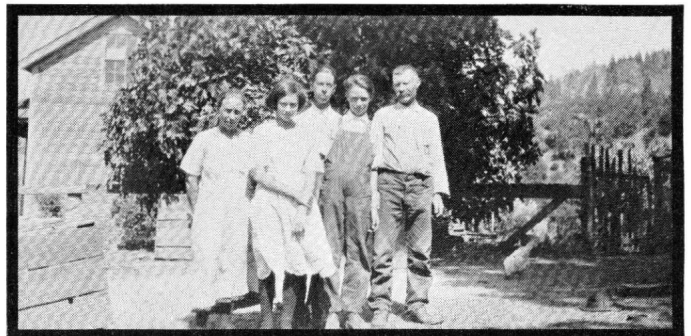
As his cattle herd grew and there was not enough grass on the ranch to feed them year-round, Giannini began herding them to summer range in the mountains. He had a range allotment in the Blue creek area with Charley Walters, judge of the San Andreas Justice Court. Their headquarters camp was in Pumpkin Valley, a lush, green meadow on the eastern slope of Blue Creek. The cattle left the home ranch in early June and were not brought back from the mountains until the end of October. The first day's drive from the home ranch to the mountains always ended at the Swiss Ranch where the cattle were held overnight and the cowboys slept in the barn. The next day's trip up Summit Level Road brought them to Hinkleman's Flat, east of Camp Connell, where Bill Hinkleman had holding corrals and operated a small store. The third day's drive brought them to Gann's Meadow, and at that point, the cattle were herded over the ridge and turned loose to drift on down into Blue Creek.

August Giannini's son, Nat, born and raised on the ranch, and who at 82, still operates it, notes that everyone in the early days belled all of their cattle. "Many of the cattlemen used just one certain type of bell and even if you couldn't see cattle scattered out on a brushy hillside, you could tell whose they were by the tone of their bells." During the 1930's and 40's and well into mid-century, San Andreas blacksmith Ed Gould manufactured cow bells and each batch would have a very distinct sound. August Giannini turned his Pumpkin Valley-Blue Creek area range over to San Andreas cattleman Ham Luddy during World War I, but he continued sending cattle to the mountains until the 1930's.

During the early part of the century and into the 1920's bears were numerous in the Blue Creek and Pumpkin Valley area. While most of them were black bear, Luddy said that during the early years the cattlemen still made occasional sightings of the now extinct California Grizzly species. While bear did not kill cattle, they would eat those that died of injury or natural causes, and it was not unusual to see several bears feeding at one time on a dead cow.

Nat Giannini remembers the night when he was a small boy that a bear came right into the cow camp complex in Pumpkin Valley and carried away the carcass of a freshly butchered yearling calf.

It was no trouble to move cattle to the mountains in the spring or to return them in the fall. By mid-May the older cattle who had made the trip in previous years were eager to leave the home ranch and would gather at the corral where they would stand bawling, waiting for the gate to be opened. In the fall, as October approached and the days grew shorter, again the older cattle would take the initiative and many, in small groups, would begin working their way homeward by themselves.



**Albina, Louise, Charlie, Nat and August Giannini at the home ranch, circa 1920.**

Gold mines in and around San Andreas still were operating when the Giannini children were young. Each morning, whistles at the Fellowcraft and Ford Mines, in San Andreas and the Thorpe Mine, at Fourth Crossing, could be heard at the Giannini Ranch as they sounded start of the miner's work day. On clear days when the wind was right, the people at the ranch could hear the whistles of the Argonaut and Kennedy Mines, in Jackson.

The Giannini children attended school in San Andreas, except for a short period of time when they went to the old Willow Creek School. Nat Giannini's first teacher at San Andreas was Adeline Squellati. Like many children who lived a considerable distance from the classroom they rode to school on horseback or by horse and buggy. Most of the schools in the county in those days had areas for the horses to be tethered while their young riders attended class.

Often, on rainy days the Giannini youngsters would arrive home from school as darkness fell,

Please see **RANCH**, pg. 4

**RANCH**, cont. from pg. 3

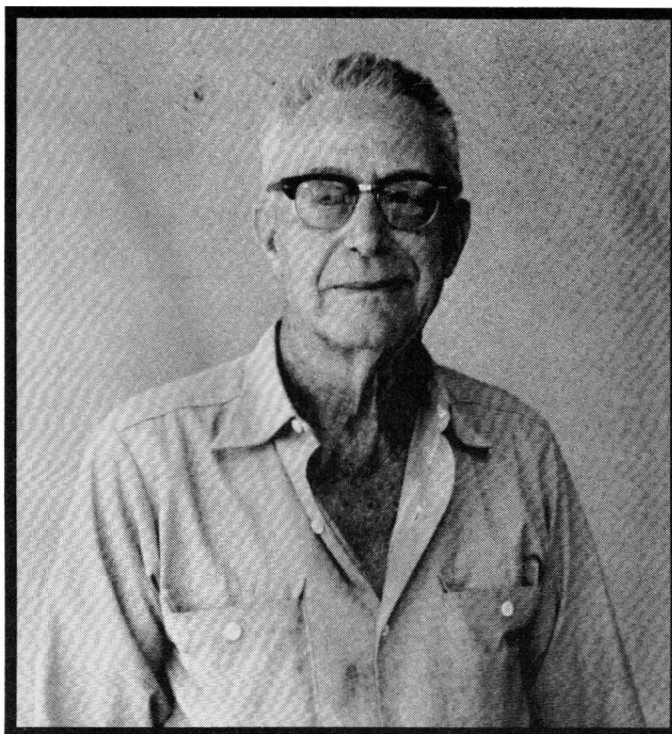
soaked to the skin. "As we rounded the last turn and came into sight of our house, Mother always had a lamp burning. We could see the light in the window and what a welcome sight that was," said Nat Giannini.

Travel became considerably easier when, during the early 1920's, August Giannini purchased the family's first automobile -- a Model-T Ford touring car. Said Nat: "we were quite a sight coming down the road on a rainy morning, water steaming off the canvas top and window curtains flapping."

During most of his high school years Nat attended classes held in rooms on the ground floor of the Masonic Building at the corner of St. Charles and South Main Street, now called Church Hill Road. However, a new Calaveras High School was under construction at that time, and he was a member of the first class, in 1928, to graduate from the new school which stood on the same site where the present Calaveras High School now stands.

While attending high school Nat worked in Treat's General Store in the mornings before school, during the noon-hour and after school. The store in those days was located on North Main Street, in San Andreas, in the building which now houses the Black Bart Inn. Young Giannini reported for work at the store at 6:30 a.m.: worked during the noon-hour, then returned when the school day ended, to deliver groceries and stock shelves. Treat's store in those days closed on Sundays and major holidays. However, when a wildfire broke out, the store like most other businesses in town, closed its doors and its employees turned out with the rest of the townspeople to fight the fire. The store supplied meat, bread and other food which was cooked for the firefighters by housewives of the community.

August Giannini obtained work building the road to the Calaveras Cement Plant which was under construction in the mid-1920's, and Nat also obtained summer work throwing rocks out of the road from behind the graders. During high school and after he graduated Charlie Giannini worked at the weekly Calaveras Prospect owned by Clarence Getchell. When the paper sold to Jesse Mayo, who later was elected to the state legislature, Charlie stayed on until 1938, when he went to work at the Gardella



**Nat Giannini**

Funeral Chapel, in San Andreas.

Louise Giannini after graduation from high school found employment in the office of the Calaveras County Clerk-Recorder-Auditor where she worked for 25 years. She married rancher and now retired state highway maintenance superintendent Bud Spence, on December 27, 1952. She and her husband still reside at their home in Altaville.

Following his graduation, Nat Giannini worked for a time at the Calaveras Cement Plant, at Stewart's Ford Garage and later, in the Dragomanovich General Store on St. Charles Street in San Andreas.

Tragedy struck the Giannini family in 1938 when Albina Giannini died at age 64 after being stricken by cancer. Despite his loss, August Giannini continued to operate the ranch alone, with help when needed, from his sons and daughter.

Shortly thereafter, war broke out in Europe and America's entry into World War II drew both Charlie and Nat Giannini into the Army. Charlie served in North Africa in the Army Medical Corps and Nat, after completing training with an armored division, served in the European theater.

At the end of the war Charlie returned and enrolled in mortuary school in San Francisco. Upon receiving his license he returned to San Andreas where, until his retirement in the early 1980's, he was associated with the Gardella Funeral Home.

Nat Giannini, upon receiving his discharge from the military service in 1945, found his father, then 81 years old, no longer physically able to work cattle or handle the ranch chores as he once did. By mutual agreement Nat took over operation of the ranch. August Giannini died in 1948, at age 84.

Nat Giannini continued to operate the ranch and in 1951 replaced the original ranch house that had been on the property when his father bought it, with a new home on essentially the same site. He also added more land to the ranch which now contains approximately 640 acres.

The big change in Giannini's life came in 1958 when he married Constance (Connie) Johns, who had come to Calaveras County from Modesto to teach school at Mountain Ranch. Their oldest son, Myron, was born a year later and their other son, Daryl, was born in 1964. Today Daryl, a heavy equipment operator, lives with his wife in a new home on the ranch and in addition to his other employment, helps his father run the ranch.

Just as it did a century ago, the ranch still supports a cattle herd, and despite the drought which in this spring of 1992, shortened the growing season, the Giannini's harvested 12 tons of grass hay that will help feed their cattle during the coming winter.

They still use the same state registered "bar D-B" cattle brand (the initials stand for Dave Beffa) that was used by the property's original ranchers. The family takes pride in the fact that their land still is a working cattle ranch.

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### MEETING SCHEDULE

This month's meeting, which marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Calaveras County Historical Society, will honor all charter members at a 7 p.m. dinner, October 22, in the Murphys Hotel.

November 19, 7:30 p.m., Rail Road Flat Community Hall. Guest speaker Mary Taylor will present the history of the Rail Road Flat School.

December 17, 7 p.m. Dinner meeting and annual Christmas party in the Metropolitan, in San Andreas.

## BLUE MOUNTAIN CITY, FORGOTTEN BOOM TOWN

By  
The Editor

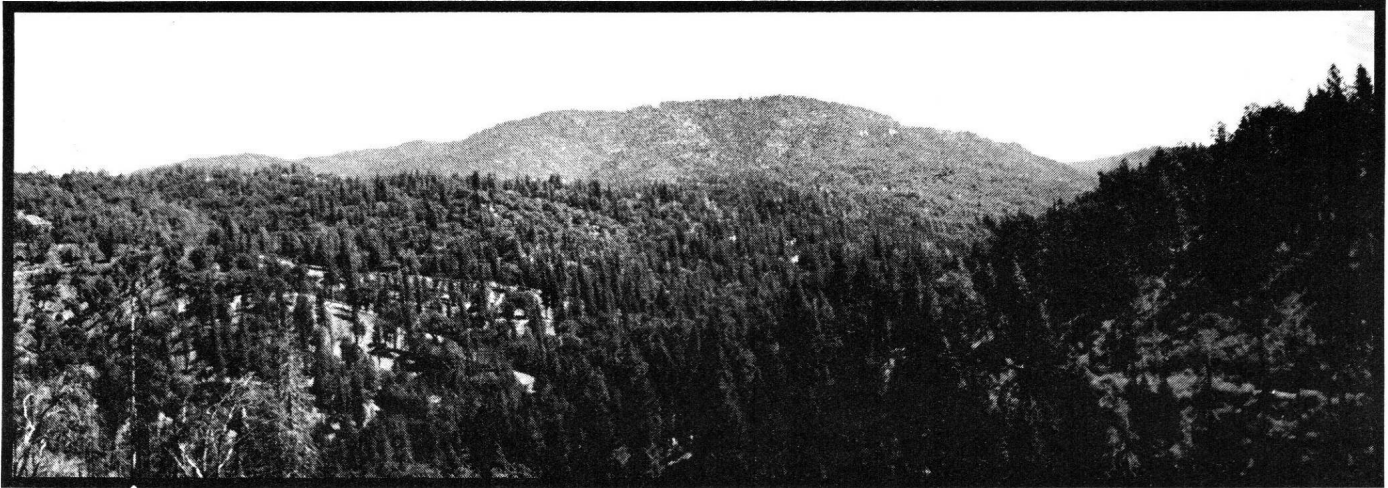
In the shadow of Calaveras County's Blue Mountain, little more than a mile from headwaters of the Licking Fork of the Mokelumne River, lies the now virtually forgotten site of Blue Mountain City. Thick stands of Ponderosa Pine, cedar and fir shroud a few remaining foundations and mine excavations on the canyon's steep western slope where the once booming mining camp once stood. As the county's easternmost mining settlement, according to the California Bureau of Mines, it sprang into being with discovery of silver and gold bearing ore there in 1863 at what was to become the Heckendorn Mine.

The new strike quickly attracted miners, prospectors, merchants and hangers-on. The center of town stood on a relatively flat bench of ground a short distance up the hillside from the mine and quickly adopted the formality of a street plan. Its principle thoroughfares were First and Second Street, Gold and Front Streets. Water for the town's residents reportedly came from a large spring on the hill above the settlement. The Blue Mountain City Post Office formally opened on August 19, 1863, with mine discoverer John Heckendorn as postmaster.

According to a local historian, the late Calaveras County Superior Court Judge J.A. Smith, John Heckendorn in addition to his mining activities, once published an early newspaper in the mining camp of Columbia, in Tuolumne County. Smith said Heckendorn also for a time, published the Big Tree Bulletin, at Calaveras Big Trees.

The Heckendorn Mine was considered to be located on what geologists term the Mother Lode's east belt and like virtually all the east belt mines, its ledge was relatively narrow and did not achieve great depth. With a small crew, Heckendorn first mined the ledge from the surface by driving a deep cut about 50 feet long and 30 feet deep into the hillside. From that point at the end of the cut he sank a shaft which followed the quartz vein downward and found free milling ore of good value.

Please see **CITY**, pg 6



**Blue Mountain towers above the remains of historic mining camp.**

CITY, cont. from pg. 5

A road that followed the ridge eastward from what is now the Wilseyville area was scratched out by pick and shovel and Heckendorn soon had a small stamp mill in operation at his mine. Meanwhile, others attracted by the strike began prospecting the area and staked out numerous claims on which they allegedly made finds of silver and copper in addition to gold bearing ore. Among those prospectors was a Peter Davis who earlier during the gold rush era had successfully mined in the Central Hill area near San Andreas. He opened up a diggings he named the Good Hunter Claim and did considerable exploration work there. Other claims which he filed in that area included Star of the West and the Last Chance. The Rathgeb brothers, who at one time owned the Guttinger Ranch upon part of which the Calaveras County Airport is located, also staked a number of claims in the Blue Mountain City area and carried out extensive prospecting operations there.

According to Judge Smith, companies formed to mine in the area around the Heckendorn and Blue Mountain City included the Heckendorn Gold and Silver mining Company; Barence Gold and Silver; Mountain Crest Gold and Silver Mining Company; Oro Plata Mining Company; West Point and Blue Mountain Mining Company and the San Andreas Mining Company. Most of the prospects were located on two quartz outcroppings known as the French Company Ledge and the Loyal League Ledge.

By late 1863 the town of Blue Mountain City was

booming and a steady parade of freight wagons and stages were bringing people and supplies to the new settlement. A sawmill was producing lumber and in addition to the quartz miners, a number of placer miners, including a group of Chinese, were sluicing at several locations on the Licking Fork, downstream from Heckendorn Mine, with only marginal success. Traces of their mining efforts still can be found here and there along the narrow, winding little stream.

The new town boasted two hotels, livery stables, several saloons, gambling halls and merchandise stores. In November, 1863, J. Heckendorn, J. Smith and E.R. Hess served as the Blue Mountain Voting Precinct's board of elections and nearly 40 votes were cast. The Calaveras Chronicle, published in Mokelumne Hill, carried the following advertisements:

#### BLUE MOUNTAIN HOTEL

Blue Mountain City

Binet and Ekert Proprietors

*The proprietors invite their friends and traveling public generally to give their hotel a trial. Their table will be supplied at all times with the best in the market served in good style. The choicest wines, Liquors and Cigars will always be found in the bar.*

<i>Board and Lodging per wk.</i>	<i>\$7.00</i>
<i>Board</i>	<i>6.00</i>

Single Meals .50  
 Horses, per night 1.50

SILVER HOTEL

Second Street, Blue Mountain City

*The undersigned take pleasure in announcing to the citizens and visitors to the new silver mines of Blue Mountain, Calaveras County, that they have completed their new hotel, fitted and furnished with a view of making their patrons comfortable during their stay in this beautiful mountain retreat. We ask the public to give us a trial and we guarantee that our fare and our prices will be such to render satisfaction.*

Board and Lodging per wk. \$8.00  
 Board 7.00  
 Single Meals .50  
 Beds .50  
 Horses per night 1.50

NYE and VIDON, proprietors

However, the expected silver bonanza failed to materialize. Prospects that on the surface appeared to have merit petered out at only a few feet in depth. Nor was placer mining on the Licking Fork proving profitable. The ore in the Heckendorn Mine continued to show good values in silver and gold, but its ledge was narrow, seldom exceeding two feet in width, and in length it was proving to be considerably shorter than its owner had hoped. The ledge did not extend much more than 20 feet north or south of the mine shaft and the

mine's ore body simply was proving too limited for good production.

By mid-1864 many of the prospectors who had flocked to the area were gone and business establishments were closing. On August 8, operation of the Blue Mountain City Post Office was discontinued. Some time later that year the Heckendorn's ore mill shut down. Underground exploration continued on a limited basis, but apparently with few positive results.

On June 3, 1865, the Calaveras Chronicle noted that: "A few months ago when the silver mania was at its height good ledges were found on this side of the Sierra at Blue Mountain. A few miners found silver bearing rock on what was called the Heckendorn Ledge. Considerable work was done on the lode, a small mill erected, but due to difficulties that were incidental to almost every mining operation in that area, little was done, and for nearly a year work has been almost entirely suspended."

The article noted that tailings from the mill had been subjected to roasting and it was found they would pay more than \$25 per ton. Whether the

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**Former miner and lumberman Elmer Fuchs views the overgrown entrance of the once busy Heckendorn Mine**

**CITY, cont. from pg. 7**

tailings actually were ever reprocessed is not known. It appears that most of the tailings would have washed down the canyon after their release from the mill, providing no chance to rework them.

Another Calaveras Chronicle article of October 3, 1865, notes that Peter Davis still was prospecting the Blue Mountain City area and had brought in valuable samples of silver and copper ore from one of his claims. However, the claims apparently did not prove profitable and ultimately, Davis and Heckendorn ended their mining operations and moved away. Blue Mountain City, by 1866, had become a ghost town. The Heckendorn remained closed for several years, although at times, prospectors or miners made use of some of the dwellings there. On one occasion when some prospectors arrived at the isolated old mining camp in the spring they found a man dead in bed in one of the cabins. They buried him on the edge of town.

Early in the 1870's the Heckendorn was reopened. A tunnel was driven several hundred feet into the hill from the level of the Licking Fork canyon floor to tap the ledge at a lower level.

A circular battery, 18-stamp mill was installed and the Calaveras Chronicle of October 2, 1872, announced: "The Heckendorn's 18-stamp mill now is in full operation crushing rich quartz ore extracted from that lead. According to assays made in San Francisco, the ore of that mine will pay from

\$22 to \$250 per ton. The report shows the proportion of silver to gold is seven-to-one." The article also stated that work on the Imperatrice and Prince Imperial Mines also is underway and both mines have large quantities for ore ready for crushing. Exactly where those two mines were located is not indicated on maps or in mining data of that period.

How long the Heckendorn operated in the 1870's is not known. It produced considerable ore and Blue Mountain City experienced somewhat of a resurgence. One problem the mine had at its lower levels was that the ledge ran through bad ground. To prevent caving, miners were forced to use square-set timbering of the type used in Virginia City's deep mines, but the mine closed and except for summertime use by cattlemen who grazed their herds there, the area saw little activity. John Raggio and his brothers, of Angels Camp, acquired title to the Heckendorn some time toward the end of the century, but they were lumbermen and sawmill operators rather than miners and to what extent they worked the mine is not known. Eventually, they moved the 18-stamp mill to the Champion Mine, near West Point.

Some time after 1900, according to Judge Smith, two Angels Camp brothers named Lavagnino reopened the underground workings. They were in the process of setting up a mill when a tree which one of them was cutting down, fell the wrong way and killed the other brother who was repairing the roof of



**Time and winter's snows long ago felled Pop Gardner's cabin, the last remaining dwelling at Blue Mountain City (Note oil barrel stove that warmed Gardner cabin).**



## ARCHITECTURAL AWARDS GO TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Two of Calaveras County's oldest store buildings and a working ranch that dates far back into the past century have been presented Calaveras County Historical Society's 1992 architectural awards. The presentations were made by Lorraine Kennedy, chairman of the architectural committee, during the society's July 23 dinner meeting in Black Bart Park, in San Andreas.

Phil and Florence Alberts, of Mountain Ranch, owners of the historic Domenghini Store on Garibaldi Street, in that community, received an award of Merit for their preservation of the old building.

Amy Monson and Suki Tutthill who operate their Cheap Cash Store in what was once Dr. Jones' Apothecary and later, Stephen Bros. Cheap Cash Store at Main and Algiers Streets in Murphys, also received an award of merit. An award of recognition went to Hollywood movie producer David Gerber and his wife, Lorraine, for refurbishing and continued use of the Six Mile Ranch, at Vallecito, as a working ranch.

The Domenghini Store, oldest structure in Mountain Ranch, was built in 1856 of field stone, adobe and hand-hewn timbers by an early settler named Pagani. The building has 24-inch thick stone walls, iron shutters protect its windows and its heavy



**The Domenghini Store, Mountain Ranch.**

plank floor covers a full basement. Six heavy glass blocks, six inches square, are embedded in the floor to emit light to the basement. A large pulley and hooks were installed to lower heavy items into it.

The building was purchased in 1872 by the Domenghini family which operated it as a saloon, billiard parlor and dance hall, until 1901. They then remodeled the building's interior into a general store and it has been used for merchandising from that time to the present. It was called the Domenghini General Merchandise until the death of Cash Domenghini in 1925.

Upon his uncle's death Louis Domenghini returned home from business college to help his parents, Attilio and Clorinda, run the store. From that time on it operated under the name of

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the mill building. The surviving brother left and the mine remained closed for many years.

During the 1930's W.H. "Pop" Gardener, of Los Angeles, acquired ownership of the mine, reopened its shaft and operated it in 1935 and 1936. He built a cabin and service buildings on a leveled spot near the mine entrance. There is no record of how much mining he did or how much ore he may have processed. Gardener lived at the mine for a considerable time and among his friends was Hollywood movie actor Stuart Hamlin, who often visited the mine and hunted bear with him.

Elmer Fuchs, member of a pioneer West Point family, now a retired lumbermen and miner, remembers as a young man in 1937, visiting Gardener and going with him through the underground workings of the Heckendorn. He said Gardener was not mining at the time.

"Those workings were a lot smaller than you would think," he remarked recently. "It was more of a chimney of ore than a long, running ledge, and the vein that comprised the ledge itself was quite narrow. I could see why they could never get a lot of production there."

Today, more than half-a-century since the last silver or gold was mined there, the course of the Heckendorn ledge can be traced for a distance beyond the open mine excavation in the hillside by a series of shallow prospect holes that hopeful miners dug during the late 1800's. A few strands of barbed wire--a few pieces of broken quartz rock--weathered, snow flattened boards of Pop Gardener's cabin are all that remain. A stranger could walk through those quiet pine woods and never dream that a busy mining camp once stood there.

**AWARDS, cont. from pg. 9**

Domenghini & Son. When his father died, Louis continued to operate the store until he died in 1963. His widow then took over the business and operated it until it was purchased in July, 1965, by Phil and Florence Alberts.

The Alberts continued operation of the old general merchandise store, still using the Domenghini name and took pains to retain its old gold rush atmosphere. Today Phil and Florence no longer run the business although they still retain ownership of the old building. For the past four years it has successfully operated under the name of Mountain Ranch Gifts and Cards, run by Kathy and Ed Griffen.

But, despite its change in name and merchandise, the old building still holds much of its early day charm. Heat still is provided by a wood stove and the store counter still is the same 30-inch wide, 16-foot-long plank that once served as a bar. Many of the artifacts used in the gold rush days are still there.

The building on the corner of Main and Algiers Streets in Murphys, which houses the Cheap Cash Store where Amy Monson and Suki Tutthill sell gifts, clothing, antiques and collectibles, was built in 1860. The name "Cheap Cash Store" is derived from the fact that James Moses Stephens and his brother, Ben, members of a pioneer Calaveras County family, operated Stephen Bros. Cheap Cash Store in that building during the 1880's and 90's, and that name, painted in large letters on the Algiers Street side of the old building, still is quite legible.

The old store, built of limestone and mortar walls with brick front for a Doctor Jones to house his apothecary, replaced a wooden building that burned in the Murphys fire of 1859. The building has no

windows (for fire protection) but has French Doors front and back, with hinged iron shutters. It served as a drug store until 1867 when the doctor sold it to John Hauselt, another Murphys Pioneer. Hauselt rented it to the Odd Fellows Lodge whose members used it as a meeting hall until the Stephens brothers took it over for their store.

The Stephens brother remained there until near the turn of the century when, needing more space, they moved their business into the building down Main Street a few doors, that now houses the Old Timers Museum. After the brothers moved, the building at Main and Algiers Streets continued to served as a store, post office, and at one time, a telegraph office. The telegraph operator was Bee Matteson, daughter of the owner of a early, Murphys area stage line.

More recently, the building was owned by Francis "Nick" and Mary Nicholson and then by Don Cuslidge, who in 1988, sold it to Bob and Amy Monson.

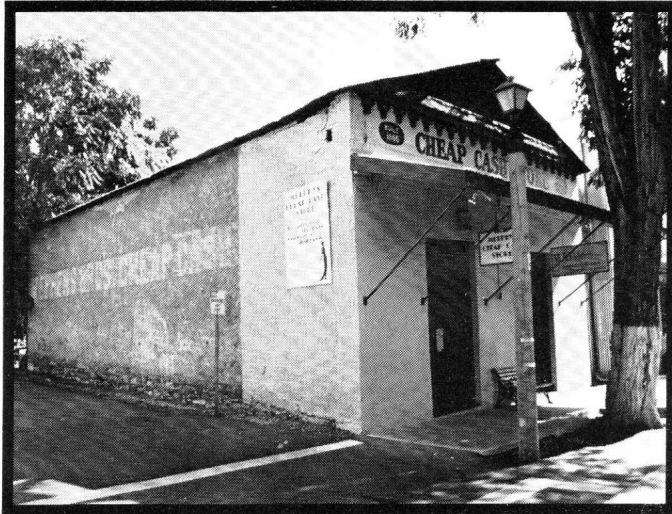
The Cheap Cash Store has been refurbished by Tom Tutthill and its time and weather battered facade replaced. However, in accomplishing that, the historic authenticity of the old building has not been compromised.

In operation since the days that cattlemen first brought their herds into the Sierra foothills, Six Mile Ranch near Vallecito, owned by Hollywood producer David Gerber and his wife, Lorraine, still remains a working ranch.

Once the property of timber and sawmill owner Matt Manuel and of Calaveras rancher and cattleman Romie Roller, the ranch lies in a fertile valley north of Highway 4, just west of Vallecito. Upon Matt Manuel's death the property was purchased



**Six Mile Ranch, Vallecito.**



**Cheap Cash Store, Murphys.**

by local contractor Craig Adkins and associates. However, his untimely death brought problems to the property and his widow later was forced to sell. Gerber, who by that time had become interested in Calaveras County, purchased the property and during the past several years, has concentrated on returning it its former productivity.

Under the management of Richard Rolleri, Angels Camp area rancher and son of the ranch's former owner, barns, fences, and the historic ranch house have been restored. More importantly, the ranch again is in cattle production and fine horses are being raised there.

In addition, this year the first crop of grapes will be harvested from the ranch's 28-acre vineyard and its walnut orchard has been replanted and is back in production.

Today the ranch is one of Calaveras County's agricultural show places. The Historical Society's Certificate of Recognition which goes to the Gerbers, was accepted on their behalf by Mrs. Richard "Rusty" Rolleri.

Members of the Architectural Committee, in addition to Mrs. Kennedy who served as chairperson, included Joe and Kim Gault, of San Andreas; Larry Carlson, Ozzie and Roberta Kenyon and Doug Meek, all of Mountain Ranch and Jack Kennedy, of San Andreas.

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## IN MEMORIAM

George Koenig, Van Nuys, CA, May 8, 1992  
 Alice Sutton, Stockton, CA, April 2, 1992

## NEW OFFICERS FOR 1992-93

Calaveras County native Charles Stone, of Copperopolis, longtime member of Calaveras County Historical Society and former member of its board of directors, will serve as its president during 1992-93. Charles, member of an early-day family, is a local historian who for years has played a leading role in preservation of the county's history. He succeeds John Gomes, of Angels Camp, who served as president for the past year.

Mr. Stone and other officers were installed at the Society's July 23 dinner meeting. Others who took office include Sue Smith, of Valley Springs, vice-president; Robert Perry, of San Andreas, reelected treasurer; Donna Shantz, of San Andreas, recording secretary and Rosemary Faulkner, of Rail Road Flat, reelected membership-financial secretary. New directors include Barbara Beeman and Grant Metzger, both of San Andreas. Willard Fuller, of San Andreas and Jack Geary, of Stockton, will continue to serve on the board for another year.

Bonnie Miller is retiring vice president and Donna Queirolo, retiring recording secretary. Retiring directors were Glenn Wasson and Mary Jane Garamendi.



**Charles Stone**

## Calaveras County Historical Society

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

### Officers and Directors

President..... Charles Stone, Copperopolis  
Vice President..... Sue Smith, Valley Springs  
Treasurer..... Robert A. Perry, San Andreas  
Recording Secretary..... Donna Shantz, San Andreas  
Membership-Financial Sec'y..... Rosemary Faulkner, R.R. Flat  
Directors..... Barbara Beeman, San Andreas  
Grant Metzger, San Andreas  
Willard P. Fuller, San Andreas  
Jack Geary, Stockton

### Staff

Office Manager.....Dolores Tipton  
Las Calaveras..... George W. Hoepfer Editor

**Las Calaveras** is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. Individual memberships (\$8.00 a year), Family (\$10.00), Junior (\$4.00) and Library memberships (\$7.00), include subscription to **Las Calaveras**. Non-members may obtain a copies of **Las Calaveras** from the secretary. The original historical material in this bulletin is not copy-righted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source will be appreciated.

The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the county, locations of which are announced in advance. Dinner meetings also are announced in advance.

The Society's office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4 pm. The telephone number is (209) 754-1058. Visitors are welcome. The Society also operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10 am to 4 pm in the historic county courthouse at 30 Main St., San Andreas.

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## NEW MEMBERS

Marci Laura Perini, San Francisco.  
Barbara Jellow, Richmond  
Tom Clark, San Andreas.  
Mrs. Willa Hirschaut, Winton.  
Wilda Plaskett, Sutter Creek.  
Elmer Shideler, Lafayette.  
Ray McKindley, Stockton.  
Mr. & Mrs. David Bean, Mountain Ranch.  
Dolores A. Bracken, Ione.  
Mr. & Mrs. Rick Darby, Angels Camp.  
Mrs. Patricia Schindler, San Francisco.  
Edna Sperry, Stockton.  
Shirley Capps, Rocklin.  
Doyce & Helen Wildom, West Point.  
Ruth Alpheus, Red Bluff.  
Shirley Wheeler, Red Bluff.

## A WET WINTER COMING?

George Wessell, Miwok weather prophet featured in the July edition of the *Los Calaveras*, early last month made at least a tentative weather prediction for the coming winter.

"Seems to me the signs are foretelling the beginning of an early winter. I've seen them before. They remind me of the beginning of the winter of 1955-56. Many of the oaks have already turned brown and large numbers of small birds -- gold finches -- are showing up a month early. The gray squirrels have begun gathering, even though this year's crop of pine cones won't really be ripe for harvest for another month.

The unsettled summer we've had, the feel of the weather itself, makes me believe a change is coming," he said. But George is not really satisfied that he has observed all that is necessary to make a true prediction for the coming winter. A recurring respiratory ailment has kept the 77-year-old Miwok elder from making trips to the mountains as he has done each fall in the past.

"The hot, humid weather has made it hard for me to breathe, and the thinner air up in the mountains adds to my problem. But, until I get up there and look at the trees and the pine cones, at the springs and vegetation, I won't really be sure," he said. "It looks like maybe we're heading into a wet winter, but don't count on it. Before I say for sure, I want to make that trip up into the mountains."

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## MUSEUM DONATIONS

Calaveras County Historical Society wishes to thank the following persons who recently made donations of cash, artifacts and materials of historical interest to the Calaveras County Museum.

Mr. & Mrs. Taylor Howard, San Andreas: \$100 cash donation

Howard Lewis, Stockton: \$15 cash donation

Mrs. Wilma DeMotte, Selma, Ore.: \$100 cash donation

Charles Stone, Copperopolis: historic photographs

Don Duneo, San Andreas: historic photographs

Evelyn Arthur, Murphys: chocolate pot with six cups and saucers