

HISTORICAL BULLETIN

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CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

San Andreas, California

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GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings to all my good friends in the Calaveras County Historical Society. I have greatly appreciated the cards and messages of encouragement. They have helped so much to pass the long hours in the hospital bed. I hope that I will be able to join you all again soon in our interesting meetings. C. W.

THE MOKELUMNE HILL BREWERY

By LIRREL STARLING

Beer, traditionally a hearty—if plebeian beverage—was relished by early Californians; its processing was carefully undertaken by brewers whose methods were often those which, passing from the Old World to the New, had been handed down from generation to generation in their families. Elaborate posters depicting the lively, convivial Goat—symbol of Bock Beer, are now collectors' items; they were once as familiar a part of Americans as the brown-ware cuspidor, and Dixie Queen Plug Cut Tobacco. When J. C. Gebbart and brothers built their Mokelumne Hill Brewery in 1862, we have a contemporary press account that is typical of the detailed journalism of the period. A massively-constructed building, the brewery was made from native lava rock quarried out of the hills immediately in back of it; the blocks were made from both the yellowish-white stone, and the more usual pale pink lava, all of which, found in abundance, was much used for building material in Mokelumne Hill, as elsewhere in the Mother Lode.

The Calaveras Chronicle, noting erection of this building as "the largest and most complete of its kind, in California" mentioned it as being two-storeys high, although the tall, rectangular-shaped right wing, with its perforated ceiling areas, was of three-storey height. This further, very complete account, is from the files of The Calaveras Chronicle of the period:

"The walls of the first storey are two feet thick. On the first floor on the eastern end is the brew house, in which is the furnace and kettle for boiling the brew, capable



Old Brewery at Mokelumne Hill

of holding 550 gallons. There is also the mash tub and cooler, the latter holding 2,000 gallons. After the beer is cooked it is conveyed down into the fermentation tubs in the cellar, from which it passes into large casks, when after a few days it is drawn off for market.

On the same floor in the western end is their store room and mill for grinding their grain. Upstairs on the second floor is the large room to receive the malt after it is made. Back of this room is the kiln for drying the malt. A room in the third storey is used for spreading the malt out to cool when it first comes from the cellar where it sprouts. The cellar on the eastern end is used for fermentation and storage of beer. There is a tunnel running through this end 150 feet long, 4 feet wide and 6 feet high, cut through lava rock with an arched top. At the back of this tunnel is a shaft 80 feet deep, which admits air for ventilation. Only 90 feet of this tunnel is used, which has been widened out to 11 feet and made 10 feet high. The cellar in the western end is used for sprouting or making malt. There are two apartments in the cellar, the back one having a shaft connecting with it, which is 50 feet deep, and used for ventilation.

The product made by this brewery is pronounced a superior grade and is distributed in all the mining camps of this district."

THE OLD BREWERY

There, hard by the town and just top o' the hill
The Brewery's standing—all stone—and so still—
Huge, chateau-like relic, mildewy with rime—
A wreck of itself from its jovial prime.
The grass grows as greenly and birds sweetly sing
As ever each did in a jollier spring,
'Though gone are the brewers, their recipes, too—
Now scattered like dust that the wind has whirled
through,

And only the owls, a smug, nocturnal race
Consort in far depths of that crumbling old place.
Alike, in hot sun and the winter's long rain,
My childhood and manhood—I've seen it remain
And—gouty with age—the Old Brewery, still,
A stout German burgher sits there on the hill!

—LIRREL STARLING, in Ad Schuster's Other
Fellow column, The Oakland Tribune.

MOKELUMNE HILL

In the early gold mining days of Calaveras County, Mokelumne Hill was the liveliest, largest and principal placer mining community in Calaveras County. It is located on the south side of the Mokelumne River, about 8 miles northerly of San Andreas.

The town was settled by a heterogeneous population of Yankees, Westerners, Southerners from the United States, French, German, Chilenos and Mexicans.

Death by violence seemed to be the rule. For 17 successive weeks in the early fifties, a man was killed between Saturday and Sunday morning. Conditions became so desperate that a vigilance committee was organized, but it did not continue long in existence.

The first occupants of the town arrived in 1848. In November of that year a Mr. Syree had a trading post and Mr. Dickinson a boarding house in the town. The mines on Stockton Hill and Corral Flat were so rich that a claim was limited to one rod square.

FIRST MINING LAWS: The miners of Mokelumne Hill secured the services of Col. Jonathan D. Stevenson to prepare a code of laws to regulate mining in the district. This draft was the basis for most of the mining laws in the California Gold Fields.

GOLD: The first discoverer of gold in the Mokelumne Hill section is lost in obscurity. One of the great rushes was made when a discharged soldier of the Stevenson Regiment found a nugget weighing more than 20 pounds along the banks of the Mokelumne River. The shallow creeks were first worked in the community. The rich discovery was made on French Hill in 1851. In the spring of 1852 gold was discovered in Stockton Hill and on Corral Flat. This mining was done by shaft and windlass process. The gravels from these two places was carted to a spring where the soda works now stands and there washed in rockers. It is claimed that before water came in from the canal in 1853 that over \$10,000,000 in gold was recovered. The east slope of Stockton Hill was honeycombed with shafts not over 20 feet apart. These early shafts were not over 50 feet in depth and the pay gravel was extracted from what is called the upper channel. In the sixties greater depth was obtained from tunnels run in from Chili Gulch. The gravel at a greater depth proved to be extremely rich and the owners made small fortunes from their holdings.

WATER: Water was brought into the community in 1853 by a company of miners calling themselves the Mokelumne Hill Canal and Mining Company. The canal was constructed from the South Fork of the Mokelumne River and used to wash the gravel deposits by the hydraulic

method. The canal was afterwards extended to Campo Seco Chili Camp and Valley Springs. The original canal is now used by the Calaveras Public Utility District to furnish water to Mokelumne Hill, San Andreas, The Calaveras Cement Company's property and vicinity.

FIRES: The first fire that destroyed a substantial part of the town occurred in 1854. On Feb. 26th, 1865 a disastrous fire originated on the second floor of the Union Hotel. The flames were gallantly fought by Mokelumne Engine Co. No. 1 and Pennsylvania No. 2, together with the Eagle Hook and Ladder Company. The fire spread rapidly up the west side of Main Street. At Danielweig's Store the flames crossed the street and burned all the building up to Mrs. McFadden's store. Going down Center Street all the wooden buildings on the south side of the street were consumed as far down as AhKew's saloon. At this point the flames crossed the street and burned all the frame buildings down to Haddock's House.

Another disastrous fire occurred in Mokelumne Hill on Sept. 4, 1874. Practically all of the business houses were destroyed together with many homes. The Grand Hotel og Leeger was destroyed, the stores of Davidson & Peek, Gradwohl, Weil, Pellaton, and M. Davidson. Loutitt the blacksmith and Ray the Tinsmith also lost their places of business.

SPORTS: Bear and bull fights and horse racing were great sports at Mokelumne Hill in the early days of the town.

CHURCHES: On November 23, 1851, Isaac B. Fish, Preacher in charge of the Mokelumne Hill, Oregon and California Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church took possession of the lot on which the Methodist Church stood in the Town of Mokelumne Hill on what was known as Church Street and dedicated on said day the canvas house thereon to the worship of God for the benefit of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Nicholas Lewis, Wm. P. Newlin and James Guard were named as Trustees.

The Congregational Church at Mokelumne Hill was built in 1856. It was the fifth Congregational Church organized in the State of California. The old building is the oldest Congregational Church building in the State.

The Calaveras Chronicle of May 29th, 1862 states, "Rev. Father Byrne will commence the building of a new Catholic Church at Mokelumne Hill on the lot donated for that purpose by Francis Snyder, Esq."

THREE STORY BUILDING: The historic old I. O. O.F. building is the first three story building in the interior of California. It was first constructed as a two story building for Adams and Co. in 1854 and used by it in its Express business. Later it was acquired by Mokelumne Hill Lodge 44 and in the year 1861 the Lodge added the third story as a lodge room.

THE CALAVERAS CHRONICLE: This newspaper published at Mokelumne Hill was the first weekly newspaper published in California. It was founded by H. A. de Coursey, Henry Hamilton and Col. James M. Ayers, (the author of "Gold and Sunshine"). The first issue appeared in Oct. 1851. Publication has now ceased.

COUNTY SEAT: Mokelumne Hill was the county seat

of Calaveras County from 1853 to 1866. It won the County Seat from Jackson and lost it to San Andreas.

THE FRENCH WAR

The so-called French War took place on French Hill in 1851. A number of Frenchmen had settled in Mokelumne Hill and while prospecting on French Hill, which overlooks the town, struck exceedingly rich mining ground, from which in less than a week they had extracted \$800,000. The hole from which this sum was extracted was on the south side of the hill and about half way down from the top. It was approximately 16 feet in length, 8 feet in width and 12 feet in depth. The gold was found in a "V" shape seam that extended about half the length of the shaft.

The discoverers attempted to keep the discovery a secret but without avail as it soon became noised about among the Americans that the Frenchmen had discovered the richest sort of diggings. Certain unscrupulous men stole into the claim at night and the Frenchmen first discovered this when the thieves had dropped a 11 pound nugget when carrying away their booty.

The Frenchmen set a watch and caught the intruders in the act and then trouble began. The Frenchmen staked off all the hill but did not have enough miners to work the claims staked out.

An intense feeling had prevailed for some time against all foreign miners. The Americans holding that the country belonged to the United States and that foreigners had no right to carry away the richest belonging to the soil. Acting upon this theory they attempted to drive the Frenchmen off the ground. The latter however appealed to their compatriots for aid and in a brief time over 200 Gallic warriors were on the hill.

They built a fort on the west side of the hill overlooking the town raised the tricolor and proclaimed they would defend the property from jumpers and intruders of all sorts. The Americans at once organized a military company and made ready for deadly conflict. Reinforcements came in from San Andreas, Calaveritas, Jesus Maria and other nearby mining camps. As soon as they were ready the Americans proceeded to storm the fort, one party marching in battle array up the hill, while another flanking the French and executing a rear movement to a higher eminence. Just before the engines of war were turned loose the French ran up a white flag and offered to compromise. The French Counsel from San Francisco acted as mediator, a committee was appointed and the matter compromised shortly thereafter. The French retained most of their claim.

French Hill proved to be one of the richest spots in the district. The pocket alone, over which the trouble first started is credited with a yield of over a million dollars. None of the claims were over 20 feet in depth and the gravel was carried in sacks on the backs of the miners to where water could be obtained for washing purposes. From 1851 to 1853 the yield from French Hill was in excess of \$10,000,000.

INDIANS OF MOKELUMNE HILL

By MRS. HARRY JAMES

Pedro and Lilly's name was Connor. They came down from West Point and Pedro was the medicine man. He carried an old sack around with dried herbs in it when he went to visit the sick and from this made brew with which to cure them. They lived in Mokelumne Hill for a long time. They had an old cart and horse and after the horse died of old age, they walked long distances. Pedro had many wives and did not know his age.

"Manuella" told us she was over 100 years old and that she remembered when "big smoke" came out of "Butte Mountain." She walked the streams barefooted all winter and panned for gold. She had a barley sack cut so a band went across her forehead and carried what she could find and was given along with her gold pan on her back. She told many fantastic tales.

"Old Jennie" had one eye gone. She combed her hair down over one side of her face to hide it as she was very vain.

"Old Betsy" from West Point was very old. She came to Mokelumne to the last Fandango which was out at Happy Valley above the water ditch. All the kids in town went out to the doings. We were afraid, but took a chance. There were a lot of Indians there. They said old Betsy was well passed 100 years old.

"Old Susie" used to go down to the river and camp in the summer and pick sacks of poppy foliage. They were supposed to get opium from it. She lived in Happy Valley and when she passed away she was buried in the old cemetery down on Calaveras River. Her son, Jim was made chief of the tribe.

"Old Mike" was a hard drinker, so one night he got very drunk. He wandered down into "China Town" and his wife stabbed him with a knife. No one seemed to care, so he was laid away and that was that.

The Indians at that time went down in the San Joaquin Valley in the summer and hunted with bows and arrows and fished. They came back with sacks of dried rabbit, squirrels and fish. They gathered acorns and ground them in their mortars. My father told me of seeing them make acorn mush many times.

"Old Santa and "One-eyed Dick" from West Point used to come to our house for food and brought us pine nuts from Carson City. I remember this as we were very much afraid of them. They wanted to touch us white children.

There was also "Old Pegleg" who had a stump.

The Leger Hotel in Mokelumne Hill was originally called the "Hotel de Europe."

Father Welsh for seven years pastor of the Catholic Church at Mokelumne Hill was transferred to Salt Lake City in June, 1871 and Father Schlattery was appointed to fill the vacancy.

Seneca H. Marlette was for two terms elected County Surveyor of Calaveras County. Thereafter he served two years as Surveyor General of the State. A street in Mokelumne Hill is named in his honor.

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FELIX

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