

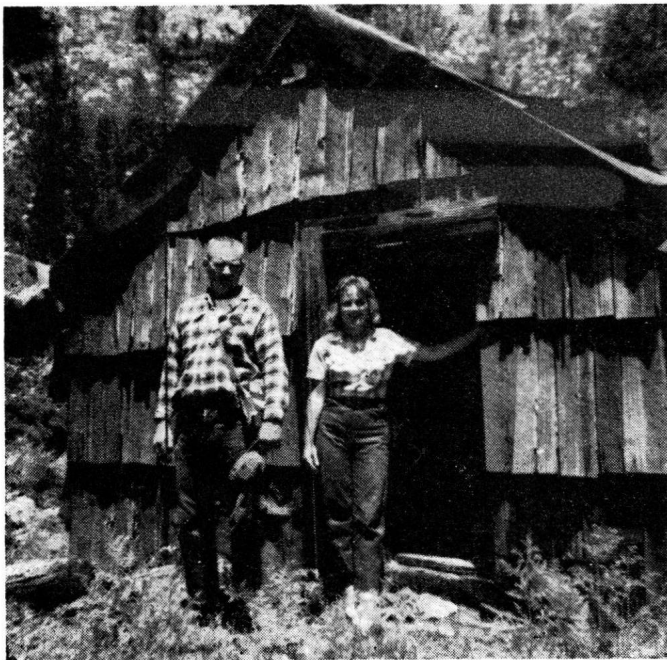


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WOLFE CABIN—Bryce Jasper and daughter, Barbara, of San Andreas, in front of Monte Wolfe's upper cabin, which is located near the Jasper summer cabin.

MONTE WOLFE, SIERRA HERMIT

By JUDGE J. A. SMITH

The story about Monte Wolfe in the local papers has recalled many memories of this "man of the mountains."

The Bryce Jaspers of San Andreas, who own a cabin near Hermit Valley, have a very fine snapshot of Monte's upper cabin.

I am indebted to them for the following article published in the "Stockton Record" entitled "Pete and His Pipe":

Now I have a "who dunnit" that intrigues me. Not just a who but a why, and upon what basis of newly discovered fact. Was it sentiment or just prankishness that led someone to pile stones on the simulated new grave and mark it with an inscribed headstone of granite?

It is just south of the road shoulder and 100 yards west of where the Ebbetts Pass Road State Highway No. 4 crosses the bridge in Hermit Valley. It wasn't there two months ago. You can't miss it, as a turn in the road puts it head-on to a car driver.

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HONOR MR. MOTHER LODGE—Archie Stevenot of Sonora (center), retiring president of the Golden Chain Council of the Mother Lode, receives a copy of a Senate resolution from Senator Stephen P. Teale (left) officially naming him "Mr. Mother Lode." Bill Cassidy, Auburn publisher, new Council president, admires a gold medallion bearing the State seal presented by Senator Teale and Assemblyman Paul J. Lunardi.

Stevenot Gets 'Mr. Lode' Senate Honor

Archie Stevenot of Sonora, who retired last month as president of the Golden Chain Council of the Mother Lode, officially became "Mr. Mother Lode."

Archie, widely known in the State for his activities in promoting highways and historical preservation of the Lode counties, was presented a State Senate resolution in a handsome frame, giving him the official title for his contribution to civic service.

The presentation was made by State Senator Stephen P. Teale. As a second honor Senator Teale and Assemblyman Paul J. Lunardi presented him with a gold medallion inscribed with the Great Seal of the State of California.

Archie's wife, Rose, was given the first life membership in the council for her faithful duties in handling secretarial work for her husband for many years, and her assistance to the council. Archie is proud of his record of not having missed a meeting of the council and its predecessor organization, the Mother Lode Highway Association, in 41 years.

RED PAT

By JUDGE J. A. SMITH

Most mining communities have their characters, and Red Pat was one at Hodson when the Royal Mine was being operated by J. C. Kemp, an executive for an English company.

Patrick McKinia (alias Red Pat) was a roustabout at the Royal Mine at Hodson, Calaveras County. He was a native of County Clair, Ireland, and was well named Red Pat, for his hair was red and curly. His skin shone red between the great red freckles and red hair that

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Monte Wolfe, Sierra Hermit

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The border of the granite slab is in green paint, the lettering is red. In front is a beer can painted green with some wilted wild flowers hanging on the side.

The inscription reads "Mounty Wolf Died 1940." It faces down the Mokelumne Hill gorge, and that, some 5 or 6 miles below the grave, was the hideout from which Monte Wolfe disappeared in April of 1940 and no trace of him has come to light about him unless the markers of the grave and monument know something that I don't.

Their spelling of the name as "Mounty" would indicate their act was a prank. Monte was a nickname, of course, derived from the Spanish card game, but the man's real name I never heard mentioned.

I do not know, but Wolfe may have been an alias applied because he has been known as the "Lone Wolf of the Sierras."

Outlaw he was and hermit and an amazing man physically in that he walked in or snowshoed incredible distances in a day's time in his rugged country. But like a wolf, I'd say, no, more I'd say like a coyote, a coyote with no inhibitions against what we term stealing. Monte did a little hunting and trapping, some trout fishing and guiding of sportsmen in season. With his main dependence on the contents of cabins within the 100 square miles of territory he had marked for his own.

Yes, Monte was an outlaw with charges of theft hanging over him in Calaveras and Alpine counties, but for bringing to trial the officials of neither county desired any part.

He was sort of a parasite, a pest, a nuisance, but not vicious or a menace.

Yes, a coyote with his den lined with chicken feathers. And his was a den, his hide-a-way deep in the narrow gorge of the Mokelumne. On a little-frequented, brush-grown island, it was a part dugout and part stone-walled and roofed with brush and concealed with brush and with the entrance a kind of crawl in crooked way through growing brush. Inside was the loot found after Monte disappeared in April, more than 8 years ago. Bear rugs, deer rugs, a phonograph radio, expensive trout rods and enough canned food to last one man many months and the body of Monte's pet cat locked in and starved to death. Monte wouldn't have done that on purpose. It was the strongest bit of evidence that he had fallen into the spring and drowned. But no part of his body was ever found, not unless the "grave markers" found a bit of his skeleton this summer, I wonder.

Note: I am sorry that Pete and his Pipe Peterson did not live to learn that his opinion that it may have been a prank was true.

John Reinking and Arlin Jasper of San Andreas erected this monument to the memory of Monte Wolfe one summer about 1948 while they were vacationing at Hermit Valley.

Just inside the door to the entrance of the upper cabin was a trap door. Below was an excavation lined with tins and it contained many utensils and food.

At one time he had a small cook stove in the upper cabin which he must have carried for a great distance.

For the foregoing article I am indebted to Romie Roller of Angels Camp.

Mr. Roller states that he knew Monte Wolfe in 1920.

Red Pat

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covered his powerful body.

He could outwork, outwalk, outeat, outrun and out-sleep any man in the Mother Lode.

He could not and would not fight. One Fourth of July afternoon at the mine he displayed his capacity for edibles and a case of eggs and a case of beer were furnished by the miners. He began to eat the eggs raw, shells and all, washing them down with copious draughts of beer.

After a number of eggs had been eaten, Pat remarked, "There was a 'burred' in that," and continued with his eating until he had consumed 60 eggs and 10 bottles of beer.

On one occasion he was called to San Andreas as a witness in a lawsuit. Clabe and Will Womble were also called as witnesses.

The Womble boys started before him in a two-horse rig. At the top of the hill in the road leading out of San Andreas, they overtook Pat on foot. They offered to give him a ride. He declined, stating he was in a hurry to get to Hodson.

They drove on and left him. It took three to four hours to drive to Hodson. When they arrived Pat greeted them in front of a building where he had been refreshing himself. He had gone across Bear Mountain and by walking and running had beaten the others home by about half an hour.

On one occasion when a man had been injured at the mine he went on foot for a doctor to Angels Camp and made the round trip in just under four hours.

He delighted to show his strength by picking up a small horse that was tied to the hitching rail in town and carrying the horse to the opposite side of the rail. If a saddle horse broke his tether, Pat would run him down and capture the horse.

He liked alcohol in any form but seldom was intoxicated.

On one occasion he tried to stop a fight between two friends and was severely stabbed in the abdomen. From this he fully recovered.

He had been blown up by dynamite, covered up in the underground workings of mines, but always managed to survive.

One Sunday morning he was engaged in tightening the fish plates that held the rails of the high trestle together over which ran an electric train transporting ore from the mine to the 120-stamp mill.

Due to the roar of the mill, he did not hear the train as it was backing to the hoist and he was run over.

He was critically injured and it was some time before he could be taken out. He did not lose consciousness, even aided the men at their work without one word of complaint.

A bottle of whiskey was offered him which he refused for the first time in his life, saying, "No thank you, boys, Pat hasn't long for this world and he is going to die sober."

That night, without uttering one word of complaint, Pat passed into the Great Beyond.

I do not know what paper the following article appeared in:

If you have fished or camped or hunted in that area
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Monte Wolfe, Sierra Hermit

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surrounding the place where the boundaries of Calaveras, Alpine or Amador counties touch each other you have heard of that almost legendary person, a person known as Monte Wolfe, and how he disappeared in the winter of 1939-40 and neither hide nor hair of him has been seen since.

Winter and summer he had stayed in that mountain wilderness for at least 20 years, but few men had seen him face to face until some five or six years ago when he offered his services as guide to a few fishing parties. He was suspected of pilfering from mountain cabins but because he was such a "wild man" and the articles that disappeared were of small consequence he wasn't officially charged. It was known that he had two "hide-aways"—cabins deep in the gorge of the North Fork of the Mokelumne River, but few men had ever seen either of the cabins.

Numerous stories about the mysterious disappearance of Monte Wolfe have been told and written but the official record in the office of the Supervisor of El Dorado National Forest at Placerville leaves little doubt that Monte Wolfe was drowned in the Mokelumne River.

The record starts with the filing of a claim to a silver mine that never existed. This is the record "Claim for Millsite for claim known as "Silver Hoard."

"July 6, 1935, we the owners, Monte Wolfe and James B. Linford, claim this flat as our base of operation for our mineral claim known as Silver Hoard. Starting at a stake in said flat near Mokelumne River in Horse Canyon from said stake or monument northeast 1500 yds; thence 500 yards east by south, thence 1500 yards south west, thence 500 yards west by north to stake of commencement.

"This claim to contain cabin and garden site and all timber thereon.

"Signed Monte Wolfe
"Signed James B. Linford"

The following letter adds further detail to the Monte Wolfe story:

July 2, 1940

Mr. Beston Robinson, atty, Financial Center, Oakland, California.

Dear Beston,

According to your suggestion I am putting in wording the facts pertaining to the condition in which we found the two cabins built by Monte Wolfe in the Mokelumne Canyon. On the afternoon of June 28, John Linford and I drove to Hermit Valley where we left our car about dark and proceeded down the trail by flashlight to Monte's upper cabin.

Passing through Onion Valley earlier in the evening we had made inquiry from Mr. Phillips, owner of the local store, about Monte. Mr. Phillips stated that so far as he knew Monte had not been seen since the first of March. He said that he had inquired from the game warden and from the Sheriff. Both had stated that they had not seen Monte for several months and they had no idea of his whereabouts.

We found the upper cabin, which is located approximately 5 miles from the point where the road crossed the Mokelumne River at Hermit Valley, to be closed and in good order.

I had keys for both cabins with me, keys which Monte gave me in 1935. It was not necessary to use the keys even though the cabins were apparently locked because one of the staples holding the chain could be removed by hand. Monte had told me several times that he always left his cabins so that they could be entered in the winter but that he closed them securely in the spring as soon as the road was opened. His bed was made, the dishes washed and everything was in order except for the fact there was a cat on the floor immediately inside the door. This cat had been dead for several months.

The cabin is tight and it is impossible for a cat to get in or out when the door is shut. The dates of March 4, 5, 6 and 7 had been checked off on a 1940 calendar hanging on the wall.

The water bucket was half full of water. There was no spoiled food standing around, only a box of uncooked potatoes. His 25-35 carbine was standing in plain view near the head of his bed. His skis, with the bindings, were overhead in the rafters. His traps were gathered and hanging on the end of the cabin. His tools were standing, some inside and some outside of the cabin, as Monte usually left them. A few marten skins and a weasel skin were hanging over the bed, all badly infested with vermin and chewed by rats.

The next morning we continued to the lower cabin approximately 7 miles further down the canyon about 1½ miles below Meadow Creek. We found the door to the cabin standing open but there was no evidence that anyone had been in the cabin since Monte left it.

Several pails full of cooked food were standing on the table and in a screened rat-proofed cupboard. These were badly decayed and would indicate that they had been there for several months. There was a coffee percolator full of coffee standing on the stove and dirty dishes on the table. His bed was unmade. Most of his tools were standing against the front of the cabin. There was a shovel, a fork and one rake in the garden.

He had planted a small patch of potatoes, about 1/3 of the area which he had in potatoes last year, one long row of onions, a row of carrots, a row of radishes and a row of celery seed. The balance of the garden was unplanted and from the condition of the weeds had been turned this spring.

Several small trees had been cut and barked but were lying where he had left them. Since our visit to this cabin last November he had built the walls of a root cellar and undoubtedly intended to use these trees for a roof.

A shallow flat box of dirt about 2 feet square covered with a fine screen was standing on a shelf immediately inside of the window recalling to mind that last fall I took Monte a package of tomato seed at his request. He expected to raise some early tomatoes this year by starting the seeds in the cabin.

We disposed of the decayed food, washed up the dishes, made the bed, left the cabin in order and locked it.

The only thing which we could place definitely missing was Monte's good fish pole, automatic reel and fish basket which I knew were at the lower cabin last fall. It seems quite obvious that Monte met with some accident several months ago very near the upper cabin otherwise he would not have left his cat locked in.

There were two coyote skins, two cat skins and one
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The Calaveras County Historical Society meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Courthouse in San Andreas. Dinner meetings are held each quarter at different places in the county.

EDITORIAL

Before another issue of "Las Calaveras" comes out, the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Conference of California Historical Societies will be held on June 22-24 in Columbia where it was organized. Although the Tuolumne County Historical Society is the official host to the Conference and the two hundred delegates who will attend, Mrs. Tillie Sheatsley, who is the Chairman of Local Arrangements from Sonora, invites all of the Mother Lode Societies to help in hosting this important event. I'm sure that we will give her our support by helping with the reception on Thursday evening and by attending as many of the sessions as possible. This is the first time for seven years we have had this opportunity to attend the Annual Meeting with only a short drive. Next year the meeting will be in Southern California and more difficult to reach. Remember, every member of the Calaveras Society is eligible to attend the Annual Meeting because the Calaveras Society is a charter member of the Conference. It is our Conference and it will be only as effective as we make it. The full program will be printed in the June issue of the "California Historian."

Judge Smith, our beloved president, wants to make it clear through our quarterly publication that we extend a cordial welcome to all those interested in the objectives of our historical society, the preservation of our history, to join the Calaveras County Historical Society. No special invitation is required and no sponsorship is necessary but only an interest in the past so that we can more fully understand the present. Contact any member of the Board of Directors or officers of the Society.

All members of the Calaveras Society are very proud of the honors given to two of our most loyal members, Archie and Rose Stevenot, for their long and devoted work to promote the civic betterment of the entire Mother Lode. The California State Senate passed a resolution

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very small cub bear skin in the lower cabin but they, too, were badly chewed up and infested with vermin.

This letter certainly paints a very unhappy picture but covers everything that I recall which might throw light on Monte's disappearance.

Sincerely yours,
James B. Langford.

That ends the official record. Monte Wolfe is presumed to have come from Tuolumne County to Calaveras County before the first World War. The Tuolumne County Monte Wolfe had a mine prospect near Groveland but was known as Ed McGraff, a former convict. One day a constable came to the miner's cabin to arrest Ed McGraff on a charge of theft. The man in the cabin said that he was not McGraff but Monte Wolfe.

When the constable said he would have to take him to Sonora the miner pulled a rifle from under the blankets, disarmed the constable and fled. If the man was the Calaveras Monte Wolfe the late hermit's like for life in the wilderness section of the Mokelumne would be accounted for.

N. B.—I have seen around Highland Lakes platforms high up in the trees which were said to have been built then and used by Monte Wolfe during the winters.

A number of years ago while I was the Superior Judge of Calaveras County I presided at a trial in Sonora of Ed McGraff. He was accused of carrying a pistol after a conviction of a felony.

At that time he had been arrested at Groveland and had a pistol on his person, not concealed. The facts of the case developed that while a young man he had been prosecuted in Stanislaus County and sent to the State penitentiary. He felt that he had been too severely dealt with and became angry at society and lived a life of a hermit. At the trial he was defended by Dave Bush who is now a Judge of the Superior Court in Stanislaus County.

McGraff admitted having the pistol but said he did not know it was a crime. The jury acquitted him and I think everyone concerned with the case was happy.

When men were required to register for World War I, Ed McGraff registered in Alpine County.

Later he was admitted to the Calaveras County Hospital with a broken leg. This is the last I knew of him. No question Ed McGraff and Monte Wolfe was the same person.

which was introduced by Senator Steve Teale of Calaveras County making Archie officially "Mr. Mother Lode" and Rosie was honored by a scroll of appreciation for her help to Archie which was presented to her by the Golden Chain Council. We all want to extend to Archie and Rose our congratulations and best wishes in receiving this well-deserved honor. We hope they will have many more years of useful service to the Mother Lode.

The Calaveras County Historical Society has an honor no other local society in California can boast of and that is we have "Mr. California," Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt; "Mr. Mother Lode," Archie Stevenot, and "Mr. Calaveras," Judge J. A. Smith, all as members. We are very proud of this honor and grateful for this wonderful opportunity to be associated with these great men who have devoted so much time and effort to the preservation of the history of our wonderful state.