



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By Charity Maness

How does a town get its name? A creek become christened? A valley forever saddled with a moniker?

Some may have noticed that the names of places in Calaveras County can vary from relatively normal to outrageous and pretty much everything in between.

With this said, I decided to do a little research on how some of these places received their names, whether ill gotten or well deserved. However, it proved to be a relatively daunting task.

Take Hog Hill, for instance. Hog Hill lay just south west of Grasshopper Hill and just across a little valley from Quail Hill. Were there, at one time, a herd of hogs, swarms of grasshoppers and flocks of quail?

History will remain a mystery for some locations, yet I was successful on a few other interesting locations.

Latimer Gulch—Located near the junction of the north and south fork of the Calaveras River approximately three miles from San Andreas, Latimer Gulch took its name from one of its local residents. According to accounts in the Stockton Record, Latimer owned a store at this location. A small town grew up around the store, a town of approximately 60 homes, populated with mostly Irish or those of Irish descent. Latimer was said

to have been of a good disposition and was well liked, which in turn made him the victim of many practical jokes by the youngsters of the growing community.

“One of these pranks will bear repeating, as it reveals Latimer was as shrewd as he was good natured.

It appears the first of April that year fell on Sunday and some of the miners decided to have a little fun with the storekeeper, at his expense, of course. Procuring a wicker bound demi-john, they very skillfully broke the bottom into tiny fragments, which they just as skillfully managed to work out through the wicker covering. It was a fine piece of work and nobody but an expert would have noticed that the container was minus its bottom.

All headed straight for the store. The leader asked for two gallons of “red likker”, Latimer looked innocent but suspected something was wrong. “All right, boys,” he said, cheerfully as he lighted a candle and went downstairs with the jug. Once there, out of sight, he turned it upside down and discovered the trick. He managed to insert the end of the whiskey barrel spigot through the wicker stuff, and with the demi-john upside down soon filled it.

Without a change of countenance he emerged from the cellar and standing the big jug upside down on the counter said with a wide grin, “There you are boys. I never spilled a drop either.”

Well, the boys laughed heartily and acknowledged the joke was on them.”

Murderer’s Gulch—Located south west of Vallecito (based on a 1949 project topographical map), the gulch was named after the local bar, aptly named, ‘Murderer’s Bar.’ According to the book, *California Places and Names*, “The bar itself takes the name from the killing of three men, by the people (Indians) living on the creek opposite.” The creek in Murderer’s Gulch was said to have been called “Yoteh” by the natives.

Gann’s Meadow—Located just north of Salt Spring Valley near Valley Springs, Gann’s Meadow was founded by cattle rancher William Gann in 1872. William arrived in California in 1853 from Missouri along with his two brothers, George and Jackson. The trio quickly began work in the booming cattle industry in San Joaquin County. As gold continued to be pulled from the ground in the Motherlode, the need for beef to feed the miners grew exponentially. Beef prices were said to have soared from \$6 to \$500 per head in the early 1850s.

Gann’s Station—The camp, located 15 miles above Arnold between Cottage Springs and Big Meadows, was a summer cattle camp originally established by George and Jack Gann. Each summer the brothers made the trek from the valley to the lush government owned rangelands with their cattle. By 1893, George and Jack retired and William and his oldest son Charlie took over the Gann’s Station cattle camp. For a short time, it was also known as Mountain Fountain where one could stop for a cool drink in the summer.

Gann’s Trespass—The 160-acre ranch was homesteaded by Charles A. Gann in 1902 and patented in 1910. A summer home tract, the 38-Mile Tract, consisting of six lots along the western side of the Ebbetts Pass Road, was laid out by the Forest Service in the 1920s. It later became known as the “Gann’s Trespass,” where homes were built on land sold by Charlie Gann in good faith, but actually on national forest lands.

Liberty Point—(now Liberty Vista) a name with a patriotic story attached.

“One morning during World War I, Charlie Gann’s sister, Susan Gann Berry and her sister-in-law, Mrs.

Henry Gann, while on a morning horseback ride east of Gann’s Station, came upon a strikingly beautiful view of the Stanislaus River Canyon.

Feeling that the spot should be marked, they rode back to Gann’s, and Susan, using green paint and her brother’s shaving brush, painted the words “Liberty Point” on a sign which she posted at the lookout spot. She chose the word “Liberty” because of the campaign which was underway for the sale of Liberty Bonds.

The sign remained for many years, and today, although the State Department of Transportation has changed the name to “Liberty Vista” it is still a designated scenic highway view spot.”

Poison Springs—Located along Highway 4 about two miles west of Gann’s Station, Poison Springs was said to have gotten its ill fated name due to some suspicious circumstances surrounding the poisoning death of a large number of sheep. According to the late Louis Lombardi of Mokelumne Hill, Poison Springs, sometimes called Poison Flat, “got its name when a large number of sheep belonging to a John Stringer of Jenny Lind were poisoned before 1890. He said there was confusion as to whether the sheep died from drinking medically treated dip water or were poisoned by cattleman on whose range they were infringing.”

Licking Fork River—According to author Erwin Gudde, it is presumed that this river located on the south fork of the Mokelumne was “probably named after salt licks for cattle.”

Brewery Hill—As the demand for beef grew with the influx of miners, so did the demand for “liquid gold”. As quickly as towns grew out of the dust, so did breweries. The earliest brewery in Copperopolis was the Copperopolis Brewery located one-mile north of town below a hill, aptly named Brewery Hill, as the road from Copperopolis to both San Andreas and Angels Camp wound up the hill behind the brewery. It was operated by a person named Mukielson. The Copperopolis Brewery was purchased by G.B. Zaiss, who was said to be “an old and experienced brewer” who “thoroughly understands the art of making good wholesome lager.” Zaiss later moved the brewery to a site near the Union Church and renamed it the Zaiss Brewery. An ad appeared in the Copperopolis Courier on February 9, 1867 for the Copperopolis Brewery, G.B. Zaiss. The brewery building was eventually

purchased by, and became the home of, the Drew family. It is still not known if this brewery bottled on site, but evidence points to storage in kegs or barrels.

Blood Station—Blood Station was a stopping place and supply center for travelers and teamsters between Murphys and the Sierras. It was named after Harvey Blood, a man who is attributed with turning what once was a trail over the Sierras into a well traveled wagon trail. From 1864 until his death in 1910, Harvey Blood and his family operated Blood's Station in Bear Valley and maintained the new wagon trail called the Big Trees-Carson Valley Turnpike as a toll road.

Lost City—Located on private property 7 miles from Milton in Salt Spring Valley at the confluence of two small creeks, there lay a town time forgot; the Lost City. Lost City is today nothing but crumbling rock foundations of a once thriving yet small French community. The small town boasted two acorn mills, a mine shaft (without a claim on record) and ten stone foundations. In 1877 the land was equally owned by Marion Eubank and Eugene Barbe, each owning 160 acres. Eventually Barbe became full owner. The Frenchmen lived in the town, living off the land and peddling home grown vegetables from 1877 to 1895, when Barbe's horse knocked him down, pulled the wagon over him, and killed him while he was unharnessing it. The town remained vacant and ultimately time and the elements left nothing but the stone foundations to tell of the town's existence.

Jesus Maria—Located approximately 5 miles east of Mokelumne Hill, the town, once the center of a large placer mining section, was named for a Mexican who raised vegetables and melons for the miners. Jesus Maria was originally settled in the 1850s with a large population of Mexicans, French, Chileans, and Italians.

Bear Mountain—A range of peaks which lay north of Pool Station and Hunt Roads, and south of Calaveras River (Hogan Lake) was reported to have gotten its name due to the high number of bears who roamed the mountainous area, some of which were thought to be California Grizzlies. The last bear was said to have been shot on a ridge near an old trail that wandered to Salt Spring Valley. Bears from this mountain were often trapped for the sport of bull fights, where bulls would be pitted against bears in an arena as miners looked on waging bets on the gory spectacle.

Joaquin Peak or Lookout (also known as Grizzly Peak)—This high peak, located on Pool Station, was said to have been named after Joaquin Murietta, who was reputed to have used Bear Mountain and its surroundings as refuge in a time of need. According to one account, Murietta, who passed away in 1853, would use the high peak as a watch tower of sorts and a means of communication to his friends, be it fire at night or reflection by day.

Hope, Faith and Charity Valleys—According to the diary of Leonard Withington Noyes, in 1885 Noyes had volunteered to help find a "*road across the mountains*" from Calaveras to Carson Valley. His passage took him from Murphys to Big Tress and then to "*country (that) was unexplored*" naming them as they went. After passing through Hangtown, "*we found a series of valleys connecting Hope Valley to Indian Valley that we had already been in. We called them Faith and Charity Valleys.*"

Greasertown—Once a bustling mining town located four miles west of San Andreas along the Calaveras River, Petersburg (also known as Greasertown) is now but a memory that lay beneath the waters of New Hogan Reservoir in a murky watery grave.

The town was rumored to receive its name due to what one-time resident and school teacher Margaret Blanc described as "*a straggling settlement... with canvas tents and wooden shanties of which it consisted the abodes of the Mexicans who packed and drove mules up to the mines with provisions for the diggers at work on the banks on the Mokelumne and Calaveras.*"

However, according to Blanc, the town was much more diverse, with many nationalities represented.

"*About thirty children made up of all classes, nationalities and ages,*" wrote Blanc, "*the variety and nature of their studies kept me interested and busy all day long.*"

Limerick—Limerick, also referred to as Clays Bar, was said to have been named after the many Irish immigrants who settled there. Limerick is now located under the Camanche Reservoir.

In a letter dated March 17, 1858 and reprinted November 11, 1937, in the *Calaveras Californian* the unknown author wrote:

"*Mr. Editor, Perhaps you don't know 'whar' Limerick is, if not, just come out of your kennel and*

place your delicate self in the charge of "Dick" and he will transport and transfer you at the Spring Valley House to "John" (Jehu of Dillon & Co's U.S. Mail Stage), who will land you safely at Poverty Bar one mile north of the City of Limerick.

This is a lively little town with about 400 inhabitants. The mining at this place is very extensive and pays good wages. Last week I was out on the flat between his place and the river and I counted 44 sluice companies."

Poverty Bar (one mile north) is rapidly improving. At present there are six stores, four boarding houses, two bakeries, two express offices, nine shops, four rondo saloons and fandango houses, until you can't rest.

One of the most notable features of Poverty Bar is the wire suspension bridge (spoken of some time ago by the State Journal). It is a superb arrangement and reflects the enterprising citizens of Poverty Bar and Lancha Plana."

Lancha Plana—A town settled along the Mokelumne River in 1848 by Mexicans was originally named Sonora Bar, but was renamed after the flatboat ferry that crossed the north bank of the Mokelumne River nine miles south of Ione. In Spanish, lancha plana means "flat boat". The population grew to 1000 by 1858 and by 1860 boasted its own newspaper, the *Lancha Plana Dispatch*. By November of that same year, the newspaper moved to Jackson, the Amador County seat, and was renamed the *Amador Dispatch*. Today the town of Lancha Plana lay beneath the waters of the Camanche Reservoir.

With growth came crime. In an article written in the *Daily Alta California* July 27, 1860 the reporter wrote:

"San Andreas, July 26, 1860—9 P.M. A fight occurred between a constable and his men, and some Indians near Lancha Plana, three miles from Campo Seco, in which the constable was killed and several others wounded; several Indians also were killed. Many were engaged on both sides. The constable was after stolen horses."

Now that I have highlighted some interesting names of locations and towns in Calaveras County, I thought I might take a moment to point out a couple obvious locations but, of course, with a little more history to go with them.

Stone Corral—Located approximately 9 miles south of Valley Springs on Hwy 26, the Stone Corral was named after the large stone corrals erected at

the location. It was one of the stopping places on the road from the mines to Stockton. The travel from the mines to Stockton was long and arduous. The stone corral offered amenities to the weary travelers, offering a hotel and a large barn as well as the stone corrals for their livestock.

What began as a stopping point for miner's in the late 1800s morphed to a designated road location reference for the improvement of transportation through the area.

By 1905 the railroad had made its way to Stone Corral.

The *Amador Ledger* March 13, 1905 headline read, "The Railroad Progress—the track laying on the railroad has advanced to the stone corral some distance this side of the Mountain Spring House... a strong force is at work on the road, and if reports are to be believed, the road as far as Martell's will be finished in a few weeks."

Major roads improvements to the area were on the horizon by 1921.

The October 30, 1921 *Daily Alta California* article read:

"Stockton Delegation Promises to assist in Raising Funds for Road—Improvement of the road from the San Joaquin county line to Valley Springs via Stone Corral in Calaveras county was discussed at a gathering held in San Andreas a few days back. The meeting was attended by a large delegation from Stockton, comprising representatives of the Progressive Business Men's Club, the Board of Supervisors of San Joaquin County, the Native Sons, Central California Fish and Game Protective Association, the American Legion and the two Stockton daily papers. The meeting was so largely attended that the Calaveras supervisor's room, in which it was to have been held, was not large enough, so the courtroom was utilized instead... The



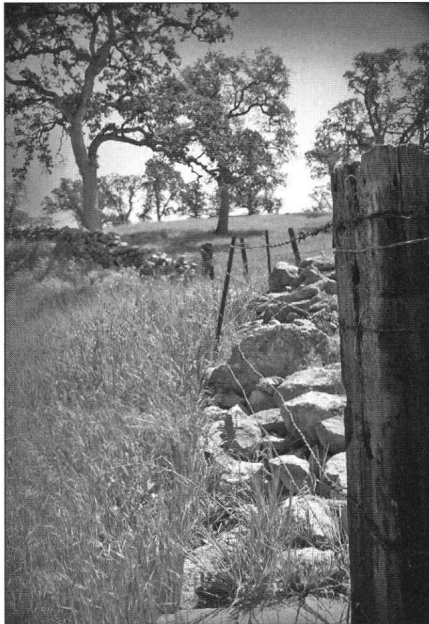
Telegraph City Barns and Blacksmith Shop c. 1925.
Calaveras Historical Society photo.

road from Stockton to the Calaveras county line is an improved road, San Joaquin county recently completing a fine surface road from Linden to Stone Corral..."

Telegraph City—Located along Highway 4 in the south west corner of the county, Telegraph City received its name and fame for being the first town in the county to have a telegraph line. However, when the town was first settled in the 1850s it was known as Grasshopper Hill. With the discovery of copper in the area, immigrants began to arrive to work the mines. During this time the town prospered. As copper was discovered in other areas of the county, the workers began to move on and the city slowly changed from a mining community to a ranching community. Field rock was soon discovered and according to researchers with Red Apple Ranch "the ranchers hired the workers still in the area—mainly Irish and Italian—to build rock walls on their properties to serve as fire deterrents as well as a means to confine their livestock" from the plentiful field rock.

And then there is always that story that is so odd it causes one to scratch their head in puzzlement. Here is just such a story from Telegraph City in 1863.

According to a report in the Daily Alta "a man shot a rat on a shelf in a store at Telegraph



Stone walls of Telegraph City built in the late 1850's still stand as a testament to the craftsmanship of the immigrant laborers who traveled from foreign countries to seek their fortunes in the Motherlode.

Charity Maness photo.

City in Calaveras County. The ball passed through the rat and the side of the house, continued on its course about 50 yards, struck Samuel Eldridge of Stockton, on the temple, glanced off, went through the glass of a window, lodged into the hat of Wm. Morris, of San Francisco."

Telegraph City also made the news in a bit more serious light. The Sacramento Daily Union reported on May 22, 1888 that the Governor had appointed Henry H. Saunders from Telegraph City, Calaveras, as a Notary Public. Mr. Saunders also held a land patent issued 8-8-1889 directly over Telegraph City, listed on the Public Land Survey System as, "Mount Diablo Meridian 1N 11E 13 XX? 105569252."

When writing about Telegraph City, I would be remiss in not mentioning the names that began this particular historical journey; Gopher Ridge, Hog Hill and Quail Hill. While I have yet to ascertain whether there were indeed herds of hogs and flocks of quail, I was able to locate some interesting history on their locations.

Just above Telegraph City and approximately six miles southwest of Gopher Ridge, where copper was first discovered at Quail Hill by Hiram Hughes in 1860, there lay a place known as Hog Hill and the Napoleon Mine. When these mines were in operation in the late 1800s, there existed a town named Napoleon City which boasted stores, businesses and housing. Napoleon Mine, one of the oldest known major copper mines in California, was established in 1860. Between 1860 and 1927 it had a total reported production of \$1.2 million worth of copper and silver.

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All that remains of the once bustling Telegraph City are crumbling stone foundations and the stone walls of buildings which once stood at the site of the town with one lone sentinel windmill which still creaks with the wind though riddled with bullet holes and rusted with the passage of time. *Charity Maness photo.*

Calaveras County Historical Society

30 No. Main Street P.O. Box 721 San Andreas, CA 95249

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The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas; and the historic Red Barn Museum at 891 Mountain Ranch Road, also in San Andreas, which is open Thursday to Sunday, 10:00 to 4:00.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museums while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com; Red Barn Museum (209) 754-0800.

October–December 2015

New Members:

Chuck & Bette Milazzo—Murphys
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Donations:

Charles Milazzo—Cannonball Safe

*Wishing You
a Very Happy
New Year!*

*From the
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