



## THE CLARK DITCH

Written in August, 1943, by W. V. Clark, Jr.  
(The Son of the Original Owner)

The "Clark Ditch," originating at Rail Road Flat, and running easterly to the south base of Blue Mountain, taking water from the South Fork of the Mokelumne River, was surveyed early in 1856. Construction work was started on May 1 of that year and completed on October 1, 1856, five months later.

The first section built was 25 miles in length and furnished water for placer mining in the vicinity of Rail Road Flat, but the main canal was extended soon afterward to Rich Gulch, with branches serving many other gulches and areas. The total length thus became about 55 miles, with several storage reservoirs at intervals.

W. V. Clark, builder and owner, was a civil engineer from Connecticut, who surveyed railroad lines in that state and also in Ohio, where he located the so-called "Sandusky and Ohio Railroad." Leaving that work in 1849, he went to New York, thence by steamer to Panama, thence to San Francisco, arriving at the "Diggins" in April, 1850. At first he mined with pick, shovel, and pan in Eldorado County, but, having brought his surveying instruments with him, he soon began surveying and building water works for the miners, taking contracts for ditches to convey water to the several mining districts in the region extending from the Sacramento River on the north to the Tuolumne River on the South.

From these contracts, over a period of five years, he accumulated \$35,000 in gold dust, and with this financial nucleus he undertook to build the "Clark Ditch."

The task was not an easy one. There were no roads to transport materials or food supplies. The latter were obtainable only at Sacramento, and were conveyed to the mines by "pack mule." And mules were scarce. A trail had

to be located from Rail Road Flat to Blue Mountain and a survey made. The work proceeded eastward and camps were established at intervals. Five hundred men volunteered to work on the ditch and take their pay in water when it was finished. All agreements were verbal. All started on the job but every day some deserted, and "man power" declined rapidly. Those who quit demanded their pay and the bank of gold dust was soon exhausted. At the end of May fifty men were left. With these hardy and loyal workers the ditch was finished, and water turned in on October 1.

In 1857 the ditch was extended to Glencoe and the following year to Rich Gulch and vicinity. Two reservoirs were built and used with the ditch—one near Rail Road Flat when the water was run to the mines at Independence, and one on the Clark home place.

## Christmas Memories of Long, Long Ago

By EFFIE ENFIELD JOHNSTON  
Born on February 1, 1868

My earliest memory of Christmas was Christmas Eve on Paradise Gulch. It was about 1871 and before my brother was born. My parents were still living happily together.

We were just Effie and Martha when mother said: "If you hang up your stockings tonight old Santa Claus might bring you something. He is coming down the stove pipe." Mother pinned together the tops of two pair of our little stockings and hung them over the door knobs in the front room.

I think we were still in our night gowns on Christmas morning when we came out of mother's room into the front room to see what Santa had left us. Our little stockings were full of candy and nuts, and hanging beside them, each of us were overjoyed to see, was a beautiful wax doll. They were not yet fully dressed but were beautiful in their fancy underclothes with a red rosebud pinned across their breast.

We must have been very young because I have no other memory of these beautiful wax dolls.

The first Christmas Tree that I have any memory of was one placed in the Town Hall in San Andreas. I think it was Christmas of 1874 because we stayed with the Jo Bryan family the Christmas night of 1874. In the evening father took us and some of the Bryan children to the Town Hall to see the Christmas Tree. The hall was full of people. Miss Manuella Salcido, who was about eighteen and dressed in white, spoke the reading, "The Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight." Old Santa Claus in his long white beard was loaded down with candy and nuts that he was giving away as he circulated through the crowd.

Somebody at the large Christmas Tree was calling out the names that were on the gifts. Miss Hattie Wyllie's name was called. As she walked away from the Christmas Tree with a beautiful doll, the largest on the tree, I cried out, "O! What a beauty of a doll!" Everybody in our vicinity took a look at me. I think father was embarrassed. The Bryan children, who were very quiet and nicely behaved, must have been surprised. If I remember rightly, nice little Rutha was with us.

There were no dolls on the Christmas Tree for us, but we received some nice presents. I remember the beautiful blue swallow on the back of the children's story books that we took home. I afterwards named a doll Little Nell for one of the characters in the book.

Well, father didn't take us to any more Christmas Trees in town. We spent all of our Christmases in our own neighborhood from then on.

About 1880 the Johnstons and the McElhany's clubbed together and had a nice Christmas Tree at the McElhany home. Cora's last doll was hung at the top of the tree which was decorated with strings of popcorn. Half the presents on the tree were homemade by Mrs. McElhany, who was very handy with a little saw and needle.

With best wishes to the Calaveras County Historical Society, December 5, 1959.

## Dates on Events in the Big Trees Grove

(In an effort to obtain the correct dates on the burning of the Mother of the Forest, the falling of the Sentinel, and the removal of the Stump House, the editor of *Las Calaveras* contacted three old timers of Calaveras County and received the following letters:)

Tanner Ranch, Murphys, California

Dear Coke,

The fire that burned the Mother of the Forest so much was in September of 1910, the first year of my mail contract. On my way down from Dorrington I drove through the burning area below the Big Trees. I gave Job Whiteside a ride down through the fire line. Later in the day the fire burned around the Mother of the Forest and up the hill beyond where there are two large Sequoia trees. The rubbish under those trees was burned and the next spring little Sequoia trees sprang up like weeds. Three of them are growing in Murphys near the Church, now about three feet

in diameter. The fire in the tree top burned the immense big limbs off and burned until the fall rains put it out. It is silly to claim the fire was shot out with a rifle. I couldn't keep fighting the fire as the mail had to go through.

The Sentinel tree fell between two of my mail trips which were on Sundays and Wednesdays. I believe this was in February, 1913. Fred Lowry, who was caretaker and postmaster, was the only one at the Big Trees Hotel. He said he heard the crash and it was like a small earthquake but he did not mention any broken windows. He did not go down to see the fallen Sentinel until later.

Irvin Tanner thinks that Edgar Whiteside is about right as to when the Stump House was taken down. Shortly after the Grove became a park in 1931. We were at the dedication of the park and I saw Arlene, my daughter, shake hands with Governor Rolph.

My writing is rather shaky as I've been out working quite hard.

Sincerely,  
AMON TANNER

2230 Crafton Way, Stockton 4, Calif.  
April 3, 1959

Dr. R. C. Wood  
120 W. Elm St., Stockton, Calif.  
Dear Dr Wood:

I have your letter relative to the Calaveras Big Trees. Have read same very carefully, and, realizing that you want the correct information, I must, even though regretfully, differ with my good friend Amon Tanner of Murphys, California.

I do not believe the Sentinel was blown down during the winter of 1912-13. This should be corrected to read that the Sentinel was blown down during a terrific wind storm Thanksgiving Day in the year of 1919. My good mother, Mrs. Job Whiteside, and brother, Sidney A. Whiteside, were at the Grove at the time. The Sentinel fell during the morning—between 7:00-8:00 A. M. There were some windows broken in the old Calaveras Big Trees Hotel, which was located approximately 200 yards away. My brother knew, by the impact, that a tree larger than a Sugar Yellow Pine had fallen, so he investigated and found the Sentinel was down. My mother left that afternoon for Angels Camp where she spent her winters. I may further state that there was no snow on the ground at that time.

Re: Old Stump House—The State of California took over the Calaveras Big Trees property in June, 1932. I believe that the deed was recorded on June 25 at San Andreas, County Seat of Calaveras County. I was appointed the first Warden of Calaveras Big Trees State Park, effective July 1, and I held this position until December 15, 1933. During the month of February, 1934, the old office part of the hotel, which was located on the East side of the building, crashed in with snow due to a heavy snow fall; also, the covering over the old Stump House crashed in at the same time.

When my mother had charge of the property, the caretaker, who remained there during the winter time, used to remove snow off the hotel and Stump House by the means of a large hose and water pressure. The old Big Trees Stump was used for a printing office, dances were held

there as well as church, from time to time during the late 50's and early 60's.

The foregoing incidents are just my own thinkings on the subjects and I know you will want to re-word them to your own liking.

Most sincerely,  
EDGAR H. WHITESIDE

San Andreas, Cal.

Dear Coke:

Answering your letter as far as I am able, I told the Historical Society that Warren Garland, a former resident of Murphys and a Supervisor from Angels Township, told me as follows:

That Manuel's Mill had the misfortune to set a fire and it raced toward the Big Trees. I think at that time the mill was on the Moran Place. That he, Garland, was unable to stop it and in desperation asked the Schaad Bros., two men from West Point who were employed at the mill, if they thought they could check the fire. They told him they thought they could if he would let them have their crew and plenty of cross cut saws. He told them to go ahead. They went upon the ground. At that time it was a crown fire. That is up in the tops of the trees.

They took the men and went a sufficient distance in advance of the flames and cut a section of timber, a clear cut, everything in the path of the fire. It stopped the fire. I do not recall that the fire got into the Mother of the Forest, but apparently it did, and burned for some time. I remember a fire in that tree well, but don't know its origin. It could have been from lightning.

I do not know what Warren Garland's position was with the Manuel Company, but he worked for them for many years. He may have been the manager. When in Angels he had charge of the Lumber Yard there for Manuel. Matt Manuel could tell you what his position was with the company.

I thought I had an account of the Sentinel that fell, but apparently not. I have not been able to find it. I was up there shortly after it fell, and it was strewn over the ground for a considerable distance. I cannot remember dates. I have no knowledge that it broke windows in the Big Tree Hotel. That may be true, but I cannot prove it. I would think Edgar Whiteside might confirm it. I think his family must have been there at that time.

I never heard that the bark from the Mother of the Forest was exhibited at Boston. My understanding is that a man named George Gale stripped the bark for a distance of 116 feet from the tree in the summer of 1854 (a long time ago), and it was exhibited in London, England, I think at the Crystal Palace, whatever that may have been.

I told the Society that a man who wintered at Douglas Flat did the turning and making of souvenirs each summer while Sperry had the trees. His name was James Alexander Zevely. My wife's father told me this.

I do not know when the stump house was removed.

Sincerely,  
J. A. SMITH

## Some Facts About the Gwin Mine and Paloma

By J. A. SMITH

Races were run on the streets of the town of Paloma and there was a circular track on the Redmond Ranch (now Ludwig).

William Gwin, Jr., was a California State Senator and Andrew Young was an Assemblyman. Gwin was the son of the United State Senator Gwin who was one of the first two U. S. Senators from California after it became a state.

Mrs. Goodall had the first store in Paloma. Late and Sommers also ran stores there.

D. Lompon had the hall, the hotel, and the butcher shop.

There were two churches, the Catholic and the Protestant.

A man named Foster ran the first livery stable but it was later sold to Copley. Foster had come from Lockeford.

There were three shafts in the Gwin Mine. The old shaft was the Alexander. Gwin bought one-fourth of the mining property from Seaver in May, 1871, and three-fourths from Alexander and Henry in June, 1871. The total cost was \$15,000. The Alexander shaft was in the footwall and on the west side of Rich Gulch.

Gwin deeded the property to the Gwin Mining Company and later the property was again deeded to the Gwin Mine Development Company. The main shaft was 2400 feet deep. At the 1600-foot level the lead was fifty feet wide. It was very rich in spots and there were two ledges.

Power for the 80-stamp mill was supplied by the Mokelumne Hill Ditch. However, there was also auxiliary steam power to supplement the water supply.

The South Paloma Mine was south of the Gwin Mine and near the town of Paloma. A 600-foot shaft was sunk in this mine, but with no success.

The Gwin house was a two-story building erected on the west side of the gulch above the main shaft. The road was so steep to the house that it wasn't used much. The house was later moved to Campo Seco, when Mr. Borger ran the Penn Mine.

The first post office that was called the Gwin Mine was opened on December 12, 1870, and discontinued July 13, 1882. It was opened again on September 23, 1895, and rescinded on October 15, 1895. A third period of activity as the Gwin Mine Post Office occurred between October 15, 1895, and August 31, 1910. The Fosteria post office operated from July 6, 1905, to November 30, 1918, when it was moved to Valley Springs.

The mining district west of Paloma was called the Johnny Bull Mining District and water was furnished it by the Mokelumne Hill Ditch.

A man named Green obtained a patent to the land where Paloma is situated. A Mr. Folsom moved the house from Chile Gulch for Green with an ox team.

Some of the families who lived in the community were the Peeks, Hoskins, Rooch, Folsom, Young, Beal, Robinson, Redmond, Gallagher, McNamara, Markwood, Schook, Powers, Phillips, Gabbert. Andrew Young mined in Gwin Mine Gulch (Rich Gulch).

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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

At the September meeting of the Society the question was discussed as to whether the essay contest on local history should be continued. Only five essays were submitted in the last contest, and only one of these was from the high school level. The question was asked why there was not better participation. From over five hundred high school students in the two high schools of the county, there was only one student who would try for a \$15.00 cash prize, a year's membership in the Society, and a free dinner. We could give many reasons for this indifference to our local heritage, but probably the most important is that our school teachers are not interested either in the historical society or the local history. However, we shouldn't be too willing to condemn them because we are at fault that we haven't caught their attention. We know our programs are interesting and our publication, LAS CALAVERAS, informative, but we haven't gotten this across to our teachers and administrators. One of the reasons for this lack of interest is that no local or even state history is taught in our high schools. In fact, only in the Fourth Grade is any California History required. A unit on state and local government is required for graduation from the Twelfth Grade, but no history. Why don't we urge our high school administrators to include a one-semester course in state and local history in the curriculum of the two high schools? There is plenty of source material for a wonderful course. The seven volumes of LAS CALAVERAS would be excellent source material for the course as would Judge Smith's SCRAPBOOK and the several books on the County.

Many local historical societies are cooperating with the schools in their communities to teach local history. Workshops and speakers on local history from the local societies are provided for institutes and in-service training meetings

of the teachers.

We, too, can achieve success in this effort in local history. We owe it to the young people of the County to pass on to them our rich County heritage. This is an "unsolved opportunity" that challenges us and we must not fail.

The Essay Contest Committee held a meeting in December at Chairman Hattie Hertzig's house in San Andreas to make plans for holding the annual contest. After considering the encouraging offers of cooperation made by County Superintendent Mrs. Lorraine Valente at the meeting at Rail Road Flat and the suggestions made by School Supervisor Mrs. Genevieve Monte Verda at the November meeting in San Andreas, it was decided to continue the contest. However, changes were made in the rules to meet the suggestions made by the educators. Another classification to include the fourth to sixth grades was added but the length of the essay was reduced to five hundred words for this group.

The committee also discussed plans for providing resource units on local history for teachers interested in teaching units on Calaveras history. The suggestion of District Superintendent Axford that a list resource of old timers be compiled for the different regions was approved and the committee felt that this could be done and made available to the contestants.

With the enthusiastic discussions and apparent interest of the educators in the contest and the larger project of teaching more about our local heritage in the schools, it is safe to predict that this will be our best year for the essay contest.

The fourth annual Christmas party of the Society was a beautiful and satisfying occasion. The music by the Girls' Glee Club, directed by Mr. Norman Persing of the Calaveras High School, was beautiful as was that of Ralph Treat and others. The articles read about early day Christmases were very interesting and gave the historical aspect to the program as did the old-fashioned Christmas tree decorated with popcorn and cranberries. Mrs. Eldridge and her committee deserve our thanks for a happy evening. It was also very appropriate that the meeting should be held in the new Calaveras Grange Hall because the Grange was the sponsoring organization that helped in the organization of the Historical Society.

The dinner meeting at Rail Road Flat in October which had as our speaker Frank Latta on the topic "On the Trail of Murrieta" was one of the largest meetings ever held by the Society, with an actual count of 108 paying diners. Certainly everyone must have felt well rewarded for their efforts. The dinner put on by Mrs. Brandt and the ladies of the Community Club was unbeatable and the dramatic and colorful talk about facts he had verified on Murrieta by Frank Latta was very entertaining. It would be hard for the most skeptical and critical historian not to believe the evidence that Latta presented about the actual existence of an historical Murrieta. We will all be looking forward to the publication of the material in book form as Frank has planned during the thirty-five or forty years he has been assembling the material on the famous and sometimes considered legendary bandit.